

## Country Profile THE NETHERLANDS

**1. Basic information** – this should be as short as possible; doesn't need to be in paragraphs or full sentences.

**Country name:** The Netherlands

**Structure of inspectorate:** Centrally and regulation does not vary per region or state. We have an inspection framework but there is differences for primary and secondary education.

**Age of inspectorate:** The Dutch Inspectorate was founded in 1801, the Netherlands' Inspectorate of Education is one of the oldest state Inspectorates of Education.

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

500 fulltime jobs.

Management: about 10

Strategic inspectors /senior advisors/ PR-advisors: about 20

Inspectors: about 230

Supporting staff: about 120

**Remits:** What form of education do you inspect? Primary education, secondary education , special education and higher education. Public and private schools. The Dutch Inspectorate also assesses the performance of the municipalities with respect to their tasks for childcare and toddler playgrounds.

**Unit of inspection:** We inspect schools rather than teachers or subject departments. We do not inspect local authorities but as of August 2017 we do inspect governing bodies/ schoolboards.

**What is your strapline?** "What is being done right? What could be done better? And what needs to be done better?" This is perhaps the best way to sum up the Dutch regime of school inspections starting in August 2017.

**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 Dutch Inspectorate of educations is part of the Education Ministry. It is a so called 'buitendienst' (external service).

The supervision is (in legal terms) attributed to the inspectorate. This means that the task of supervising the law (as arranged in the Education Supervision Act) has

been entrusted to the inspectorate and that the inspectorate carries out this task in its own name.

Simultaneously supervision of the inspection falls under ministerial responsibility. Within this ministerial responsibility, there is as much professional independence as possible. The independent judgment of the inspectorate, regardless of political and / or policy influencing, has the specific attention. In the Education Supervision Act, this is formulated as follows: *Our Minister gives no indications with regard to the assessments of the inspectorate about the development, in particular of the quality, of the education.* The inspection also determines to a large extent what it investigates and how it investigates.

In Education Supervision Act is determined that the inspectorate yearly reports on the state of education, as referred to in the Constitution. The minister sends the report, accompanied by a response, to parliament on behalf of the government.

The inspectorate can write down what it wants. Our research covers the quality of education in schools and also the quality of the education system at various levels. Our research is therefore not directly concerned with government policy, but our reports can say something (implicitly or explicitly) about government policy and often have significance for government policy.

We issue our reports on separate schools or educational institutions without intervention from the government. Reports on system research as a rule go via the minister to the parliament. The Inspectorate can decide to make the report public after a period of five weeks, if the minister has not sent it yet to parliament.

**Accountability:** The Dutch Inspectorate of Education publishes various types of reports. We distinguish between the following types of reports :

- Quality inspection school reports
- Reports after thematic inspections
- Reports of incidental inspections
- The Inspectorate's annual report on education: 'The State of Education in the Netherlands'
- Sometimes staff members of the Inspectorate write articles or give presentations at conferences

We also publishes several kinds of data about the quality of education in the Netherlands.

## 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.

No, we do not use a form of self-evaluation. We stimulate the use of self-evaluation, but schools are free in choosing a certain approach/form.

**What do you examine during inspection?** The governing body is responsible for the quality of education at its schools, which is why the Inspectorate's regulation starts and ends there. We distinguish between the basic quality (statutory criteria) and the governing body's and school's own ambitions (i.e. the quality aspects that they themselves have defined). We ensure that the basic quality is in order. In addition, we encourage governing bodies and schools to pursue their ambitions and achieve improvements above and beyond the level of basic quality.

At the heart of the four-yearly inspection are the following questions:

1. Does educational quality receive sufficient emphasis and are measures in place to improve educational quality?
2. Is there a professional quality culture in place and is the governing body characterized by transparency and integrity?
3. Does the governing body pursue an active policy of communication on its own performance and developments and the performance of its schools and the developments taking place there?
4. Is the financial management sound?

**Do you have an inspection framework? Is this a quality or compliance model?**

Despite being largely similar, a different inspection framework applies to each educational sector. The differences between the frameworks are generally related to sector-specific legislation.

Each inspection framework consists of:

- an assessment framework: What does the Inspectorate inspect?
- an approach: How does the Inspectorate conduct its inspection?

Supervision in higher education works differently: no inspection framework is in place.

In the 2017 Inspection framework, we define five quality areas:

- (i) educational process
- (ii) school climate
- (iii) learning outcomes
- (iv) quality assurance and ambition
- (v) financial management.

This breakdown allows us to answer three fundamental questions about the schooling pupils are receiving:

- (a) are they learning enough (learning outcomes)?
- (b) are they being taught well (educational process)?
- (c) are they safe (school climate)?

### **Inspection time and resource.**

This may differ per inspection depending on the number of school that belong to a specific governing body. In general schoolvisits last one or two days and 1 to 4 inspectors go on an inspection. Inspectors may have different backgrounds and expertise, they could be former teachers, teacher trainers, headteachers, consultants or other education specialists.

