

# Supporting school improvement: the role of inspectorates across Europe

A report from the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI)

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The logo for the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) features the letters 'SICI' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'S' and 'I' are white, while the 'I' and 'C' are a golden-yellow color. The logo is positioned on the left side of a red horizontal bar that spans the width of the page.

The Standing International  
Conference of **Inspectorates**

Better Inspection, Better Learning

This paper brings together the contributions of delegates made at the SICI conference in Braunschweig, Germany, in September 2013, with additional material from members. Delegates were invited to share information on how post-inspection activity was carried out in their own countries as part of SICI's work in sharing best practice between its members.

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# Foreword by the President of SICI

Wulf Homeier, Chief Inspector, Lower Saxony

## **Dear SICI members, colleagues, friends!**

At our workshop in Braunschweig in September 2013 the idea came up to publish in one paper all the information the different member countries have for answering the question, "What happens after inspection?" This paper contains information gathered at the workshop in Braunschweig, where this question was one of the main points of discussion, with further material sent in later by the member countries.

It offers a broad view of all the diversity in the various inspection systems of our "SICI-family" and also shows them in their bigger context, in which they definitely should be seen: each in interaction with their countries' political and educational systems.

I hope that this paper will be used as it is intended, as a piece of information to get into discussion about how to support schools best. What we must not forget is the fact that support for schools does not stop there, but we should always have in mind the central reason we are doing all this: to exchange best practice in order to help schools to improve for better learning for all students in Europe.

I would like to thank all the member inspectorates participating in the study and sending in their documents. My special thanks go to Mr Adrian Gray, HMI, for his work collecting, assembling and also summarizing all the material.

**Wulf Homeier**

## Summary of main findings

- Most countries in Europe now have some form of national or state inspection of schools<sup>1</sup> which produces reports although, in some cases, reports are not available to the general public; most states have started with a system of inspecting all schools regularly, but many are moving towards a more risk-based approach or a system for complaints triggering inspection.
- Guidance and assessment structures for school inspection are generally published and form an important link with school self-evaluation.
- Reports on schools are generally seen as having high impact on schools and others, especially where they are published.
- There is varying practice in how schools are 'judged' by an inspectorate; although most include a concept of minimum standards which schools must meet, this is not always seen as 'failing' an inspection.
- The extent and nature of post-inspection feedback is very varied; in some countries the inspection finishes with a short verbal feedback and the submission of a written report, but in others there are extended discussions with interested groups extending over several weeks after the inspection.
- Several countries now have various levels of sanction on poorly performing schools; often the Principal is held liable but in a few cases sanctions extend up to the closure of a school if it fails to improve.
- In some countries, schools are generally expected to submit a post-inspection improvement plan to the inspectorate or some other body but this is far from universal. Some countries have ceased to require this except in special circumstances.
- Some inspectorates make repeat visits to schools which are considered to be below standards, but often this is the responsibility of other authorities.
- Inspectorates vary in the extent to which they engage directly in the continuing support for school improvement. Often this is done by a different agency, for example local or regional government. However there appears to be a growing trend towards this, with inspectorates engaging in more extended relationships especially with weaker schools.
- Many inspectorates now see their role as including the promotion of high quality education systems. However the approaches to this vary: some inspectorates play a leading role in promoting quality through identifying the leading schools, providing 'best practice' case studies, brokering support, publishing research etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence for this report has been gathered from the members of SICI and therefore does not include countries with no national inspectorate or where no submission was returned.

## The context of European inspection

This report describes widely varying practice in the main European school inspectorates, whilst at the same time identifying some common activities which are used to support school improvement after an inspection.

The lack of a single dominant pattern should not be a surprise because inspectorates operate in very different contexts so that a consistent pan-European approach would be illogical. At the simplest level, schools are organised in very different ways: the level of power, autonomy and accountability for headteachers varies both across and within countries; arrangements for the 'first tier' governance of schools are very different; structures for local or regional control and supervision (the 'second tier') are very varied – in some countries the 'local authority' has been all but replaced by the free-standing 'trust' or 'board' which may operate any number of schools in various locations; responsibility for advice and improvement may be the task of the inspectorate, the local authority or some other agency. Other conditions also vary – for example, the opportunity to improve a school rapidly by moving on weak headteachers or teachers varies considerably between states.

The 'philosophy' underpinning accountability systems also varies. In terms of the actual process of inspection, some countries place great emphasis on the possibility of schools 'failing' inspection whereas others do not; this often reflects the role of the 'inspectorate' in either being there as an accountability agency or an improvement agency – with increasing blurring of the boundary between these.

As a result, inspectorates operate in very different legal frameworks. Some have the power to close schools or fine headteachers, whereas others do not even publish their reports.

Given all this variety, it is perhaps surprising that there is as much common ground as there is. This is partly due to growing international research about inspection and school improvement, but also because the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates has made it possible for member organisations to share best practice on issues of mutual interest.

## Brief introduction to school inspection in Europe

The majority of European nations now have education inspectorates as do over three-quarters of the countries reviewed by the OECD. In countries such as Ireland, and the Czech and Slovak republics, there is one national inspectorate but in Germany each of the separate states has its own form of inspectorate. Generally the inspectorate is a separate organisation from the policy-making part of government but in some areas, such as Scotland, they have been brought together. In some states such as Bulgaria the local government is responsible for conducting inspections, but often according to guidelines set by the ministry of education; however we can see a trend away from this to a central body in countries such as Albania.

In Denmark, there is no formal system of national inspection and there is therefore no national system of formal consequences from inspection. Instead the process of making quality reports is the responsibility of the local authorities.

The publication of individual school reports is now increasingly common. By 2012, 16 European states or regions were publishing school-level reports. This is the very simplest level at which inspection can support the post-inspection process, and provides a means for other stakeholders such as parents to be involved.

## What happens to schools that need to improve?

The system of inspection is generally seen as being a powerful driver of improvement because results are shared with key groups or individuals and also the general public. For example, in Berlin the publication of school inspection reports is seen as having had 'high impact.'

In some systems there is no concept of a school 'failing' its inspection whereas in others the concept of identifying and taking action against such schools is seen as a key purpose of inspection. Broadly, three possible things happen after the inspection process has been finished:

- no action is taken by the inspectorate other than the completion of a report
- a series of steps can be taken to provide support for the school's improvement
- schools can be required to take action, and a series of sanctions are possible leading ultimately to the closure of the school if improvement does not take place

National systems vary in the degree to which the inspectorate is involved either in support or taking action against the school.

The support process is now understood to include the inspection process itself, for example the publication of inspection guidance on quality judgements, and the presentation of the inspection findings. The publication of the inspection guidance and the involvement of school headteachers and other officials in the inspection process contribute to the long term improvement of the school. Feedback is also important. In several German states, extensive arrangements are made to present the findings of the report to a variety of stakeholders in the weeks after the inspection; in contrast, in England inspection finishes with a short feedback to senior staff and some governors, although reports have been restructured so that they focus much more clearly on what schools should do to improve.

In some countries, there is also a requirement that school leaders are engaged with other key stakeholders. Sometimes this can be achieved through the post-inspection follow-up meeting, but in Belgium (Flanders) there is a requirement for school leaders to discuss the report with the school staff.

Once this phase is complete, some systems require weak schools to develop and agree action or improvement plans that, in some cases, have to be signed by the key parties including the relevant local education authority. In many cases, such as

Portugal, there is an expectation and often an actual requirement to produce an improvement plan. In Denmark, the local authority can set an action plan for underperforming schools. There is thus a high degree of formality involved, although the involvement of the inspectorate in this process varies between countries. In some cases the inspectorate formally judges the quality of the plan and in others it agrees the objectives and measures.

As the school sets out on its journey of improvement, the involvement of inspectorates again is varied across Europe. In Lower Saxony, the inspectorate provides extensive resources and guidance accessed centrally through its website – notably because this is a system where there is little school to school support. In Saxony and Berlin, advice and guidance come from separate agencies. Schools in England that ‘require improvement’ have found the support of the inspectorate especially helpful in arranging links with high-performing schools, or holding meetings with groups of their staff.

<b>Table 1: support and sanction measures for schools not meeting required standards</b>	
Support for improvement	Requirements and sanctions
Publication of quality indicators used in the inspection system	Publication of report provides an incentive for school to improve
Report makes clear what the school needs to do to improve and enables it to make comparisons with others	Preparation of a post inspection plan of action by school and its supervisors
Presentation of findings to school and groups	Powers to close schools or place them under different supervision including the requirement to link with other schools
Support and guidance in drawing up improvement plans	Binding agreement on targets, or inspectorate’s approval of targets
Provision of advice and guidance on specific issues	Requirement to engage or consult with other stakeholders, eg school staff, parents
On-going support by regional supervisors or local authorities	Follow up visits with significant judgements on progress
Regular follow up visits to review progress	A specified period in which improvement must be made
Financial rewards	Financial penalties
Website of good practice	Legal measures to enforce compliance with standards
Providing links to other schools with matching strengths	Local or regional authorities required to set targets and work with schools for improvement
Publishing other data on school performance to help parents, local officials etc understand a school’s	



qualities	
Publishing articles etc about identified weaknesses in the system	

Malta is relatively unusual in having a system that involves a return visit to all schools, to check progress and ensure that the original results were secure.

Where schools are considered to be doing quite badly, there is a scale of responses with, at the ultimate level, the complete closure of the school. This can happen in countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders) the Czech Republic and England although it may not be the inspectorate itself which is responsible for this; in countries such as Norway it may be the inspectorate that brings legal action against a school. The OECD report *Synergies for Better Learning* considered 20 countries, finding 9 where they judged external school evaluation to have a 'high' or 'moderate' impact on possible school closure<sup>2</sup>. However they found other European countries, including Germany, France and Spain, where there was no impact on school closure. The consequences for school staff of a disappointing inspection result are very varied. In Albania, England the Czech Republic and elsewhere, headteachers can be subject to sanctions of various forms and possibly dismissed. However in Lower Saxony and other German states this type of outcome is unlikely.

The concept of 'school closure' can cause confusion. In England, for example, it is common for schools to close in July but to reopen the following September in the same buildings, with largely the same pupils and some of the same staff albeit under the control of a new academy trust and probably with new senior managers as well as a new name.

For schools that are not going to be closed, or at least not immediately, many countries now accept that processes are needed to help them respond to critical inspection findings. There is recognition that 'accepting feedback does not necessarily lead to school improvement actions. A degree of external follow-up can ensure that schools use external evaluation results to undertake school improvement actions.'<sup>3</sup>

The SICI conference, and also the OECD report, find very few examples of financial rewards or sanctions being used in response to inspection findings. The OECD report identified only Belgium (Flanders) and the Czech Republic in this respect as 'high' impact, the latter having the fairly unique approach of fining headteachers directly – albeit rarely. However, some countries have recently shown signs of moving to more robust measures as a balance to increased autonomy and Sweden is an example:

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<sup>2</sup> *Synergies for Better Learning*, Paris, 2013, p.454

<sup>3</sup> *Synergies for Better Learning*, p.455

'...the new Education Act (SFS, 2010:800) gives Skolinspektionen the authority to shut schools down or impose economic penalties on poor schools. Thus, inspections can determine the future of schools.<sup>4</sup>

The effect in Sweden is to bring the system for state-funded schools into line with the system that had existed for private schools, which is logical where state-funded schools are largely autonomous. It is, though, rare for an inspectorate to have the power to close a school directly; in the Czech Republic the Chief Inspector can recommend a closure or in England, where a judgement by the inspectorate sets off a process that can end with a ministerial decision.

Although financial penalties may be rare, a number of more regulatory systems use legal processes such as injunctions as in Norway. In these situations the standards that schools must comply with are written up in law although in some more evaluative systems, such as England, the standards are effectively defined by the inspectorate's guidance and judgement is made by the inspector. In both situations, schools must comply with expectations against which their progress will be checked.

As we have noted, support for the improvement process may be the responsibility of the local school authority, the school board, a high-performing partner school or education professional, a semi-autonomous agency or even the inspectorate itself. However, the basic steps to improvement are generally very similar and are shown in Table 1 above but the bodies that are involved in these vary from country to country. In Denmark the local authority is responsible, but in some cases they have found problems in having the capacity to engage at school level<sup>5</sup>. Processes of follow-up support, monitoring visits or further inspections are expensive and so ways to continue to provide this are being found through approaches such as:

- reduced inspection of high-performing schools
- school to school support
- on-line 'best practice' websites
- using inspection to 'match' weaknesses in some schools with strengths in others.

For inspectorates, involvement in on-going support for schools raises the question of the 'boundary' between 'advice' and 'inspection': should inspectorates be 'inspecting' their own advice? Frequently this is managed by return visits focusing on recommendations or requirements from the previous visit, with the emphasis on planning for what needs to be done rather than how to do it. In Portugal the inspectorate monitors the implementation of the development plan and interacts with school players.' This debate has been evident in the Netherlands and England as inspectorates engage more actively with a broader definition of weaker schools but to an extent ignores the fact that inspectorates have always issued advice on *what* needs to be done, if not so often on *how* it should be done. It is also the case that

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<sup>4</sup> Joakim Lindgren, Agneta Hult, Christina Segerholm & Linda Rönnerberg, *Mediating school inspection – Key dimensions and keywords in agency text production 2003–2010*, in *Education Inquiry* Vol. 3, No. 4, December 2012, pp. 569–590

<sup>5</sup> *Synergies for Better Learning*, p.455

inspectorates do not have the executive power themselves – it is the school leaders who are tasked with putting advice into practice.

Inspectorates also increasingly see their role as identifying best practice so that weaker schools can learn from the best. This is notable in Wales, England and the Czech Republic.

# State arrangements for supporting schools after inspection

## Albania

Until February 2010 inspection was the responsibility of the Regional Educational Directorates (RED), which were also responsible for the appointment of teachers and headteachers. The State Inspectorate of Education (SIE) started working on April 1st, 2010. There are 21 general inspectors working nationally. The number of education institutions to be inspected is over 3800 in the pre-university system, including both public and private education. According to current SIE regulation, schools should be inspected once in four academic years. SIE selects schools to be inspected based on several criteria such as: number of students, low and average results, geographical location, etc.

The main aim is to have an impact through the creation of effective practice in institutions of every kind, in all regions.

The Inspectorate has designed the basic assessment documents where there are defined fields, indicators and instruments, as well as the implementation methodology. The way they have been developed helps the institutions' different stakeholders and other members in self-evaluation. In addition, it helps its users (teachers and headmasters) in the understanding and implementation process of the package of actions, as do other official curricular documents. Guidelines such as: *Inspection and internal school assessment*, *Inspection and internal assessment of Regional Education Directorate and Education Offices*, *Inspection and internal kindergarten assessment* and *Inspection methodology and internal assessment of pre-university educational institutions*, were distributed to all schools.

