



Norwegian Directorate
for Education and Training

Inspection of Kindergartens and Education in NORWAY

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1 Introduction

Inspections in the educational sector are relatively new in Norway. National inspections in 2006 indicated the start of coordinated inspectorate efforts for the educational sector.

The department of inspection was established in 2008. During the period from 2006 to the present day, inspection activities have become more widely prioritized as an instrument for reaching political goals for education and training. The scope and extent of the Inspectorate's activities in this period has increased, and work has been done to further develop inspection methods and operational models for inspections.

Inspectorate activities in Norway are not the so called "full-scale inspections of all schools".

The central government has established national goals for learning and issued broad guidelines as a general framework. National standards are ensured through legislation, periodic and regular controls, curricula and general framework plans.

The education sector is one of many public sectors with responsibility for the municipalities, County Councils, and private institutions. The Education Act is a comprehensive and detailed Act. *Summed up, the Education Act regulates how the education should be carried out, what responsibility each party has, what rights the students have and what procedures the students/parents must follow if they need to complain about the education they receive.*

The essential principle of the Norwegian educational system is that students have an equal right to education, regardless of where they live, gender, social and cultural background or any special needs.

Legal regulation has always been the preferred management instrument in Norway. All sectors, both private and public, have to meet the requirements set by the law.

Within the Education Act there is a wide opportunity for local adjustments. All inspections are therefore based on a common national interpretation of the Education Act.

Inspection of the kindergartens

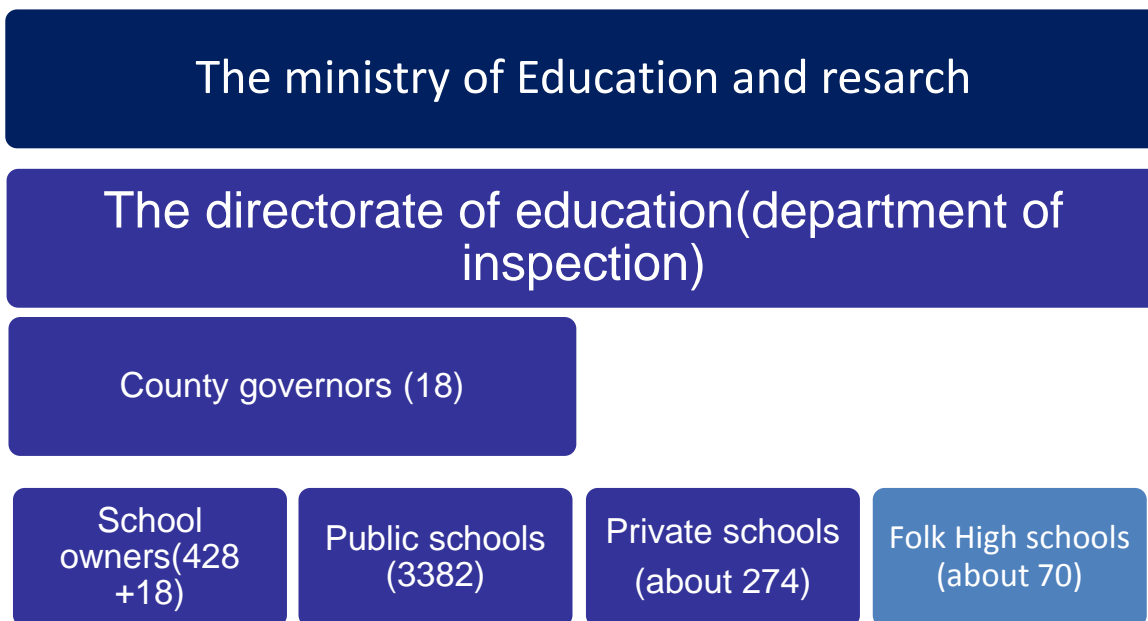
Inspections of the kindergartens have until recently been coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research. In 2012 the Directorate for Education and Training took over the responsibility for coordinating inspection with kindergartens. From 2014 these inspections are carried out with the same methodology as school inspection.

