

## Country Profile FLANDERS

### 1. Basic information

**Country name:** Belgium - Flanders

**Structure of inspectorate:** The inspection in Flanders is organised centrally. The Inspectorate is an independent body under direct jurisdiction of the Minister of Education. It's main role is to monitor educational quality and act as a lever for improvement of educational quality

**Age of inspectorate:** 27 years (since 17 July 1991).

**Size:** 140 inspectors, 5 coordinating inspectors, 1 inspector-general, 18 civil servants.

**Remits:** Nursery education, (regular and special) primary education, (regular and special) secondary education, part-time artistic education, adult education and also centres for pupil guidance (CLB). We also carry out individual checks of pupils attending home schooling.

**Unit of inspection:** It is prohibited to inspect teachers (since 1996). Teacher evaluation is the responsibility of schools themselves. The inspectorate inspects schools separately, but sometimes also in group (when a group of schools is one pedagogical unit).

**What is your strapline?** 'Oog voor kwaliteit' (English: eye for quality) and 'Doorlichten in dialoog' (English: inspecting in dialogue)

**Relationship with government:** Independent organisation. Our inspection has to guarantee the quality of the education in Flanders. The tasks of our inspection are granted by decree

- provide advice on which institutions should be given government recognition;
- conduct inspections of institutions;
- All other tasks assigned by decree or enacted by order of the Flemish government

Often, the inspection is consulted when new legislation is being prepared or when Parliament, the press or the general public asks questions related to quality in education.

**Accountability:** Our accountability tasks are set out in legalisation. The task of the inspectorate is among other things to control the schools on how they comply with legislation. An important part of that work is to monitor the way schools implement the Flemish national curriculum as determined by the Parliament. A recent change in our inspection system is that the main focus will be on the school's quality development and assurance. Quality standards are set out in the reference framework for quality of education 'OK'. This framework is the result of co-creation with different stakeholders and it connects the internal quality assurance of institutions with the

supervision by the inspectorate of education. This system starts on the first of September 2018.

## 2. Evaluation process

**Self-evaluation:** Schools are responsible for their quality of education. Internal evaluation is part of that. Schools choose how this happens, there is no central system or obligation to perform a self-assessment. There are however quality expectations in the reference framework 'OK' about quality development. There is also support by the school guidance organisations (pedagogical services ...).

**What do you examine during inspection?** Our inspection design starts with two research questions for each school visit: 1. To what extent does the educational institution develop its own quality, with special attention to the management and quality assurance of the teaching practice? 2. To what extent does the educational institution provide quality education that meets the quality expectations of our reference framework 'OK' and does it respect the regulations? To answer these two research questions, we carry out four studies: 1. the examination of quality development 2. the investigation of one or more quality areas (e.g. pupil guidance) 3. the study of the teaching practice 4. the study of habitability, safety and hygiene. We examine both the level of the institution's policy and the level of the classroom practice.

**Do you have an inspection framework? Is this a quality or compliance model?** The principles of the new inspection system of Flanders ('Inspectie 2.0') are:

1. Schools, pedagogical services and the inspectorate share the same reference framework for education quality: 'OK'
2. The education inspection has a controlling and a stimulating role (among other things by engaging in a dialogue with schools about the school's quality)
3. The Flemish inspection visits schools more frequently (every 6 years instead of every 10 years like before)
4. The Flemish inspectorate has faith in the school and starts each inspection from the principle: the school works qualitatively.
5. The inspectorate builds upon the internal quality assurance of the school
6. The learner is the key figure
7. The Flemish education inspectorate minimizes administrative burden for schools

These principles are translated into an inspection framework. This framework consists of an inspection design (what we inspect) and a cultural component (the way the dialogue with the school is being developed). This leads to a concrete inspection scenario (what happens before, during and after an inspection).

**Inspection time and resource:** Our inspection consists out of three parts: desk analysis, effective inspection visit of five days and the writing of the report. An inspector should have at least 8 years of experience in the education field. Inspection of a primary school is done by 2 inspectors. The inspection of a secondary school can

be more complex due to the complexity of the schools (different campuses etc.). The minimum here is also two but it can go up to 5 or 6 inspectors.

**Frequency of inspections:** At least once every 6 years. Not risk-based.

**Main business:** Our inspectors are responsible for the inspection of schools and our staff members are responsible for policy research and information management. Our other responsibilities are divided into four main topics: additional controls (e.g. on arts initiation, Dutch education abroad ...), research (on a range of different topics – often relatable to actuality and needs in Flanders), advisory tasks (such as advising learning programs) and other tasks like the writing of our annual report, investigation of awarding certificate of primary education in special primary education ...

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

**Reporting:** Our reports are published on a website and therefore accessible for everyone. As a consequence, parents can base their school choices on these reports, although this is not the prior aim of these reports.

**Grade:** We use development scales (a four point scale) for the different topics we investigate. These development scales are based on the reference framework 'OK' and made public. By working with development scales, we want to encourage the school team to (continue to) develop their own quality. The development scales consist of four levels: 1. Below expectation: there are several essential elements that need improvement. 2. Approaches the expectation: there are also several points for improvement next to strong points. As a result, the whole does not yet meet the expectation. 3. According to the expectation: there are many strengths and no important points or areas for improvement. The whole meets the expectation. 4. exceeds expectations: many strengths, including significant good practice examples. Because we want to support the educational institution with the inspection report in its further quality development, we visually present the answers to the research questions with a web diagram. In this way it becomes clear at a glance what the strengths and the development opportunities are.

**Knowledge sharing:** We autonomously publish reports about the results of school inspections or thematic inspections. We also present an annual report to the minister and Parliament containing a summary of the results of our thematic surveys and a concise overview of audits and other assignments.

**What happens following an inspection?** We work with two types of advices after a school visit: a positive and a negative advice. In the case of favorable advice, the school retains its recognition; in case of unfavorable advice, the inspectorate will advise the start of the procedure to withdraw the recognition. Both advices have two variants; the "favorable advice" may imply the obligation for the board to work on the identified deficits. The "unfavorable advice" may include the possibility of requesting that the procedure for withdrawing the accreditation does not start, provided the board's commitment to work at the identified deficits with external support.

**What is the stated purpose of your inspectorate?** We want to give institutions confidence. We start from the premise that the educational institution is the first responsible for its quality. Our aim is to have a development-oriented dialogue with the school. By doing this, we want to foster a stimulation of the quality development of the schools.