SIE sends inspection reports to the RED/EOs and schools. Although it is legally allowable, the inspectorate has never faced the kind of problem which means a school has to be closed. Some of them are assessed as poor (the lowest assessment level).

Following the overall (full), thematic and oriented inspections, SIE reaches findings about the system; it uses these to provide the 'Informing Letters' that give an opportunity to all interested stakeholders to receive information concerning the performance in particular aspects of the system. The Informing Letters have been focused mainly on issues such as the school annual plan, the curriculum, teaching and learning, students' assessment, climate and ethics, human and financial resources management, effective use of laboratories, etc.

Within a period of three years, SIE has observed more than 1,000 classes both in the elementary and in the secondary education in full inspections. Priority is given to Albanian Language (25%), Foreign Language (20%), Mathematics (16%), etc.

The Information Letter regarding teaching and learning includes (collected/gathered) findings about the organisation, evaluating what is positive and what needs to be improved, in order to improve the expected quality overall.

The implementation of a standard form given by SIE has been the main focus within the framework of teaching quality, in order to improve the daily work plan. The impact of inspections on written objectives has been of great importance, in accordance with the activities that take place.

Methods, techniques and teaching strategies have created several opportunities with regards to the individual work in 78% and in team work in 44%. The huge frequency of TIK (Information and Communication Technology) use has been noticed following the observation of indoor subject inspections, as a didactical innovation that influences (improves) a student-centred teaching method. This testifies to a new approach which is in accordance with the curriculum framework changes.

In order to better treat problems and critical challenges that schools are dealing with in the pre-university education system in Albania, the Inspectorate has implemented several projects and has co-operated with organizations like: Save the Children, UNICEF, and the "Hap pas Hapi" (Step by Step) Centre.

The Inspectorate has published regularly articles concerning the work of teachers and the general pre-university educational institutions. The articles address perceived problematic issues identified during the inspection process, providing suggested solutions. The periodical magazine *Mesuesi* ('The Teacher') is one of the journals where our experts publish their articles. The most important topics focus on: school annual plans, self-assessment, teacher annual plan arrangement for every subject, daily plan structuring (arrangement/preparation), complaints resolution, inspection methodology of RED/EOs, etc. This has had a very positive impact on the performance of teachers, which has also been observed in the subsequent inspections.

The collection and publication of educational institutions' best practice are very important parts of SIE work. These best practices have been identified by experts during the inspective, evaluative, motivational, informing, advising and facilitated collaborations with teachers and headteachers in various schools at national level. Best practices are considered as productive and successful experiences of teachers, subject curricular teams, operative sectors within the school and headteachers.

The school is not only a place that conveys knowledge, but also a place where lifestyles and behaviours are offered as well. The assessment summary report for fields like "Climate and Ethics" and "Care toward the student" aim to inform all stakeholders on the actual conditions of the educational institutions concerning the above fields. The importance of these two fields is emphasized in the report, which comments on the students' welfare as well as the education and teaching progress.

Furthermore, students are supported in their personality development, making possible the development of individuals and citizens in a democratic society.

Expert staff of SIE have contributed in composing these fields for the Full (Complete) Inspection Guideline (manual/guidebook) of school, and have evaluated different field indicators during the inspections.

The Ministry of Education and Sports, REA/Eos and schools (teachers, students, parents), are the beneficiary groups of the report's data on schools' achievements in these directions. In addition, this will influence the community, as well as other involved or interested stakeholders.

The Normative Provisions of the Pre-university Education 2013 (obligatory by law) provide greater autonomy and decision-making power in schools. Headteachers, other leaders, teachers and other school representatives (operative sectors) have a huge need of clear understanding for planning and implementing their content within the school.

In this context, a serious effort was made by the SIE in building ways, processes, plans, layouts, methods and professional collaboration procedures, through the analysis of the Normative Provisions articles. Our appraisal and observation instruments will support the schools in order to enable the legal implementation of these articles.

The material provided by SIE aims to:

1. assist headmasters, leaders, teachers and school operative sectors to correctly meet (fulfil/execute) legal articles of the Normative Provisions.
2. facilitate the internal assessment process regarding legal aspects.
3. support the external assessment process by inspection teams.

The instruments designed within the Normative Provisions are in complete accordance with the used methodology of SIE in relation to the internal and external school assessment.

One of the assessed areas is the applied curriculum, which means: the written curriculum, the legal package that helps its implementation, as well as the methodology and the tools used during the instructional classes. The last ten years the curriculum has undergone major changes related to the vision and the way the disciplines have been conceptualized; for that reason its correct implementation has been a priority for all the educational institutions. The evaluation of the applied curriculum is based on a well-defined methodology that focuses on the observation of documentation drafted by teachers; it takes into account the teachers' and headteachers' opinions in agreeing the identified findings during the inspection, in analysing and explaining every assessed element. The Inspectorate has been influential in facilitating the teacher's job and increasing their awareness of the implementation of curricular documents in accordance with students' interests and level.

The SIE website is updated periodically and it is a window for the stakeholders and the community.

The SIE has a number of processes where school performance has not been convincing:

- after delivering SIE's report to all the regional education centres and institutions, it is RED's duty to follow up the school progress in relation to the recommendations assigned by the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate also assesses and values the activities of RED/EO-s.
- in addition the Inspectorate can schedule re-inspection of schools in order to check the progress of the recommendations given, specifically schools when were rated as 'poor'

The spread of the internal and self-assessment culture is perceived as a permanent move towards a sustainable improvement at individual, institutional and regional level, including the whole system of education. SIE facilitated and trained five lower secondary schools and five secondary schools to manage self-assessment. This process was conducted based on the defined fields of evaluation, the indicators and the standardised instruments, taken from the official inspection manual, *The inspection and the internal evaluation of the school*. The aim was to launch pilot school models that will help in spreading the self-evaluation culture at regional level.

The self-assessment was carried out upon the same methodology and techniques used by the school actors and external school evaluators. The schools finalised their self-assessment and the results were compared with the external assessment conclusions.

Headteachers and the school self-assessment teams consider the process to be very active, very inclusive and they emphasised the necessity of its periodical implementation. The process achieved a positive atmosphere as a result of the debates held, the team consultations on the selected strategies and at the same time the ways of avoiding and fixing errors. The teams process data in order to identify the areas for improvement and planning.

Moreover this process leads to institutional accountability. The self-evaluation in the education institution should be implemented based on systematic data gathering, information analysis and interpretation, using different methods and techniques. This is the only way the self-assessment can be integrated into the management system of the educational institution. It can serve also as a strategy that fosters the institutional improvement.

In the framework of the developments in the field of school evaluation and inspection, and the results of the piloting process in some schools, the current legislation (Provision Acts, September 2013) has included the implementation of self-assessment in each school. The spread of the self-assessment culture and compatibility of the internal and external evaluations are important.

The school performance card is a document designed to gather information and provide efficiency. It provides data about the school achievement during an academic year. It explains the quality of the school service based a variety of standardised indicators and serves as an instrument for the school self-assessment and inspection.

The school card performance provides information to parents, headteachers, students, regional education directorates, the community and stakeholders to analyse and compare the school results through different indicators; it is easily accessed. This will help the parents and the community to reflect on the school's success and any need for improvement, enabling them to get involved in the decision making process.

The school performance card can help the RED/EO-s to analyse upon the school performance at regional level, in accordance with the indicators defined in the card, to identify the schools that are being successful, as well as the schools that need support in their efforts to improve the service they provide.

This evaluation tool helps the RED/EO-s adjust their plans accordingly in the implementation process of the National Strategy of the Pre-university Education, with regard to the Ministry of Education and Sport priorities and the local context.

School executives use the school performance card as a key pointer to a deep analysis that will be a reference source in compiling the school annual plan and an objective evaluation of their performance.

Schools that perform well in certain fields may serve as role models of successful practices to other schools. The school performance card will help in providing qualitative and contemporary methods in the evaluation process, by comparing the school with other schools in the region and the school progress periodically.

As a result of the reconfiguration of National Inspectorate of Pre-university Education into the new institution of the State Inspectorate of Education, the institution's responsibilities have been extended. The new functions prepare for the extension of the influence in the system by inspecting the universities. SIE are developing inspection manuals for this.

In medium term we have planned the reassessment of schools' progress. One of the other instruments used to perform this reassessment is the school performance card, combined with the results taken by the process of schools self-assessment.

After the school inspection, the Regional Educational Directorates and Educational Offices hold responsibility for supporting schools through the improvement process. RED/EOs also monitor the schools' progress based on the recommendations given by the Inspectorate.

The school board also has an important role in this process.

The new law has incorporated recommendations to take different measures towards schools that perform poorly and headteachers that don't achieve progress from one academic year to another. 41 private schools have been closed due to failing to meet the criteria defined in the license.

The Educational institution board requests the educational unit (office) to consider, with a majority of secret votes, the discharge of the headteacher. The leader of the educational unit discharges the headteacher should this be agreed, or he can be given specific and measurable tasks to be completed within a year. Afterward the



headteacher is evaluated; in the case that he has not fulfilled the tasks correctly as according to the regulation and to the agreement, he is discharged.

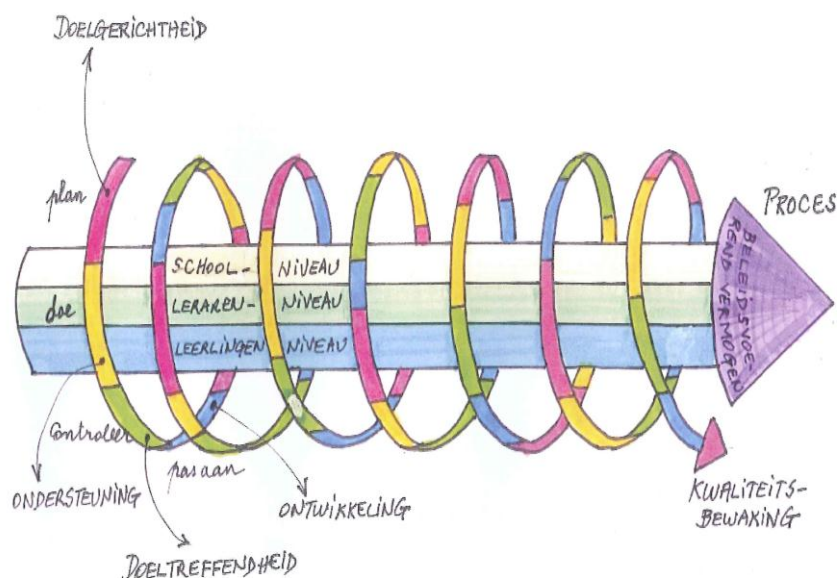
## Belgium – Flanders

The Inspectorate audits all schools at least every 10 years, as the Decree on Quality (2009) requires.

The inspection team enquires whether the institution respects regulations and assures its own quality. The audit concentrates on the question whether the minimum goals (curriculum) are achieved. The CIPO-framework is used to assess this.

To assess the internal quality assurance of schools a cyclical model is used. This model is known as the 'DODO' or 'PACT' model. It has four stages:

- PLAN: focus on targets and goals, requiring vision but also providing a framework for accountability
- DO: provide the support that is needed to overcome structural and cultural barriers to meet the targets set
- CHECK: ensure that there is appropriate self-reflection and self-evaluation to assess progress towards the goals. Evaluation methods must be accurate and the school needs to be open to review by external evaluators
- ACT and ADAPT: this is the development stage, where a responsiveness to incoming understanding is essential



If the school does not respect the conditions for recognition (minimum goals, safety and hygiene etc) a restricted positive or even a negative recommendation (multiple, severe and structural deficiencies) can be given. In case of a negative advice the inspectorate judges - based upon the policy-making capacities of the school - whether cooperation with external guidance is required to remediate the shortcomings.

The inspection visit ends with a debriefing during which the head of school and (usually) some representatives of the school team are informed about the findings.

A maximum of 30 days after this the school receives a draft version of the report. This is verified with the head of school and (sometimes) some representatives of the school team. A maximum of 60 days after the school receives the final version of the report. The school then has 30 days:

- to submit its comments (which will be added in an addendum)
- to discuss it in a staff meeting
- to inform pupils and parents about the possibility of consulting the report.

All reports since 2009 on are also made available on the public website. The reports start with a summary for the broad public in accessible language.

In case of a 'restricted positive recommendation' the school can choose independently how to remedy its shortcomings. However, in the case of a 'negative recommendation' the school can opt to develop an improvement plan in order to prevent closure. The inspectorate then advises the Minister whether or not to approve the school's improvement plan. The improvement plan must include the goals, actions, actors, necessary means, timing, instruments, measurement of progress etc to secure progress. The improvement plan must be shared with school staff within 30 days – this is clearly intended to engage all staff in the improvement process.

In the case of a restricted positive recommendation a follow-up inspection is organised after maximum three years. The same goes for a negative recommendation, with some extra requirements for the composition of the inspection team (external president, balanced composition of team including official and subsidised education).

A system of coaching is provided after the school audit or inspection. The pedagogical guidance team is charged with the task to support schools. The school can also opt to work with other organisations. This includes review of the conditions and whether the school is making progress towards its goals, the quality of the educational processes, and the capacity of the leadership to take the school forwards.

In case of a previous 'restricted positive advice', the follow-up team can decide for a positive or a negative advice. In the latter case the school can opt to develop an improvement plan and the inspection will return after maximum three years.

In case of a previous 'negative advice', the inspectorate will advise the minister to close (the component of) the school.

Therefore a significant element is that weak schools are required to take external support and advice. There is also encouragement for schools to form 'communities' to work together.

## Belgium – German-speaking

Schools are inspected every five years. Particularly weak schools are re-inspected after 16 months. The inspectorate has special indicators to identify those weak schools during the inspection.

A short presentation of the main findings is given to the teachers and the headteacher a week after the inspection. The inspectorate sends the official report to the headteacher a few weeks later. It is his task to transport the results to all groups and individuals who were involved in the inspection; he can decide how this is done. The headteacher must discuss the report with the teachers and he has to write down questions, misunderstandings and comments. About four weeks later the inspectorate returns to the school and discusses their comments with the headmaster and teachers....this is known as "Feedbackkonferenz."

The post-inspection plan of action includes a main field of action, a timeline and specifies who is responsible for the tasks. The inspectorate is no longer involved in this. This is a task of the school-supervision board and - if the school wants its - the school advisers. The school can also ask for the support of specialist advisers, (according to the different school-subjects). These specialist advisers are from the „Autonome Hochschule“.

There are no further arrangements for the inspectorate to visit except where there are safety deficiencies or the school did comply with the conditions of a post evaluation. Until now there have been no examples of schools failing to improve.