The County Governors carry out the public school inspections. They also carry out inspections towards the municipalities' responsibility with kindergartens. Inspections with kindergartens are carried out at municipality level, not in each kindergarten. The inspections contain control with the municipality's responsibilities by law. The municipalities are responsible for providing and running public kindergartens, as well as for approving and supervising both public and private kindergartens in the municipality. The municipalities are by law required to ensure that the kindergartens are operated within their approval framework and that the contents comply with legislation,

regulations and the framework plan. In addition the municipalities have an active responsibility for providing guidance to the kindergartens within their municipality.

2 The Norwegian inspection system

The different actors in the Norwegian Inspection system – an overview



1) *The Ministry of Education and Research...*

...bears the overall responsibility for the Education Act, Private School Act and Folk High School Act, which are the laws we inspect. The Ministry has delegated the management of the inspection system to the Directorate for Education and Training.

2) *The Directorate for Education and Training*

The Directorate reports to the Ministry.

- *Department for Inspection...*

...is given the primary national responsibility for inspection work; e.g. instruction and guidance work for the County Governor's offices, carry out inspections towards private schools and Folk High Schools.

The Directorate for Education and Training carries out inspections of the private schools and Folk High schools. These inspections follow the same principles and methodology as with inspections of public schools.

In addition, inspection with private schools has a special focus on how they use their financial subsidies. The statutory requirements are generally the same, with the exception of the economic element that is characteristic of the private schools.

3) *County Governor's office...*

..are the Governments regional offices with many different tasks for following up the Governments policy. One of their main tasks is to carry out inspections in public schools and with the municipalities' responsibility for the kindergartens. Inspections are carried out towards County municipalities and municipalities.

4) *County municipalities...*

...are the school owners of secondary education and training (upper secondary schools) and subject to inspection.

5) *Municipalities...*

...are the school owners of primary education (primary and lower secondary schools), and of some kindergartens (see description of the responsibility of kindergartens below), and are subject to inspection.

Resources

There are approximately 40 full time equivalents within the County Governors and the Directorate who works with inspection in Norway. The inspectors at the County Governor level have professional academic backgrounds, mainly as educators or legal practitioners. The professional educators have many years of experience as teachers and/or school leaders. The department of Inspection in the Directorate consists mainly of legal practitioners and economists.

3 Responsibility of central government and local authorities(municipalities)

In recent years, considerable responsibility and decision making authority has been delegated from the central government to municipalities and county authorities.

Individual municipalities are responsible for running primary and lower secondary schools, while the county authorities are responsible for upper secondary schools. Within the framework of statutes and national curricula, municipalities, schools and teachers are able to decide what learning materials to use and what teaching methods to adapt.

Even though the national authorities run different welfare sectors through legislation, there are also a certain freedom for local authorities to decide how they will fulfill national ambitions and goals set up through legislation.

Local autonomy has always had a strong position in Norway, and the government's policy for governing and cooperation with the municipalities has always been based on mutual trust. The local authority's freedom to make priorities, make their own choices and adapt the policy for local needs and assumptions has varied through the years. It has varied from great local autonomy combined with little intervention from the national government to a stronger integration up till the 1970s. From the middle of the 1980s there came several initiatives and reforms with the object to strengthen the local autonomy. Later the development characteristics have gone into another direction. Today we have a so called system where the municipalities are generalists. This means that all municipalities have the same tasks through legislation, the same financial system is valid for all municipalities, and the same legislation gives the same framework for organizing and governing of the municipalities.

It also means that all municipalities shall:

- take care of democratic functions,

- provide services for their citizens,
- be the executive authority and
- take care of planning and developing tasks within their local community independent of population, settlement structure and other characteristics

Kindergartens

The Government (The Directorate for Education and Training) is overall responsible for quality development, management and financing of the kindergarten sector. The County Governors are a link between the Ministry of Education and Research and the kindergarten sector. The County Governors implement kindergarten policy through development work, administrative tasks, inspection and guidance for municipalities.

The municipalities are responsible for providing and running municipal kindergartens, as well as for approving and inspecting both public and private kindergartens in the municipality. The municipalities must also ensure that the kindergartens are operated within their approval framework and that the contents comply with legislation, regulations and the framework plan. In addition, the municipalities have an active responsibility for providing guidance.

Municipal authorities must ensure that public subsidies are paid on an equal basis to all the approved kindergartens in their municipality. Kindergarten owners are responsible for the contents of the individual kindergarten. The Parents' Council for each kindergarten determines a year plan ensuring the participation of parents and staff in the framing of the educational content. Kindergarten owners are responsible for employing adequate and qualified staff.

