Inspectorate of Education
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

State of Education

System section

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Foreword

In ten years from now, how will we look back at this period and at the way in which the education system has coped over the past year? The year 2020 will certainly be etched into the collective memory as the year in which our country and our education system were engulfed by the coronavirus pandemic. A year in which society came to understand more than ever how important schools are, not only for the development of pupils and students but also for their well-being.

Agile and adaptable

Looking back on the past year, we see how the crisis unfolded rapidly and how quickly the educational field responded to this. Right from the very first lockdown, our inspectors saw enormous drive, commitment and agility among teachers, school leaders and school boards. Almost immediately, most schools and institutions had made the switch to remote teaching and learning, adapted their facilities to social distancing requirements or organized services for the children of key workers. The crisis demanded – and continues to demand – a high level of adaptability. From both pupils and students and their parents, and not only at a practical level but also emotionally. Social activities have been cancelled. Sports clubs have had to close their doors. Pupils have missed their school, their classmates and the bustle of the canteen. Students have felt trapped inside their rooms. And then there were the young people who were trying to make the transition to secondary education, to MBO or higher education, who have been unable to start this new chapter in their lives in their lives according to plan.

Coronavirus magnifies existing problems

All of us are trying hard to make the best of this situation. But there is no escaping the fact that we are in a crisis mode. Not all groups have been affected by this crisis to the same extent. Pupils who were already facing difficulties at home were more likely to have problems coping during this crisis. We are now starting to see that it is those same pupils who have, on average, made the least progress during the crisis. We have known for some time that there is inequality of opportunity within our education system. This can lead to a dichotomy between the majority of pupils who leave our education well-equipped, and a minority of pupils who enter society without having acquired a good command of basic skills and with limited prospects. Even before the pandemic, we saw that this inequality was extremely persistent – for a variety of reasons and despite everyone's good intentions. Our task to provide every pupil with the basic skills needed to participate fully in society is under pressure, as we have set out in previous *State of Education* reports. The pandemic seems to have aggravated this risk.

From repair to renovation

Hopefully, the end of the pandemic will emerge on the horizon, and the relevant government ministers have presented the government's National Programme for Education after Coronavirus. The aim of the programme is to catch up on the backlog that has built up together with stakeholders, but also to ensure that those improvements are lasting. Additional funding of €8.5 billion has been made available to do this. This creates a unique opportunity because major repairs are necessary. But So let's use this additional funding and impetus to do more than just catch up on the backlog that the pandemic has left us with: let's also make lasting improvements. Because if our ambitions are limited to returning to the way things were before 2020, too many students will continue to fall through the gaps. We now have the opportunity to truly turn things around and realize sustainable improvement in our education system.

So along with the this *State of Education* report, we are also issuing an appeal: switch from the proposed repair to a renovation. Use this investment and energy now; not only to address the adverse effects of the pandemic, but also to tackle the root causes of the decline in basic skills and persistent inequality of opportunities in education. Now is the time to tackle and carry on with it, because opportunities like these do not come along very often.

A solid foundation for all pupils and students
Here is an example to illustrate why we need to do more than just 'get back to 2019'. Let's take the average year 8 group at a regular primary school from before the pandemic – a class of about 25 pupils. In that class, six children had not attained the basic standard agreed for writing. Will those children get the opportunity to catch up later in their school career? Or take fifteen-year-old students, a quarter of whom cannot read (anymore) at the basic level required. We do not know how these students will fare in secondary education, MBO or higher education. Will they catch up before they enter society? Language skills, numeracy skills and also social skills belong to the minimum basic skills that every young person needs to acquire in order to participate fully in society.

Equality of opportunity still requires attention
The class in the example mentioned above is an average class. But some pupils are lucky to end up in an above-average school, because their parents have made a deliberate choice for such a school. And some pupils, regardless of whether the school they attend is average or not, have parents with enough financial means and knowledge to purchase supplementary education for them. So our education system is, unintentionally, acquiring more and more characteristics of a free market, with plenty of opportunities for those able to find their way, while others are all too predictably left behind. At the same time, though, education is a public service and there should be no need for any supplementary education.

The courage to set priorities
What can we do to reverse this trend towards unequal outcomes in a lasting way? Everybody involved has a role to play in this. First of all, the government should provide the required direction and preconditions. Because if 'everything is a priority' then nothing gets the attention it deserves. By setting clear priorities, schools and institutions can avoid the pitfall of trying to do too much all at once. Lasting improvement will require more effort from some schools than others. So the resources and attention of the government will, of necessity, be distributed unevenly. A clear direction with the right parameters, that is what will give teachers and school leaders the options they need to achieve the long-term improvements that are required. In the end, they will make the difference in the classroom.

Doing what works
In achieving this turnaround, we do not have to develop all kinds of new ideas – in fact, preferably not. Particularly at this point, it is important to do what works and opt for tried and tested approaches. There is already so much knowledge and experience available in education and science, so let's make full use of it. For example, the schools that could rely on their high quality of education before the crisis, now appear to be doing better than other schools. Particularly during this crisis, education has shown society how much potential there is out there. Potential which we can use collectively in a targeted way in a time like this.

Lasting improvements
In ten years from now, how will we look back at this current period? The pupils and students of today, the young adults of tomorrow? It would be such an achievement if they could look back on a period in their education that was turbulent, but which they ultimately came through with flying colours and were able to fully capitalize on their potential and talents.

And it would be so marvellous if we make the most of this unique opportunity to bring about a lasting change in our education system. Towards an education system that provides equal opportunities for all, and ensures that every pupil and student has at least the basic skills they will need for the rest of their lives. Let's make sure that in ten years' time we can look back with pride and satisfaction and say that we helped turn things around. Because this unforeseen crisis turned into an unforeseen opportunity.

Alida Oppers
Inspector General for Education


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1.1 Education during the pandemic

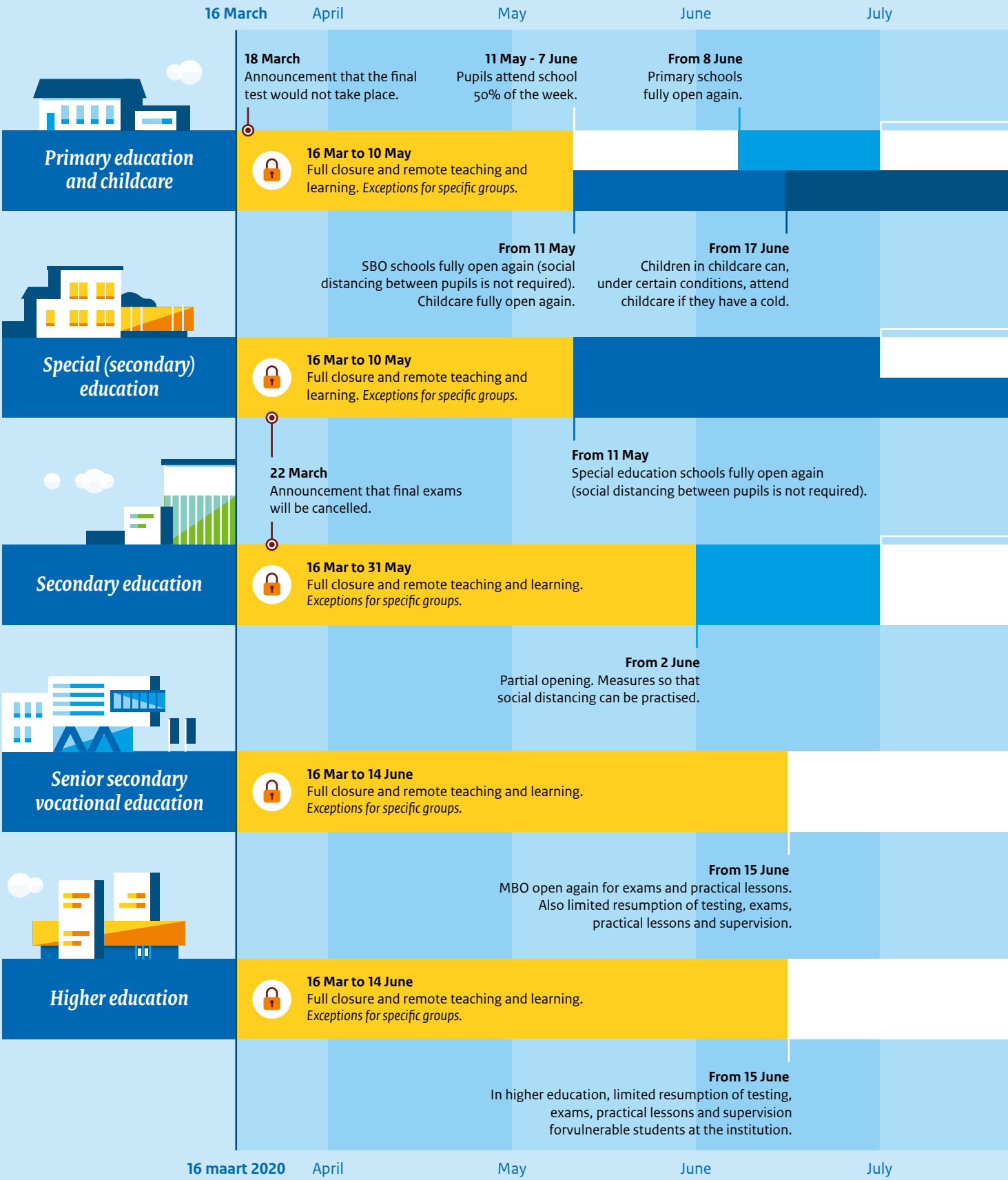
Huge impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the education system • In 2020 our education system faced an unprecedented challenge. On 16 March 2020, all educational institutions had to close their doors for several months, and most pupils and students had to rely on remote teaching and learning. The measures were relaxed from 8 June onwards: pupils in primary and special education were able to return to school, and after a while pupils in secondary education too. Practical exams were allowed to take place once again in secondary vocational education and higher education. There was a second lockdown at the end of the year, with all educational institutions closing their doors once again from 16 December onwards.

