

## **Inspectorate Profile**

### **The State School Inspectorate, Slovak republic**

**August 2024**

#### **1. Overview of the Inspectorate**

##### **Age of inspectorate**

Our institution has been founded in year 2000.

##### **Structure of inspectorate**

Our institution is organized at the national level with an Inspectorate headquarters and eight regional centers aligned with the eight regions of Slovakia. Regulation applies uniformly across all regions, ensuring consistency nationwide.

##### **Size**

Our structure currently includes 150 school inspectors, supported by 15 leading managers (7 at the headquarters and 8 in the regions). There are currently 13 employees working as policy/data staff at the HQ.

##### **Remits**

We regulate all levels of education except tertiary education.

##### **Unit of inspection**

Our inspection process involves inspecting individual schools and school facilities within the official network of schools and school facilities.

##### **Purpose of inspectorate**

According to legislation (Act No. 596/2003 Coll., as amended), ŠŠI serves as the state's oversight authority for the quality of pedagogical management, education and training, and material-technical conditions, including practical training in schools and educational institutions, at practical training workplaces, and in special educational institutions and educational counseling and prevention centers.

During inspections, we conduct both normative inspections (compliance with legal and departmental regulations) and qualitative inspections (assessing the quality of the educational process and other aspects).

### **What is your strapline/motto?**

Critical friend of schools and education facilities

### **Relationship with government**

According to legislation (Act nr. 596/2003 Coll., as amended), our institution is considered independent from the Ministry of Education. However, there are financial ties to the ministry's budget, and we inherently cooperate with the Ministry of Education. One of the most significant forms of cooperation is the annual release of the Inspection Process Report to the Ministry of Education in November, which is subsequently published for the public. Additionally, we submit the plan of inspections for the upcoming school year to the Ministry.

### **Accountability**

See previous question - according to legislation (Act No. 596/2003 Coll., as amended), our institution is deemed independent from the Ministry of Education. However, we inherently cooperate with the Ministry. One of the most significant forms of cooperation is the annual release of the Inspection Process Report to the Ministry in November, which is subsequently published for the public. This can be deemed as a policy document. We also submit the inspection plan for the next school year to the Ministry.

### **Impact of inspections**

If, during a school inspection, deficiencies related to violations of legal regulations are identified, the school principal (SP) is obliged to take measures to eliminate the identified deficiencies. The implementation of these measures in practice is monitored through a follow-up inspection. Additionally, at regular intervals, we reach out to the SPs where we have conducted comprehensive inspections in the past, requesting their feedback on the inspection process and its contribution to the school's processes.

### **Quality assurance of inspections**

Given that Slovakia does not have defined criteria for a quality school, the State School Inspectorate (ŠŠI) had to develop its own quality criteria, also based on international cooperation and analysis of other countries' practices. All the tools we use are first validated and only after validation are they employed to assess quality. We also compare our findings with the school's internal evaluation (self-assessment), although conducting self-assessment is not a legal requirement. Additionally, we compare our results with national and international assessments (such as T9, EČ and PFIC MS, PISA, TIMMS, and others).

## **2. Evaluation process**

### **Self-evaluation**

During a complex inspection, the State School Inspectorate (ŠŠI) monitors whether the school uses self-evaluation processes to improve the quality of its own pedagogical work. If the school principal indicates that self-evaluation processes are carried out in certain areas, school inspectors analyze these processes (including the tools used and the results) and assess their impact on improving the school's quality. If the self-evaluation processes are systematic and well-planned with a positive impact on the school's quality, this positively influences the overall evaluation of the school in "School Management." However, if the school does not implement self-evaluation processes, it does not negatively affect the school's evaluation (since it is not a legal requirement). This evaluation model by the school inspection is intended to positively motivate schools to adopt a system of autonomous care for their own quality.

### **Focus of inspection**

ŠŠI serves as the state's oversight authority for the quality of pedagogical management, education and training, and material-technical conditions, including practical training in schools and educational institutions, at practical training workplaces, and in special educational institutions and educational counseling and prevention centers. In this capacity, it handles complaints and petitions. The ŠŠI's jurisdiction does not include areas of financing or labor law.

We assess the inspected entity on a five-point scale, separately evaluating the areas of school management, school conditions, and the educational process. The educational process is assessed based on observations (inspections) focused on student activities, with an emphasis on supporting and developing their competencies. We conduct normative inspections (compliance with legal and departmental regulations) as well as qualitative inspections (through observations/inspections).

### **Inspection framework**

ŠŠI has developed its own quality criteria, which are divided into three areas of evaluation: school management, conditions for education and training, and the educational process. Each area has specific indicators that we verify, assess, and evaluate using developed tools. Our goal is to ensure that each indicator is validated from multiple sources. We have also established a unified evaluation system. Every school inspector must adhere to the methodology approved by the Head School Inspector and follow the prescribed guidelines, utilizing all the tools that are part of the methodology.

During inspections, we conduct both normative inspections (compliance with legal and departmental regulations) and qualitative inspections (assessing the quality of the educational process and other aspects).

## **Inspection time and resources**

Complex inspections typically last 5 to 8 days (2 to 4 days in kindergartens), while some thematic inspections may take just 1 day, and others 2 to 4 days. The duration of the inspection always depends on the subject of the inspection and the size of the school. The inspection team usually consists of 2 to 8 members, with the number varying depending on the type and size of the school.

To become a school inspector, one must meet the qualification requirements for higher education relevant to the specific type, kind, and level of school or educational institution. Additionally, the individual must have at least eight years of professional experience in a school or educational institution, have passed the first qualification exam, and have held a managerial position for at least three years.

## **Frequency of inspections**

The legal framework for inspection cycles related to complex inspections is outlined in Decree No. 137/2005. According to this legislation, there is a mandated five-year inspection cycle, meaning that each school must undergo a complex inspection at least once every five years. Generally, inspections are scheduled annually as part of a planned program or triggered by complaints, so the frequency of inspections may vary.

## **Non-inspection activities**

One of the primary tasks of the ŠŠI is the investigation of complaints. Additionally, school inspectors serve as members of selection committees for the appointment of school principals. Based on our findings and experiences, we submit proposals to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MSVVaM SR) for amendments to legal and departmental regulations.

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

#### **Reporting**

Since January 1, 2020, the reports from individual inspections have been published on our website, making them accessible to parents, students, teachers, and the public.

#### **Grading**

We evaluate schools using a five-point scale; however, this evaluation has no impact on their funding, rewards, or penalties.

#### **Sharing inspection findings**

During the school year, in addition to complex inspections, we also conduct thematic inspections focused on various topics. All inspections are compiled into summary reports for Slovakia based on their type. These reports serve as the foundation for the "Report on the State and Quality of Education in Slovakia" for the relevant school year, which the Head School Inspector presents to the Minister of Education. This report is also presented to the Education Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

The "Report on the State and Quality..." not only includes key findings from the inspections but also provides recommendations for school principals, school founders, professional and occupational organizations, and the system as a whole (i.e., the Ministry of Education and its directly managed organizations). Current findings are regularly published on our website and presented at meetings of school principals and various associations.

#### **What happens following an inspection?**

If legal violations are identified during an inspection, a follow-up inspection is conducted after a certain period to ensure that the identified deficiencies have been addressed. If no corrective action has been taken, the Head School Inspector may propose to the school founder the dismissal of the school principal or submit a proposal to the Ministry for the removal of the school or educational institution from the Network of Schools and Educational Institutions in Slovakia. The reasons for such actions are defined by law. Fines are also applicable in some cases foreseen by law.