Primary and Secondary Education and Training

The County Governors shall function as links between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Directorate for Education and Training on one hand, and the education sector in municipalities and counties on the other. The County Governors are responsible for inspection and dealing with complaints related to regulations, participation in quality development, information, guidance and various administrative matters.

Legislation and regulations, including the National Curriculum, form a binding framework, but within this framework the municipal and county authorities, schools and teachers can influence the implementation of the education and training. Each school has a head teacher and various boards, councils and committees.

The Directorate for Education and Training

It is the municipalities/county authorities as school owners and responsible so that their schools are practicing according to the law.

In addition to inspection, the Directorate's main tasks are to promote quality development, quality assessment, analysis and documentation in primary and secondary education and training, and to perform administrative tasks connected with primary and secondary education and training, and bearing the overall national responsibility for supervision of primary and secondary education and training and kindergartens. This

means that The Directorate has a broad sphere of work, ranging from curriculum planning, examinations and analyses to legislation and supervision;

Curriculum planning

The content of primary and secondary education is to be renewed through the Knowledge Promotion. The core of this work is curriculum development. In its work on developing school curricula, the Directorate has collaborated with professional environments throughout Norway.

Clearer learning objectives play a central role in the new curricula. Basic skills, such as reading, writing and arithmetic, are central to all subjects.

The Directorate monitors how the Knowledge Promotion functions in the schools.

Examinations and tests

The Directorate is responsible for preparing examinations, national tests and diagnostic tests for primary and secondary education.

Examinations provide a final assessment of the competence of each individual pupil.

National tests provide information on the pupils' basic skills, and a basis for improvement and development in the school.

Diagnostic tests detect needs for individual follow-up and adaptation.

Knowledge development

The Directorate is responsible for development projects, research and statistics on primary and secondary education. User surveys of pupils, apprentices, teachers, instructors and parents provide valuable feedback to schools, school owners and the authorities.

Results and analyses are published on the Directorate's website. This knowledge is intended to help improve the Norwegian school.

International comparisons

The Directorate is responsible for coordinating many international studies. The most known of these is PISA, but Norway participates in a large number of surveys.

The studies provide valuable feedback, and have had major significance for the public debate on the Norwegian school.

4 Inspection

4.1 Legal basis; description in official documents

One of the main tasks for the inspection is to make sure that it helps to increase the fulfillment of the regulations (set of rules). If the regulations are obeyed, all pupils and children in Kindergartens would have the offer put out through legislation as a minimum standard.

The inspection activities in Norway are legally based, this means that the national curriculum, the Education Act and its regulations are part of our framework. The municipalities and counties are not a part of the hierarchical national government system. The municipalities and counties are by law established as independent legal bodies. The Government therefore needs the legislation to intervene the local autonomy. *Other governing tools are economic- and pedagogical tools.*

Even though there is a certain freedom and opportunity for local adjustments, it is also a common democratic value that all citizens shall be treated *equally, without any discrimination, and should have the right to predict what they can expect from both local and national authorities.*

The placement of legislation in the public system is described as following:
"National legislation for primary and lower secondary education and training contains a number of rules that as a whole shall contribute to the individual pupil (...) receiving a safe, qualitative and quantitative education in line with the Storting's¹ intentions. In order to ensure that this body of rules is complied with, it is necessary for school owners to be subject to inspections and controls."

The Education Act, the Private Schools Act and Folk High Schools Act represent the legally defined minimum standards for the quality of Norwegian schools. Inspection shall contribute to reach the political goals stated in legislation.

Our work is based on the assumption that if the legislation is fulfilled, the pupils and children will be secured a good kindergarten and education situation. The Inspectorate's main duty is to contribute to improving compliance with the rules in the entire educational sector. School owners who are not subject to direct controls will also learn by observing other school owners being inspected.

It is important that the Inspectorate communicate with the sector in general terms based on experience, not just communicating with school owners who have been subject to controls.

Inspections at public and private schools are fundamental instruments to guarantee that children and adolescents receive their legally established right to a balanced education of the highest quality.

