

Inspectorate Profile

Central Inspectorate, Spain

July 2024

1. Overview of the Inspectorate

Age of inspectorate

The Inspectorate was founded in 1849 when the rules to inspect primary schools were set. It was the only inspectorate in Spain for about 150 years until the autonomous communities started having their own inspectorates at the end of the 20th century.

Structure of inspectorate

Nowadays, each autonomous community in the country has its own inspectorate with its own regulation and standards, within the framework of Spanish law.

Therefore, the Central Inspectorate is in charge of inspecting schools/programmes that follow the Spanish curriculum or part of it overseas, as well as the European Schools and others that will be further specified later.

Size

The current number of serving inspectors stands at 14, including the chief inspector (*Subdirectora General de la Inspección de Educación*) and the deputy chief inspector (*Subdirectora General Adjunta de la Inspección de Educación*).

Each inspector is assigned to inspection and advisory services to a given number of schools/programmes. And the work of inspectors is supported by an administrative staff of four people.

Remits

We inspect early years, primary and secondary schools, regardless of whether they are state-funded or private.

In addition, inspectors carry out inspections in vocational training schools, sport schools, and circus travelling classrooms. Also, we supervise the distance learning centre which depends on the Ministry of Education.

Unit of inspection

The Inspectorate usually reports on individual schools/programmes and also inspects and reports on individual teachers and school leaders. The focus of inspection depends on whether the school is state-funded or not, although observation of the teaching and learning process is a key element of all inspections.

Concerning Spanish education authorities that are located overseas, we also inspect and report on technical advisors, whose role is to support schools/programmes and teachers.

Besides, the Inspectorate also appoints two inspectors (nursery/primary and secondary) that are members of the two boards of inspectors of the European Schools.

Purpose of inspectorate

In accordance with the Education Act 2006 (revised in 2020), all inspectorates in Spain have a statutory role to:

- Supervise, evaluate and control schools and programmes to ensure that regulations are followed within schools.
- Supervise the work of school leaders and teachers and support them to improve coexistence at schools.
- Inform and advise education stakeholders about their rights and duties.
- Write reports when required by education boards or when relevant facts are noticed.

The accountability function is achieved by writing individual reports for education boards and by reporting back to schools about the outcomes of inspections.

The Inspectorate aims at improving the quality of education provision for students through the advice and support it gives to school leaders, teachers, education boards and policy makers, as well as through the sharing of good practices among different schools/programmes.

What is your strapline/motto?

“Without Inspection, Administration sees nothing, knows nothing, and can’t solve anything” (*Sin la Inspección, la Administración nada ve, nada sabe y nada puede remediar*) has been the essential leitmotif of inspectorates in Spain since 1849.

Relationship with government

The Inspectorate is a division of the Ministry of Education of Spain (*Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes*), and the chief inspector is accountable to the General Director (*Directora General de Planificación y Gestión Educativa*) and the Secretary of State for Education.

The Inspectorate does not report on government policy nor are we allowed to publish reports without approval either. Nevertheless, the Inspectorate assists other units with policy decisions when requested.

Accountability

The accountability functions of the Inspectorate are set out in a four-year plan approved by the General Director (*Directora General de Planificación y Gestión Educativa*), which is updated in an annual plan established by the chief inspector every year.

As we mentioned above, the duties of inspectors may vary depending on the school's owner, but in general, the Inspectorate verifies the implementation of regulations by assessing and evaluating the multifaceted dimensions of teaching and learning provided at schools. Inspectors have the responsibility of synthesising their findings into reports that serve as a feedback mechanism, since they offer constructive advice for improving and enhancing provisions and practices.

At the end of every school year, the Inspectorate writes a report which includes all the activities carried out and an analysis of their compliance with the aim of being accountable to education boards and also seeking continuous improvement.

Impact of inspections

Existing inspection impact processes include:

- Influence of reports written by inspectors on decisions taken by policy makers.
- Removal of teachers/school leaders with negative assessment.
- Enhancement of inclusion, diversity and innovation at schools.
- Compliance with education stakeholders' rights and duties.
- Influence on teacher recruitment processes through an in-depth analysis of the situation at schools.
- Best practice sharing to improve teaching and learning at schools.

