

COUNTRY PROFILE DUTCH INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Country name: The Netherlands

Structure of inspectorate: The Dutch inspectorate is structured centrally. Regulation does not vary per region or state. We have an inspection framework but there are differences between primary, secondary education, and other sectors.

Age of inspectorate: The Dutch Inspectorate was founded in 1801 and is one of the oldest state Inspectorates of Education.

Size: 598 fulltime jobs.
Management: about 20
Strategic inspectors /senior advisors/ PR-advisors: about 25
Inspectors: about 250
Supporting staff: about 300

Remits: What form of education do you inspect? Primary education, secondary education, special education, vocational education (VET) and higher education. Public and private schools. The Dutch Inspectorate also assesses the performance of the municipalities with respect to their tasks for childcare and toddler playgrounds.

Unit of inspection: We inspect governing bodies and schools rather than teachers or subject departments.

What is your strapline? 'Effective supervision for better education'

Our main tasks are:

- Improving the quality of the education system
- Assuring quality of education (guaranteeing basic quality as an extra check on top of the supervision that the school board/ governing body is legally responsible for carrying out)
- Fostering quality of education (stimulate schools and boards to perform above average, and to formulate their own ambitions)
- Annual public report to the parliament on 'The State of Education' and the 'Financial State of Education'

Relationship with government: The Dutch Inspectorate of education is part of the Ministry of Education. It is a so called 'external service'

The supervision is (in legal terms) attributed to the inspectorate. This means that the task of supervising the law (as arranged in the Education Supervision Act) has been entrusted to the inspectorate and that the inspectorate carries out this task in its own name.

Simultaneously supervision of the inspectorate falls under ministerial responsibility. Within this ministerial responsibility, there is as much professional independence as possible. The independent judgement of the inspectorate, regardless of political and/or policy influencing is specified in the Education Supervision Act, this is formulated as follows: *Our Minister gives no indications with regard to the assessments of the inspectorate about the development, in particular of the quality, of the education.* The inspectorate also determines to a large extent what it investigated and how it investigates.

In Education Supervision Act it is determined that the inspectorate reports yearly on the state of education, as referred to in the Constitution. The minister sends the report, accompanied by a response, to parliament on behalf of the government.

Our research covers the quality of education in schools and also the quality of the education system at various levels. Our research is therefore not directly concerned with government policy, but our reports can say something (implicitly or explicitly) about government policy and often have significance for government policy.

We issue our reports on separate schools or educational institutions without intervention from the government. Reports on systemic research as a rule go via the minister to the parliament. The Inspectorate can decide to make the report public after a period of five weeks, if the minister has not sent it yet to parliament.

Accountability: The Dutch Inspectorate of Education publishes various types of reports. We distinguish between the following types of reports :

- Reports about the quality of governing bodies
- Reports about the quality of schools (inspection of schools at risk or sample quality investigations)
- Reports after thematic inspections
- Reports of incidental inspections
- The Inspectorate's annual report on education: 'The State of Education' and the 'Financial State of Education'
- Sometimes staff members of the Inspectorate write articles or give presentations at conferences

We also publish several kinds of data about the quality of education in the Netherlands.

Evaluation process

Self-evaluation: We do not use a standardized form of self-evaluation. We stimulate the use of self-evaluation, but schools are free in choosing a certain approach and form.

What do you examine during inspection?

We supervise three different levels:

1. Education System Level
2. School board / governing body level
3. School level

System level:

We define education system quality as the extent to which the system of school boards, schools and other stakeholders succeed in the core functions of education (qualification, socialization and allocation including selection and equal opportunities). In our supervision, we take these core functions as starting point for the description of the quality of the education system.

Supervision on system level is based on the interest that society as a whole has in education: public interest. As part of that, in our supervision we pay attention to specific opportunities and threats, specific parts of the system or specific groups of pupils. As a supervisor, we therefore need to know how education develops, reflect on it and, if something does not go well, inform society about it.

School board / governing body level:

The governing body is responsible for the quality of education at its schools, which is why our regulation starts and ends there.

