

## INSPECTION PROFILE

### 1. Basic information

**Country name:** Austria

**Structure of inspectorate:** The Austrian Inspectorate applies both structures: the inspectorates for the state schools are organised centrally by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research, whereas the schools in the provinces or regions are organised by the Boards of Education in the Federal Provinces and inspected by regional school inspectors. The inspection regulations and standards are set by the state and lie in the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research. There are also nine regional Boards of Education in the Federal Provinces which organise their inspection regions themselves.

**Age of inspectorate:** School inspectors have been monitoring the education system ever since Maria Theresia introduced the obligatory school attendance in 1774. Some key dates of changes were 1849 (Introduction of a three-tier school inspection with : Provincial Board of Education, District Board of Education and School Headmaster), and 1974 (Austrian School Education Act), or 2012 (Federal School Inspection Act).

**Size:** All in all, there are 390 inspectors (Landesschulinspektor/innen) in the nine Boards of Education (Landeschulräte). Education controlling and school quality management are carried out by so called Landesschulinspektor/innen, Pflichtschulinspektor/innen and Fachinspektor/innen (regional school inspectors, district school inspectors for 6 to 14 year olds, subject-matter inspectors for sports, music, drawing and handicraft, etc.)

**Remits:** The following forms of education are inspected: primary schools, secondary schools : secondary school stage I with grammar schools, new middle schools and comprehensive schools; secondary school stage II with upper-level academic grammar schools and with upper-level vocational schools (four year course) as well as advanced vocational colleges (five year course with final exam and university qualification); special schools; private schools (operated by the Roman Catholic and the Protestant church, as well as by other denominations, or other private providers); adult and evening schools, specialist vocational schools in engineering, childcare, commerce, tourism, fashion, hotel and catering, etc.; work-based learning; community learning schools for all ages.

**Unit of inspection:** School inspectors in Austria inspect primary, secondary and adult education, whereby they inspect all aspects of education as, for example, teachers, classes, headmasters or principals, subject groups, the realisation of curricula, final examinations, certificates and diploma issued by the schools, and the compliance with laws, decrees and educational regulations. They are also responsible for quality management, i.e. for the quality of teaching and learning, for the development of the school, for staffing and for cooperations of schools with external organisations.

**The strapline of the Austrian inspectorate is:** "Equality of opportunity and successful education for all". The mission and vision of the new Austrian inspectorate is to improve the quality of teaching and learning at all schools. In order to achieve that, we need common quality criteria, a nationwide education monitoring and output-oriented as well as competence-oriented teaching. In this respect, school inspectors take over the task of controlling the quality of teaching and learning, of organisation development, of staff development, of the allocation of resources, of curriculum development, of educational strategies for the future, and of quality assurance.

**Relationship with government:** The government, in the form of the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Research, is the central authority that determines the work profile and the educational

tasks of the inspectorate. Inspectors have to act according to the laws on education, to decrees from the ministry, to the curricula and to concrete incidents that happen at the various schools. The relationship with the government is, however, excellent, especially since all inspectors act as ministry agents. All inspectors have reporting duties in the form of quality reports which the schools edit, the inspectors evaluate and then send on to the ministry. It is not the task of the inspectorates to report on government policy, but in staff meetings inspectors from the various types of schools also have an impact on the future strategies in education. The regional inspectorates do not publish any reports, because this is the task of the ministry. In the regions, it is the task of the Boards of Education to inform the general public about educational matters and to talk to the media.

**Accountability:** The inspectors are accountable for delivering all the necessary information that the ministry needs about a school, also for coordinating new educational projects like standardised final examinations or new curricula, as well as for the realisation of pedagogical matters. The inspection profile which is set out in the “Bundesschulaufsichtsgesetz” (Federal School Inspection Act) rules in § 18 that school inspectors are quality managers who have to define and describe school quality, who have to submit school development plans, quality reports and quality programs of schools, who must also carry out target agreements and staff appraisals, and who also operate and provide instruments for education controlling, self-evaluation and miscellaneous administrative matters. Concerning their work, the school inspectors in the regions are held accountable by the various Boards of Education and by the General Director of Education. At the same time, they must also report to the Ministry of Education, Science and Research on request and in three to four annual meetings.

## 2. Evaluation process

**Self-evaluation:** Self-evaluation of the inspectorate is not a statutory requirement, however, the schools have to submit quality reports in which they present their strengths and weaknesses, also their plans for development, as well as their school-specific activities. There are two quality management systems which require self-evaluation as part of the quality reports which are edited every two years. These two systems are called SQA – School Quality in General Education - and QIBB – Quality Initiative in Vocational Education and Training. External evaluation is not so much exercised as peer evaluation, the idea behind that is that self-evaluation of a school’s performance can then be inspected by the competent inspector and measures of improvement can then be discussed, planned and organised for each school.

**What do you examine during inspection?** During an inspection which can take place at least two times a year, the school organisation is first of all looked at accurately. This means that the lessons teachers have to teach in a week, the timetable, the room allocation plan, the class registers, the relevant forms for certificates and diploma, some written records of different meetings at the school, relevant school statistics, school-autonomous curriculum regulations, staff development plans, school targets for the current school year, current and planned quality measures, external partnerships and other criteria have to be checked. Inspectors do not look at the finances of a school, they do, however, look at resource parameters, e.g. how high the standard conversion factor per student is in a school. For the above-mentioned topics, legal compliance is also monitored. The observation and grading of lessons is the task of the Principal, however, if special problems arise the inspectors go in and observe and grade the teachers.