Quality assurance of inspections

The Inspectorate uses a range of mechanisms to ensure that its work is conducted to the highest professional standards, and is considered valid and reliable, such as:

- Education inspection framework: to plan carefully the activities to be carried out and make sure inspectors make judgements fairly and consistently among different types of education providers.
- Recruitment of inspectors: using an interview process to choose from highly qualified and experienced inspectors.
- Professional development: to base inspectors' everyday practice on an updated, coherent and integrated professional knowledge that can contribute to a good quality education.
- Allocation of inspectors to each school/programme so that they have a reference person to contact whenever they need advice.
- Regular meetings to continuously reflect on our work and try to improve the quality of inspections.
- Annual report, which is underpinned by evidence from inspections and visits to school/programmes, and contains data, analysis and evaluation of the work done.

2. Evaluation process

Self-evaluation

Institutions carry out their own internal evaluations to continuously monitor and improve teaching and learning experiences. At the beginning of every school year, they set their general programme, which includes objectives, projects, curriculum, wellbeing, improvement plans, etc. And at the end of the school year, they write a final report after having evaluated the extent to which their aims have been achieved.

In addition, school leaders and teachers are asked to voluntarily write a self-assessment report before being evaluated by inspectors.

On the other hand, institutions are also subject to external evaluations, mainly through annual inspections, but also by other means such as standardised assessments for students at the ages of 9 and 13.

Focus of inspection

Inspections are intended to focus on the quality of learning and teaching process. They include a review of compliance with regulations, examination of school documentation, observation of teaching and learning in the classroom, supervision of facilities, teacher evaluation and meetings and interviews with school stakeholders.

The Inspectorate does not examine the finances of a school, but inspectors get information about the school budget and the way funds are allocated based on the needs of every school in order to report to education boards.

Inspection framework

We have some inspection frameworks that combine both quality and compliance models, especially to evaluate the teaching process, which includes the following criteria:

- Teacher's performance: effective planning and class management, implementation of lessons, student interaction and motivation, subject knowledge, etc.
- Involvement in school projects.
- Participation in cultural and extra-curricular activities.
- Communication and interaction with different school stakeholders.

In any case, inspectors have professional autonomy to make a judgement on quality when they write their reports.

Inspection time and resources

The type of school/programme determines the number of days and the number of inspectors involved, but inspections usually last between one and five days. Some inspections are carried out by one inspector, but in the case of state-funded schools, they are conducted by two inspectors since the workload is higher.

All inspectors are former teachers with post-graduate studies and who have invested a lot of time into their professional development.

Frequency of inspections

An inspection visit is conducted in state-funded schools every year, and the rest of schools are visited at least every other year. In addition, school leaders and teachers are evaluated every two years.

Inspections are mainly qualitative, although there are also risk-based inspections, which are mostly grounded in external evaluations and/or complaints from parents or students.

Non-inspection activities

The Inspectorate also performs other functions, such as:

- Provision of advice to educational policy makers: curriculum, assessment and teaching methods, coexistence, etc.
- Participation in recruitment of school leaders and teachers.
- Review of complaints.
- Participation in Baccalaureate examinations.
- Participation in national school juries to grant scholarships and awards.
- Involvement in disciplinary procedures for students, school leaders and teachers.
- Provision of advice to all school stakeholders.

There are also two inspectors who sit on the boards of inspectors of the European Schools.

3. Consequences of inspection

Reporting

Our reports are not published, but we send them to education boards. We also send shorter reports to school leaders with recommendations to achieve a twofold objective: to encourage school self-review and to disseminate good practices.

Grading

The Inspectorate does not grade institutions, and therefore there are no rewards or punishments. Nevertheless, inspectors follow up on improvement measures implemented by schools after each inspection.

Sharing inspection findings

The findings of inspection are shared with other divisions of the Ministry of Education through final reports written every year. On the one hand, we write individual reports that provide an analysis of the situation of every school/programme. On the other hand, a general report is written with information and data of the different types of schools/programmes we inspect.

What happens following an inspection?

As said above, there are follow-up inspections to ensure that recommendations in reports are being implemented, and schools have established their improvement plans, but schools are not shut down.

Regarding the evaluation of school leaders and teachers, they can be removed from their positions if there is a negative report after the assessment carried out by the inspector.