We distinguish between the basic quality (statutory criteria) and the governing body's and school's own ambitions (i.e. the quality aspects that they themselves have defined). We ensure that the basic quality is in order. In addition, we encourage governing bodies and schools to pursue their ambitions and achieve improvements above and beyond the level of basic quality.

At the heart of the four-yearly governing body inspections are the following questions:

1. Does educational quality receive sufficient emphasis and are measures in place to improve educational quality?
2. Is there a professional quality culture in place and is the governing body characterized by transparency and integrity?
3. Does the governing body pursue an active policy of communication on its own performance and developments and the performance of its schools and the developments taking place there?
4. Is the financial management sound?

These questions form the basis of the quality areas and standards that we assess on governing body level (see our framework).

School level:

At school level the following questions form the basis:

Are the pupils being taught well? (Teaching and learning process)
Are the pupils safe? (School climate)
Are the pupils learning enough? (Student outcomes)

These questions form the basis of the quality areas and standards that we assess on governing body level (see our framework).

We do not always assess all the standards of our framework. We choose a set of standards according to the situation (risks, potentially good elements, etc). We call this proportional supervision.

Do you have an inspection framework? Is this a quality or compliance model?

Despite being largely similar, a different inspection framework applies to each educational sector. The differences between the frameworks are generally related to sector-specific legislation.

Each inspection framework consists of:

- an assessment framework: What does the Inspectorate inspect?
- an approach: How does the Inspectorate conduct its inspection?

In the 2021 Inspection Framework (adjusted in 2023) for governing bodies/ school boards, we define three quality areas:

GQA1. Vision, ambitions and goals

The school governing board has a vision for quality, it has identified ambitions and goals in relation to that vision, and it seeks to achieve those.

GQA2. Implementation and culture of quality

The school governing board, together with the schools, achieves the goals relating to quality, promotes a culture of quality, sets parameters and makes interim adjustments where necessary.

GQA3. Evaluation, accountability and dialogue

The school governing board systematically evaluates and analyses whether it is achieving the goals and reports on this. Where necessary, it adjusts policy and involves internal and external stakeholders through a proper process of dialogue.

In the 2021 Inspection Framework for schools, we define four different quality areas:

QUALITY AREAS AND STANDARDS, PRIMARY EDUCATION, SCHOOL LEVEL	
TLP TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS	
TLP0	Basic Skills
TLP1	Curriculum
TLP2	Monitoring Pupils' Achievements and Support
TLP3	Teaching Strategies
TLP4	Planned teaching time
TLP6	Completion of Primary Education
SE SECURE ENVIRONMENT AND ATMOSPHERE	
SE1	Safety and Security
SE2	Atmosphere at School
LO LEARNING OUTCOMES	
LO1	Results
LO2	Social and Civic Skills
MQA MANAGEMENT, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND AMBITION	
MQA1	Vision, Ambitions and Goals
MQA2	Implementation and Quality Culture
MQA3	Evaluation, Accountability and Dialogue

Supervision in higher education works differently: no inspection framework is in place here.

Inspection time and resource: This may differ per inspection depending on the number of schools that belong to a specific governing body. To give a rough idea we set out our main types of inspections:

- *Quadrennial inspection of governing bodies and their schools*
These inspections last two to eight weeks. We have meetings with the governing body, Internal Supervision, Participation Counselling and usually one to five schools. We visit these schools to verify the quality assurance of the governing body. We may also have meetings with other parties, depending on the situation. If there are schools at risk, we do a full inspection at that school as a part of this inspection.
- *Inspection of schools at risk*
These inspections last one or two days with 1-3 inspectors. If possible we visit schools at risk as a part of the quadrennial inspection of governing bodies. However, if a school is at risk and we do not have a quadrennial inspection planned, we may visit the school. If the governing body has adequate quality assurance and quality culture, we may also ask the governing body to assess the school.
- *Sample quality investigations*
From September 2023, the Inspectorate carries out inspections at a representative sample of schools. By carrying out these sample inspections, we can better monitor and report on the quality of education at system level than we do now, and we improve our risk-oriented digital performance monitor.
- *Theme inspections*
These inspections last half-full day with one inspector, depending on the theme and type of research.