**Frequency of inspections:** The four basic principles of our regulation:

1. The Inspectorate's supervision keeps in dovetail with the governing body's responsibilities.
2. The Inspectorate safeguards statutory quality and encourages governing bodies, schools and educational programmes/institutes to pursue their own quality ambitions
3. All governing bodies are inspected every four years. Additionally, all schools and educational programmes/institutes are inspected every four years in different ways
4. Follow-up inspections depend on the Inspectorate's assessment of the governing body's system of quality assurance.

This assessment consists of:

- the annual analysis of students' achievements
- the four-yearly inspection of governing bodies and schools

Supervision in higher education works differently.

Our inspections of governing bodies always cover quality assurance and financial management. Components of the four-yearly inspection are different for secondary vocational education and inclusive education alliances.

**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?

- **Complaints**

All schools are legally obliged to have a complaints procedure, If the complaint cannot be solved by the school or the school board, the complainant can apply to an independent committee with his complaint. If the results are still not satisfactory, the complainant can ultimately go to court. The Inspectorate has no legal powers in case of complaints. It may happen however, that the Inspectorate – by acting as intermediary - helps to reconcile the problem between e.g. a parent and a principal. Thus problems can be solved without taking them to an independent committee or to court.

Complaints - and in particular complaints with respect to the quality of education- are treated as signals. The Inspectorate can decide to visit the school in serious cases (or if several complaints come in about the same school and reveal a certain pattern). If the number of complaints about a certain issue becomes a national issue, this also may lead to a thematic inspection. If the complaint concerns the Inspectorate itself, the complainant can apply to the Inspectorate's complaints commission.

The Inspectorate has a separate desk for issues concerning sexual abuse and intimidation, mental and physical violence, discrimination and extremism within the context of education. Specialized inspectors deal with these matters. This special desk is broadly accessible by phone. The main task of these specialized inspectors is to advise and sometimes (in cases of mental and physical violence, discrimination and radicalization) to act as an intermediary.

- **Financial or staff management of schools or districts (or the financial reports of the institutes by accountants)**

The managerial condition is inspected by the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate does not take over the managerial responsibility which lies with the board. This would be considered contrary to the broad autonomy of school boards and school leaders in matters of the foundation of new schools, merger or closure of schools, appointment of staff / replacement of staff or management of the school budget.

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

#### **Reporting:**

Our judgements and reports on individual schools and institutions can be found on our website under 'Find and compare schools'. This section of the website is only available in Dutch.

- We generally only publish a quality judgement on schools and institutions falling under basic regulation. No inspection report is prepared in these cases.
- The inspection reports we prepare for schools with adapted regulation are primarily intended for the school or institution and the governing body. The school or institution is required to communicate this information to the parents and/or students.

**Grade:** If a school meets the statutory requirements for basic quality, then the school will be judged to be 'adequate'. If they fail to meet the basic quality requirements, they will be judged to be 'inadequate'. These schools may even be judged to be 'very weak' if they perform below the applicable statutory standard. The inspection framework for each educational sector indicates when the judgement will be adequate, inadequate or very weak. These judgments are new and apply from 1 August 2017. In addition to these judgements, the inspection may award a school a rating of 'Good'.

During our inspection we answer three fundamental questions about the schooling pupils are receiving:

- (a) are they learning enough (learning outcomes)?
- (b) are they being taught well (educational process)?
- (c) are they safe (school climate)?

Together, our findings in these three areas reveal the overall standard of education the school is providing in the classroom. The other two areas, quality assurance (coupled with ambition) and financial management, reflect quality of provision – by which we mean the school's performance in these domains combined – and its

continuity. We define the overall quality of a school's educational provision as the aggregate of its performance in all these areas.

Each standard is operationalized. The statutory criteria determine whether a school is judged "Adequate" or "Inadequate", whilst fulfilment of its own self-defined quality factors - those displayed or aspired to by the governing body – makes the difference between "Adequate" and "Good".

**Knowledge sharing:** Our judgements and reports on individual schools and institutions can be found on our website under 'Find and compare schools'. This section of the website is only available in Dutch ( please see "Reporting" for more detailed information).

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

We use the results of the four-yearly inspection to specify the structure of the follow-up regulation of the governing body and the schools. Follow-up regulation may be prescribed if we detect something that must be remediated or improved. If everything is as it should be, then the next inspection of the governing body will take place in four years' time in principle.

If follow-up inspection is required, we always take the governing body's or school's specific situation into account. For example, the number of schools falling under the governing body, the size of the schools, developments in quality and quality assurance, the severity of any shortcomings and risks, and the relevant regulation history. In other words: follow-up regulation is always bespoke.

### **What is the stated purpose of your inspectorate?**

The Inspectorate:

- ensures that schools at least comply with basic quality;
- intervenes at institutions (boards and schools), where these do not meet basic quality so that they can recover as quickly as possible;
- stimulates schools and educational institutions to maintain and improve the quality of education they offer;
- assesses the quality of education of the individual educational institutes and the education system as a whole in the Netherlands and its developments;
- communicates in an accessible way with all its target groups and stakeholders;
- reports in public.