## Bulgaria

A National Education Inspectorate does not exist in Bulgaria. The management and control of the educational system are carried out by 28 regional education inspectorates. Inspections are carried out in schools in accordance with procedures approved by the Minister of Education and Science, and the inspection plans of the respective inspectorates. Besides planned inspections there are checks made after of complaints and reports.

In principle, the school cannot "fail" the inspection. The school management and teaching staff get to know the results of the planned inspections. The person submitting the request or complaint gets acquainted with the results of inspections upon complaints and reports.

If faults are found then after the inspection an order of mandatory prescriptions is issued, with due measures and deadlines. The control over the implementation of the mandatory instructions is carried out by the regional education inspectorate.

During the subsequent control period, experts from the regional education inspectorate visit schools. Pedagogical specialists from the school and experts of the regional inspectorate are included in activities in support of the school's progress after the inspection.

The school director is sanctioned if mandatory instructions have not been fulfilled. In case violations are identified, an injunction with mandatory actions on the Principal is issued. The purpose is to ensure action is taken to address the identified deficiencies and violations.

After expiration of the implementation deadline, verification is carried out and if the mandatory actions have not been completed by the Principal, a procedure of disciplinary action in accordance with the Labour Code is initiated. According to the seriousness of the violations, the penalties imposed can increase from comments made to warning of dismissal or actual dismissal of the Principal.

## Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the school inspectorate (CSI) performs systematic and regular inspection activity in schools and school facilities which are included in the Register of Schools and Educational Facilities. Since 2014 regular inspections are planned in a 6 year cycle. In the Czech Republic school system, the headteacher carries ultimate responsibility for the quality of the school and therefore plays a more significant role than in many European countries. As schools and their headteachers have begun to enjoy greater autonomy, so the inspectorate has responded with more frequent and more rapid inspection.

According to the Education Act no. 561/2004 it is possible to fail the inspection. It is stated that persons who have been inspected are obliged to adopt measures in order to correct, without undue delay, deficiencies ascertained during the inspection, however not later than within the period specified by the Czech School Inspectorate.

On the basis of the results of the inspection the founder shall adopt, without undue delay, measures at schools and school facilities he/she has established.

The school inspectorate must post the inspection report to the headteacher, founder and to the school board. Since 1995 all inspection reports are public and available on the CSI web pages. The reports are accessible to the parents in the school, in the founder's office or at the inspectorate. The parents may read or copy the inspection report.

Czech School Inspectorate previously had approximately a three-year cycle of visits to all schools. Since 2014 this is now a six-year cycle; the appointment of the headteachers has changed, with his/her appointment cycle assumed to be for six years.

In the Czech Republic, the law does not require any form of post-inspection plan.

According to the Education Act no. 561/2004 the inspectors come back to school to find out whether the school have removed the deficiencies ascertained during the inspection. It must be done within a stated period of time. The period is stated by the Czech School Inspectorate.

It is stated in the Educational Act no 561/2004 that on the basis of the results of the inspection the founder shall adopt, without undue delay, measures at schools and school facilities he/she has established. However, the main responsibility for the school's improvement lies with the headteacher. The headteacher is also responsible for instance for the teachers' further education. The school board also has a significant role in school improvement and co-operates with the headteacher on the measures for overall school improvement.

As with some other European systems, schools which do not meet required standards can be closed. Furthermore, in the event that it is ascertained that the school or school facility concerned failed to act or gross deficiencies are ascertained in school or school facility activities, the Chief School Inspector may submit to the body maintaining the Register of Schools and Educational Facilities (Ministry of Education Youth and Sports -MEYS) a proposal for removal of the school or the field of education from the Register of Schools and Educational Facilities. This has happened four times in the three years to 2013. After that the MEYS decides about the actual removal from the School register. The headteacher can be fined up to the equivalent of three months' salary although this is very rare – it happens in fewer than 1% of schools. However the inspectorate can also recommend to the founder that the headteacher should be dismissed, and in almost all cases the authority acts on this advice.

## England

Since 1993, England has had a system of post-inspection intervention in schools judged to be failing by the inspectorate, Ofsted. Ofsted is politically separate from both the Department for Education and the local authorities who deliver local services although many schools are now run by separate academy trusts. At first the

judgements of 'failing' were interpreted by the press as 'naming and shaming' and were linked legally to the process of 'Special Measures' although there have been other levels of intervention at various times known as 'Serious Weaknesses' or 'Notice to Improve', the difference being that:

- Schools require Special Measures where they have been judged to be inadequate *and* lack the capacity on their own to bring about improvement
- Schools judged to have 'Serious Weaknesses' or which have been given a 'Notice to Improve' were inadequate in important areas, but were judged to have the capacity to bring about their own improvement

Some schools could also be judged as 'under-achieving.' Schools could be classified as 'causing concern' and guidance was published by the Government which set out powers of intervention in these schools for local authorities and also what the inspectorate, Ofsted, would do to follow up.

The original system involved:

<p>Special Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One lead inspector (originally always an HMI) was allocated to the school throughout the next stages</li> <li>• This inspector led a termly monitoring visit, focusing on the school's weaknesses</li> <li>• These visits were likely to include much greater dialogue about improvement, including with the governors and local authority</li> <li>• The school and the local authority both had to prepare their own improvement plans which were reviewed by the inspectorate</li> <li>• The inspector could choose to make a monitoring visit into a full inspection, in order to remove Special Measures</li> <li>• If the school was still in SM at two years, it was re-inspected</li> <li>• The Secretary of State could write to the local authority, requesting they consider the school for closure if improvement had not been made</li> </ul>	<p>Serious Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lead inspector (usually an HMI) was allocated to conduct a monitoring visit during the year after the initial inspection</li> <li>• The visit would focus on evidence about the school's improvement</li> <li>• The monitoring visit would make a judgement on whether the school was making good progress</li> <li>• If progress was poor, the inspector might return with a larger team so that the school could be re-inspected and placed into Special Measures if needed</li> <li>• If progress was at least satisfactory, a new inspection would take place the following year</li> </ul>
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After the passing of the School Standards and Framework Act of 1998 there was increased expectation on the local authority to develop its 'supervisory' role to act in failing schools both before and after inspection. In recent years this pattern has been made more complex by many schools leaving local authority supervision to become academies. However, the main local authority powers have included:

- being able to appoint additional governors where governance is weak
- being able to suspend the 'delegated powers' of the governing body and to appoint an Interim Executive Board to supervise the school
- being able to issue a 'warning notice' where they have concerns about low standards, leadership and management, or safety at the school; warning notices are reviewed by the inspectorate, who may act upon them

Where a school failed its inspection, the local authority had to immediately consider whether to make use of the powers described above. However, there was an expectation that the local authority should provide support as well as intervention, and this was not always done well, so from 2002 the Secretary of State had the power to *require* a local authority to bring in an external source of support – over time this has evolved to generally mean the support of a high-performing school or an academy trust. From that year, failing schools began to be closed and to reopen as academies.

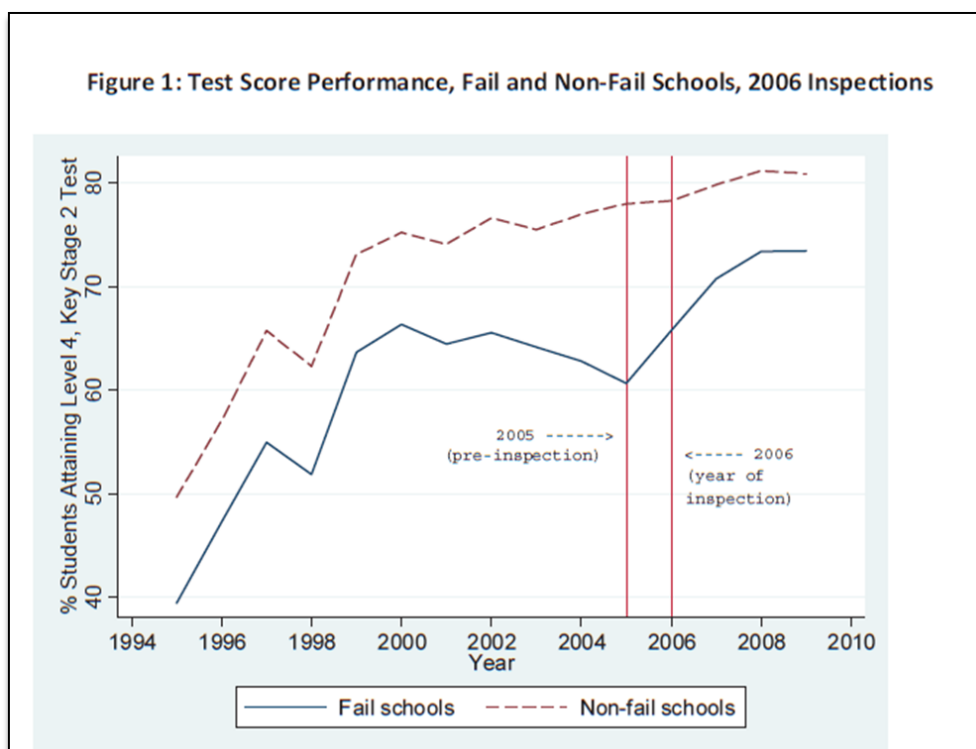
The Special Measures system has remained largely unchanged in format for around two decades. The inspectorate's role has been largely confined to monitoring the progress of the school, but it has given some advice and guidance to these schools that goes beyond the boundary of what might be considered purely 'inspection' activity; examples of this include:

- inviting schools and their governors to training sessions about how to write a Special Measures improvement plan
- assessing and commenting on the quality of the plans, both of the school and the local authority
- the continuity of a single lead inspector across the monitoring process allowed for a much more interactive process, with inspectors being able to discuss 'next steps' and then returning a few months later to review how they have been carried out

A recent change to the process has been a much earlier first monitoring visit to the school by its linked inspector. This first visit used to take place after several months, but now often follows only six to eight weeks after the inspection. The intention is to focus on the quality of improvement planning and to avoid delays where schools debate the merits of the original inspection and fail to start moving forward on the areas of concern. This earlier challenge appears helpful, since around a third of plans by schools, local authorities and academy trusts have been judged to be of poor quality.

The Special Measures process represented a significant investment by the inspectorate, but there was also a recognition that schools just above the 'inadequate' margin were neither receiving the same type of challenge nor in many cases making equivalent progress towards providing consistently good education. This issue was brought into focus by a series of research publications. Ofsted's own report, *Schools that stay Satisfactory* (2011)<sup>6</sup> highlighted the problem of schools that provided a barely adequate level of education for year after year: six per cent of secondary schools had been judged 'satisfactory' for their last three inspections, and nearly 22 per cent in their last two inspections. A report from Becky Francis<sup>7</sup> concluded that the problem of stagnating schools affected disadvantaged pupils most: 'Satisfactory' schools with disadvantaged pupil populations are significantly less likely to improve at the next inspection than are those with advantaged populations.'

Iftikhar Hussain's 2012 paper, *Subjective Performance Evaluation in the Public Sector: Evidence From School Inspections*<sup>8</sup>, clearly indicated the way in which schools which had failed their inspections improved whereas those who had 'just scraped through' did not:



<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/schools-stay-satisfactory>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.thersa.org/action-research-centre/learning,-cognition-and-creativity/education/social-justice/satisfactory-schools>

<sup>8</sup> This paper can be accessed via Dr Hussain's website at: <https://sites.google.com/site/econhussain/research>



In Hussain's 2013 article, *The School Inspector Calls*, he demonstrates that the impact of a failed inspection includes a raising of pupils' performance in primary schools that was still evident even after they had transferred to secondaries<sup>9</sup>.

Rebecca Allen and Simon Burgess, *How should we treat under-performing schools? (Who fails wins)*, also published in 2012, came up with very similar conclusions<sup>10</sup>, noting improved results for middle and higher ability pupils 2-3 years after a failed inspection:

We find that schools failing their Ofsted inspections improve their subsequent performance relative the pre-visit year. The magnitudes are quantitatively very significant: around 10% of a (student-level) standard deviation or one grade in between one and two of their best eight exam subjects. The main impact arises two years after the visit in this data.

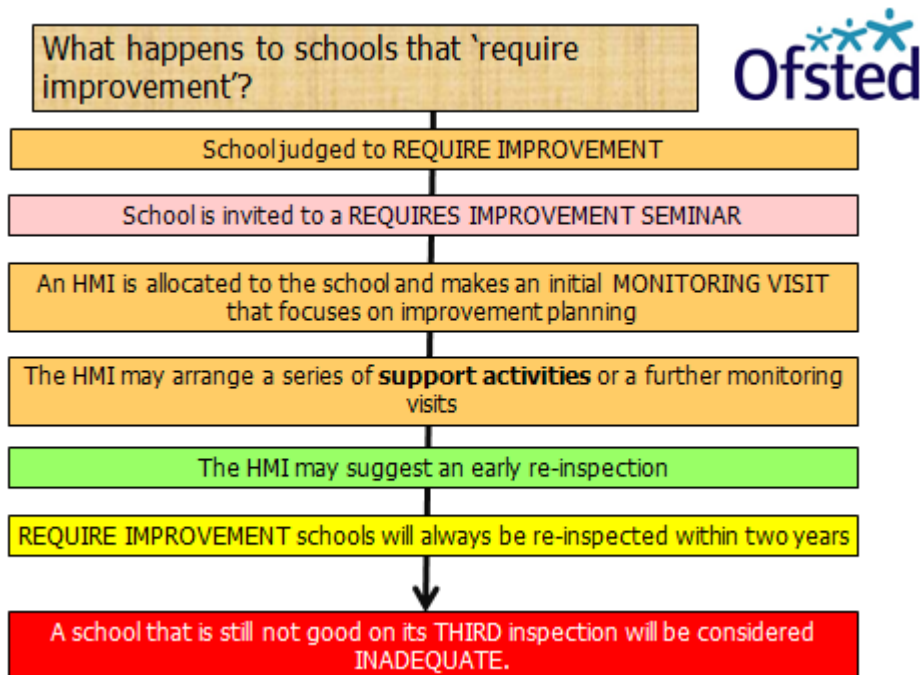
Allen and Burgess concluded by commenting that Ofsted's new Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, was arguing for greater intervention in 'satisfactory' schools, and noted that 'Our results suggest that this is potentially a fruitful development with some hope of significant returns.' Ofsted's announcement in January 2012 that it was to abolish the grade of 'satisfactory' and to replace it with 'requires improvement' was linked to the expectation that all schools should aspire to be 'good' but also informed thinking that the inspectorate should take a greater role in securing the improvement of these schools.

