

Inspectorate Profile

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate

September 2024

1. Overview of the Inspectorate

Age of inspectorate Sweden has had a system with regular educational inspection since 2003. Until September 2008, the Swedish inspection was organised as an independent agency under the Ministry for Education and Research, The National Agency for Education. In 2008, an independent school inspectorate was established.

Structure of inspectorate The Swedish Schools Inspectorate is a central state agency organised in regions with offices in Göteborg, Linköping, Lund, Stockholm and Umeå. The inspection regulation is the same across the regions. The Main Office is located in Stockholm.

Size A total of 551 employees including central/policy and management staff. 263 of the employees are inspectors.

Remits The Inspectorate inspects pre-schools, after-school and youth centres, compulsory schools, upper-secondary education and adult education.

Unit of inspection The Swedish Schools Inspectorate carries out inspection on school level and on provider level (municipal and independent providers).

Purpose of inspectorate The stated purpose of the Inspectorate is outlined in the Governments´ Instruction for The Swedish Schools Inspectorate:

“The Swedish Schools Inspectorate shall through the inspection of education providers and schools promote that all children and pupils have access to educational equity and education of good quality in a safe environment. The Inspectorate should promote good prerequisites for the childrens´ development and learning and improved learning outcomes for the pupils. Within this task, the Inspectorate shall promote improved equity between schools and between pre-schools.”

See: [Governments Instruction for the Swedish Schools Inspectorate](#)

What is your strapline/motto? On the basis of the Instruction and other legal frameworks, the Inspectorate has formulated an overarching goal to attain:

“A school system where all children and pupils regardless of gender receive a high-quality education, equitable education and knowledge in a stimulating and safe environment. All children and pupils should be given the opportunity to develop as far as possible on the basis of their preconditions.”

Relationship with government The Swedish Schools Inspectorate is a central governmental agency under the Ministry of Education and Research. The Government decides on the objectives, guidelines and distribution of resources for the operations of the agency through a yearly letter of regulation/commission. However, the Government does not control the application of laws or the Inspectorate's decisions on specific matters concerning the exercise of official authority towards an individual person or a local authority or independent school owner.

Accountability The Inspectorate summarises all inspection results in an annual report to the Government. The report contains a summary and an analysis of the results from the two main forms of inspection - supervision and quality audits. This is regulated in the Government's Instruction for the Swedish Schools Inspectorate.

Impact of inspections Short-term effects can be observed through how schools change their working methods following an inspection. The Inspectorate scrutinizes how these adjustments are done – both through follow-up of recommendations in the Quality Audits and through following up that shortcomings are rectified in the regular supervision.

Quality assurance of inspections Overall, inspections are risk-based in a sense that the Inspectorate targets operations where there are risks of pupils not receiving the high-quality education they are entitled to. Assessment of risks are based on available statistical information, surveys and different signals reported to the Agency and experiences made through previous inspections.

When assessing whether the overarching goal of the Inspectorate is met, a number of quantitative and qualitative aspects are taken into account. One indication of the adequacy of our samples of schools is by measuring the share of schools with shortcomings relative to the total sample and the number of sharp interventions that the Inspectorate makes. Another aspect is that the Inspectorate focuses on factors that are based on research and other relevant knowledge.

The Inspectorate also continuously follows up inspections through surveys on how headmasters and providers view the inspections in order to develop the Inspectorate's working methods. This is also a method to assess whether the inspections have intended effects.

2. Evaluation process

Self-evaluation According to the Education Act, every municipality and independent school owner (the education providers) must develop its quality and have an evaluation system which is systematically managed. The same legislation applies to all schools which need to have a continual process of follow-up and evaluation activities. There is not, however, a prescribed or standardised self-evaluation procedure. The Inspectorate inspects how providers comply with the legislation regarding self-evaluation.

Focus of inspection The audit of schools in the regular supervision (legal inspection) includes the following standards:

- If the teaching is planned and evaluated in relation to the national curriculum.
- If the teaching is performed to meet individual needs of the students and if the school supports students with special needs.

- If the assessment and grading processes are performed in a correct way.
- If the school can provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning and if and how schools are working to prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- If the work of the school health services, guidance counselling etc. is carried out based on the needs of the pupils.
- If the school has a self-evaluation system to develop quality.

The regular supervision includes observation of lessons, document studies and meetings with staff and pupils.

In thematic quality evaluations, different areas are examined. The quality audits are reported back to each inspected school and the results are also published in a summarising report which can be used on a national level. In 2018, the Inspectorate introduced Regular Quality Audits (renamed Planned Quality Audits) which focus on quality aspects, especially in the teaching and learning processes.

Inspection framework In the regular supervision, the main focus is legality and the purpose is to ensure the right of each individual in relation to the Education Act and relevant Ordinances. In the thematic quality evaluations, the focus is on quality aspects in the teaching and learning processes in relation to the results and performance of schools. Assessments are based on regulations in the Education Act, Ordinances such as National Curricula and on research and best practice.

Inspection time and resources School visits normally lasts two or three days and there are usually two inspectors participating in school visits. The inspectors interview various categories of staff, including head teachers, teachers, health services, as well as pupils, and the responsible local politicians. Usually, inspectors also observe lessons. The inspectors have different backgrounds, for example teachers, head teachers, legal practitioners, social sciences as well as researchers and analysts in different disciplines.

Frequency of inspections The Inspectorate does not have set inspection cycles. However, presence in all schools is deemed necessary and the Inspectorate also strives to visit schools which have not been inspected in a long period of time.

Non-inspection activities The Swedish Schools Inspectorate are responsible for handling applications for approval as an independent provider of education. What is examined is for example the organiser's ability to run the school in a stable and long-term manner and in accordance with democratic values.

3. Consequences of inspection

Reporting All reports, to schools and school owners, are addressed to the responsible authority (municipality or independent school owner). All reports are published online and anyone can access them.

Grading In the regular supervision, the main focus is legality and therefore there are no grades given. However, the Inspectorate may issue penalty fines. The Inspectorate can also revoke an independent school's permit if the activities have serious shortcomings which are not rectified. In the thematic quality evaluations, the focus is on quality aspects in the teaching and learning processes in relation to the results and performance of schools.

Sharing inspection findings Sharing inspection findings is a key priority. Results are communicated to supervised schools and to the providers of education. Communication before, during and after the school visits are important methods to share results and create trust for the Inspectorate's activities.

Every school will get a report after a thematic quality evaluation and a regular supervision. A general report that summarises the results from the evaluated schools is normally produced in addition to the school reports. The general reports are distributed through newsletters and seminars.

What happens following an inspection? The inspected local authority or independent school owner has to report on the work carried out to rectify shortcomings. If the Inspectorate deems that the requirements are satisfactory, it will conclude the inspection; otherwise, the Inspectorate requests additional measures from the responsible organisation. For independent schools, the Education Act states that the Inspectorate has the possibility to withdraw the approval and the right to public funding if the independent school does not fulfil its obligations in accordance with the rules and regulations. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate can conduct a new inspection to certify that measures have been taken to rectify identified shortcomings