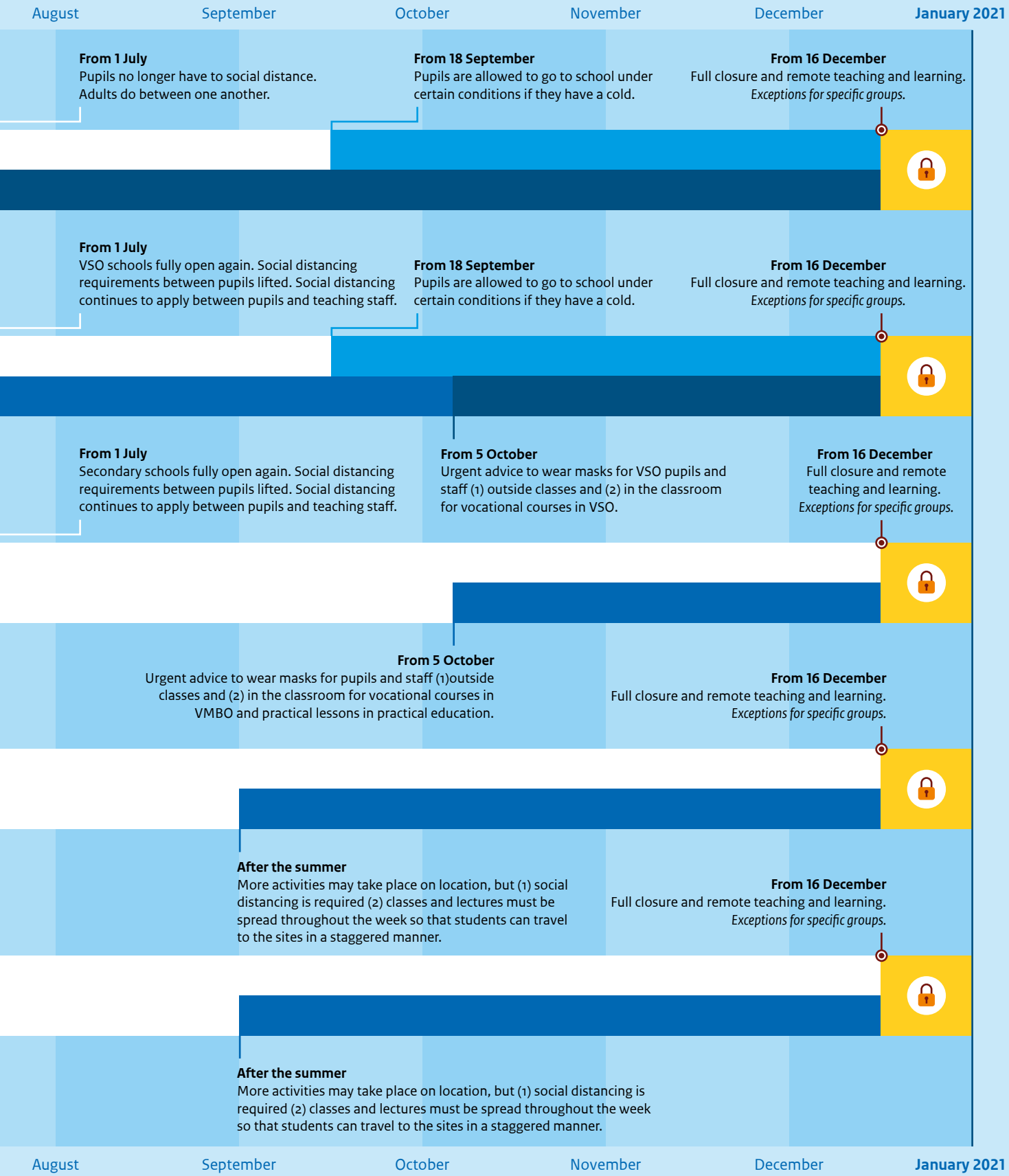
The drive, adaptability and dedication of teachers, school leaders and parents • In 2020 the education system made an enormous effort to keep going, demonstrating its resilience and capacity for innovation. On several occasions, a rapid switch had to be made from physical education to remote teaching and learning, or some combination of the two. Digital forms of teaching were introduced at unprecedented speed and the education system was able to cope mainly thanks to the commitment of teachers and school leaders and our country's strong digital infrastructure. Especially teachers with ICT skills played a major role in this, providing training and support for colleagues. In addition, school governing boards, municipalities and other organizations have stepped in to provide further support, including the provision of laptops, smartphones, webcams and IWBs. Parents also had their roles to play – from facilitating remote teaching and learning by providing a suitable location and a laptop, to acting as teachers themselves. The flexibility, creativity and dedication of all those involved has been impressive.

A mixed picture, with persistent concerns • Despite all this effort, concerns about the quality and continuity of education remain. Pupils and students have been unable to learn and develop optimally during the pandemic, not only within the education system, but often at home too, in spite of all the efforts made. The pandemic has had an impact on the curriculum and on the planned teaching time, on the development and (equal) opportunities of pupils and students, on practical training and on labour market prospects. The workload of teachers and school leaders has also continued to increase. Existing problems in the education system seem to be magnified.

Assignment for the future • We sketch an initial outline of the education system during coronavirus and the effects of the pandemic on pupils and students. We base this outline on the information available, including the incurred backlog in learning. However, there is so much that we do not yet know, not only concerning the learning delay, but also with regard to their well-being, their socio-emotional development and opportunities in the labour market in the short and longer term. Important information is still missing with respect to the complex challenge that we now face: how to minimize the adverse consequences for pupils, students and ultimately our society as a whole.

COVID-19 restrictions in education in 2020




August
September
October
November
December
January 2021
From 1 July
Pupils no longer have to social distance. Adults do between one another.
From 18 September
Pupils are allowed to go to school under certain conditions if they have a cold.
From 16 December
Full closure and remote teaching and learning.
Exceptions for specific groups.
From 1 July
VSO schools fully open again. Social distancing requirements between pupils lifted. Social distancing continues to apply between pupils and teaching staff.
From 18 September
Pupils are allowed to go to school under certain conditions if they have a cold.
From 16 December
Full closure and remote teaching and learning.
Exceptions for specific groups.
From 1 July
Secondary schools fully open again. Social distancing requirements between pupils lifted. Social distancing continues to apply between pupils and teaching staff.
From 5 October
Urgent advice to wear masks for VSO pupils and staff (1) outside classes and (2) in the classroom for vocational courses in VSO.
From 16 December
Full closure and remote teaching and learning.
Exceptions for specific groups.
From 5 October
Urgent advice to wear masks for pupils and staff (1)outside classes and (2) in the classroom for vocational courses in VMBO and practical lessons in practical education.
From 16 December
Full closure and remote teaching and learning.
Exceptions for specific groups.
After the summer
More activities may take place on location, but (1) social distancing is required (2) classes and lectures must be spread throughout the week so that students can travel to the sites in a staggered manner.
From 16 December
Full closure and remote teaching and learning.
Exceptions for specific groups.
After the summer
More activities may take place on location, but (1) social distancing is required (2) classes and lectures must be spread throughout the week so that students can travel to the sites in a staggered manner.
August
September
October
November
December
January 2021

1.2 The societal tasks of our education system

The societal tasks of the education system • For a strong education system, it is important that we share the same concept of what we mean when we speak about the quality of education. That concept must guide all our efforts – from the work of teachers in the classroom to the work of policymakers and decision-makers. Quality often relates to the core tasks or core functions of the education system. Sometimes these core tasks are named or grouped in different ways, but eventually they all boil down to the same concepts: qualification, socialization and personal development, allocation, selection and equal opportunities. These core concepts are still fairly general in nature, so we add more detail in what we refer to as the societal tasks of the education system. These tasks emerge through consultation between the fields of education and politicians and, like the core tasks, they may also relate to the law around education. The tasks relate to issues that emerge repeatedly as relevant and crucial for our pupils and students, and for our society as a whole. These tasks enjoy wide support. The core tasks are the following:

- Every pupil and student should leave the education system with adequate literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Every pupil and student should have self-knowledge and has learned how to make independent choices.
- Every pupil and student should be able to contribute to the cohesion of our society.
- Every pupil and student should be able to succeed in further education and in the labour market.
- Every pupil and student should have equal access to education that is tailored to their needs.

Every pupil and student should leave the education system with adequate literacy, numeracy and digital skills

Too few primary school pupils achieve the target level for writing skills • The reference level of 1F (see inset) for writing is achieved by 75 percent of pupils in year 8 in primary schools. Only 72 percent of the pupils master the target level of 2F. Compared to previous surveys carried out in 2009 and 1999, the level of attainment has remained the same (Inspectorate of Education, 2021b). The teaching of writing skills focuses on correctness, rather than on communicative or expressive aspects. However, more focus on the latter is required in order to teach pupils how to put forward arguments and express their thoughts. More focus on teaching a broader range of writing skills is necessary in order to equip pupils for success in further education, and to be able to function effectively in society in later life. This certainly applies to special primary education (SBO), where 33 percent of the pupils attain the level of 1F, while almost 50 percent of the pupils leave primary education to attend VMBO or higher. These pupils arrive in secondary education with inadequate writing skills.

Too few primary school pupils attain the target level for maths • The basic level of 1F for maths is achieved by 82 percent of pupils in year 8 of primary schools. Only one third of pupils attain the target level (1S) (Inspectorate of Education, 2021b). The ambition of 85 percent of pupils

Reference levels for language & maths

Since the 2010/2011 school year, statutory frames of reference for language and maths have been laid down for primary, secondary and secondary vocational education. The reference levels indicate to what extent pupils and students master the basic skills of language and maths.

Two levels of attainment are identified. For primary education, these are:

- 1F: The basic level, which should be attained by 85% of pupils.
- 2F/1S: The target level, which should be attained by 65% of pupils.

For pupils and students, the reference levels guarantee a basic level of literacy and numeracy (the basic level), as well as a target level that will facilitate the transition to subsequent phases of education.

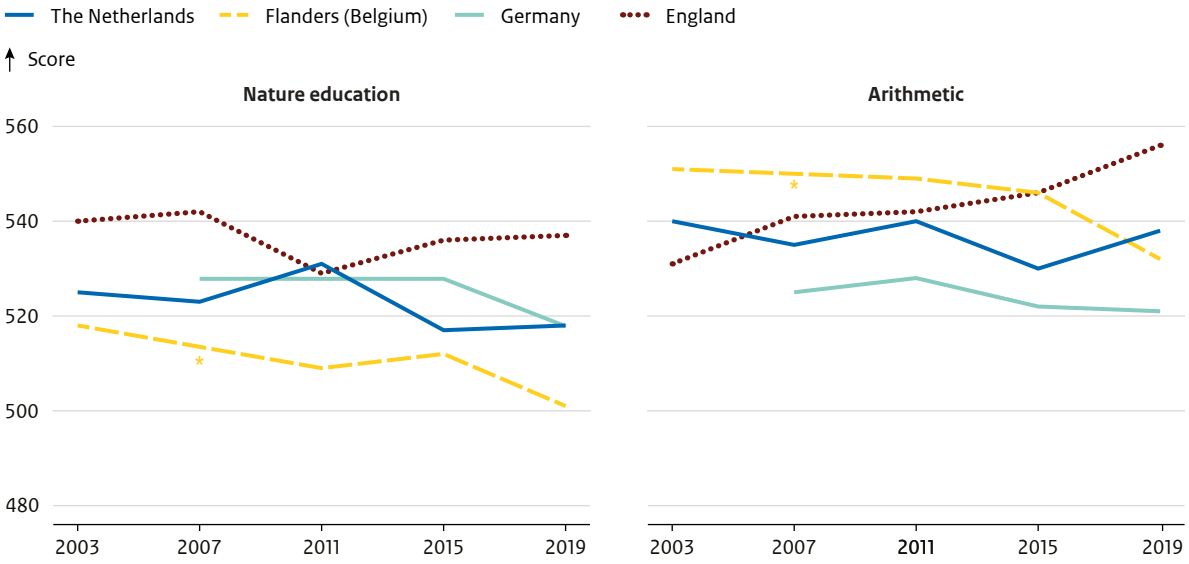
attaining the basic level and 65 percent of pupils attaining the target level is not being achieved. In 2019, the picture in the national Final Test was more favourable, but not yet satisfactory: 94 percent of pupils attained the basic level, but only 47 percent attained the target level. According to international comparative research, the attainment level of Dutch year 6 pupils in maths has been fairly stable since 2003 (Meelissen, Hamhuis, & Weijn, 2020). This can be seen in Figure 1. Compared to neighbouring countries, in 2019 our 10/11-year-olds performed better in maths than their peers in Germany and Flanders, but worse than their peers in England. Pupils in year 6 receive an average of 197 hours of maths teaching during the school year, which is relatively more than in other countries.