The inspection is acts by public authorities and it is therefore important for the Inspectorate's objectives to be well planned and executed according to the following principles for exercising public authority and application of law:

- Legitimacy
- Predictability
- Equal treatment and non-discrimination
- Verifiability.

¹ The Storting is the Norwegian Parliament. It is the supreme arena for political debate and decision-making in the Kingdom of Norway.

Consequences from inspections

Public schools	Private schools
Corrections - orders <i>a description of what to do in order to obtain a practice in accordance with law</i>	Corrections - orders
	Withdrawal of the funding's
	Hold back funding's
	Withdrawal of the schools approval

If we discover a breach to the regulations, the municipality will be informed. Then we will give orders to rectify non-compliance in the form of an inspection report. That means we must formulate the wording of these orders when we draw up the inspection report. Each order will require the formulation of one or more items for correction that describe the specific action required by the municipality to comply with the order. The wording of the orders are usually in general terms. It must always refer to a law or regulation and point out the specific regulatory requirement being in non-compliance. The wording must clearly tell the municipality what the legal grounds for the order are. In practical terms the wording of orders are often very similar to the wording of provisions in statutes or regulations. However, that does not mean the entire statutory provision has to be replicated in the order. An order must refer to a regulatory requirement, not necessarily to all the statutory or regulatory provisions.

An example of an order:

X Municipality must carry out inspections to ensure that kindergartens comply with the provisions of the Day Care Institutions Act, cf. the Day Care Institutions Act (Section 8, cf. 16).

Items for correction: These orders imply that:

A) the supervisory tasks of the municipality must be based on a correct understanding of educational norms.

B) the municipality must react to any violation discovered during the inspection so the violation can be rectified.

Organization of activities

As a part of the directorate's responsibility for inspection, we are guiding and instructing the County Governors in their work with carrying out inspections.

Fifty percent of inspection activities at the County Governors' offices are coordinated nationally by the Directorate for Education and Training. The Directorate for Education and Training establishes themes for inspections based on risk analysis, as well as deciding the scope, extent and organization of the inspections. This means that the Directorate elaborates tangible indicators of quality and prepares an instruction that provides guidelines for the inspection. This instruction also defines the size of the

selection (sample) of municipalities to be included in the inspection. County inspectors then conduct the inspection.

Remaining inspection tasks by the County Governor offices are based on own initiative by the offices and are carried out based on risk assessments done on a regional basis by the County Governor offices. Situations also arise (for example, stories seen in the media) which require the Inspectorate's immediate intervention and attention. This requires County Governors to also execute inspections regarding specific isolated incidents based on their own knowledge and initiative.

The 18 County Governors have different amount of recourses to use in inspection, their Counties are in size different (could be challenges with travelling etc), and there are different numbers of municipalities ("available" for inspection) in the different Counties (from 15 to 45). And the County Governor offices are different when it comes to competence.

4.2 An overview of the Inspectorates' focus

The Norwegian Inspectorate is not organized as its own agency. Instead, "inspection" is one of several tasks and roles at the Directorate for Education and Training; from supervisory tasks to development and school guidance.

The Inspectorate focuses on inspecting the application of laws, ensuring that school owners and owners of kindergartens comply with the statutory obligations.

As a preparation to all inspections, we contemplate both the law and other frameworks that are developed as tools for how the sector shall behave. It's important to mention that inspection is a part of a bigger toolbox (e.g. guidance, subsidies).

Since 2014, we have had a new handbook for inspection on how inspections with schools and kindergartens are carried out.

The Norwegian Inspectorate focuses on controlling the municipalities and counties compliance's with the statutory duties. National standards are ensured through legislation, regulatory controls, curricula and general framework plans.

The Inspectorate will supervise and monitor the legislators' wishes and ensure that these are realized to the extent they are expressed in laws or in accordance with these laws.

The Inspectorate will also require schools and school owners to make changes to the educational practice if legal obligations are not complied with. In cases where inspections discover violations to the law, the Inspectorate's work does not end until the violation is corrected.

4.3 An overview of the Methodology

Our inspections include two main activities; 1) investigate the practice of the municipalities and in the school, and 2) make orders to correct the practice that conflict with the law.

