

Country Profile FRANCE

1. Basic information –

Country name:
FRANCE

Structure of inspectorate: Are you organised centrally or by region/state? Does inspection regulation or standards vary across regions or states?

We have a central organisation, the general inspectorate, as well as regional inspections in each of our 30 educational regions (académies) managed by a recteur (regional representative of the minister of education).

Age of inspectorate: How long have you been established for? What was your predecessor organisation (i.e. who did inspection before you?)

IGEN (Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale) was created in 1802 by Napoleon.

IGAENR (Inspection générale de l'administration de l'Education nationale et de la Recherche) was created in 1965.

The regional inspectorates have been set up progressively since 1964.

Size: How many inspectors do you have? How many central/policy staff do you have?

240 general inspectors, at central level. There are two general inspectorates: IGEN specialised in primary and secondary education; IGAENR which is competent in the field of Higher education and focuses mainly on the evaluation of institutions.

1300 regional inspectors for secondary education based at regional level. They are subject based and also have a role of advisors of the recteur.

1400 inspectors for primary education based at local level.

Remits: What form of education do you inspect? E.g. early years, schools, universities? Anything that is non-education?

French inspectors inspect in the field of education, from early years to universities.

The format and method is very different between primary and secondary education on the one hand, tertiary education on the other hand.

We focus on individual teachers' inspection at primary and secondary level. The focus is pedagogical. Universities are seen from a more general point of view, with an inspection cycle. There is no individual inspection of university professors or teaching. The focus is administrative and financial.

Unit of inspection: Do you inspect schools or groups of schools (or both?) Do you inspect teachers, or subject departments? Do you inspect local authorities?

In primary and secondary education, French inspectors inspect mainly teachers in their subject field.

In Higher education, institutions as a whole and/ or subject departments can be inspected.

Local authorities are not inspected.

What is your strapline?

No strapline in the French Inspectorate.

Relationship with government: Do you operate as part of the Education Ministry, or are you independent? Briefly explain the legal relationship you have with the Ministry (e.g. any reporting duties)? Are you allowed to report on government policy? Are you allowed to publish reports without govt approval?

The Inspectorate is part of the Ministry of Education.

The general inspectorates report directly to the minister of education and the minister of Higher education. All thematic reports need the minister's approval before they are published.

The regional inspectorates report directly to the recteur of the académie. There are no public reports at this level.

Accountability: What are you accountable for delivering? Where is this set out? (e.g. in legislation or in a policy document?) How are you held to account as an organisation (e.g. must you report annually)?

The duties of the French inspectorates are listed in legal documents.

The general inspectorates have a number of permanent duties:

IGEN is in charge of assessing every aspect of teaching and learning. It also contributes to the recruitment process of teachers, school heads and inspectors at regional level.

IGAENR is in charge of evaluating the organisation of Higher education institutions, focusing on administrative and financial aspects.

Both inspectorates also have a number of specific temporary missions, which change every year and are listed in an official document signed by the ministers of education and Higher education.

Both inspectorates are legally required to publish a yearly report for the benefit of Parliament.

2. Evaluation process – this should be in short paragraphs

Self-evaluation: Do you have a form of self-evaluation (i.e. do you expect institutions to report on themselves?) If so, briefly explain how this relates to external evaluation.

Self-evaluation exists but is not very formalised in France.

It is mainly developed at primary level. Self-evaluations are tools which prepare external evaluation and help inspectors to assess the school.

In secondary education, teachers are encouraged to prepare their inspection with a self-evaluation framework which is provided to them. This is not mandatory.

What do you examine during inspection? Do you look at finances? Do you look at legal compliance? Do you observe and/or grade lessons?

In the most common case, at primary and secondary level, inspectors mainly observe elements of the teaching and learning process. It is a three-step process: observation of a lesson followed by a one to one discussion between the inspector and the teacher, and an interview between the school head and the teacher. The teacher is graded on the basis of the results of this process.

The specific act of individual teacher's evaluation is more and more completed by a number of other activities where teamwork is encouraged: on the part of inspectors and on the part of teachers and leaders of the school.

In higher education institutions, IGAENR has a systemic approach but does not inspect professors.

Do you have an inspection framework? Is this a quality or compliance model? Do you evaluate the quality of education or teaching, or report against a series of non-qualitative standards? How does this work?

France has a national framework for the inspection of teachers. It is both a compliance and a quality model.

It lists a series of items relating to three main categories:

- Quality of teaching and command of the subject taught.*
- Level of involvement in the school project.*
- Global skills as an educator.*

In Higher education, a specific process is defined for every inspection.

Inspection time and resource. How long are your inspections? Do they last several days, or shorter? How many people go on inspection? What sort of qualifications/experience do they have? i.e. are they former head teachers, lawyers or accountants?

In primary and secondary education, an inspection lasts about half a day: class observation, one to one discussion and exchange with the school head. It only involves one inspector. Inspectors are mainly former teachers and teacher trainers. They are recruited through a competitive exam.

In Higher education, inspectors are generally a team of two or three and they assess the institution either globally or on one particular aspect.

Frequency of inspections: Do you have set inspection cycles? How long are these? Are they risk-based or not? If risk-based, what information do you use for assessing risk?

Institutions of Higher education are assessed on a risk based approach.

Teachers in primary and secondary education are inspected every four or five years, depending on the level of education and the subject matter.

Main business: Do you do anything that is not inspection? E.g. pre-registration or providers, or other forms of regulation? Are you involved in complaints examination? Do you take part in competition of headmasters?

Inspectors have many tasks other than inspections; these are mainly:

-the definition and assessment of implementation and impact of reforms.

-Thematic reports required by the government

-monitoring of exams (exam papers- exam boards-)

-recruitment and training of teachers

-recruitment and training of school heads and inspectors

-complaints examination.

-supporting school leaders and teachers.

-advising policy-makers at regional and national levels.

3. Consequences of inspection

Reporting: Do you publish your reports on institutions? If so, who reads them and how are they used? (e.g. to help parents make school choices?)

The annual report is published and communicated to parliament.

Thematic reports are published by request of the ministers concerned

Reports on institutions and teachers are not public.

Grade: Do you grade institutions? If so, how many do you have? Are there any rewards for getting the top grade? Or any punishment for getting the lowest?

Teachers are graded and this has an impact of their career evolution.

Institutions are not graded.

Knowledge sharing: How do you use the findings of inspection? Do you use thematic reporting, and publish your findings?

Thematic reporting is very developed in France and considered useful by policy makers and heads of schools and higher education institutions. Knowledge and analysis are usually shared with the institutions concerned.

What happens following an inspection? Do schools shut down? Are the weak ones partnered with other schools; the strong ones allowed to flourish?

Schools and institutions are not shut down or show- cased following an inspection. If needed, the school or the teacher is requested to follow a professional development plan to improve results and methods.

What is the stated purpose of your inspectorate? Do you have a theory of action about how improvement is achieved through inspection?

The tradition in France was that the quality of teaching determines the quality of education and the success of students and pupils. This explains why so much emphasis has been put on the observation of teachers. This focus is now shifting more and more towards a more collective approach, which leads to paying more attention to team work and leadership at school level.