Differences between schools in maths attainment levels • In the years 2016-2018, the national targets for maths were achieved at 7 percent of schools according to data from the National Final Test. In these schools, at least 85 percent of pupils attained the basic level and 65 percent of pupils attained the target level in maths. These are almost all schools with a low or average school weighting (i.e. pupils whose needs are of an average to low level of complexity). In the great majority of primary schools (86 percent), most pupils achieve the basic level, but not the target level in maths. These primary schools have all kinds of different pupil populations and denominations, and are found across all regions. Among these schools, the spread in the percentage of pupils attaining the target level is significant, especially among schools with an average school weighting (i.e. an average pupil population). Schools in the major cities (with the exception of Utrecht) also frequently fall into this group. Finally, there is a small number of primary schools where more than 15 percent of pupils fail to attain the basic level in maths. In the years 2016-2018, this was 7 percent of the schools. (PM ref AWP Maastricht)

Attainment levels in nature sciences are below attainment levels in maths • In international comparisons, the level attained by Dutch pupils in nature education is lower than that of maths. In addition, the average attainment level in the Netherlands has dropped over the past 24 years (Meelissen et al., 2020), although the average in 2019 was practically the same as it was in 2015 (figure 1). It is striking that compared to other countries, the planned teaching time for nature sciences in the Netherlands is low: an average of 50 minutes per week. In the case of integrated project education, the average is 45 minutes per week. Additionally, teachers often feel inadequately equipped to teach nature sciences. Only 8 percent of the teachers have completed additional professional training for this subject in recent years. Many school leaders indicate that they would like to have a teacher who specializes in nature sciences.

Attainment levels in first year of secondary education are concerning • Figures show that fewer pupils attain the reference levels in reading skills and maths in the beginning of the first year of secondary education than at the end of primary education (BAO). A quarter of secondary school pupils fail to achieve the level of 1F in reading, while this is about 2 percent at the end of year

Figure 1 Result of TIMMS Nature studies and Maths, the Netherlands compared to neighbouring countries



*No data available for Germany in 2003 and Flanders in 2007.

Source: Mullis et al., 2020

8 of primary school, according to the National Final Test. In maths, 45 percent of the pupils fail to attain the level of 1F (Emons, Frissen, & Straat, 2021). The fact that the test at the beginning of the school year of secondary education has no immediate consequences for the pupils will undoubtedly play a role here, as will the method of standardization. But even though achieving the reference levels does not impact on access to the next level of education, pupils still need to achieve those levels in order to cope in education and society. It is alarming that so many students fail to attain even the basic level. Particularly since it became clear last year that the levels attained by our 15-year-olds in reading is nothing to be proud of from an international perspective (Inspectorate of Education, 2020d). More detailed research is needed into the causes of this, as well as more systematic monitoring of the attainment levels in basic skills in secondary education.

Proficiency in Dutch and maths dropped among first-year secondary pupils in 2020 • Compared to 2019, the levels of reading skills, vocabulary and maths skills dropped lightly among pupils in the first year of secondary education. Pupils at all levels, from VMBO basic to VWO, achieved a lower level of attainment in reading and particularly in maths (Emons, Frissen, & Straat). The decline in 2020 was probably the result of the school closures. This means that secondary schools now have first-year pupils who have a lower level of basic skills.

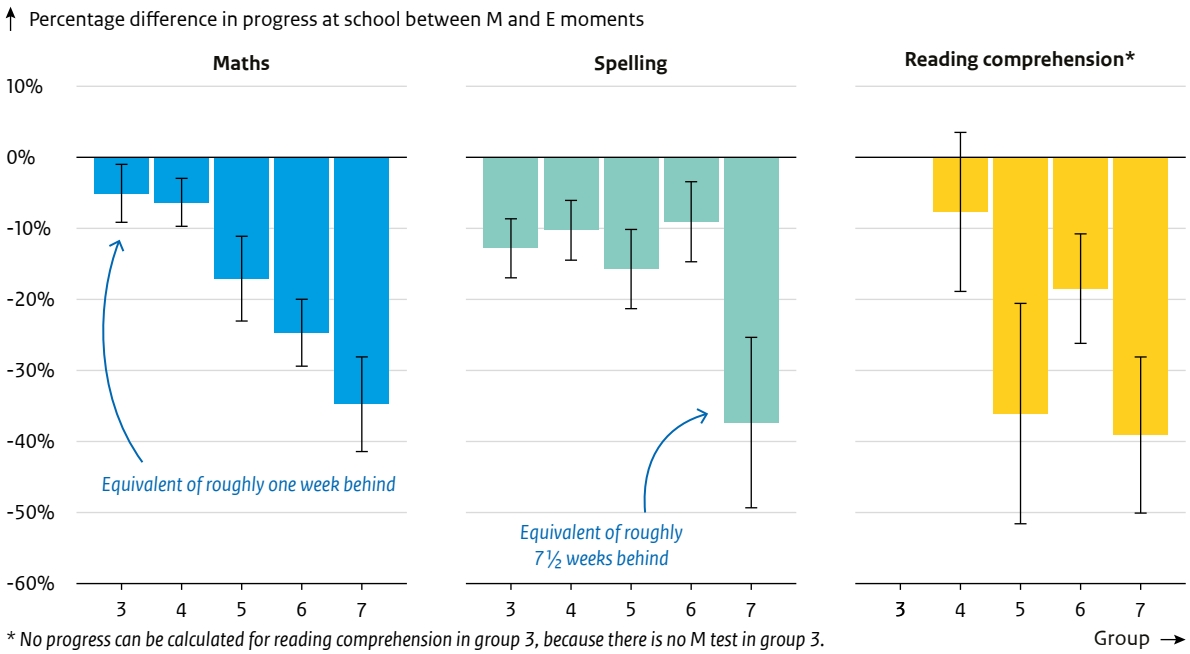
Concerns about reading skills among 15-year-olds persist • Last year, we reported a decline in reading skills among 15-year-olds. International comparative research has shown that 25 percent of 15-year-olds are at risk of low literacy. This mainly concerns pupils in practical education (PRO), VMBO basic, and pupils with lower educated parents (Gubbels et al., 2019). It is unclear whether the education system is providing these pupils with the basic level of reading skills in time, and whether the learning outcomes attained by these pupils meet the relevant requirements.

Limited view of basic skills in secondary education, secondary vocational education and higher education • The national final exams were cancelled in 2020. This means that we are now missing an important data reference point for secondary education. In addition, not many schools track their pupils' progress using standardized tests. As a result, most schools are unable to say whether pupils have fallen behind and, if so, to what extent. The educational achievement of MBO students in the national exams in language and maths is not monitored systematically. Nevertheless, this information is important because without it we have no insight into the extent to which incoming students have attained the relevant reference levels. What we do know is that average reading skills among VMBO pupils, many of whom progress to MBO, are lower than the OECD average (Gubbels et al., 2019). Monitoring the development of MBO students is all the more important because in 2018 the reading skills of 15-year-old pupils in the Netherlands dropped in international comparisons. Neither is there a broad picture of the extent to which students have mastered basic skills in higher education. For a quarter of senior students in higher education who have arranged supplementary education during their studies, one reason given for this was that Dutch language teaching in their previous phase of education had not provided them with the skills expected in their current studies.

Initial picture of backlogs is disturbing • Several studies, all focusing on primary education, have examined the learning outcomes of pupils in years 4 to 7 in the areas of reading comprehension, maths and spelling. We do not have enough information from other sectors to provide a more detailed picture. In line with the results of these studies into the impact of coronavirus (Engzell et al.; 2020; Lek et al., 2020; OiS, 2020; Meshcheriakova et al., 2020), data from the pupil tracking system of the National Cohort Study also show that primary school pupils (in years 3 to 7) made less progress during the first school closure in the spring of 2020 than in the same period in previous years (figure 2) (Inspectorate of Education, 2021e). This pattern is evident in all year groups, to a greater or lesser extent. It applies to each of the three domains of maths, spelling and reading comprehension. There are, however, clear differences between these domains. Pupils have made less progress in reading comprehension in particular: on average across all year groups, between the mid-year and final test (i.e. between January/February and June/July), they achieved only 74 percent progress compared to previous cohorts. In maths and spelling, the figures were 82 percent and 85 percent respectively. There are also major differences between year groups. Pupils in year 7 only made 65 percent of the usual progress, while pupils in year 4 made 90 percent of the usual progress. These findings from the Netherlands are similar to what we also see in other countries. (Chetty et al., 2020; Maldonado & De Witte, 2020).

Some groups of pupils have fallen behind more than others • On average, pupils with well-educated parents showed less decline in their development in the areas tested than pupils with lower educated parents. The difference was most notable in the first years of primary school. For example, in year 4, pupils with well-educated parents roughly progressed similarly compared to previous years, while pupils in the same year group whose parents have a lower level of education made

Figure 2 Progress in the first half of 2020 compared to previous years



** No progress can be calculated for reading comprehension in group 3, because there is no M test in group 3.*

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2021

about 85 percent of the progress in maths and spelling compared to a normal year. In later years, too, there was a decline in progress among pupils with better educated parents, but this decline was still less pronounced than among pupils whose parents have a lower level of education. Parents' income also played a role. Pupils whose parents have a higher income made more progress during the first school closure than pupils with low-income parents. Finally, pupils' migration background also played a role, albeit to a lesser extent than the level of education and parents' income. Pupils from a non-Western migrant background made less progress than pupils from a Dutch background, especially in reading comprehension and spelling. The effect was most noticeable among pupils from a non-Western migrant background who were not born in a Western country. Compared to a regular year, these year 3 pupils made only 75 percent of the average progress expected. The equivalent figure for pupils without a migration background was 89 percent.

Differences between schools in percentage of primary school pupils whose attainment dropped by one skill level • Compared to previous years, pupils at most schools achieved less educational progress in 2020, on average. However, the picture is not uniform. A few schools actually achieved more progress in 2020 than they did in previous years, but these are exceptions. These were often schools that had achieved less progress in previous years than average. Shutting down physical education therefore had less effect and in some exceptional cases even had a positive effect. Schools where pupils had made above-average progress in previous years, compared to their own educational achievement in previous years, saw an above average reduction in pupil progress. However, this does not alter the fact that pupils at these schools still made more progress on average while remote teaching and learning was in use.