Frequency of inspections:

- All governing bodies are inspected once every four years. Additionally, all schools and educational programmes/institutes are inspected once every four years in different ways
- Follow-up inspections of inadequate schools or governing bodies.

- When schools are at risk we can inspect the school (or ask the governing body to do an assessment), regardless of how long ago the school was visited.

Supervision in higher education works differently.

Complaints: All schools are legally obliged to have a complaints procedure. If the complaint cannot be solved by the school or the governing body, the complainant can apply to an independent committee with his complaint. If the results are still not satisfactory, the complainant can ultimately go to court. The Inspectorate has no legal powers in case of complaints.

Complaints however- and in particular complaints with respect to the quality of education- are treated as signals. The Inspectorate can decide to visit the school in serious cases (or if several complaints come in about the same school and reveal a certain pattern). If the number of complaints about a certain issue becomes a national issue, this also may lead to a thematic inspection. If the complaint concerns the Inspectorate itself, the complainant can apply to the Inspectorate's complaints commission.

The Inspectorate has a separate desk for issues concerning sexual abuse and intimidation, mental and physical violence, discrimination and extremism within the context of education. Specialized inspectors deal with these matters. This special desk is broadly accessible by phone. The main task of these specialized inspectors is to advise and sometimes (in cases of mental and physical violence, discrimination and radicalization) to act as an intermediary.

Financial or staff management of schools or districts (or the financial reports of the institutes by accountants): The managerial condition is inspected by the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate does not take over the managerial responsibility which lies with the board. This would be considered contrary to the broad autonomy of governing bodies and school leaders in matters of the foundation of new schools, merger or closure of schools, appointment of staff / replacement of staff or management of the school budget. However we do assess the Legality (via accountants), Expediency and Financial continuity of governing bodies and give recovery orders if they do not meet the regulations.

Consequences of inspection

Grade:

School as a whole

If a school meets the statutory requirements for basic quality, then the school will be judged to be 'adequate'. If they fail to meet the basic quality requirements, they will be judged to be 'inadequate'. These schools may even be judged to be 'very weak' if they perform below the applicable statutory standards. The inspection framework for each educational sector indicates when the judgement will be adequate, inadequate or very weak.

Standards that are set out in our framework

Each standard is operationalized. The statutory criteria determine whether a school is judged "Adequate" or "Inadequate", whilst fulfilment of its own self-defined quality factors - those displayed or aspired to by the governing body or school - makes the difference between "Adequate" and "Good".

Reporting:

Our judgements and reports on individual schools and governing bodies can be found on our website under 'Find and compare schools'. This section of the website is only available in Dutch.

The inspection reports we write are primarily intended for the school and the governing body. The school is required to communicate this information to the parents and/or students.

What happens following an inspection? We use the results of the four-yearly inspection to specify the structure of the follow-up regulation of the governing body and the schools. Follow-up regulation may be prescribed if we detect something that must be remediated or improved. If everything is as it should be, then the next inspection of the governing body will take place in four years' time.

If follow-up inspection is required, we always take the governing body's or school's specific situation into account. For example, the number of schools falling under the governing body, the size of the schools, developments in quality and quality assurance, the severity of any

shortcomings and risks, and the relevant regulation history. In other words: follow-up regulation is always bespoke.

What is the stated purpose of your inspectorate?

The Inspectorate:

- ensures that schools at least comply with basic quality;
- intervenes at institutions (boards and schools), when these do not meet basic quality so that they can recover as quickly as possible;
- stimulates schools and educational institutions to maintain and improve the quality of education they offer;
- assesses the quality of education of the individual educational institutes and the education system as a whole in the Netherlands and its developments;
- communicates in an accessible way with all its target groups and stakeholders;
- reports in public.

Link to our English website:

<https://english.onderwijsinspectie.nl/>