As a first step, the inspectorate began a programme of inviting 'requires improvement' schools to day-long seminars, led by experienced inspectors, which took them through the problems and solutions of school improvement. The inspectorate then added a programme of activities directly linked to challenging and supporting 'requires improvement' schools except where they had been judged to have 'good' leadership and management:

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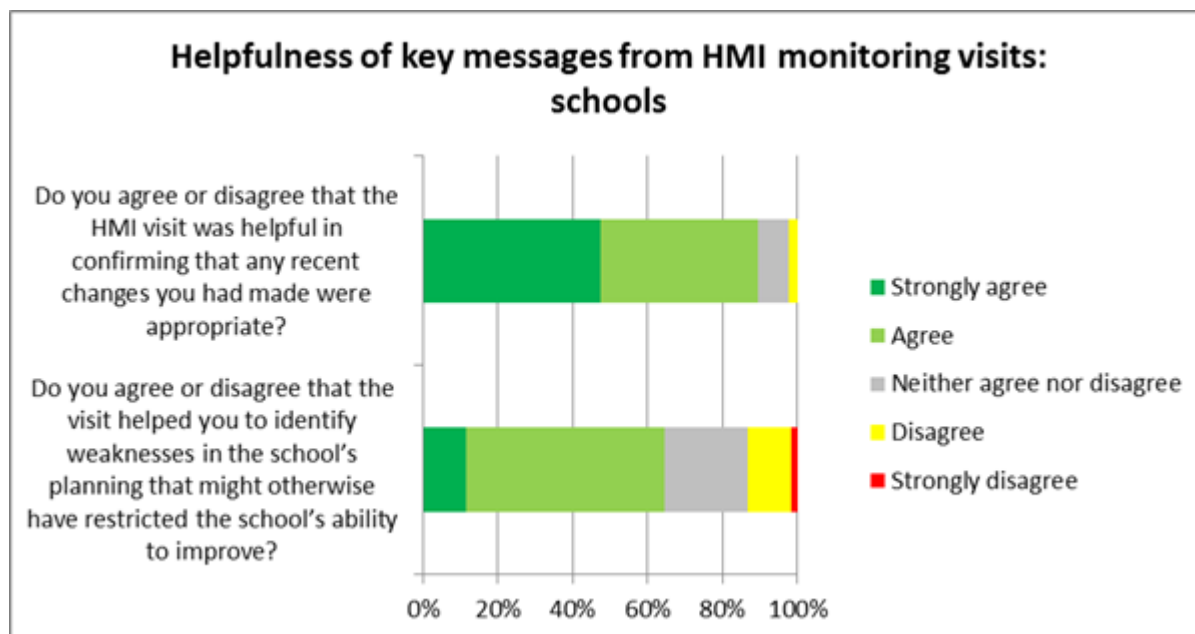
<sup>9</sup> <http://educationnext.org/the-school-inspector-calls/>

<sup>10</sup> This paper can be accessed via: <http://cmpo.wordpress.com/2012/03/27/who-fails-wins-the-impact-of-failing-an-ofsted-inspection/>



At the same time, the inspectorate was re-organised on a regional rather than a national structure to give a much stronger local focus. Each region was given its own director and team of senior Her Majesty’s Inspectors to work with local authorities and schools to drive improvement. Schools that were judged to `require improvement` were allocated an HMI, who would visit the school to discuss the quality of the school’s planning and to decide on what other forms of support were needed. The HMI had some choice over the types of activity which have included discussions with managers at all levels, visits focusing on specific subject areas or staff teams, or arranging links with schools which have complementary strengths.

Headteachers who responded to the Ofsted survey found the monitoring visits useful and welcomed the process of discussion and challenge. As the following chart shows, headteachers especially appreciate the visits when they help to confirm that the correct decisions are being made in order to improve the school:



Headteachers have also commented on the types of activity they find most helpful. The highest ratings have been given to activities that engage the wider staff of the school in discussing its progress, and for the assistance of the inspector in creating links with high performing schools from which the school can gain advice and guidance.

It is too early to draw any firm conclusions about the impact of this additional challenge and support on schools as only a few 'requires improvement' schools have been re-inspected so far.

Ofsted also publishes much material aimed at providing advice and guidance to schools. All school inspection reports are published, so schools can identify the strengths of other schools from which they might want to learn, and the inspectorate also publishes thematic survey reports on specific issues. Its website contains a large number of 'good practice' examples.

## Estonia

In Estonia, the aim of national supervision is to control whether the study and inclusion activities as well as legal acts are fulfilled.

### Thematic supervision

Thematic supervision has been regularly conducted since 2006. It is carried out according to the priorities of the national supervision system and validated by the Ministry of Education and Science. A priority can be, for example, supporting the students' individual development or guaranteeing that teachers participate in in-service trainings. Thematic supervision is carried out every academic year in approximately 10% of all the educational institutions. When compiling the sample, the last supervision date, the location of the school etc. are taken into account. Starting from the academic year 2014/2015, the Ministry plans to change the basic

criteria for sampling educational institutions and the new direction is to henceforth prioritise the so-called risky schools – schools with low results (for example in final exams, the results of state exams, drop-out rate etc.).

### **Supervision of individual schools**

In 2010 it was established that initially a school is licensed to provide education for a specified period of time. After this period, a 'supervision' is conducted. Should the educational establishment's activities meet legal requirements then the school is granted the next education licence for an unspecified period. Should there emerge problems in the school's activities, then it would return to an education licence for a specified term and another supervision will be conducted.

When, during an evaluation, it emerges that there are problems in the educational establishment's activities, then the school is given proposals, which are recommended, and precepts, which are required to be fulfilled. In case of non-compliance with precepts, penalty payment of up to 640€ may be demanded. The education licence of the educational institution may be revoked, if there occur problems in the school's activities and if the school does not fulfil the precepts. In that case these educational institutions have to face the closure of school and grant that the students can continue their studies in another school.

### **Reporting on the findings**

The inspection results must be discussed in the school's teachers' council where the members include the school workers and the board of trustees, also representatives of the parents and those of the school owner. The evaluation results are public, so different interest groups can familiarize with these on the ministry's or the county government's web page.

### **Schools that 'fail' inspection**

If the school is handed mandatory precepts, then the schools must inform the evaluation body who made the precept (country government or the ministry) of meeting the requirements by a deadline set by the inspectors. If necessary, the inspectors can demand that the school presents corresponding materials to check whether the requirements have been fulfilled.

The evaluators do not routinely return to schools. There are single cases where, after a school has been inspected, another evaluation is exercised in order to check whether the school is fulfilling the proposals and precepts set by the inspectors. In most cases a regular evaluation does not occur.

Every school is themselves responsible for their improvement activities. Every school also has owners, mostly the local governments, who are able to observe the school's development. The educational institution can call for themselves advisers who primarily have been trained for advising the educational institution in conducting the internal evaluation.

If the school results continue to be poor, the school owner should step in, and possibly a new evaluation could be carried out. There are no specific procedures or

rules for observing whether the school activities change for the better and improve after the inspection. The Ministry is considering training new school advisors whose task would be to help the school leaders develop school activities. This is planned to be implemented within the next few years.

## Germany - Berlin

All schools are inspected regularly and the results of the inspection fed back to school leaders. Four months later the inspection report is published on the inspectorate's website; publication has had very significant impact. Between 2006 and 2011 all 700 Berlin schools were inspected. According to the mandate of the Berlin Education Act (§ 9.3) the task of the School Inspectorate is to support the school programme work of the schools and promote and ensure the quality development of teaching and education, school organisation and school life<sup>11</sup>. However, in 2007 the inspectorate and the Institute for School Quality of Berlin and Brandenburg (ISQ) noted that few schools took concrete action as a result of their inspections. The original system also did not incorporate any consideration of what should happen if schools were judged to be failing – until the first two were found.

As a result, the inspectorate began to raise expectations of how schools should respond including the preparation of action plans to be discussed no later than six months after the inspection. The inspectorate should also provide 'consultancy' to schools where target-orientated support was needed<sup>12</sup>.

- Schools that have good results have no follow up or further support.
- Schools that have weaknesses will, depending on the local school board, discuss targets for improvement with the inspectorate and agree on these.
- If the school has significant development needs, the school board will be obliged to provide immediate additional support to the school focused on the attainment of specific targets and the involvement of proSchul. The interval before the next inspection can be reduced by two years.

It will be noted that the local school board is a key element of improvement work, but the engagement of school boards has been found to be varied.

Under the revised arrangements, the report is delivered to the headteacher who then needs to provide feedback within two weeks. Soon after this the report and its results can be presented to the school at a meeting open to interested persons. The report is also handed over to the responsible school supervision body and education authority; accompanied by offers for talks about its findings, which can include with the district councillor. Six months afterwards, the inspectorate may request information from the school about its progress.

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<sup>11</sup>[http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-bildung/schulqualitaet/schulinspektion/handbuch\\_schulinspektion\\_english.pdf](http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-bildung/schulqualitaet/schulinspektion/handbuch_schulinspektion_english.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> *School Inspection In Berlin – Second Round*, p.11

The way in which the report is presented to a wider audience provides an opportunity for others to be engaged in the school's improvement process. This is described in *School Inspection in Berlin*:

An important part of the inspection process is the presentation of the inspection results to the members of the school committee, because, besides the school administrators and members of the teaching staff, this meeting is also attended by representatives of the pupils and parents and/or training institutions. Thus, the inspection results are communicated to the wider school public. The members of the school committee are invited to this event by the inspection team. The school committee is free, in agreement with the head teacher, to invite more guests from the school, the school supervision and the education authority. The inspection team prepares a presentation which, upon request, is made available to the school administrators for their own presentation of results in the school committees.

One of the main sources of support is proSchul, an institution of the Berlin senate Department of Education. Their objective is to provide on-going counselling and support to the school such as:

- defining the general principles to work with
- assistance for the headteacher
- advice on team structures and time management
- advice on suitable partners for co-operation
- public relations issues
- coaching for individuals who are underperforming

There is also support from the 'multipliers' who are in twelve districts. These can provide detailed support on:

- methodology
- subject-related work
- the curriculum, specific to the needs of the school
- school development work

The Berlin inspectorate's report for 2011/12 noted 'the increased willingness of the schools, school supervision bodies and district school authorities to work with inspection results.' Due to the financial problems of government in Berlin, it is also important to make use of low cost routes to improvement; therefore involving school to school partnerships and teaching organisations is important.

## Germany – Hesse

School inspection as an obligatory external evaluation procedure was generally introduced all over Hesse in 2006. By the end of the year 2010 all approximately 2,000 Hessian schools had been evaluated for the first time. From January 2011 the

inspection of all public schools for the second time began, and also schools for adults and centres for students with special educational needs are evaluated.

In the framework of the Hessian school inspection, it is possible that schools turn out to be "below standard". The criterion for a "school requiring re-inspection" is reached, if at least half of the criteria of some quality areas have been rated with 2.0 or lower (maximum of 4.0).

After the school visit, all the collected data will be summarized and the core information will be evaluated in form of an overview of results. On this basis, the inspection team creates the school inspection report. The report provides schools with a detailed feedback on their quality profile in terms of the evaluated criteria of HRS and includes the following content:

Foreword:

1. Summary of the results
2. Differentiated feedback on the quality profile of the school
  - 2.1. Quality Area II: "Objectives and strategies of quality development"
  - 2.2. Quality Area III: "Leadership and management"
  - 2.3. Quality Area IV: "Professionalism"
  - 2.4. Quality Area V: "School culture"
  - 2.5. Quality Area VI: "Teaching and learning"
  - 2.6. Profile focus of the school
3. Annex
  - 3.1. Collection methods and instruments
  - 3.2. Explanation of the methods and the presentation of the evaluations
  - 3.3. Results of the class observations
  - 3.4. Results of the online survey

Prior to the finale completion, the report is given to the school management. Within three working days, the school management has the opportunity to correct factual errors or to make a supplementary statement to the report. The report is then provided to the school management on the exchange platform and as a printed version.

The presentation of results (EP = "Ergebnispräsentation") is the final part of the inspection process. As part of the EP, the management of the inspection team optionally offers a presentation and explanation of selected central results. This presentation serves to pave the way for the further school development. With the provision of the report the work of the inspection team is finished.

Moreover, there is an annual inspection report that summarizes the results of the Hessian school inspection.

As mentioned above, schools can be rated as “below standard”. The local education authorities are informed that these schools are in need of extra support. For these schools, there will be a follow-up inspection taking place about two years after the regular inspection but the inspectorate does not provide support for the school in the interim.

In the follow-up inspection, the inspectorate provides a focused evaluation of the areas previously classified as weak. Otherwise, the follow-up inspection corresponds to the standard procedure of regular inspection (online-survey, interviews, document analysis, observation). The schools receive a re-inspection report focussing on the areas which were classified as weak.

There is no separate arrangement for handling schools that fail to improve. As there is extra support for schools which were rated to be “below standard”, it is not expected that these school could not improve their quality of education.

## Germany - Lower Saxony

The Education Authority of Lower Saxony supervises all of Lower Saxony’s general-education schools, advises and supports them and provides them with staff. Vocational schools have their own budget and can choose their own staff, but they are also advised and supported by the Education Authority. In addition, necessary funds are allocated within the budget and additional benefits are granted.

The Authority is responsible for:

- the supervision of primary, secondary, special and vocational schools
- the supervision of teacher training colleges
- school organisation and legislation
- budget (except for vocational schools)
- allocation of staff and administration of personnel records (except for vocational schools)
- funding of Pre-Schools

‘Supervision’ is understood to mean advice and support, controlling and structuring; if necessary and as a last resort it may include direct intervention.

Lower Saxony has had a school supervision system for more than ten years, but it is currently going through a period of radical change. In 2005 the School Inspectorate was founded as an authority independent from the Education Authority, answering only to the Ministry of Education. Results of school inspections were given to the school, to the Educational Authority and the Ministry of Education. In the period from 2006 to 2011, schools that had been inspected were judged to either meet or not meet required standards. Those that had met the required standards went through a staged process of:



- analysing and interpreting the findings of the report
- defining objectives for the school's response, and setting out measures for this
- discussing the defined objectives with a member of the Education Authority
- completing the plan of improvement

During this period schools that met the standards had a follow up meeting with the Education Authority, with the school being free to make its own choices such as making use of different types of adviser. However, if a school was considered to not be meeting the required standards, the representative of the Education Authority would have a more advanced role in discussing the objectives and measures of improvement, and adjusting them where necessary. These schools were subject to re-inspection within two years, so there was an incentive on them to respond to advice. These re-inspections will end in the first half of 2014.

Between 2006 and 2011 the Education Authority's roles included a general contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools; defining and organising the processes for school quality management; and giving advice and support to schools in specific areas of subject teaching such as physics or mathematics.

In January 2011 the formerly independent Lower Saxony School Inspection authority became the fourth of four departments of the Lower Saxony State Institute for School Development in Hildesheim, a sister authority of the Education Authority, solely answering to the Ministry of Education. This institute is responsible for teacher qualification, head teacher qualification, core curricula, media education and evaluation as well as school inspection.