Schools took steps to try to ensure that children did not fall behind • Many schools provided additional support to individual pupils who had fallen behind. Primary schools made more use of additional online resources for their pupils than ever before (Smeets et al., 2021). The extra funds made available were often used to provide additional support; almost 75 percent of schools in primary education opted to do this. In secondary education, 60 percent of the PRO schools applied for funding; in VMBO that figure was 90 percent, and in HAVO/VWO it was 95 percent. More than half of the school leaders used the extra funding for pupils with special support needs due to the school closure, mainly in the areas of reading (62 percent of programmes), maths and language (both 60 percent). In secondary education, the funds were used to provide additional tuition in vocationally-oriented subjects and/or to focus on pupils' socio-emotional development.

Every pupil and student should have self-knowledge and have learned how to make independent choices

Personal development is a societal task in our education system • It is important for everyone to learn about themselves, other people, their environment and how to deal with challenges. Pupils and students also need to make choices about the desired direction in which to develop at a relatively early stage. Many difficult and consequential decisions need to be made at a young age, and these decisions require self-knowledge. What ambitions do I have? What are my strengths? Which opportunities do I have? How do I make decisions? Personal development and growth are important to individuals but are also of intrinsic value: they are what make people who they are. One of the tasks of the education system is to guide young people through this process. It is up to schools and institutions themselves how to put this mission into practice on behalf of society. The government, therefore, takes a back seat in this regard. All involved should expect schools and institutions to be accountable to pupils, parents and other partners regarding how they fulfil their vision of personal development in education, and that – as in other disciplines – they evaluate whether their objectives are being achieved or whether adjustments need to be made.

View on schools' curricula for personal development lacks • Opinions vary when it comes to what personal development education should involve. There is no consensus, and neither are there any regulations about this. There are no statutory requirements relating to personal development education and it is therefore not an explicit part of the Inspectorate of Education's evaluation framework. This means that there is no systematic overview of what is going on in schools and educational institutions in this area. Failure to evaluate the work of schools and institutions in this area represents a missed opportunity, because it means that we cannot fully understand what is being achieved through this work in terms of the personal development of pupils and students. Neither can we learn from good examples.

Many different examples of personal development in practice • Inspectors see many good practical examples of education that aims to ensure that pupils and students grow and develop. We also see that schools and study programmes differ in this regard. This stems partly from their specific vision: which ideals does the school pursue and how does it support young people? Inspectors also notice that the extent to which schools succeed in offering a reasoned curriculum content varies. In some schools, personal development receives significant attention based on the school's specific vision, and it is a clear element of lessons and cross-curricular activities. In other schools, the focus is more implicit, or the picture may be fragmented or more dependent on individual teachers. Below we provide a (partial) outline of the way in which schools and institutions interpret personal development in practice.

Well-being of pupils and students adversely affected by the pandemic • More pupils and students are experiencing loneliness and reduced well-being than before the pandemic. Warning signs about the well-being of young people from various sources are becoming increasingly concerning (also see sections 3, 5 and 6). According to primary and secondary schools, the difficulties experienced by pupils who have issues with social and emotional skills seem to be getting worse, especially during the school closures. In addition, remote teaching and learning means that pupils with problems need to take the initiative in order to receive support, and this is not something that all pupils are willing or able to do. Inspectors note that a decline in motivation and a lack of structure, routine and clarity can also place pupils under strain. Pupils' attitude to work and motivation are increasingly identified as problems.

Possible aspects of personal development

Personal development as developing your character • Personal development can be interpreted as the development of an individual's identity and character in relation to other people and his or her environment. The goal may be to help pupils and students to identify and reconcile the diverse and sometimes contradictory values, demands and interests that they have to cope with in their lives.

Personal development as developing your own talents • Ever more schools are focusing on personalizing their education, with the aim of developing the individual talents of pupils and students as fully as possible. This could include personalized activities, extra challenge classes, sports classes, excellence programmes and flexible forms of education. We see ever more flexible and collaborative processes in almost all sectors of education (see also Inspectorate of Education, 2019; 2020d).

Personal development as focusing on a career • Exploring career options is an important way of supporting pupils as they progress towards further education and the labour market. Schools can help pupils and students to understand their own skills, motivations, ambitions and opportunities, and to translate these into a position in society that really suits them. Schools can arrange careers fairs, or (social) practical training and conduct placement interviews.

Personal development by gaining new experiences • Personal development can also involve new experiences: schools and institutions can facilitate new experiences that help to broaden the world view of their pupils and students. This involves experiences that they normally would not have within their own environment, such as (international) exchange projects or collaboration projects with other schools or educational programmes.

Personal development as learning to think independently • Being able to think independently helps to build pupils' capacity to make considered and substantiated decisions and judgments and to form their own opinions. Schools and institutions can help pupils and students in this regard, by regularly focusing on this in the curriculum, for example. This requires giving them the freedom to reflect on and discuss lesson material.

Personal development as character development • By understanding which personality traits in pupils can be developed or promoted, thereby contributing to the success of young people in education and society, schools and educational programmes can contribute to the development of young people's character. In practice, schools organize a range of activities in this context, such as debating clubs or anxiety training.

Every pupil and student should be able to contribute to the cohesion of our society

The importance of citizenship education is brought into focus once again • Sometimes the importance of citizenship education is made all too painfully clear. One such instance was when the French history teacher Samuel Paty was murdered, not so long ago. The pretext was his teaching of a lesson on civic skills, about tolerance and the freedom of everyone to express his or her own opinions. In the Netherlands, too, the murder underlined the importance of education in citizenship and the fact that talking about differences of opinion can be difficult at times. Similarly, the coronavirus pandemic made it clear that handling differences, feeling connected and solidarity are indispensable ingredients in any socially cohesive society. Schools can play a role in this by improving and expanding pupils' citizenship skills. The education system can also contribute to this by reducing segregation in education. The fact that societal dividing lines are increasingly apparent within our education system – with pupils from different backgrounds often having little contact with each other even if they attend the same school because they follow different types of education – not only underlines the challenge that exists, but also makes that challenge even more daunting (Vogels, Turkenburg, & Herweijer, 2021).

More information required on results of education in citizenship • The Inspectorate has been expressing its concern over the quality of education in citizenship for some time now. Despite positive trends, such as an increased focus on citizenship in schools, programmes to strengthen education in citizenship and the government's intention to clarify its legal status, the Inspectorate sees little improvement with respect to the main points for attention. These points are choosing concrete learning objectives, an explicit approach and better information on results. The successful acquisition of social and societal competences is an important indicator when it comes to the effectiveness of education in citizenship. Lack of data on outcomes is not only a problem because of the lack of clarity around the quality of education and the opportunities for improvement. Additionally, if we have no data on what pupils have learned, we cannot turn our attention to what other needs they continue to have. Information on the results achieved is therefore indispensable in terms of quality assurance, but at present the information provided by many schools and institutions is inadequate.

Prerequisites for effective education in citizenship • Schools where pupils indicate that there is a pleasant and open atmosphere are the same schools where pupils achieve relatively good results in education in citizenship (Geboers et al., 2013; Maurissen, 2018; Wanders et al., 2020). There are significant differences in pupils' perceptions of whether they are free to voice their own opinions. For example, pupils at some schools indicate that there is little such freedom, whereas pupils at other schools have a very positive view on how much freedom there is for differences of opinion (Coopmans et al., 2020). An open atmosphere at school is also associated with the culture of quality within that school, including the support that teachers perceive from the school management, the extent to which there is a shared vision

and the degree of trust that teachers have in their pupils. The importance that the school attaches to citizenship also plays a role, as well as the way in which this translates into practice (Coopmans et al., 2020).

Data on (social) safety • It goes without saying that every school or institution should be a safe place. A secure and constructive atmosphere is essential to learning, and promotes successful social and civic development. For quite some time, periodic national studies have shown that the vast majority of pupils in primary and secondary education feels safe at school, although over the years there have always been pupils who have indicated that they are bullied. One important aspect of schools' statutory requirement to ensure social safety is the annual survey of perceptions of safety among pupils. In recent years, the number of schools that has fulfilled this requirement and submitted the relevant data to the inspectorate has increased steadily, reaching around 80 percent in primary education and 84 percent in secondary education in the 2018/2019 school year. The 2019/2020 school year saw a break in this upward trend, however, due to the consequences of the pandemic. Because of the closure of many schools in the spring of 2020, they were unable to carry out the relevant monitoring activities, and the inspectorate did not take enforcement action in the 2019/2020 school year. Although schools go to significant lengths to look out for all their pupils, there is concern about the impact of repeated and long-term school closures and remote teaching and learning on perceptions of safety (due to the problem of digital bullying, for example) and the well-being of pupils.

Every pupil and student should be able to succeed in further education and in the labour market

Further education

Trend reversal in numbers of pupils joining, leaving and progressing within various phases of education due to coronavirus • The coronavirus pandemic has affected the numbers of pupils joining and leaving the various phases of education, and progressing within the education system. Primary school pupils ,on average, received lower recommendations for further education; fewer pupils changed levels; and far more pupils successfully completed further education than we would have expected on the basis of previous years. This trend reversal, which are is described in more detail below, could impact the future opportunities of pupils and students. At this stage, it is not yet clear what the consequences might be exactly, but what is clear is that we need to continue monitoring this closely and that we must build flexibility into the system to prevent any adverse consequences, so that pupils and students are not disadvantaged in their further education or in the labour market.

Pupils receive lower school recommendation; a decline in equal opportunities • In primary education, pupils were given lower recommendations for secondary education on average in 2020 (Inspectorate of Education, 2021j). In particular, there were fewer recommendations for HAVO and VWO (45 percent in 2020, more than 3 percentage points lower than in 2019). In 2020, it was not possible to take the final test in primary education, so pupils had no chance of changing the recommendation they were given. As a result, an estimated 14,000 pupils missed out on a higher recommendation for secondary education (Swart et al., 2020b). Often, this involved pupils with a migration background, pupils whose parents have a lower level of education, and children of parents on a lower income.

Final test for pupils in special education did not take place • Pupils in special education, with the exception of those with severe learning difficulties and multiple handicaps, were due to take part in the final test for the first time in 2020, on a compulsory basis. However, these exams were cancelled. This meant that pupils did not receive any additional school recommendation. The same applies to pupils in SBO. In special education, opportunities for development and the school's assessment play an important role in determining the school recommendation. The final test can provide a more detailed and objective picture of these pupils and can therefore lead to additional opportunities.

Far fewer pupils had to repeat a year in secondary education • In 2018 and 2019, ever more pupils in secondary education had to repeat a year, but in 2020 that number dropped across all types of school and all year groups (Inspectorate of Education, 2021l). About 30,000 pupils had to repeat a year in 2020 (4.3 percent); in 2019 this number was 45,000 (6.3 percent). There was a particular drop in year 3 of HAVO and VWO, where the number of those having to repeat a year dropped by half. Among pupils with a second generation non-Western migration background, the number having to repeat a year dropped to 4.5 percent, from 7.2 percent in 2019. Among pupils without a migration background, 3.5 percent had to repeat a year, compared to 5.5 percent in 2019. The drop in the number of pupils repeating a year is partly a result of the less strict progression criteria that schools applied due to the pandemic.