Our inspections are mainly carried out in two ways:

- 1) Through research of documents and then a preliminary report (post inspection report).
- 2) Through research of documents and interviews in a school before a preliminary report (post inspection report)

All inspections, both those initiated by the directorate, and those decided by the County Governors themselves shall be carried out by using a common handbook for inspection. This handbook was renewed in 2013 and are available in English.

Before every inspection starts, we (or the County Governors) collect all available information about the theme for inspection. This should help the preparation of the inspection, and help the inspectors in how to prepare questions for their interviews in the inspection. After that, we do interviews, if necessary. This normally takes two days. The County Governors prepare a post inspection report for each school they have visited. When it comes to our reactions towards public schools, the inspectors can only give injunctions –this is a description of how their practice should be in accordance with the law. Injunctions are addressed to the school owners, and they can complain if they do not agree with the inspector's interpretation of the law, or on the inspectors understanding of their practice.

In our new national inspection, our methodology contains an offer to schools and school owners with guidance and self-assessment before the inspection starts. The guidance will be both written material and conferences on each subject of the inspection. This guidance will be offered to all school owners (municipalities and county municipalities).

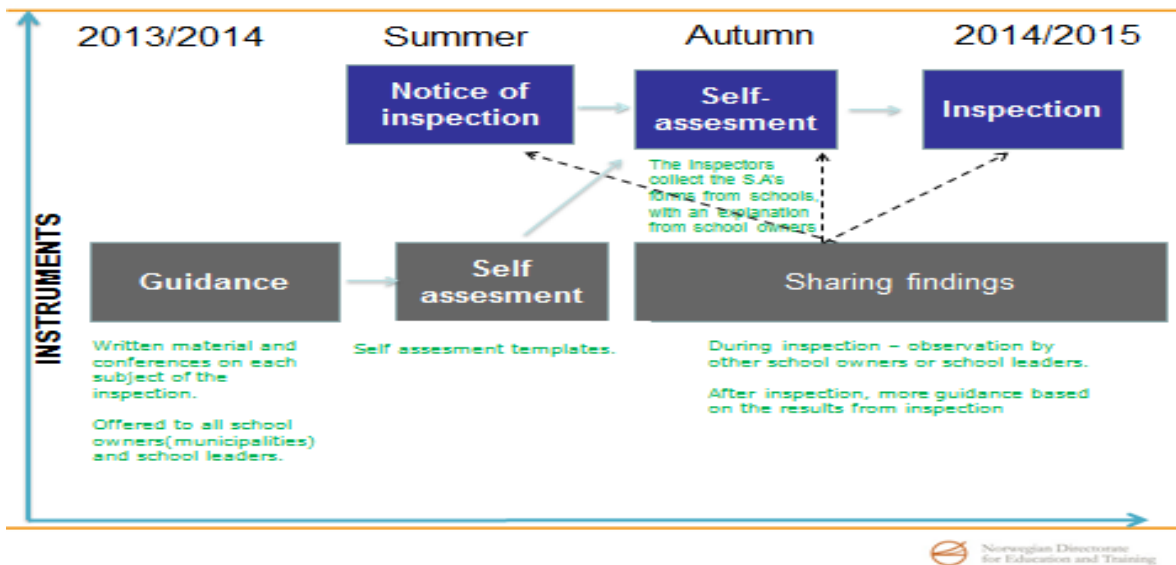
To carry out the self-assessments there will be offered templates for school owners to do this. Initially it will be voluntarily to use them, but when the inspection starts, the inspectors will collect the self-assessments and use them as documentation in the inspection.

During the inspection, it will be possible for other school owners/schools to observe how the inspection is carried out and what inspectors are focusing on.

After the inspections, the school owners will be offered more guidance based on the findings.

This new approach will be commenced in 2014 and will initially be carried out in the national inspections until 2017. The inspection theme will be addressing core educational subjects regulated in the legislation. Those years it will be an overall thematic approach to see the correlation between the school owner and school efforts towards all students (braille, sign language, special education etc.)

The new approach can shortly be described as follows:



The three- step process



We are communicating the findings and conclusions from an inspection by publishing an Inspection Report. The communication and completion phase is a three- step process.