In November 2012, the Lower Saxony School Inspectorate completed the first inspections of all publicly-funded schools and began to develop pilot inspections of a new approach. It has moved to a system of evaluating the quality of a school in five levels altogether, two levels referring to legal and basic requirements:

- not meeting basic requirements
- meeting basic requirements

and then three levels of estimating the quality of a school's processes

- developed
- established or introduced
- secured and reliable

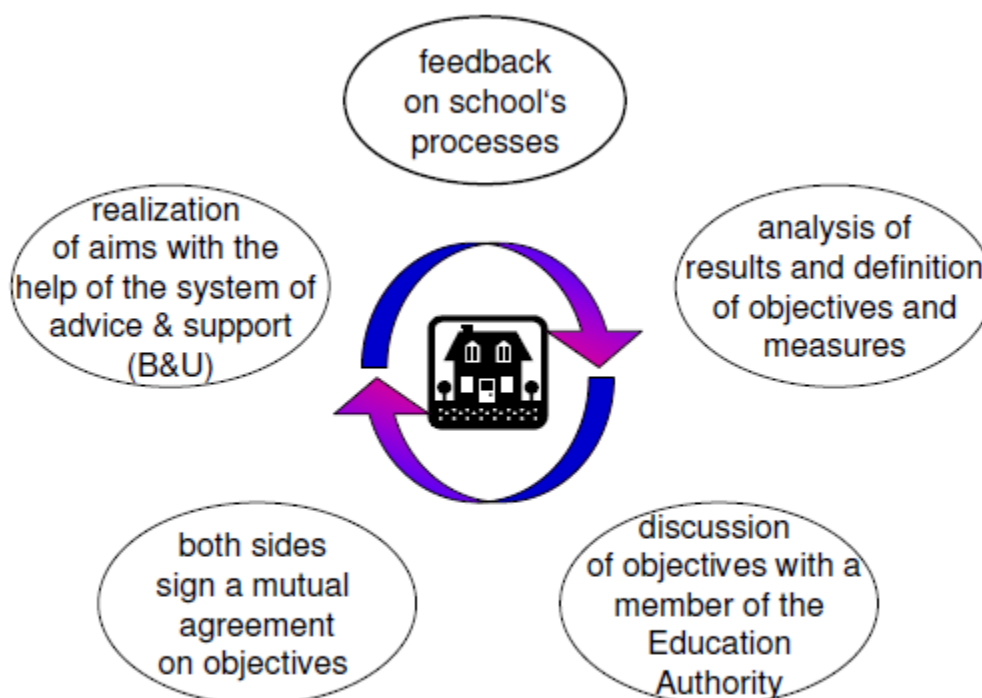
The further developed system aims to provide a report that is clear and easy to understand. It will prioritise the school's core business of teaching and learning, be simplified to reduce time and effort, and feature some profiling of the inspection according to available information about the schools. However inspectors do not have access to the school's test data and reports are not currently published.

All schools are planned to be inspected on the regular basis every four years. The only criterion for inspections is a regular rotation of four years. It will also be possible for schools to ask for an inspection of their own accord, which may be earlier than this making rotation more flexible.

Under the new approach, schools will not be re-inspected because there is no category of "failing".

The revised approach includes some of the strengths of the previous system but also develops this into a continuous, on-going process:

In future inspection in Lower Saxony will aim to stimulate quality development in each inspected school, but also be tailored to the individual requirements of each type of school, basically of each single school. Inspection concentrates more on quality of processes rather than results or a possible judgement of "failing". The further developed inspection framework has a consistency with a set of 21 core tasks but can also include additional questions which can help to generate strategic knowledge for the Ministry of Education. The revised approach also aims to improve the interaction between the School Inspection and the Education Authority's school support or school improvement system.



All schools in Lower Saxony are self-supporting schools, which means the headteacher is responsible for the individual school's quality development and – unless there is a breach of law involved - a mutual agreement is only signed if the school actually requires help from B&U.

A key emphasis in the further developed system is on the quality of feedback about the inspection. This is the reason why the system is now called "dialogic". Options include a feedback session to the headteacher and his/her team, in which the results so far are presented, explained and discussed in comparison with the self-evaluation of the school in the areas of activity (and corresponding core tasks) in question. Then there is a feedback conference to the school's executive committee, at which a member of the school authority, the school board, is also present. In this session one big part consists in the feedback on lessons, results of class observation (at least 50% of all teachers), and is presented and visualized on the basis of statistical data, charts. There is a plan for a short written report, not as long as it used to be in the first round, but a lot more concise, including all the findings of the inspection.

In some situations inspectors might return to give a feedback workshop, particularly so in vocational schools.

It will be noted that the system now includes the encouragement given by the inspection for the working out of the school's objectives and of the next few steps of school development. Schools describe their ideas for their next steps on their self-evaluation sheet which they fill in before the inspection and in one of the formalized conversations conducted together with the inspectors during the inspection. They already can, if they like, work on a more detailed future plan during the inspection. The drawing of action plans however is the individual task of each self-depending school according to its individual rhythm. The question whether the individual school actually implements or completes the steps is part of its own responsibility as a self-supporting school. The headteacher has to answer to the Educational Authority.

The system also includes analysis of the results of the inspection, a discussion of objectives with the Education Authority and – if required by the self-supporting school, the engagement of a system of advice and support for which an internet portal is now provided by the Education Authority; this has the additional advantage of concentrating online access to advice and support in one place.

Schools can log a request for advice and guidance directly with the Education Authority through the website. A supervisor checks and approves the request, matching it to the most suitable advisor available, who then contacts the school in order to meet its needs, while the main responsible for the school's development is always the head of the school.

This provides a standard system of enquiry for schools seeking advice, and ready access to information about resources available. It also helps to provide good insight into what issues are 'in demand' so that this can be responded to. The advisors of the Education Authority can respond to the insight developing from use of the website.

Visitors to Lower Saxony noted that schools appeared to have a very collegiate approach to post-inspection training<sup>13</sup>.

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<http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDIQFjAB&url=htt>

In Lower Saxony there is a very close connection between the inspection system and the process of on-going advice and support intended. Unlike in other countries, there is not a proliferation of different bodies responsible for running the schools and therefore 'central' support is more practicable.

The situation in Lower Saxony has a number of key differences from some other European countries. Headteachers and teachers cannot be dismissed as a result of an inspection, and there is almost no school to school support. Although networks of teachers exist to some extent especially at subject level, the Education Authority does not play a big role in bringing schools together although some sharing of 'best practice' might be possible. It is the school maintaining body, the municipal authority, which is interested in and arranges for the formation of networks.

## Germany - Rhineland-Palatinate:

The Agency for Quality Assurance was formed in 2006 and provides an external evaluation of the school and presents this in a report including detailed and graphed data. Its main aim is to provide continuous quality development for schools. Inspections do not result in schools being judged to be 'failing'; instead the report gives an overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and makes recommendations. At the level of the school and its community, the report is shared at this stage with the school's managers, its teachers, the school's parental as well as students' councils, the school supervisory board for the district, and as an option with the Ministry for Education and any other educational providers. The sharing of the report is helpful to these groups as a comparison of the findings of successive reports sheds additional insight, and schools are not strong in interpreting their own performance data.

The school and its supervisory board then receives the report and is expected to discuss its contents. They need to consider the recommendations and prioritise their actions. Goals and objectives must be set, which are binding between the school and its supervisory board, and must be agreed within 14 weeks. As the inspectorate's summary information explains it:

To ensure sustainable quality development, law requires the schools to reach binding goals in so-called "target agreements" with the respective school supervisory board. The school and the school supervisory board discuss the results and sign a contract in which 1) the objectives of the next period, 2) the means to control the process and 3) internal evaluation methods are defined.

The school can engage with external supporting agencies to help in the analysis of the report and the planning of a response. This external perspective can be helpful in setting the priorities and deciding on the objectives. In Rhineland-Palatinate, the inspectorate has no involvement after inspection.

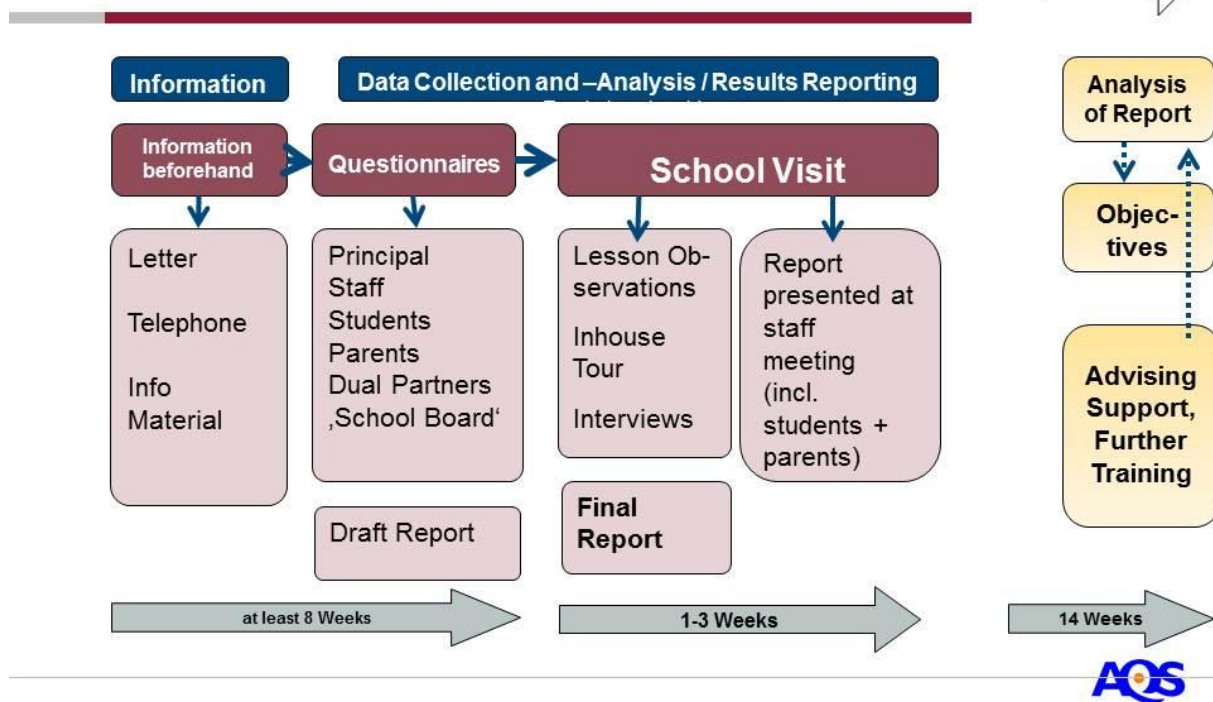
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The inspectorate also provides instruments for an online tool for school self-evaluation issued by the state's supporting agency.



## Evaluation Phases – Rhineland-Palatinate



## Germany - Saxony

The Sächsisches Bildungsinstitut (SBI), an institution responsible to the Saxon State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, was founded in 2007. As an institute of education it maintains basic educational contents, teacher training and evaluation of schools. The SBI is responsible for external evaluation of all state schools in Saxony, it assesses the quality of work and the results achieved. This helps schools to set their own goals and develop their own internal evaluation.

After the school visit the school receives a report that contains the results of the external evaluation and shows the strengths and weaknesses. In a presentation the evaluators explain the structure of the report, where the data come from and they outline selected results. The responsible official of the regional school board also receives a copy of the report. The evaluators do not provide advice to the school, for instance, about how to deal with the weaknesses or which measures should be taken first.

The school has the opportunity to identify the weaknesses and to prioritize the necessary measures. The school and the responsible official of the regional school board (SBA) discuss the outcomes of the evaluation and come to a target agreement with the school about what to do in terms of quality improvement and when and how goals should be reached. This ensures that the messages of the evaluation report are taken seriously.

The regional school board (SBA) is also responsible for giving support and guidance to the school in this further quality development. For this, a supporting system was installed at the school board. The function of advice, resting with the SBA, is therefore clearly separated from that of external evaluation, which is the duty of SBI. However other sections of the SBI may offer courses and in-service training.

The “support system for school development” includes five components:

1. process moderators support longer term processes of school development and quality assurance.
2. regional advisors for mediation at school are responsible to transfer the models of student mediation and give support for conflict resolution at the school.
3. advisors for democratic pedagogy support schools to develop a democratic school culture.
4. pedagogical supervisors organize the process of reflection of the pedagogical work and support the participants with respect to the further development of their professionalism.
5. trainer for teaching development give advice and support to the teacher in learning and teaching processes and for further development of teaching quality.



## Ireland

Responsibility for school improvement in Irish schools rests primarily with the board of management, principals and staff of individual schools. Effective schools engage all of the school community including pupils/students, parents, patrons and trustees in this process of on-going improvement.

Inspection findings facilitate school improvement. Inspection reports affirm good practice and help to inform and complement schools' self-evaluation. Recommendations in inspection reports provide important direction for the school community as they seek to bring about on-going improvement.

All schools in Ireland are inspected on a regular basis. The Inspectorate has developed a risk-based analysis tool to support more effective planning for inspection. At primary level the inspection planning process involves risk assessment based on data from a significant number of unannounced incidental inspections that will be conducted each year and a range of other data, including school size, for example.

At post-primary level, data from stand-alone subject inspections, incidental inspections and other school evaluations facilitate risk-based assessment in the selection of schools for whole-school evaluation (WSE) or other forms of inspection. Other data available to the Department such as performance in certificate

examinations, student attendance and student retention is considered as part of the risk assessment process.

Whilst the programme of inspection includes schools identified through our risk analysis procedures as likely to benefit from external evaluation, schools at all levels of quality performance are also included. This allows the Inspectorate to recognise, affirm and disseminate very good and exemplary practice across the system through the publication of inspection reports.

In 2012, a model of follow-through inspection was developed. This model was used in a pilot phase in 2012 and in 2013. Following consultation with the education partners, an external Guide to follow-through inspection was written and was published on the Department of Education and Skills' website in March 2014. All schools that have had an inspection report issued to them will now be subject to follow-through inspection, generally within a three-year period of the issuing of the inspection report.

An analysis of 90 follow-through inspections in primary schools in 2012 shows that inspectors judged that 84% of the recommendations made to the primary schools had been fully or partially implemented, and that no progress had been achieved in relation to 15% of the recommendations. Four (1%) recommendations were considered no longer relevant. Inspectors recommended further follow-through activities in the case of 11 (12%) of the 90 primary schools in the sample.