Many more pupils graduating from secondary education • In 2020, almost 99 percent of all pupils taking part in exams passed. In 2019 that figure was 92 percent. The national exams were cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, and pupils passed or failed their year based on the results achieved in school exams. All pupils were entitled to boost their average school exam grade

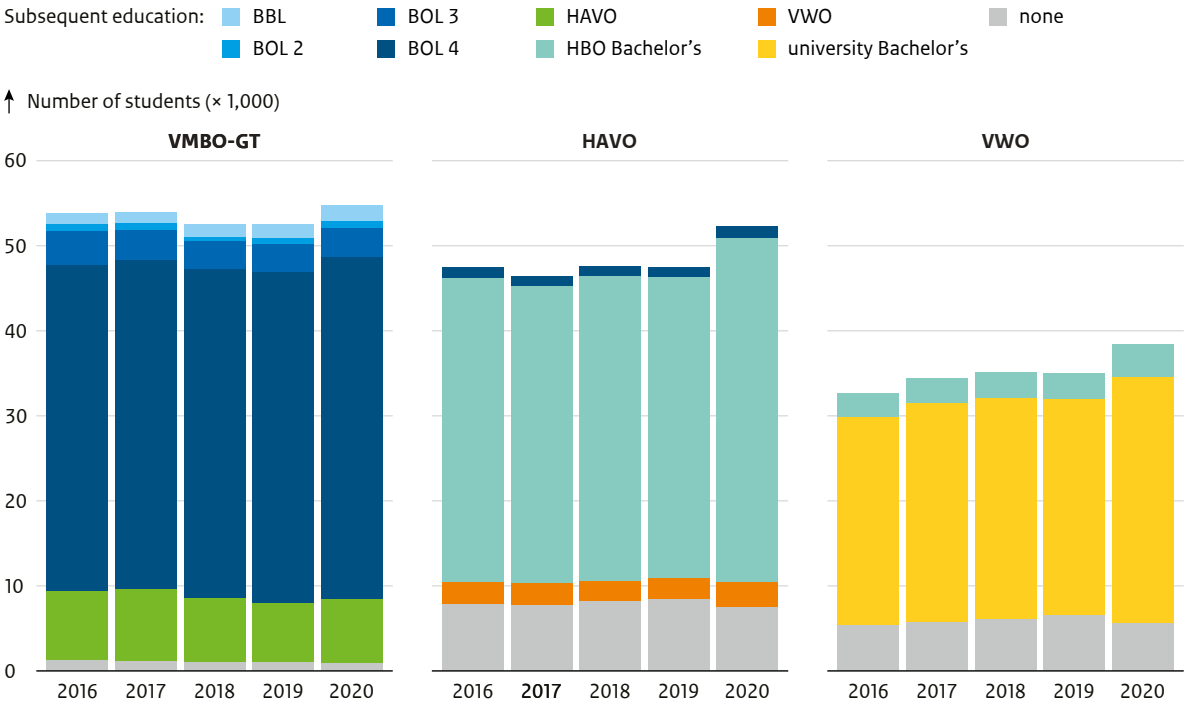
for a subject using 'result improvement' tests (RV tests). School leaders estimate that without these RV tests, approximately 3 percent fewer students would have graduated (Inspectorate of Education, 2020b).

Fewer dropouts in MBO • The dropout rate in MBO fell in 2020: fewer students left MBO without a qualification than in previous years (Inspectorate of Education, 2021h). This may have been due to the less favourable labour market conditions (see below). Although some MBO students expect to fall behind due to the pandemic (JOB, October 2020), there was only limited evidence of this in the 2019/2020 academic year. However, the average registration period for students has already increased slightly, particularly at level 2. Students have also switched programmes less often (OCW, 2020).

Pupils and students are missing out on work experience due to a shortage of work placements • As a result of the pandemic, fewer practical training opportunities were available at the start of the 2020/2021 school year than a year earlier (SBB, 2020). Schools and MBO institutions are concerned that this shortage will continue to mount, and that it is becoming increasingly difficult to help pupils and students to find traineeships. This means that pupils and students are making slower progress. MBO institutions are also concerned about the quality of the traineeships that are still available. There are also problems with the supervision of students – partly because the workload in the sectors is often high, and partly because staff at the companies providing practical training are working remotely. Students in higher education are also noticing less supervision when it comes to finding a traineeship, and fewer practical training opportunities. About 13 percent of senior HBO Bachelor's students indicate that this means that they are not properly prepared to join the labour market. In university Master's programmes, this problem affects 6 percent of senior students (Inspectorate of Education, 2021g). Pupils in secondary education and VSO are also suffering from the same issue. At many VMBO and VSO schools, it has not been possible to take part in practical lessons at school and traineeships in the usual way since March 2020. There have been fewer practical lessons and many individual or group traineeships have had to be delayed or cancelled. As a result, many young people have missed out on the opportunity to gain practical work experience in real-life situations and to develop their skills as employees.

More students progressing to higher education • In 2020, almost 3,500 more MBO students progressed to higher education than in 2019. Approximately 1,200 former MBO students had not yet graduated at the start of the 2020/2021 academic year (OCW, 2020); those students were given six months to obtain their MBO 4

Figure 3 Pupils progressing from secondary education to further education, 2016–2020



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2021vo

diploma while they were enrolled in a HBO Bachelor's programme or an AD programme. The numbers progressing into higher education directly from HAVO and VWO rose sharply in 2020, in both relative and absolute terms. Some 76.3 percent of HAVO graduates transferred to an HBO Bachelor's programme (versus 73.7 percent in 2019) and 75.1 percent of VWO graduates transferred to a university Bachelor's programme (versus 72.1 percent in 2019) (Inspectorate of Education, 2021l). There was also an increase in the number of students progressing from VWO to HBO. Within higher education, too, the number of students progressing from university Bachelor's to university Master's programmes is increasing (Inspectorate of Education, 2021g). Since the 'no Master's before Bachelor's' rule was scrapped in 2020, more university Bachelor's students are able to start their Master's programme without having completed their Bachelor's degree.

Fewer students dropping out of higher education

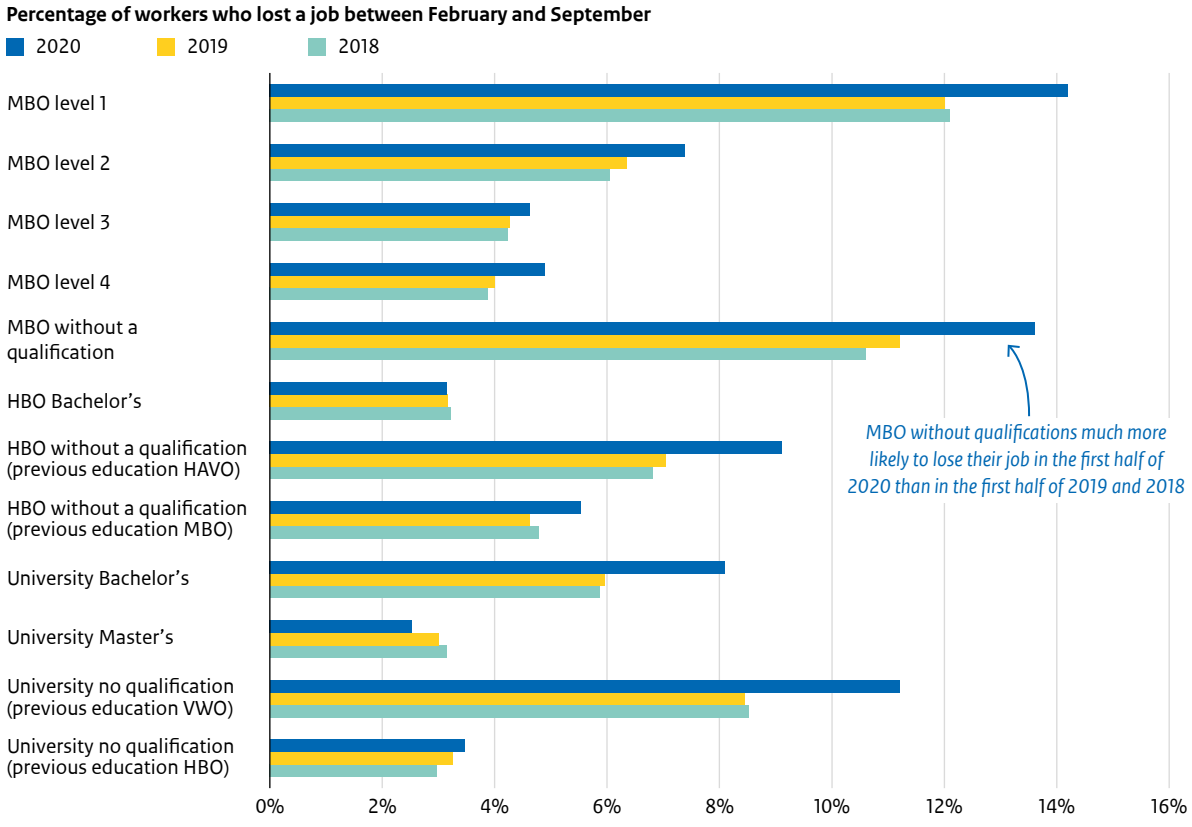
• The drop-out rate in higher education has fallen sharply. Only 11.5 percent of HBO Bachelor's students left higher education within one year (see also chapter 6), while in previous years, this number had fluctuated between 15 and 16 percent. The drop-out rate for university Bachelor's programmes in 2020 also fell to 5 percent, a fall of almost 2 percentage points. This fall may relate to the decision not to apply the BSA (binding recommendation on continuation of studies) at the end of the 2019/2020 academic year. In higher education, the number of students graduating rose slightly in HBO, while it remained unchanged in university education. A majority of senior students, about 60 percent, indicated that they have not fallen behind in their studies so far as a result of the pandemic (Inspectorate of Education, 2021x).