The completion of these three steps ensures the compliance on our part with various legal provisions in the Public Administration Act and the Local Government Act that state violation and non-compliance must follow certain instructions to rectify a situation. This phase is over when the inspection terminates and we are certain all violations/non-compliance are clarified and rectified. The process involves sending the municipality at least three documents, which means a number of activity needs to be accomplished after the different document is sent. The first provision requires notifying the inspected object of an administrative decision (Rectification Notice) and giving the municipality the opportunity to express its opinion on the matter. The second requires the County Governor to give the municipality a reasonable deadline to rectify the situation. As the third step, the County Governor orders the municipality to correct the situation through an Administrative decision of rectification.

4.4 The main aspects to be inspected

Inspection activities are organized and carried out concerning conditions of important significance for attaining the objectives of the education sector, and where inspection could have the greatest effect. All inspections are risk based and limited within the economic frames of the inspection institute (In our last national inspection (2010-2013), regarding the theme psychosocial environment, about 10 % of all public schools and 50% of all public school owners was inspected).

A major focus of the Inspectorate is to have attention on fundamental values like safety, non-discrimination and attending to the interests of groups with the greatest needs.

An assessment is made of the importance of and risks involved in selecting themes for inspections. In the past, the Inspectorate has focused on themes like the psycho-social environment, students with special needs, and lately also Sami students' rights and the rights of adult students, how the schools handle with national tests and the schools work on the local curriculum.

Different subjects for inspection – initiated by the directorate

Common national subjects:

- An adequate outcome of the education for every pupil 2014-2017
- Psychosocial environment, 2010-2013
- Organization of pupils in groups (*size of the normal classes etc.*)
- *Special Education*
- *Number of class hours to make sure that pupils have a feeling of belonging to a group of other pupils*

Other prioritized subjects:

- *Local curriculum work*
- *National tests*
- *Sami pupils rights*
- *Adult education*
- *Swimming education*
- *Vocational training*

Risk based inspection

We make risk assessment, both to select municipalities for inspection, and to select themes for inspection.

An important basis for selecting themes and subjects for inspection is an effective system for monitoring education. Faster discovery of any possible violation of the law ensures that the Inspectorate can act on short notice to verify whether a law has been broken or not.

Information about the entire educational sector is collected, discussed and analyzed at regional and state level. The information from this work is also used as the basis for more long-term planning of inspection activities. Theme(s) for the inspections are selected based on a risk assessment of the data collected from a number of sources,

recent research and information from the most important operators in the sector. Emphasis is also placed on experience from previous inspections and experience from guidance work and complaints and previous casework by the County Governor offices.

5 More on the practical organization of inspection

About 80 to 120 school owners are inspected each year. These inspections are of varying scope, and require different amounts of resources.

Usually there are between 2 and 3 people who carry out an inspection. Interviews are mainly carried out with school owners, school leaders, teachers, students and parents, and other representatives who will be relevant for the subject inspected.

After the interviews, all the data is gathered, collated and evaluated. There are no observations in classrooms. The results of an inspection are presented, and sent to the school owner/school leader, and very often there is held a closing meeting so that a common understanding can be reached about the findings. Investigation can be carried out at school level. However, we do not have focus on the individual teacher

A final report is being sent to the municipality (school owner) pointing out what corrections need to be done. In this stage of the process, there is often a dialogue between the inspectorate authorities and school owners.

6 Reporting findings and possible consequences

The Directorate for Education and Training gathers and analyzes results from all inspections held around the country.

The focus of the analysis is to have a closer look at the reason for the findings, what consequences they have for the students and what must be implemented to change and improve the overall situation. The findings from the inspections are considered in relation to results from other policy instruments, cf. guidance, support, financial management tools, competence development etc.

The analysis can for example show a need to evaluate better coordination between various state policy instruments. Furthermore, the analysis may recommend amendments to laws or adjustments to legal administration or technical legal matters.

7 Other Tasks

Databases

The Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for publishing statistics about primary and lower secondary education and training. This is not only about inspection statistics, but also all sorts of statistics about primary and lower secondary education and training.

The Inspectorate does not currently have its own database with information related to inspection activities. However, all of our reports from inspection with private schools are published on the Directorates web site and all 18 county Governors publishes their reports from inspection on their own web sites.

For more information:

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training: <http://www.udir.no>

The Ministry of Education and Research: <http://www.kunnskapsdepartementet.no/>

The County Governors: <http://www.fylkesmannen.no/>