A similar pattern emerged in an analysis of 80 follow-through inspections conducted in post-primary schools in 2012. Inspectors judged that 90% of the recommendations had been fully or partially implemented and that no progress had been made in respect of 10% of the recommendations. 5 (less than 1%) recommendations were considered no longer relevant. Inspectors recommended further follow-through activities in the case of 11 (14%) of the 80 post-primary schools covered in the sample.

From time to time, inspectors identify a small number of schools in which significant weaknesses occur. In these schools there may be significant weaknesses in the leadership or management of the school or in the quality of teaching and learning. In some cases, several aspects of the work of the school are poor. These findings are set out in the reports of the inspections and in the oral feedback provided to school staffs and boards of management. While responsibility for improving the work of the school rests primarily with the school's board and leadership, the Department has recognised that in some of these schools, additional inputs are required to ensure that improvement happens.

Given the independent nature of school management and the role of the patron in Irish schools, the powers available to the Department are limited. This has meant that in some of these cases it has been necessary for the Department to engage with the patron, trustees or management of the school to ensure that the need for improvement and change is fully appreciated by the school and by those responsible for its management. The engagement of the Department with the school authorities is managed through the Department's School Governance section with the assistance



of the Inspectorate. This work is overseen by the Department's School Improvement Group. This is an internal coordinating group of senior officials drawn from the Department's School Governance section and the Inspectorate and involving officials from other sections of the Department as necessary.

The process of engagement with these schools by the School Improvement Group has shown a positive impact on a proportion of these schools. In the period from the establishment of the School Improvement Group in February 2008 until the end of January 2014, a total of 76 schools were referred to the School Improvement Group and were subject to a specific monitoring process. Of the total number of schools referred, 45 (59%) cases were resolved by January 2014 either through showing improvement or through the closure of the school by the patron. 31 (41%) schools that were referred to the School Improvement Group did not show sufficient evidence of improvement to be removed from this monitoring process or had been in the process a relatively short time by January 2014.

## Malta

The Quality Assurance Department (QAD) is responsible for inspecting all state, independent and church schools in Malta and Gozo over a period of years following a cyclical pattern. In selecting schools a number of criteria have been drawn to help guide the QAD. Nevertheless, the QAD may also be directed by the Directors General to undertake ad hoc reviews of particular schools or services.

Every external review aims at supporting school improvement. Following the various findings and recommendations, each report concludes with a statement about when the next external review is due. Normally, when findings and recommendations are within expectations, the next external review is held after the termination of the current cycle of reviews. However, the Director QAD, following discussions with the review leader, may decide that the outcomes and recommendations of the report require that the next external review takes place in a year's time.

After the external review, the team works on the report. This includes an executive summary of the main findings and recommendations. Each main finding is based on the emerging realities of the school and the focus is mainly on learning and teaching, and on school leadership. The evidence for each finding is listed in the main report. The report ends with the decision on when the next external review is to be held. Appendices include the results of the teachers and parents' pre-review questionnaires. An electronic copy of the draft report is sent to the Head of School within two weeks from the external review and he/she has three days to react. The Director QAD, together with the review leader, may amend the draft accordingly. The final report is sent to the Head of School for his/her perusal. The summary report, consisting of the executive summary and the results of the pre-review questionnaires, is sent to be disseminated among all members of the teaching staff. The Head of School also formally communicates the findings of the review during a staff meeting. The school disseminates to parents a letter from QAD with the statistical data from the parents' pre-review questionnaire together with a letter

about the outcomes of the external review prepared by the Head of School. The QAD expects the Head of School to keep it informed about the dissemination process and follow-ups to ensure procedures are adhered to.

The Assistant Director, together with the review leader (and other review team members as required) visit the school again for an unannounced follow-up visit up to one calendar year after the review. The purpose of the visit is to ensure that the observations made during the external review were not unduly influenced by tactical behaviour of school staff and to determine to what extent the school has started to consider its recommendations. During the follow-up visit, the Head of School is expected to identify which recommendations he/she has started to work on and his/her plan of action on the other recommendations. This applies for all schools, not only those that raise concerns during the external review.

The progress of underperforming schools is checked when another external review is undertaken by different QAD personnel during the scholastic year following the one of the first external review. This review covers all areas but with special focus on the particular areas of concern highlighted in the external review report.

The QAD forms part of a broader Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), which is to date responsible for the regulation of Education in Malta and Gozo, and for curriculum design and development. The DQSE has a number of Education Officers responsible for the various learning areas as well as support teachers in specific areas like literacy, mathematics and assessment. The external review report often recommends that schools seek the support of these officers. The QAD itself offers support to schools with regard to internal self-evaluation and school development planning which would be expected to address critical areas identified in the External Review Report through officers other than those who would have reviewed the respective schools by offering support in these areas.

In the eventuality of a school repeatedly emerging as struggling, the first measures to be taken would be of a supportive nature by lending the expertise of specialised professionals/teams focussing on the areas deemed as critical for the school to help it improve its performance. In such cases Action Plans would need to be drawn up setting specific targets and related timeframes for monitoring purposes. In the case of a school where the QAD has decided that no improvement has been made after the second review, the QAD will recommend: that another (third) review takes place within one year, and confer with the minister of education that the school is in breach of legislation.

However when in extreme circumstances schools fail to respond positively to supportive measures, under powers in the Education Act in Maltese legislation the Minister of Education has the authority to issue or withdraw school licences. Hence in the case of non-State Schools, the Minister may in such extreme cases, decide to withdraw the licence for the institution to operate as an educational institution, whilst in the case of State Schools, there can be a variety of decisions taken, ranging from changes at Senior Management Team level to changes at various other levels of professionals serving at the particular school. One does not exclude any other

measure which may be considered in the best interest of students and the community. This is a very sensitive domain and is treated with the required tactfulness, considering each case that may arise on its own merits.

## The Netherlands

A significant characteristic of the Dutch educational structure is that schools are supervised by over a thousand different highly autonomous school boards, around half of which in the field of primary education only supervise one school. However with increased autonomy has also come increased accountability, and the Minister will soon have the power to close a failing school after a year. Schools are generally given two years to improve.

The inspectorate operates at the moment with a risk-based inspection schedule, in which schools can be classified as failing or weak if they do not meet the minimum requirements of quality on the following 6 aspects; student results, quality of teaching, curriculum, school climate, student care and total lesson time. Schools that are failing tend to lack educational leadership and systems for quality assurance and improvement. In some cases they also suffer from isolation, either socio-economic or because of their denominational nature.

Because of these weaknesses, failing schools need an intervention strategy. In the Netherlands, improvement must be secured within two years and the starting point is that the school board must set up an improvement plan. There is also agreement over the follow-up inspection arrangements, which will include a visit by the inspectorate at least twice a year and a more formal inspection of assessment results and improvement made at the half way stage.

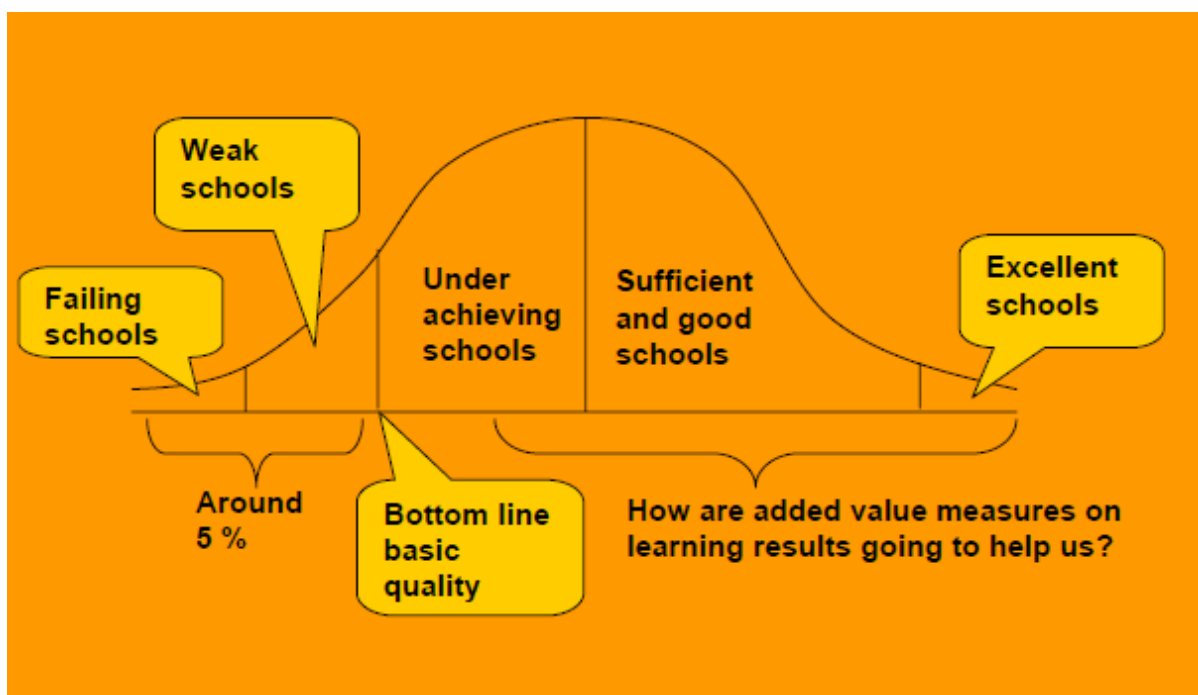
With a risk-based system, it is more possible to intervene at an early stage when data indicate that performance is starting to decline. Official warnings are being issued to school boards in this situation.

As a result, there have been some encouraging signs with greater numbers of improving 'failed' schools since 2009. From 2009 to 2012, nearly half (48%) improved within two years whereas before it had only been around 17% from 2005-7. There are also encouraging signs that very few then drift back into failure. The system as a whole also seems to be driving schools to be better; since 2009 the proportion of schools failing inspection has fallen from 5% to 2% and is now only a little above zero.

The Dutch system maintains the separation between inspection and support, which is in order to keep independence. Government, regional and local authorities set up initiatives such as financial support and monitoring of progress. There are also supporting programmes of national educational councils (subsidized by government) and also supporting programmes of other agencies. There can also be co-operation between schools by exchange of information, taking part in training sessions etc.

The Netherlands system seems to be working as it has increased the sense of urgency for headteachers and school boards. It has been a learning process for school boards, who are increasingly aware of their responsibilities although a system of direct inspection of school boards is still being developed. There has been a stronger focus on results-based policy and the on-going improvement of quality, supported by the transparency of inspection data and indicators.

However, to improve the system of education as a whole means that it is not only the failing schools that must be tackled but also the 'coasting' schools and the schools which are persistently 'average'. The Dutch inspectorate aims to provide all schools with feedback on their level of educational quality in order to stimulate further improvement at all levels. The inspectorate will continue to safeguard the minimum requirements of quality but will also stimulate schools that perform above by introducing a differentiated method of inspection.



The concerns of the inspectorates of the Netherlands and England are therefore very similar: whilst ensuring that failing schools improve, it is essential to secure the progress of schools which are marginally above this level and do not meet the increasing expectations of modern society.

In the Netherlands, the many school boards are seen as key to improvement and the inspectorate is starting to look at how inspection may be organised at 'board' level. If necessary the school board itself can be object of supervision by the inspectorate. In that case the functioning of steering at quality assurance and financial conditions, as well as the functioning of governance are being evaluated by the inspectorate.

## Northern Ireland

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is implementing a proportionate, risk-based approach to school inspection to ensure more effective use of ETI's resources and to ensure that schools experience inspection as an integral process of evaluation rather than cyclical events of external scrutiny.

Primary, post-primary and special education schools in Northern Ireland which are evaluated on inspection by the ETI as 'satisfactory' or less ('inadequate' or 'unsatisfactory') in terms of their educational provision are required to draw up an action plan to address the areas for improvement identified, which must be approved by the Department of Education (DE), on the advice of the district inspector (DI) for that school. After the inspection, the DI makes one or two interim follow up visits to ensure that the school is working towards the objectives set out in the approved plan. Between 12 and 24 months after the initial inspection a follow up inspection is carried out by a small team which focuses mainly on the areas for improvement identified in the original report. The school is re-evaluated and a further report is published. Schools which are evaluated as 'good' may also be required to prepare an action plan; progress on improvement will be monitored by the DI through occasional visits.

Under the terms of the Department of Education's policy for school improvement entitled *'Every School a Good School'*<sup>14</sup> any school where the overall quality and effectiveness of the provision is evaluated by ETI as less than 'satisfactory' may be placed by the Department into a 'formal intervention process' (FIP). The purpose of the FIP is to provide the school with external assistance from professional advisory support officers from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services of the local Education and Library Boards. The external assistance focuses largely on assisting the school to make improvement in its leadership, governance and development planning and improvement arrangements in order to effect the necessary improvements. A school in the FIP must subsequently be evaluated as at least 'satisfactory' by ETI before the Department will consider removing the school from the process and, even then, removal depends on context and circumstances.

Schools evaluated as 'satisfactory' may also receive external support based on their need and the availability of such support.

Schools which do not improve to at least an evaluation of 'good' will continue to receive further support and further follow up inspections.

### **Sustaining Improvement Inspections: pilot programme**

The *sustaining improvement* inspection is a new development in the suite of inspections in which schools, which had been evaluated as 'very good' or 'outstanding' three years previously, experience a one-day visit by a small ETI inspection team. The sustaining improvement inspection requires the school to

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/esags\\_policy\\_for\\_school\\_improvement\\_-\\_final\\_version\\_05-05-2009.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/esags_policy_for_school_improvement_-_final_version_05-05-2009.pdf)

demonstrate that it is sustaining improvement in its provision and raising standards, through effective self-evaluation and school development planning, in the areas that the school's staff have been working on since the original inspection. This model of inspection is predicated on the DI having visited the school during the three-year period and a minimum of one interim district inspection visit to monitor developments in the school.

The one-day process entails a scrutiny of the evidence provided by the school, including classroom practice observations, other relevant school documentation, the school's performance data and the evaluation and reporting on the quality of the leadership and management for the key developments being undertaken through the school development plan. The report issued to the school evaluates the school's capacity to sustain improvement. Most of the schools, during the pilot phase, have participated positively.

### **Promoting Improvement in English and Mathematics Programme**

In the 2013-14 school year, the ETI embarked on a new way of working that raises the profile of ETI support for under-achieving post-primary schools. From 2013 to 2015, two post-primary English, and two post-primary mathematics inspectors, each working half of their scheduled time on the programme, are supporting 20 post-primary schools in which the pupils' performance in either English or mathematics is falling behind the performance in their other subjects. The inspectors will be supported by two experienced serving heads of department (one English, and one mathematics) that are being seconded to the role of *Inspection Associates* (IAs) for the duration of the programme.