Labour market

Most young people having more difficulty finding work

• Young people who have recently left education find a job less often. (Inspectorate of Education, 2021k). This applies to almost all types and levels of education, with a few exceptions, such as university Bachelor's graduates and HBO Master's graduates. Unemployed University Master's graduates also had more difficulty finding a job in the first half of 2020. About 55 percent of unemployed recent graduates with a university Master's degree have

Figure 4 Loss of job between February and September, young people who left education between 2010 and 2020



Concerns young people who have left education in the past ten years

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2021k, own calculations based on non-public microdata from Statistics Netherlands

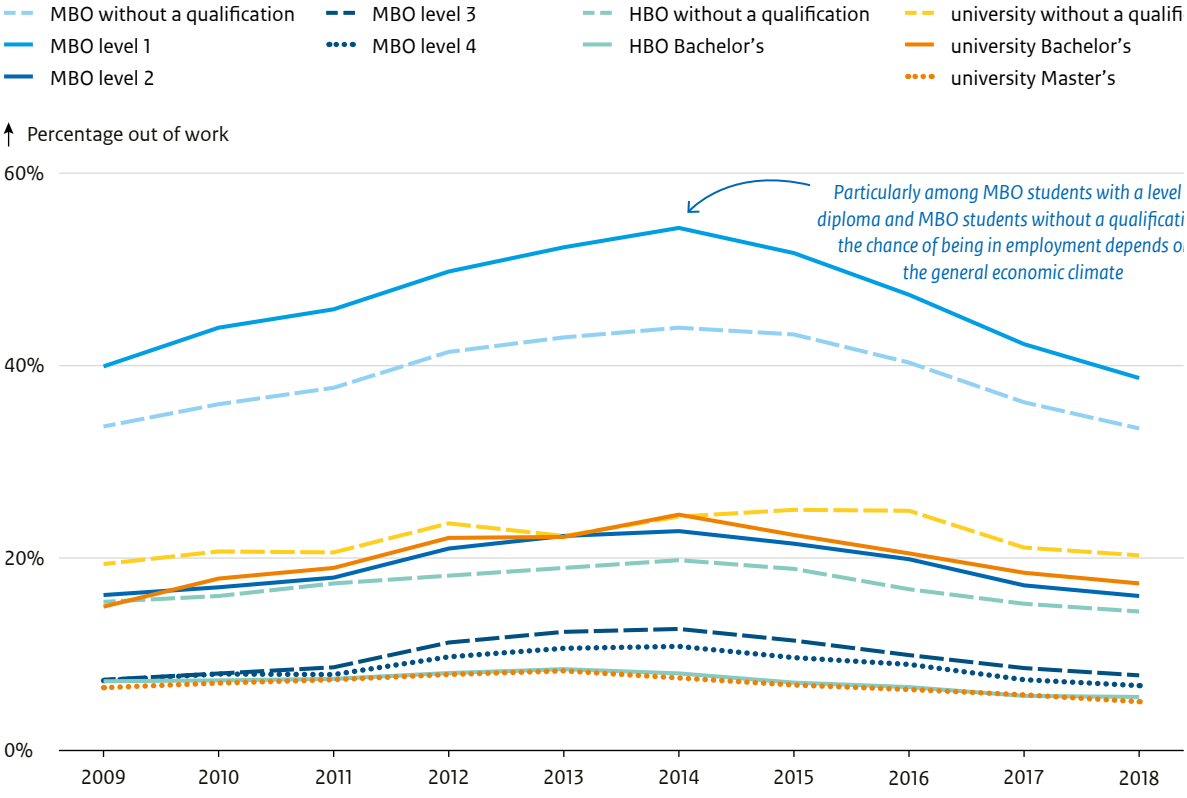
found work, compared to 58 percent in previous years. Although university graduates were no more likely to lose their jobs, they did have more difficulty finding a job if they were already unemployed at the start of the pandemic.

Young people with migration backgrounds more likely to lose job • Over the past ten years, the proportion of recent graduates with a non-Western migration background (second generation) who are in employment has been gradually increasing. The gap with peers without a migration background has generally been closing. In the first half of 2020, however, young people with a second-generation migration background have been more likely to lose their jobs than young people without a migration background. The difference between these two groups increased particularly among those who have graduated from MBO and students who left education without a qualification.

Those who left education without qualifications hit the hardest • In the first half of 2020, 1 in 7 MBO students who had left education without a qualification in the past 10 years lost their job (figure 4). In previous years, this proportion was about 1 in 9. Job losses were also greater among students who left university without graduating: 11 percent compared to 8 percent in previous years. The difference with previous years is even clearer among young people who have left education most recently. More than 1 in 5 of those who left MBO without a qualification and 1 in 4 of those who left university without graduating lost their jobs between February and September. In previous years, these proportions were 1 in 6 and 1 in 7, respectively.

Those who left MBO without a qualification are the most sensitive to prevailing economic conditions • After several years of economic crisis, the labour market picked up in 2014 and unemployment levels fell. The degree to which the improving economic situation affected students who had left education without graduating varied greatly. Especially among MBO students who left education without a qualification and students who left during the entrance programme, a large proportion was unemployed even at the peak of the economic cycle. The proportion of unemployed people increased sharply when the labour market deteriorated, and fell back again relatively rapidly when the labour market picked up. For students who left higher education with an HBO or university degree, the effect of economic conditions was

Figure 5 Consequences of the economic cycle for people with various levels of education



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2021k, own calculations based on non-public microdata from Statistics Netherlands

scarcely noticeable, and the proportion of people unemployed remained virtually unchanged (figure 5).

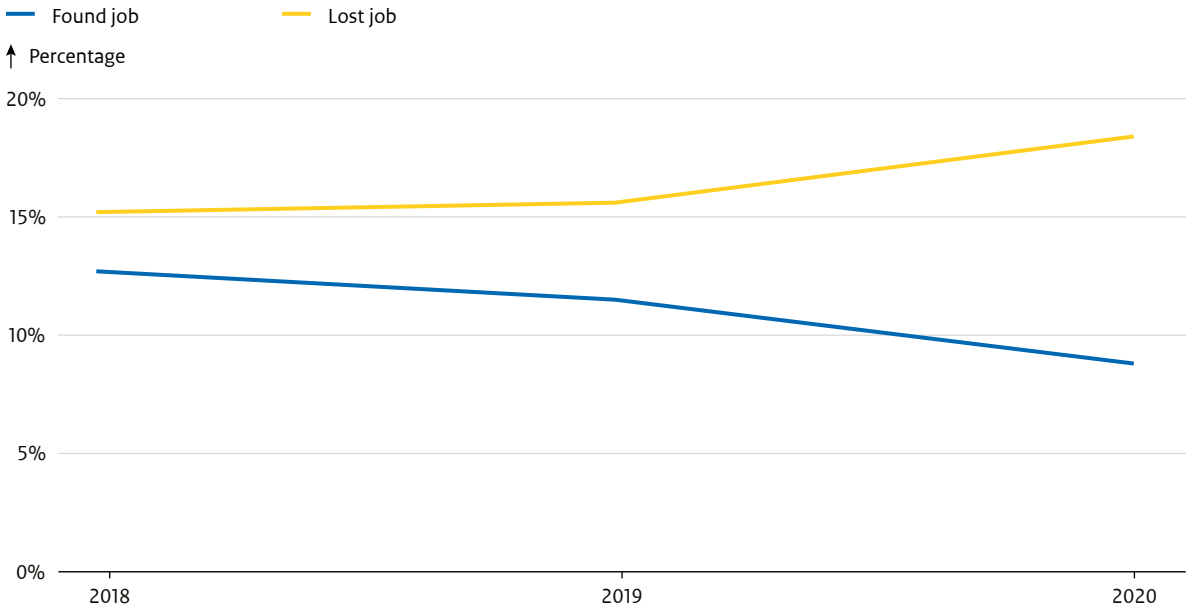
More job losses for those without qualifications in specific sectors • In economic sectors that have been relatively hit hard such as hotels, cafés and restaurants, retail and car repairs, more jobs have been lost among those without qualifications. In these sectors, qualified people have been more likely to keep their jobs than those who left education without a qualification, whether at the level of MBO, HBO or university. In some sectors, there is a significant difference between the number of jobs lost in 2019 and 2020, and between the number of job losses among staff with and without qualifications: in the retail sector, job losses among those who left HBO without a qualification having previously completed HAVO rose by 3 percent between 2019 and 2020; among HBO Bachelor's graduates the figure was just 0.1 percent.

Labour market position of vulnerable young people increasingly difficult • Young people with a chronic health condition are less likely to find work than young people without a health condition but with the same level of education (Zwetsloot et al., 2021). In the first half of 2020, the number of job opportunities for young people with a physical health condition dropped about as much as those for young people without a health condition. Young people who do not have a basic qualification and suffer from psychological problems or psychological *and* physical health problems have much fewer employment opportunities. Young people in special secondary education have had reduced employment prospects for many years (Inspectorate of Education, 2020x). Between February and September 2020, the employment prospects for young people who have recently completed the labour market profile of special secondary education but were still looking for a job, decreased still further (Inspectorate of Education, 2021x). Only 8.8 percent of them managed to find work (figure 6); a year earlier, in 2019, that figure was 11.5 percent. In addition, pupils who had completed the labour market profile of special secondary education in the past three years and who were already employed, were more likely to lose their job in the first half of 2020 than young people in a similar position in 2019 and 2018. In 2018 and 2019, approximately 15 percent employed former VSO pupils lost their jobs, compared to 18.4 percent in the period between February and September 2020.

Every pupil and student should have equal access to education that is tailored to their needs

Effect of coronavirus on (tailored) curriculum content and equal opportunities • The coronavirus crisis has had an effect on planned teaching time, curriculum content, participation in education and dropout rates, and on gaining practical experience. There are huge differences between schools, which has implications for the (tailored) curriculum content and for equal opportunities. We will discuss this in more detail in this section.

Figure 6 Success in the labour market among workers and jobseekers between February and September, young people leaving special secondary education, labour market profile 2017-2019



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2021

Less planned teaching time • School leaders indicate that the number of (planned) teaching hours during full remote teaching and learning was lower than before the pandemic (Inspectorate of Education, 2021e). There are major differences between schools in both primary education and secondary education, both in planned teaching time and in the estimated average time spent learning according to school leaders. We have no data available on the planned teaching time in MBO and higher education. Pupils and students indicate that they receive less teaching during school closures, because certain classes are cancelled, practical assignments are replaced and many schools and programmes adopt shortened timetables. Inspectors find that most pupils participate less actively during remote lessons. The pupils themselves say that they feel less comfortable asking questions, and that they may miss more remote lessons because nobody checks whether they are present, whether homework has been done, or because exams are cancelled.

Focus on cognitive subjects, other parts of the curriculum scaled back • In primary education, many schools spent a relatively large amount of their planned teaching time on maths and language during the first school closure (Inspectorate of Education, 2021e). In special education, the emphasis was more often on reinforcing and reviewing existing knowledge, while this was less the case in primary and secondary education. In secondary education, many schools did not resume their regular curriculum until after the summer: in April and June, approximately 39 percent of the schools resumed their regular curriculum as much as possible; after the summer this rose to 67 percent. Remote lessons focused largely on theoretical subjects. Practical subjects, traineeships and vocational subjects were no longer seen as indispensable, and were regularly replaced by assignments or simulations, made optional or cancelled entirely. Remote teaching and learning also left less time for pupils' socio-emotional development. In addition, it was more difficult for teachers to differentiate, to check whether students were understanding the materials and to organize tests and exams. Almost all the schools surveyed indicated that these factors meant that the education provided was less good than it was before the pandemic hit.

Unequal curricula for different groups of pupils • When we asked school leaders and teachers about the extent to which pupils were taught the full regular curriculum in the period before the summer, we found that this varied between schools. Pupils at schools with a high percentage of pupils with a non-Western migration background and schools with a low percentage of university-educated parents were more likely to be offered only a limited part of the regular curriculum.

