

What to do when threats are made

What to do when a threat is made at school – verbally, in writing or in a chat? First hour, first day, first week: who does what. For school management, teachers and school social work.

Acute danger – weapon, attack, concrete announcement for today? Call 117 or 112 immediately. Protect yourselves, lock in, do not seek contact with the perpetrator. Follow police instructions.

Principle: every threat is taken seriously. If it is unclear whether it is meant seriously, it is treated as serious until proven otherwise. Most threats do not lead to an act – but perpetrators have almost always hinted at their intention beforehand.

First hour

- Whoever learns of a threat reports it immediately to the school management – also outside school hours.
- Record the threat word for word: wording, time, place, witnesses. Save screenshots of chats, don't touch letters any further.
- School management makes an initial assessment: is anyone in danger now? If yes or unclear: call the police.
- Convene the school's crisis team. From now on, one person is always reachable and coordinates.
- Protect and inform the people threatened – without creating panic.

First day

- Involve the cantonal threat management or the police specialist unit, school social work and the school psychology service.
- Gather information: were there earlier warning signs, conflicts, humiliations, violent fantasies, suicidal thoughts? Does the person have access to weapons?
- Carry out a structured assessment (e.g. with the VORFELD tool).
- Talk to the person who made the threat and to the parents or guardians – clearly: the threat is not accepted. And: we want to understand what is behind it.
- Decide on measures: support, report to the KESB, criminal complaint, assessment by child and adolescent psychiatry.

First week

- Coordinate communication: who informs the class, the staff, the parents – and about what? Only school management speaks to the outside; if the police are involved, only in agreement with them.
- Support the classes concerned: room for questions and fears, counter rumours with facts.
- Plan the return of the person who made the threat: conditions, contact person, support. Exclusion only with restraint and with accompanying measures.
- Document everything: decisions, people involved, next steps.

Afterwards

- Debriefing in the crisis team: what worked, what didn't?
- Ensure support for teachers and those affected (care team, victim support 142).
- Incorporate lessons learned into the school's safety concept, make reporting channels known.

Documentation sheet

Date and time of the threat

Reported by / to

Exact wording

Place and channel (verbal, letter, chat, social media)

Person(s) threatened

Person making the threat

Weapon, plan, time mentioned?

Already informed

Next steps and person responsible

Sources: guide "Herausforderung Gewalt an Bildungseinrichtungen" (Bern cantonal police), fact sheet "Amokdrohungen" (Lucerne compulsory schooling service). Procedures and responsible services differ from canton to canton.