

## 1. Basic information

**Country name:** Austria

**Structure of inspectorate/external evaluation body:** External evaluation of schools is organised centrally as part of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research; thus its standards and procedures apply to all types of schools across Austria.

**Age of evaluation body:** Operational since September 2021. Prior to the Education Reform Act of 2017, responsibility for school inspection lay with the school supervision authority. There was no school evaluation body and no overarching nation-wide quality standards framework in place.

**Remits:** Focus is currently on general education (primary school, middle school, academic secondary school).

**Relationship with government:** External school evaluation is a competence of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research; regular reporting of aggregated data on school quality to the Minister of Education, to school authorities and to the public as part of the triannual National Education Report Austria.

### **Accountability:**

The external school evaluation body is part of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (organised as a separate department) and thus reports directly to the Minister of Education. The organisational framework including staff regulations for school evaluators is enshrined in law. School evaluators are independent by law with regard to their quality judgements.

## 2. Evaluation process

**Self-evaluation:** There is no self-assessment requirement for schools during or prior to an external evaluation process. However, all Austrian schools are legally required to carry out self-evaluation on a regular basis.

**What do you examine during external evaluation?** Quality of schools' instructional and management processes as set out in the "Austrian Quality Framework for Schools" ([www.qms.at](http://www.qms.at)); lessons are observed with regard to generic instructional quality, there is no assessment of individual teachers by external evaluation. Aggregated data on lesson quality form part of the overall quality assessment of the school. Finances and the school's compliance with legal requirements are not evaluated, this is the responsibility of the school authorities in the Austrian states (Directorates of Education) and of internal and external auditing bodies.

**Do you have an evaluation framework? Is this a quality or compliance model?** External evaluation is carried out according to an evaluation framework that is derived from the Austrian Quality Framework for Schools. School evaluation follows a quality model and is based on a set of some 60 indicators.

**Evaluation time and resource:** Ca 3 months from initial contact with the school until evaluation report is handed over. A team of 2-3 evaluators visits the school during 2-3 days to observe lessons and conduct interviews (with the head of the school, teachers, students, parents). School evaluators have a background in teaching and receive intense specialised training.

**Frequency of external evaluation:** Evaluations do not follow a cycle, rather schools are selected for evaluation based on a stratified sample to cover key characteristics of the school system. Evaluations are also conducted on request from schools and regional school authorities.

**Main business:** Running evaluations and providing evidence on school quality.

### **3. Consequences of external evaluation**

**Reporting:** Evaluation reports of individual schools are not published, only the school as well as the school supervision authority receive the report.

**Grade:** School quality is graded based on some 60 indicators and a 4-grade scale.

**Knowledge sharing:** Aggregated information on school quality is shared with relevant departments of the ministry, education authorities in the Austrian states, schools, teacher training institutions etc.

**What happens following an external evaluation?** Schools as well as the responsible school supervisors have to take into account results from an evaluation in school improvement processes and need to set adequate targets and measures. If schools do not meet minimum quality standards, school supervision has to initiate a comprehensive process of school improvement together with the school head. Schools can receive professional support for school development processes.

#### **What is the stated purpose of external evaluation?**

1. Providing impetus for school development: Differentiated, data-based feedback to schools, identifying strengths as well as areas of quality improvement.
2. Knowledge generation: As an instrument of monitoring, evaluation generates knowledge on school and teaching quality for different system levels.
3. Enforce common quality standards: What aspects evaluation measures becomes more important for schools and directs the focus to the achievement of generally binding quality standards (i.e. the Austrian Quality Framework for Schools).
4. Accountability: Ensuring minimum standards and accountability for schools' achievement to stakeholders, the school supervision and school authorities.