Quality of remote lessons varies • The quality of remote lessons varies significantly. This is the picture from a study of 66 remote lessons at 46 schools (primary, secondary, vocational and special education). Quality disparities seem to be greater than they are for regular lessons. In good remote lessons, inspectors saw clear explanations, feedback, interaction and supervised practice. Most pupils and students were participating and motivated. In a limited number of lessons, differentiation was also applied. There were also lessons where teachers brought teaching materials to pupils at home, and there was a lesson in which an MBO teacher had created inspiring educational videos in regular workplaces to demonstrate particular skills to the students. Additionally, however, inspectors also saw lessons that were cancelled or of poor quality, lessons where teachers did not check whether the pupils were participating or had understood the material, and lessons where the technology was not working properly (audio or video connection not working). In some cases, teachers were trying their best to actively involve students in the lesson, but the pupils were hardly responding, if at all.

Characteristics of effective remote teaching and learning (Aarts et al., 2020)

1. High-quality didactic approach

Didactic quality is just as important in remote teaching and learning as it is in face-to-face lessons. The components of effective didactics are no different in digital lessons. This means a combination of:

- clear instruction, which matches the knowledge and skills level of the pupils;
- organizing structure, transparency and a calm environment;
- ensuring that pupils are involved;
- practice;
- feedback.

Some of these elements are more challenging to achieve in remote lessons than face-to-face lessons, such as giving feedback. Furthermore, certain didactic forms are more difficult to implement in remote lessons, such as challenging pupils to vocalize their thought process and define their own answers (scaffolding).

2. Interaction with/between pupils in order to increase motivation levels
Pupils can get distracted more easily in an online environment, and may find it more difficult to follow the lesson, which can reduce their motivation. Interacting with others increases pupils' motivation and can help them to achieve more. That interaction may be between pupils, or between the teacher and the pupils. Scientific research shows that applications for communication and collaboration help to promote interaction between pupils and pupil-teacher interaction.

When designing collaborative tasks, teachers should consider four aspects:
• positive interdependence between pupils;
• individual responsibility;
• promoting interactivity;
• giving and receiving detailed instruction.

For example, these four elements were fully integrated in a lesson in which pupils were asked to draw a diagram to illustrate the concept of photosynthesis during a biology lesson. The pupils first had to draw their diagram individually. They then presented their drawings to each other within their group, explaining the concept of photosynthesis using their diagram. Once all the pupils had presented their drawings, the differences and similarities were discussed. As a final task, the pupils had to create a diagram together, based on the individual drawings and the comments that had been made. In this example, collaboration had a positive overall effect on learning.

3. Teaching pupils the concept of independent learning
In remote learning it is also important that pupils work independently, but this requires them to create structure in their own work and to apply the right learning strategies. Teachers can give various forms of support or 'scaffolds' to pupils. For example, they can help them by simplifying tasks, splitting them up into smaller subtasks, or adapting them so that they involve less complex processes, knowledge and tools.

This support is, to some extent, equivalent to the support provided in a normal classroom situation. But in other respects, the teacher needs to provide support in a different way, because it is not possible to help all the pupils at the same time. This could include applying certain learning strategies so that pupils can continue to work on a task, for example by explaining the subject matter to a fellow pupil over a video connection, or by creating a mind map which the pupils can add certain concepts or ideas to.

Practice and the application of knowledge in practice is an essential part of learning. It helps pupils to retain key concepts and ideas. One clear way in which technology can improve learning is by increasing the quantity or quality of practice during online lessons and afterwards. Teachers can use digital applications to do this, such as Kahoot, Nearpod and LessenUp.

Independent learning can also be done by using programs with adaptive options. A number of digital resources incorporate some form of assessment, or can adapt the tasks that the pupil needs to perform to provide additional challenge and support.

Although these types of applications provide additional learning opportunities for pupils at risk of falling behind, their impact will depend on how well the teacher is able to use them and how well they can be combined with traditional didactic approaches. After all, most programs are designed to provide additional support. Examples of adaptive online programs include: Rekentuin, Taalzee, Words & Birds and Snappet.

4. Vulnerable pupils need extra attention
Some pupils do just as well in remote lessons as they do in the classroom, and some may even do better. On average, however, pupils perform less well in an online environment, and this is especially true for pupils with a learning disability or who are less able. This means that teachers need to give additional attention to these pupils in order to keep them engaged. This extra attention can include:
- monitoring cognitive results and socio-emotional well-being properly;
- additional contact time for these pupils (for example through extra support);
- more support during independent learning, for example by providing checklists or daily plans;
- more frequent contact with parents.

Concerns about pupils who have fallen off the radar • While schools in primary and secondary education were able to keep in touch with the vast majority of pupils during the period of full school closure, there was a small group of pupils about whom little was known (Inspectorate of Education, 2021e). Even during the period when schools were (partially) open, these pupils stayed away in some cases. During contacts with the inspectorate, school leaders and teachers occasionally stated that they were very concerned about these pupils. Schools are making significant efforts, often together with truancy officers, to restore contact and get pupils back to school. Another concern is the extent to which schools in asylum seeker centres and newcomer centres are still able to monitor pupils effectively. Only half of the eighty newcomer facilities surveyed indicated that they were able to maintain proper contact with all pupils. For asylum seeker centres in particular, it has proven difficult to maintain contact with pupils due to restrictions at asylum seeker centres or problems with online education (also see section 2).

No information on (long-term) school absenteeism • Since schools closed last spring, they have no longer been required to report to municipalities regarding school absenteeism. The lack of this information means that there is no national picture of the number of pupils who have not been taking part in education (on a long-term basis). This is concerning because the number of children not in education has been rising in recent years (Inspectorate of Education, 2020d). This category comprises pupils who did not visit school for the last three months (long-term absenteeism) or pupils who are not even enrolled at a school (absolute absenteeism). These indicators provide grounds to believe that long-term absence may have increased as a result of school closures and remote teaching and learning. For this reason it would be desirable to resume the full registration of absenteeism from school as soon as possible.

Various reasons for lack of participation • In the spring of 2020, primary and secondary education were affected by a lack of the right facilities, because not all pupils could participate fully in remote learning. In particular, the lack of a quiet place to study at home and the lack of access to technology limited pupils and students to take part (Inspectorate of Education, 2021e). The reasons why some primary and secondary pupils did not attend school after the summer holidays were clearly different from the restart before the summer, when a small proportion of the pupils stayed at home due mainly to the increased physical vulnerability of a family member, or because parents had doubts about the (enforcement of) preventive measures within the school. After the summer holidays, by contrast, the main reason for absenteeism was that pupils were in quarantine because they or someone in their household had coronavirus or had been at high risk of infection. These pupils were often able to participate through remote learning.

Lower participation in MBO and higher education • In the period between 15 June and December 2020, institutions in MBO and higher education were, to a limited extent, able to offer practical lessons, tests, exams and supervision face-to-face for vulnerable students. According to school governors, participation in remote learning in MBO was lower than in primary and secondary education (Inspectorate of Education, 2021e). During the first phase, school governors often cited a lack of self-discipline, a lack of a suitable environment at home and other personal circumstances as the reasons behind the low participation rate. Students in HBO and universities themselves indicated that their participation was lower than usual: about 40 percent of senior HBO students participated (much) less and among senior university students the figure was around 30 percent (Inspectorate of Education, 2021x). Students who are participating less in the educational activities provided say this is because they feel less motivated and that education is less appealing to them.

Participation in special education stabilizing • The participation percentages for special primary and secondary education are virtually unchanged from last year (Inspectorate of Education, 2021j; 2021m). There does seem to be pressure on the number of available places, with indications of waiting lists. A pupil on a waiting list may lack a suitable place in education, which can ultimately lead to children being at home instead of in school. Waiting lists and shortages of places in special education are contradictory to the main task of an inter-institutional partnership, which is to realize a comprehensive network of facilities, so that suitable places are available for pupils who need extra support. This requires inter-institutional partnerships to provide enough suitable school seats in collaboration with the relevant school governing boards. Where necessary, this can be done within special education, but given the intended shift towards more inclusive education, certainly within regular education too.

Lack of a clear national overview of waiting lists • There is not enough information on the number or length of waiting lists in special primary and secondary education, even though such an overview would be very useful. Inter-institutional partnerships, in particular, would benefit from better information in this area, because ensuring a nationwide network is the main goal and responsibility of such partnerships. Inter-institutional

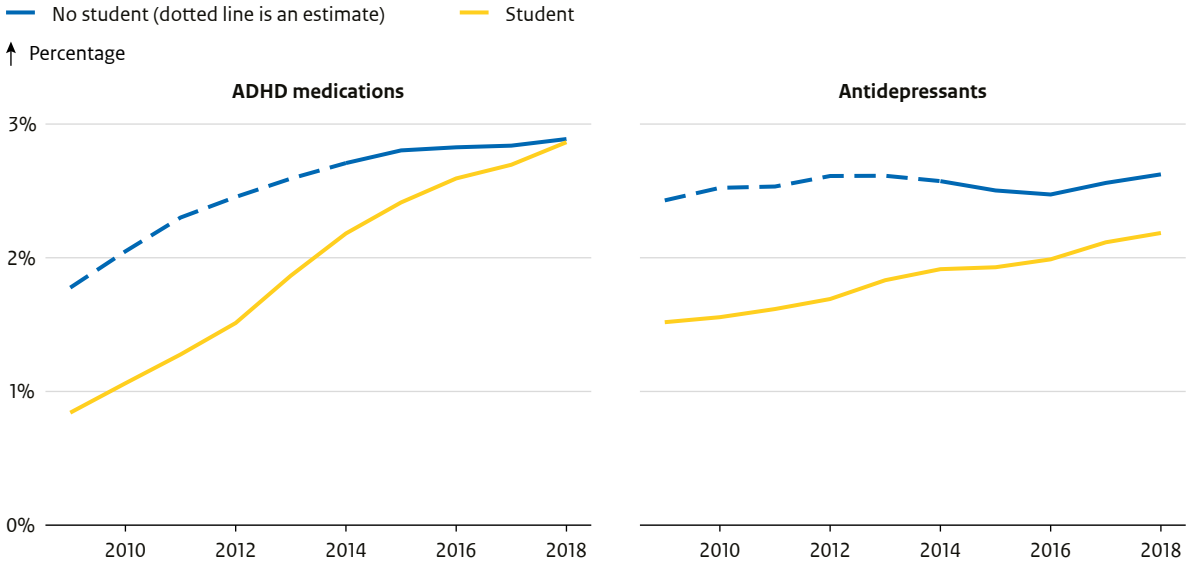
partnerships where waiting lists occur are unable to signal adequately that a lack of capacity is imminent, or are unable to take appropriate action in good time. Expanding the range of education on offer or providing good alternatives in time requires good cooperation and responsiveness. At a time when there is a serious shortage of teaching staff, this is a challenging situation. An accurate, up-to-date overview of the number of places available in special facilities is therefore an important requirement if we are to ensure that there is a suitable place for every pupil.