The inspectors and IAs provide professional dialogue, challenge and support through specialist visits with the aim of building the capacity for sustained improvement at the level of middle management. The work will include the organisation of events to disseminate the lessons learned amongst the 20 schools and, where appropriate, the wider education community. A composite report will be published at the end of the programme to identify the practice in schools that has had the greatest impact on improving the provision and raising the pupils' achievements.

## Norway

### **Introduction**

The Directorate for Education and Training has the overriding responsibility for inspection in the education sector. The purpose of inspection in Norway is to ensure children and young people obtain the right to equal education in accordance with the aims of the legislation - The Education Act and the Private School Act. These Acts impose a number of obligations for school owners and grant several rights for students. Compliance with the rules and regulations is an important part of achieving an equal education.

The Directorate for Education and Training aims to achieve predictability in the planning of the inspections, and aspires to give the inspections the greatest positive significance for the students.

Inspection of independent schools is carried out by the inspection department of the Directorate for Education and Training (12 employees with varied backgrounds), while the county governor offices conduct inspections of public schools. Norway has 18 county governor offices. All county governors have one department with duties related to the education sector. In addition to inspection of public schools these departments of education have duties related to guidance and complaints.

Inspection in Norway is not designed as a full-scale inspection of the entire set of rules with all school owners. The inspections focus on school owners, i.e. the board of private schools, and the local and county authorities. The inspection in Norway focuses on legal control, in other words an inspection of the school owners' compliance with statutory obligations. The inspection authority in question does not inspect the school owner's compliance with the entire set of rules, but rather with parts of it. When carrying out an inspection, the Directorate for Education and Training and the county governors cannot inspect other matters than those regulated by the Education Act and the Private School Act. The sections of the rules that are selected as the theme for inspection are mentioned below.

### **The method of inspection**

In the beginning of each inspection a school owner, authority or board is selected sometimes together with a specific school in that group for a sampling inspection. Usually the inspectors have an opening information meeting where both representatives from the school owner and the schools are invited.

The school owner is asked by letter to send in relevant documents regarding the subject of the inspection. Document review is an important element of the inspection. Usually a lot of necessary information is gathered through the document review.

When the inspection authority has reviewed the documentation from the school owner, meetings and interviews are often scheduled with representatives from the school owner. The purpose of these interviews is to get supplementary and additional information in order to be able to make a conclusion.

Relevant interviewees are:

- Chief municipal administrative officer
- Chief municipal education officer
- Headmaster of school
- Teachers at school
- Other staff at school
- Students
- Parents

- Health visitor, cleaner, caretaker etc.

The inspectors are obliged to follow a methodology manual for the education sector when carrying out inspections. This ensures that all the offices conduct the inspections effectively, equally, transparent and verifiably.

There are no time limits for an inspection, but normally it takes three months from start to finish. This can however vary regarding the complexity and size of the inspection subject.

Injunctions are the only available sanction when breaches of the law are revealed during an inspection of a public school. The inspection authorities do not have the authority to close down the school. When it comes to independent schools, the inspectorate can also hold back the state funding, withdraw the state funding or withdraw the school's approval if the breaches are serious.

After each inspection, an inspection report is sent to the inspected school's owner. The inspection report, which is public, explains the findings and assessments made by the inspection authority. It is mainly the school owner's responsibility to inform the school about the results, but a copy of the report could be sent to the school (headteacher). Sometimes the inspectorate also writes a letter to parents about the findings. After (almost all) inspections there is a concluding meeting between the inspectors, school leaders and school owners. In this meeting the findings are presented and there could also be given some guidance. All inspection reports are as a routine published. It is an important issue that the methodology is transparent.

If inspections reveals that a school doesn't comply with the minimum standards expected, post-inspection reports contain a concrete description of what the school has to do to change their practice. The inspectorate considers all breaches of minimum standards as if the school is not delivering a practice in accordance with minimum standards. However the inspectorate does not grade its findings.

If violations of any rules are found, the inspection authority makes an individual decision with an injunction to rectify the violation. The school owner has the right to appeal the decision within three weeks. If the decision is sustained, the school owner must undertake necessary changes in order to comply with the injunction.

If inspections reveal a practice that is not in accordance with the minimum standards put out in the minimum standards, the school owner is obliged to ensure that the practice is changed. The inspectorate then sets a deadline for the school owner to give feedback. The feedback normally consists of a confirmation and documentation on which changes that have been done. If the inspectors are satisfied with the feedback, they close the inspection. If not satisfied, a new deadline for making necessary changes is normally given.

The inspectors will follow up a school owner until they can give sufficient proof that the school's practice is in accordance with the frameworks. In our situation this means in accordance with our Education Act or other regulations.



## Portugal

The Portuguese inspectorate works with groups of schools in a formal 'cluster'. School clusters were designed to increase efficiency in the management of resources and to improve articulated work between schools and pedagogical sequence. The Inspectorate has no statutory advisory role. However, whenever weaknesses are found during the inspection, it can provide recommendations built upon inspection activities, addressed to schools, to policy-makers and even to the Inspectorate itself. Its reports are public.

It is now a requirement that schools have to produce an improvement plan to respond to recommendations, and that the responsible authority will follow this up to assess the extent to which weaknesses are being overcome.

Schools are inspected according to three main areas. Firstly, results are considered in both academic and social respects. Secondly, the quality of the provision is examined including in teaching and learning, and planning. Thirdly, leadership and management are assessed with a focus on leadership and self-evaluation.

Schools may be rated unsatisfactory in any of the 3 evaluated domains. All the schools have to design an improvement plan after the external evaluation, whose implementation may be monitored by the Inspectorate. Those schools will be a 'monitoring priority' in our monitoring activity. Even schools rated at 'Satisfactory' levels are of major concern. They will be the second monitoring priority.

The Inspectorate does not support schools. It monitors the implementation of their development plan and interacts with school players (sometimes it works as a strategy to bring about improvement). Schools may find support resources, such as universities, critical friends, experts in specific areas and even private companies, as it happens frequently for the internal evaluation. Formally, the Direção Geral dos Estabelecimentos Escolares - a directorate with regional branches – has the support role assigned. However, this structure was recently launched and does not cover all the areas of school lives.

In one example, a school cluster in a disadvantaged area included an upper primary/lower secondary, a primary/kindergarten and two kindergartens. The inspectorate decided to make this cluster a priority based on an analysis of previous inspection reports and an examination of its data. The inspectorate then reviewed the four priority actions being taken by the school cluster, appraised the progress on each, and identified new development opportunities. They also analysed whether there were constraints on the school cluster's improvement.

Schools are not normally closed as a result of a poor inspection outcome. They can be closed if the number of students is small (under 20) or as part of the re-organization of the school network.

## Scotland

During the period 1983-2002 post-inspection support and challenge was referred to as 'follow up inspection.' Inspection reports were published from 1983 on.

Arrangements for follow-up were as follows:

- the inspection report always contained Key Strengths of the School and Main Points for Action
- the relevant Education Authority gave support to the school in addressing the actions
- inspectors returned after 2 years to evaluate the progress made by the school on the Main Points for Action and published a brief report
- if a school had a particularly negative report, inspectors returned after 1 year and again after 2, publishing a report each time
- this system worked well enough; between 75% and 89% of schools took this work very seriously and could demonstrate improvement. The quality of support from the education authorities was variable.

During the next phase, 2002 – 2011, post-inspection support was called 'Follow-through'. Over the period 1990 – 2000 (and onwards), self-evaluation had gradually become established in Scottish schools so that often the inspection 'Main Points for Action' already figured in the school's action (improvement) plan. Also, in the period 1998 – 2002, inspectors carried out evaluations of all education authorities (EA) which led to substantial improvements in the ways education authorities interacted with schools. The nature of what happened after an inspection changed (several times) to meet these new circumstances. Follow-through was tailored to the quality of provision in the school and account was taken of the quality of the support and challenge potential of the local authority. A number of options for the follow-through were put in place as follows, each school subject to one or a combination of the options :

- Option A: no further involvement, the EA published a letter for parents on how the school had followed through
- Option B: some additional support was provided by the EA (and sometimes by inspectors); the EA informed parents of progress after 2 years
- Option C: a further inspection was carried out by inspectors one year after the original report and inspectors published a letter for parents. A second follow-through was possible.
- Option D: where innovative practice had been found, inspectors revisited to seek detail or help the school present a case-study or video for wider distribution as good practice

In 2011 HMIE (the inspector body) amalgamated with Learning and Teaching Scotland (the curriculum and assessment support agency) to form Education Scotland. Arrangements are now being put in place in order to 1) emphasise that inspection is for improvement and 2) draw on the wider support team available within Education Scotland in order to build capacity in schools. To that end, the current arrangements build on the previous system but now, support can be provided by Education Scotland (HMI or development officers) to help secure improvement whether or not a further inspection is to be carried out.

Therefore Scotland does not have a cyclical approach to school inspection. A statistically valid sample of schools is inspected each year. There is also provision to conduct additional inspections as a direct response to risk or indeed best practice. For more information, please see section three of the document below:

[http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/SchoolInspectionFramework2011\\_tcm4-684005.pdf](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/SchoolInspectionFramework2011_tcm4-684005.pdf)

We do not use the approach of 'school failure' in Scotland. There is a trigger for further inspection activity which is where a school is weak or unsatisfactory in all three key indicators that we use for national performance benchmarking. But the approach to each school is tailored to that school, with support and advice from the local authority, ourselves and / or further inspection activity to best suit the school concerned.

All inspection reports are published and publicly available. At the end of each inspection week the inspection team discusses their findings with the headteacher, and they give a short summary of their findings orally to staff. At the end of the process, the evidence base found by inspectors is made available to the school headteacher, the local authority and the chair of the parent council. This provides much more detail than our short "letter form" reports that we issue at the end of the inspection, primarily targeted towards parents.

Schools are expected to incorporate their actions as a result of the inspection into their normal school improvement plan. Inspectors do not approve action plans arising from inspection, although they may give advice about what should be included. The responsibility for delivering and improving education lies with our 32 local authorities (municipalities), and so they would be involved directly with the school in ensuring the actions required after the inspection are implemented.

If a further inspection is required, this can take place within 6 months, but more usually one year or more after the original inspection. Our Area Lead Officers are HM Inspectors who link with each local authority. They would discuss any poor inspections with the authority to discuss progress and actions being taken.

The main responsibility for supporting the school is with the local authority. However, as an improvement agency Education Scotland can be involved in providing specialist advice and support to the school as part of their improvement plan. This would be negotiated with the local authority after the inspection.

Inspectors will continue to revisit the school until they are happy that improvement has been made. Should this be taking longer than it should, concerns are raised with the local authority, ensuring that they have a clear plan of action. Ultimately, HM Inspectors do not have the power to close a school. However, in such circumstances where there is a lack of progress being made, a recommendation for further action is made to the Minister for Education who has powers to intervene in a local authority or school to secure improvement. This has not happened in recent times, with the most that has been required being the Minister discussing the situation with the local authority concerned.

Where a school is not within local authority control – this is only around 3% of schools in Scotland – the same process described above applies. However, Education Scotland will work with the managing body to support improvement. Should this not occur, inspectors would make a recommendation to the Registrar of Independent Schools. The Registrar would then seek Ministerial support to impose improvement actions, or indeed close the school. This process has closed a school in recent times.

#### A CASE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

At the time of the inspection, the school was found to be satisfactory overall, but with some important weaknesses in self-evaluation. The school did not know itself well and, as a result, the findings from the inspection were less positive than most staff were expecting. On the whole, staff had difficulty in accepting the findings and were unclear about how to improve. Both deputy headteachers left their posts. The headteacher remained in post.

The Education Authority (EA) took strong and supportive action following the inspection. It deployed a quality improvement officer to work with the senior leadership team and staff. HMIE continued to engage with the school and EA to support on-going improvement and monitor progress. The district inspector met with the headteacher and senior EA representatives to discuss the inspection findings and advise on strategies for improvement. The headteacher was, at that stage, unable to come to terms with the inspection findings and unwilling to see where improvements were needed. The EA continued with focused support to the school. It supported staff to visit other schools to observe good practice and provided focused development activities to ensure that staff had the necessary training to help them to improve. The EA also supported the school to evaluate its work. Staff began to see where they had made improvements and there was a better understanding in the school about what needed to get better. The district inspector visited the school to talk with the senior management team and to visit classes. Staff were asked to volunteer to have a short visit and this process helped them see the original inspection in a more positive light.

Eighteen months later, the headteacher and staff had accepted the findings at the original inspection and had realised, through reflection and working with EA staff, what needed to be improved. There had been significant changes to staffing and the headteacher had found that the new staff group were keen to improve the school's provision and ensure high quality experiences for learners. There was a renewed enthusiasm and determination amongst staff, who were keen to demonstrate their new skills.

By the time of the HMIE follow-through inspection staff were very positive and proud of their achievements. The school had made good progress in each of the main points for action, notably in improving leadership and the quality of learning. Staff reported that dialogue with inspectors, EA officers and among themselves had supported their work and encouraged them to continue to improve. HMIE did not need to carry out any further visits in connection with the original inspection.

#### A CASE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL

At the time of the original inspection, the school was found to have important weaknesses in most aspects of its work including ethos, pupils' learning experiences, attainment and leadership, and major weaknesses in self-evaluation. The education authority took immediate action following the original inspection to support the school to improve.

Following the inspection, the education authority provided considerable additional support to the school to improve the way in which self-evaluation and improvement were carried out. Quality Improvement Officers worked closely with the headteacher, senior management team, departments and staff to support them in making the school better. HMIE continued to engage with the school and education authority to support improvement and monitor progress. The district inspector met education authority representatives and senior promoted staff in the school to discuss and advise on the way forward. The headteacher worked with staff to improve morale following negative reports in the local media and to encourage staff to work together more and discuss their teaching practice.

After a year the school's ethos had improved and staff were working better as a team. Staff had begun to improve learning and teaching and they were more involved in making decisions about the work of the school. The school had improved the way in which its work was monitored and evaluated, although the new systems were at an early stage of development. There was a need for further work to ensure impact on learners. After a further year, the school had regained the confidence of most staff and a significant number of parents who had removed their children from the school were happy for them to return. The education authority improved aspects of the building which enhanced the learning environment. Staff monitored the quality of learning more effectively, and the school's plans for improvement were more systematic. Inspectors were able to indicate that they would not undertake any further inspection visits in connection with the original inspection. The headteacher and staff reported that the original inspection and subsequent support work from the education authority and HMIE were real catalysts for change in the school. Many teachers had taken successful steps to improve their practice. The ethos of the school and behaviour of learners had changed significantly. Leadership had improved and this had resulted in improvements in outcomes for young people.

## Serbia

### **Building the system of external evaluation**

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia in the period prior to 2003 had a developed supervision system which was primarily focused on the teacher as an individual through professional and pedagogical supervision performed by pedagogical advisors, as well as on the legality of work of institutions for which education inspectors had responsibility.