**Do you have an inspection framework? Is this a quality or compliance model?** The Austrian inspection framework is based on both quality and compliance. In terms of compliance, inspectors must check and monitor if the schools comply with the legal regulations, the curricula and the educational standards. In terms of quality, the inspectors help the schools to improve their quality, they read and assess the school quality reports, they put together their own regional quality reports

on their schools, and they help the school to assess their performance. School inspectors are in a permanent form of dialogue with the school they are responsible for, they have a controlling function, but they also encourage and accompany the schools on their way to educational excellence. Inspection visits are rarely carried out by inspection teams, but mostly by individual inspectors who have a good relationship with the school Principal and also show this trust in their schools. In this connection, it is also important to note that there are quality standards for nearly all subjects in the various schools and that it is the task of the inspectors to help the schools reach these standards.

**Inspection time and resource:** Inspections can generally last a few hours or up to a couple of days. Most inspection work is carried out at the desk in the inspectors' office, whereby school data are analysed, information from the ministry or from schools is forwarded to the various recipients, and administrative matters concerning the schools for which the inspectors are responsible are dealt with. Contacts between the School Principals and the Inspectors are frequent, also staff meetings with different subject-matter working groups, or with task forces from the various schools that have to implement new educational measures. Usually, one inspector goes to the school for which he or she is responsible. If needed, inspection teams can also carry out these inspection visits. All inspectors in Austria have a teaching background and have either been teachers or principals before they became inspectors. They have academic teaching degrees at secondary level or teaching qualifications (can also be academic) at primary level. Inspectors must have at least six years of teaching or school-leading experience before they become inspectors. Candidates have to apply to the Board of Education and are then chosen in a hearing.

**Frequency of inspections:** There are no set inspection cycles, however, the organisation of the school, the number of students and classes, the number of teachers and the subjects they teach, as well as the new staff that is needed, are exactly analysed and evaluated at the beginning and at the end of each school year. If certain risks arise, for example, that a school loses students or that there are reports about the decreasing quality of teaching, inspectors also visit the school and carry out a risk-based inspection. In any case, the school inspectors play an important role in the quality assurance of the quality of teaching and the quality of a school, normally, they also carry out three types of inspection: thematic inspections, risk-based inspections and strategic inspections. Thereby, the inspectors check and monitor all school activities, give advice, and control the compliance with the legal regulations.

**Main business:** In addition to inspection, Austrian school inspectors are also involved in pedagogical guidance, strategic planning and coordination, whereby they work together with the schools, but also with universities and teacher trainer universities, with the industry and with other public institutions. In this respect they are also involved in organising competitions for students, providing external certificates and liaising with sponsors and the general public. A second field that inspectors additionally deal with is complaint and conflict management, whereby they get involved in staff meetings, individual talks, problem-solving meetings, or the writing of expert reports related to specific topics. In terms of school and organisation development as well as of quality assurance, the inspectors also organise meetings related to pedagogy, to subject-matter content, to social and personal competences, as well as to quality management, evaluation and education controlling. Last but not least, they are also involved in the staffing of the schools that is mainly carried out by the Board of Education in cooperation with the headmasters and the inspectors.

### **3. Consequences of inspection**

**Reporting:** The Ministry of Education, Science and Research publishes a National Education Report. For that, data from all schools and all inspectors are needed. The data gathered give information and

feedback on the results of the final examinations, they inform about the levels reached in the testing of educational standards in all subjects, and they show, in the form of school quality reports, but also in school programs and school websites, what the specific quality criteria of a school are. Inspectors themselves do not publish an inspection report, they do, however, write a number of expertises on school-related topics, on staff issues, on pedagogical matters and on administrative business. In Austria, Inspectors and reports do not help parents make school choices.

**Grade:** Schools in Austria are not graded. It is government policy not to publish any school rankings.

**Knowledge sharing:** The findings of an inspection are discussed in the different staff meetings that inspectors in a region or nationwide have. By comparison and by pooling information on the schools of the same type, all inspectors who come together from the different regions can draw their conclusions, can share their knowledge and can develop common strategies to overcome problems or to implement necessary measures in the future. The results from the inspectors' meetings are recorded in minutes and are made available to the ministry and other representatives of the government. Otherwise, the findings are not published, they might only appear as thematic chapters in the various quality reports.

**What happens following an inspection?** Inspectors study the school reports and then edit their own regional reports if required. A certain consequence of an inspection is that suggestions and proposals are made as to how certain aspects of school quality and the quality of teaching can be improved. Together with the management of the school, target agreements are mutually agreed upon, the achievements of the past school year(s) are analysed, and advice for improvement in the coming school year is given. As a result, the school defines its own targets and makes a commitment to achieve them.

**What is the stated purpose of your inspectorate?** The stated purpose of the work of Austrian school inspectors is to inspect, to inform, to encourage, to innovate and to evaluate. As the intermediaries between the ministry and the schools, the inspectors are always at the forefront of information, they can inform the schools about good practice and they can encourage self-reflection. Although inspectors are individual performers, they have a privileged 360 degree view of education, they get the bigger picture, and they can serve as implementers and as shape shifters. In Austria, inspection guarantees that the schools are accountable for managing their teaching and learning processes, the inspectors are responsible for school as well as quality development, and they also have a policy informing function.