In the period from 2003 to 2009 professional and pedagogical supervision was mainly performed in cases of parents' complaints about teachers' work, assessments of whether the teachers meet the requirements for obtaining a post in career development or assisting schools in implementing the self-assessment (self-evaluation) system developed under the project implemented with the British Council. Experience with application of the *Handbook on Self-Evaluation of School Work* and with the process of self-evaluation of school work in Serbia has shown that there were substantial opportunities for work quality improvement through implementing self-evaluation (self-assessment), as well as that self-evaluation (self-assessment) did not often lead to improvement of work or contribute to effective planning within the School Development Plan. However, the experiences gained through these processes, as well as evaluation areas defined as 7 domains, were later of considerable help in developing standards and instruments for external evaluation of the quality of the work of institutions.

The Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation (IEQE) launched a project in 2008 to assure the quality of education by strengthening the system of external evaluation and by the capacity-building of employees in the Institute and the state administration for activities of monitoring and evaluating the quality of schoolwork. The project with the aim of laying the foundations for external evaluation of schools lasted for four years in order to complete the building of the overall system and ensure sustainability. A number of activities were implemented under the project, including the improvement of the legal basis for introducing external evaluation and the development of by-laws, standards and instruments and other supporting materials for the needs of external evaluation, such as the development of The School Quality Framework, consisting of 30 standards and 158 indicators in the 7 quality (evaluation) domains. Upon its development, the National Educational Council adopted it, thus making it the official National Quality Framework. Before the adoption, the standards were also published for the public debate and through open hearing the educational employees had the opportunity to discuss and improve them. Within the project the methodology of external evaluation of schools was also developed and piloted on a suitable sample of schools. The handbook for external evaluators, consisting of the defined procedures, roles and responsibilities of the participants in the external evaluation of institutions, was developed, too.

The participation in the project of a wider international team comprised about ten experienced experts from Inspectorates of Education of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, England, Scotland and Germany, with the support of SICI (The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates) which provided an insight into a series of different experiences and options which enabled the system in Serbia to

take advantages and avoid potential “traps” in establishing the system of external evaluation.

In the period from 2011 to 2012 the training courses were organised with the aim to build the capacity of the employees who would be in charge of carrying out the external evaluation activities. The ten-day training courses, divided into four modules related to the activities of external evaluation, were delivered by SICI Inspection Academy for 137 external evaluators - pedagogical advisors. Also, 20 trainers were provided with a course in the implementation of the future training on external evaluation. The SICI certificates were awarded to all the participants who successfully completed the training. Only then did they become authorised to do the external evaluation of the schools within the system in Serbia.

In 2012 Serbia became a full member of the SICI family, which coincides with the beginning of the external evaluation of schools. Today regular evaluation of educational institutions is conducted every five years.

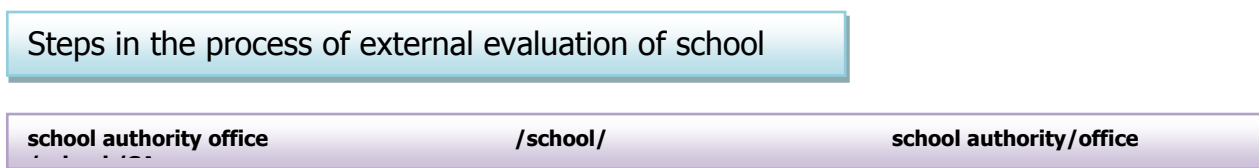
### **The process of evaluation of school quality**

The two by-laws, the “Rulebook on Standards of Work Quality of Institutions” and the “Rulebook on Evaluation of the Work of Institutions”, provide the basis for the legal framework for external evaluation of schools.

The process of external evaluation of school quality involves four steps (Picture 1):

1. Preparation and organisation of external evaluation
2. Direct evaluation - the school visit
3. Analysis and reporting
4. Follow-up activities

### **Picture 1. Steps in the process of external evaluation of school quality**



Preparation and organization of EE	School visit	Analyzing and reporting	Following activities
<b>Planning the evaluation of school quality</b> <b>Direct preparation of school visit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Preparing the plan of visit</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Informing the school about the evaluation</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Preparation of meeting with the school principal</i></li> </ul> <b>Team preparation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Analyzing document and data</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Preparation for monitoring activities</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Preparing the interview</i></li> </ul>	<b>Holding an introductory meeting</b> <b>Observing classes</b> <b>Observing other activities in school</b> <b>Interviews</b> <b>Team data analysis</b> <b>Giving feedback to the teachers</b> <b>Giving feedback to the school management</b>	<b>Team analysis of gathered data</b> <b>The choosing relevant data</b> <b>Writing a report</b> <b>Organizing the report</b> <b>Delivering the report to the school after 8 weeks</b>	<b>An opportunity to appeal against the procedures</b> <b>Data entry in the informational system</b> <b>Determining the Plan for improving school quality</b> <b>Self evaluation of the evaluation process</b>

Although there are 30 standards in the Quality Framework, 10 of them have been defined as the key standards in the evaluation. In addition to those key standards, the team numerically assesses the achievement of the so-called *chosen* standards out of the remaining 20. Based on the review of the documentation, as well as on the previous school reviews, these standards are identified by the team as particularly important given that they reflect the specific characteristics of the school. In the pre-visit (preparation) period, they are planned for the evaluation and further discussed during the school visit.

The overall quality of educational institutions can be assessed as 1, 2, 3 or 4, where 4 is the highest grade. In order for the general quality of an educational institution to be assessed as 2, 3 or 4, two conditions have to be met: (a) the school has to reach the necessary percentage of all the standards and (b) the required percentage of the key standards of the evaluation.

- Grade 4: (is awarded to) the schools that have achieved more than 75% of all the standards, including 100% of the key standards of the evaluation
- Grade 3: (is awarded to) the schools that have achieved more than 50% of all the standards, including 75% of the key standards of the evaluation
- Grade 2: (is awarded to) the schools that have achieved more than 30% of all the standards, including 50% of the key standards of the evaluation
- Grade 1: (is awarded to) the schools that have not reached the criteria for grade 2

The level of achievement of the key standards and the *chosen* standards in the final report also has a numerical value (1 to 4), followed by the necessary description and argumentation.



## Next steps – Beyond 2013

In the first year of conducting the external evaluation (2012/2013 school year) 257 primary schools (21.5% of the total number of primary schools) and 71 secondary schools (13.8% of the total number of secondary schools) were externally evaluated. The results of the external evaluation of the schools have been collected by the IEQE. The first report of the school quality will be presented to the national authorities and published by the end of June 2014. Upon the review of the current situation, the decision makers are expected to intervene in order to improve the educational system as a whole.

As part of its annual plan for 2014 and within the support for the system of education quality and evaluation at the national and institutional level, the IEQE has developed a new project: *Improving the quality of school after external evaluation*. It has been launched in order to provide support to those evaluated schools that have not met the minimum of quality standards. The project is expected to result in the defined and implemented models/programmes for the improvement of the quality of schools after the external evaluation, in their documented effectiveness in a selected number of schools and in the models of good practice to be further disseminated.

The IEQE and the Ministry will continue to work on developing the educational information system for external evaluators (web resource and web community of professionals), capacity building of external evaluators, the development of communication strategies for raising awareness of school life actors, development of support for schools for drawing up the school improvement plan after evaluation and implementation of improvement activities.

## Slovak Republic

Inspections are carried out at all types of schools irrespective of the type of founder according to the annual plan of inspection and evaluation activities. However schools showing evidence of weaker outcomes or other concerns such as complaints are given more attention and higher priority.

A school might “fail” its inspection if it fails to pass the given standards and criteria set as quality indicators in the inspection methodology - not fulfilling the requested norms in the followed areas of concern.

Feedback on what inspectors have found is offered to the teacher after the lesson observation, and also to the headteacher after the whole inspection process is complete. The outcomes of inspection are presented in a report that is discussed with the school management. The report is accessible to the school founder and school board where also parents are involved. Schools provide annual reports on their activities, which should include when inspection was carried out.

If weaknesses are found the school is given a chance to improve the current situation by suggesting the proposals for improvement in the identified areas or problems within a given time period. If the school is unable to satisfactorily propose

its improvement procedures, they can be proposed or formulated by the inspectorate. The school is requested or expected to write a report about improvements and the resolution of problems and send this to the school inspectorate. The progress and current state at school is checked and assessed by the follow-up inspection.

SSI has got specific arrangements for follow-up inspection to assess fulfilment of the requested improvements, usually within a year, depending on the seriousness and severity of failings.

The school inspectorate in Slovakia supports school improvement by helping the school to make suitable improvements and can even make some suggestions or requirements concerning the negative findings such as violations of the law, etc. often in cooperation with school founders. The shortcomings are identified, the consequences are applied. The implementation of suggested improvements is checked and monitored in a follow-up inspection. It is up to the school management to take the action and to make necessary changes. A time line for the action depends on the severity of shortcomings and suggested solutions.

In the case of a repeated failure of the school to remove its problematic aspects and show improvement, SSI can use any of the following options:

- request the school founder to dismiss the headteacher (the proposal is binding for school founder)
- propose to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport to exclude the school from the school network system.

## Sweden

Since 2003 the Swedish inspectorate has inspected all schools twice in a 5 year cycle covering about 6000 schools. The inspectorate also uses risk assessment to decide how long time to spend at each school; weaker schools are allocated more time, usually 2-3 days, while in good schools there may only be an interview with the headteacher taking up no more than half a day.

Every school gets a decision or judgement after the inspection. In their decision the inspectors have the following options when evaluating the school:

- no intervention
- critical observation
- order 10 under penalty of fine
- withdraw of approval in independent schools or state measures for correction (municipal schools)
- temporary prohibition to operate

Inspectors present the decisions to the responsible persons in the municipality, the principals, teachers, and politicians. Often the inspectorate organises this meeting like a seminar to explain the evidence informing the decisions and to discuss

solutions. The inspectorate also sends a letter to the parents about the findings. We publish all decisions on the website. We give the schools and the municipality 3- 6 months to answer and to explain their activities for providing solutions to what has been criticised. Most municipalities will be visited for this follow up.

The schools do not have to produce a formal action plan but they must send a letter to the inspectorate with answers that directly relate to the judgements; it means that an answer and description on all the points that have been criticised has to be provided.

The inspectorate is not directly involved in support more than in helping schools to understand why they have been criticised and explaining the meaning of the regulations. Our sister organisations are responsible support and advice.

## Wales

The name of the inspectorate in Wales is Estyn. Currently, Estyn inspects all schools within a six-year period. Depending on the outcomes of the inspection, the school may need additional 'follow-up' visits. This can range from identifying excellent practice to recommending special measures.

If a school is not performing as well as it should be, Estyn identifies the specific areas that need improving and carries out follow-up visits to monitor progress. There are four levels of follow-up, including two statutory categories for schools that are causing significant concern, namely schools identified as being 'in need of significant improvement' and schools identified as requiring 'special measures'.

During the inspection, inspectors have a professional dialogue with individual teachers after observing them teach. Inspectors do not share judgements, but discuss strengths and shortcomings. At the end of the inspection, inspectors provide verbal feedback to the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. All inspection reports are public documents and are published on the Estyn website so they are available for anyone to read. The school must ensure that all parents know how to obtain a copy of the report, either by providing them with one, or directing them to Estyn's website.

All schools are expected to produce a post-inspection action plan that they share with parents and other interested parties. If a school is placed into one of the two statutory categories, the school must send its post-inspection action plan to Estyn for approval. The local authority must also prepare a statement of action to support this and send it to Estyn for approval. If necessary, Estyn will request improvements to these documents. When Estyn carries out monitoring visits, inspectors use these plans to support their work.

Schools identified as needing follow-up receive additional visits from inspectors. Depending on the level of follow-up, these normally take place about a year after the publication of the report. In the case of schools in special measures, Estyn normally visits every three to four months, until the school has made sufficient progress.

The following table summarises how Estyn responds to schools with different judgements:

Category	Explanation
Excellent practice	If a school gains any excellent judgements and is, therefore, identified as having sector-leading practice in one or more areas they will be invited to write a case study to share with other schools. The case study may be published on the Estyn website or shared with other schools through Estyn events or conferences.
Local authority monitoring	If inspectors judge a small number of quality indicators as adequate, Estyn will place it in local authority monitoring. The local authority will work with the school to address the recommendations highlighted in the report. Local authority officers will discuss progress with Estyn's local authority link inspector regularly. About a year after the publication of the inspection report, the local authority will write a report for Estyn, explaining how the school has progressed. If the school has made good progress, Estyn will remove it from local authority monitoring. If progress has been insufficient, Estyn will normally visit to school to decide whether the school needs more intensive follow-up.
Estyn monitoring	This level of activity will be required when at least one of the overall judgements for a school is adequate, but it is not causing concern to the extent of requiring significant improvement or special measures. Normally a small team of Estyn inspectors will visit the school to judge progress around a year to 18 months after the publication of the report. After that time, if the school has made good progress, Estyn will remove it from Estyn monitoring. If progress has been insufficient, inspectors will consider whether the school requires significant improvement or special measures.
Significant improvement	If inspectors judge that a school is performing significantly less well than expected and requires significant improvement, Estyn will inform the Welsh Government that the school has been placed in this statutory category. The school must send its action plan to Estyn for approval. A small team of Estyn inspectors will usually visit the school to judge progress around a year to 18 months after the publication of the inspection report. After that time, if the school has made good progress, Estyn will remove it from the category of significant improvement. If progress is insufficient, the team will consider whether the school requires special measures.
Special measures	If inspectors judge that a school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and that school leaders are not demonstrating the capacity to secure improvement in the school, Estyn will identify the school as requiring special measures. Estyn will inform the Welsh Government that it has been placed in this statutory category. The school must send its action plan to Estyn for approval. A small team of Estyn inspectors will usually visit the school every term following the publication of the inspection report. Inspectors

	will focus on the progress the school has made towards addressing the recommendations highlighted in the report. Estyn will continue to carry out monitoring visits until Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decides that the school has improved enough to remove it from special measures.
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If problems have been identified, it is the local authority's responsibility to work alongside senior leaders in schools and the governing body to support school improvement. However, local authorities often work with regional consortia and other agencies to develop a specific support package. Many schools requiring improvement work with other, more successful schools to share good practice. In some cases, schools or local authorities bring senior leaders and teachers from other schools to work in the school.

Schools that do not make sufficient progress over time can move into a more intense level of follow-up. Where schools still fail to improve, local authorities and Welsh Government have a range of powers that they can use. These include appointing additional governors, replacing the governing body with an interim executive board of people with specific skills and experience to support the school or, ultimately, closing the school.