Lack of a national overview of the number of pupils at OPDCs • A didactic support centre (OPDC) is an educational facility for pupils who are temporarily unable to attend (full) education at a regular school, even with extra support. It is not known how many pupils attend OPDCs, or for how long. It should be possible to infer this figure from entries in the Basic Education Register (BRON) by the referring schools, but this registration hardly ever occurs. As a result, there is no information on how many pupils are joining and leaving OPDCs, how long they are staying, or the effect of temporary placement on the subsequent school career of these pupils.

Limited information on pupils with special educational needs • Since the introduction of inclusive education, there is less information on pupils with special educational needs because there are no national definitions, and schools' registration of progress and development plans leaves much to be desired. In a study of ten inter-institutional partnerships, only 27 percent of progress and development plans had been registered in BRON (Inspectorate of Education, 2018). Schools are obliged to register pupils that have a progress and development plan in BRON; the inspectorate will be monitoring this more closely.
Information on pupils with special educational needs is important. In order to determine the extent to which the important societal goal of (equal) opportunities in education for these pupils is being achieved, more systematic information is required on which pupils have additional support needs, where they are located, which 'systemic barriers' they are facing and whether they are receiving effective and appropriate support.

Use of medication among students in higher education has increased significantly in the past 10 years • For students in higher education, there is even less information on how many students need extra support and guidance across the country than in primary and secondary education. However, we do have information on the use of (prescription) medication among students in higher education, which has been increasing in recent years (Inspectorate of Education, 2021g). Figure 7 shows that the use of ADHD medication in particular has risen sharply: in 2009/2010, 0.8 percent of students aged 17-24 were using ADHD medication; by 2018/2019, this was 2.9 percent. The number of students in higher education using ADHD medication increased from approximately 3,600 to approximately 13,400 during this period. An increase in the use of antidepressants is also evident: from 1.5 percent in 2009/2010 to 2.2 percent in 2018/2019. Students in higher education always used less ADHD

Figure 7 Use of medication among 17-24 year olds between 2009/2012 and 2018/2019



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2021g, own calculations based on non-public microdata from Statistics Netherlands

medication than students in MBO and non-students in the same age group, but their use of ADHD medication has been rising faster. The use of prescription ADHD medication among children and adults is somewhat higher in the Netherlands than in other European countries (Piovani, Clavenna, & Bonati, 2019; Raman et al., 2018). International research among students, specifically, is often based on questionnaires (e.g. Smith & Farah, 2011), making comparison with the above figures difficult because some students use this type of medication without a doctor's prescription (Benson et al., 2015; Trimbos, 2019). It is therefore plausible that the actual use of ADHD medication among students is higher than 2.9 percent. For example, in a survey involving students in Groningen, 16 percent of respondents without an ADHD diagnosis indicated that they had at some point used ADHD medication (Fuermaier et al., 2021).

Differences in the use of psychopharmaceuticals between groups of students in higher education • There are differences between groups of students in higher education when it comes to the use of medicines for psychiatric and psychological disorders. The use of ADHD medication is higher among university Bachelor's students than among university Master's students, but the rate of increase in consumption is about the same. In addition, full-time students use antidepressants less than part-time students and dual students, while full-time students use more ADHD medication. The use of medicines among university and HBO students is comparable.

There are several possible explanations for higher drug use • Several factors could conceivably play a role, such as broader acceptance of the use of this type of medication among students in higher education, changes in the population of students or an increase in the perceived pressure to perform well. The BSA and the introduction of the loan system could also be explanatory factors, but we cannot identify the real causes of the increase in the use of medication from these descriptive analyses. However, these figures are consistent with earlier warnings from healthcare professionals about a growing number of students using ADHD medication to improve their academic performance (Van der Heijde, Van den Berk, & Vonk, 2020): national figures on prescription medication also show an increase in the use of ADHD medication.

1.3 Quality & management

Quality of management

School governing boards are responsible for the quality of education • The governing boards of schools are responsible for ensuring the quality of the education that pupils receive, compliance with legislation and regulations, and healthy finances. Although most schools meet the minimum legal quality requirements, there are school governing boards in every sector that are responsible for schools or educational programmes that repeatedly or persistently achieve lower educational results, compared to other schools and educational programmes. This is the case even when we compare schools and educational programmes with similar student populations.

School governing boards with consistently underperforming schools or educational programmes • Approximately 11 percent of school governing boards in primary education are responsible for at least one school that has fallen below the lower limit for educational outcomes in eight of the last ten years. In secondary education, approximately 8 percent of boards are responsible for at least one department which has achieved inadequate educational outcomes in at least four of the past five years. And 45 of the 59 MBO boards are responsible for at least one educational programme that achieved inadequate outcomes in all four years for which data on programmes is available. The definitions between the sectors are not the same (see box), due to the availability of data and changes to the standards of institutional supervision. The proportion of boards responsible for underperforming schools or educational programmes therefore cannot be compared between sectors. Another factor is that boards differ in the number of schools and educational programmes which they are responsible for (Inspectorate of Education, 2021d).

Children of low SES parents more likely to attend long-term underperforming schools • When the outcomes achieved by schools fail to improve structurally over the longer term, this is a cause for concern. The pupils and students served by these schools would have achieved better results and would have had better opportunities if they had attended a different school, even one with a similar pupil population. We have already confirmed that there are differences between schools (Inspection of Education, 2017; Inspection of Education, 2020x), that comparable schools achieve different results and that the school governing board is one of the most important actors when it comes to achieving better results (Inspectorate of Education, Education, 2020x). In primary education, it is now estimated that 35,000 pupils are taught at a school that is failing to raise its standards in a consistent and lasting manner. This often affects pupils from a low socio-economic background (see also Inspectorate of Education, 2021d).

Definition of long-term underperforming schools and educational programmes

Primary education: schools that have performed below the lower limit for educational outcomes in 8 of the past 10 years. This lower limit takes account of the background of the school's pupils.

Secondary education: departments which, in 4 of the past 5 years, have performed below the lower limits associated with placement with respect to school recommendations, progress in junior years, progress in senior years and examination results. In secondary education too, the required standards take account of the background of the school's pupils.

Secondary vocational education (MBO): programmes that, more often than other programmes, have performed below the required standards in terms of starter results, end-of-year results and diploma results in the past four years. These standards do not take account of pupils' background. However, a correction was made for this when identifying which school governing boards had a higher or lower number of long-term underperforming programmes.

Context and characteristics of boards with schools underperforming frequently or for an extended period

Good quality assurance is important • Good quality assurance is important: schools managed by school governing boards where quality assurance is below the required standards achieve lower results in the final test or lower secondary education examination results. The same applies to long-term underperformers: when school governing boards do not focus adequately on quality, schools and department more often achieve lower educational outcomes over the longer term. On average, almost one in five school governing boards in primary education and MBO has an inadequate quality assurance cycle. These school governing boards have too little information on learning outcomes and the educational process in their schools. In some cases, the school governing board limits itself to indicators that are easy to measure, and excludes aspects of education and/or examination quality that are more difficult to analyse. In other cases, the goals that school governing boards set are not specific enough and therefore more difficult to monitor. Or sometimes there are goals, but no targeted actions that will actually lead to quality improvements.

But other characteristics also play a role • However, it is not just a good quality assurance cycle that is important; other characteristics of schools and school governing boards can also affect the performance of pupils at a school or in an educational programme. These ingredients can lead to different outcomes when the contexts are different (Hopkins et al., 2014). It is therefore sometimes difficult to explain why schools under one school governing board perform well, but schools under another do not. Often, this involves a series of accumulating factors. Nevertheless, discussions with our inspectors and data from underperforming schools have revealed a number of common characteristics, see Figure 8.

Contextual factors in long-term underperformance • In primary education, secondary education and MBO, schools and educational programmes are more likely to underperform when they serve a more challenging pupil population. Schools with a challenging pupil population are often operating under difficult conditions. Pupils whose parents have a lower level of education are more likely to fall behind in their progress at school, even before starting primary school (CPB, 2019). Often, various urban issues come together at these schools (Inspectorate of Education, 2018). The school, and certainly also the school governing board, need good information on their pupil population, and they need to adjust their education accordingly. The school governing board needs to adapt its policies to the context in which it operates in order to ensure that pupils continue to develop and to achieve appropriate outcomes.

Staffing problems • In both primary and secondary education, teacher absence is more frequent in schools that are underperforming over the long term or more often. Teacher absence is very unlikely to have a positive effect on quality. The question is whether these absences are due to factors associated with lower-quality education, or whether the lower outcomes are the result of more frequent absences among teachers. The same applies to the shortage of teachers. School governing boards that are responsible for weaker schools are more likely to face a shortage of teachers and they also have more difficulty in attracting good staff (Inspectorate of Education, 2020X).

Sector-specific characteristics • In primary education, some governing boards with just one school stand out in a positive sense: the schools they are responsible for are less likely to be long-term underperforming schools. In fact, a number of these school governing boards are responsible for schools that consistently perform very well. This often concerns school associations, for example, which are often located in areas with a higher socio-economic status, but also some Islamic school governing boards. At the same time, however, there are governing boards with a high school weighting that have been performing at around the lower limit for an extended period. In secondary education, whether a governing board is multisectoral also plays a role: for example, where a governing board is responsible for both primary schools and schools for special education, the secondary education departments are more likely to underperform than under a governing boad that is responsible for just one sector of education. In MBO, educational programmes in commerce and entrepreneurship and in media and design are more likely to underperform. MBO students are less satisfied with institutions which have underperforming programmes than with other institutions.

Factors that influence the relationship between educational achievement and governance, according to our inspectors

1. Quality of staff (teachers and school leaders). This concerns the quality of teaching, but also finding sufficient qualified staff (particularly in certain regions). Sometimes certain staff

members are underperforming, but remain in their position because there are not enough alternative staff members available. All schools are fishing in the same pond.

2. Monitoring and adjustment
   Governing boards monitor results, set goals and adjust their ambitions and course. They understand what is going on behind the figures and respond appropriately.

3. Educational administrative capacity:
   School governing boards have knowledge of and expertise in education and know what is going on in schools. School governors visit their schools frequently, hold the right conversations and have the skills required to develop and provide direction.

4. Contextual factors.
   These play an essential role. They can include the pupil population and the wider geographical area served (with the associated problems and socio-economic status).

Prospects for action, according to our inspectors

1. A properly functioning system of quality assurance.
   Monitor, make the link with the quality of education and adjust accordingly. Set goals that go beyond just the minimum limits and the standards required for inspections.
   Know the pupils and the context and make decisions on the structure of the education on that basis.

2. Capacity for learning.
   Learn from the good practices of other schools and boards. Adapt this knowledge for your own pupils and context. Be motivated to learn and share knowledge with others.

3. Set good parameters.
   Having enough qualified staff is essential. Strategic human resource management policy keeps good staff motivated. There are also opportunities for staff to gain learning experiences elsewhere within the school governing board.

The need to strive for more than the bare minimum in quality • It is important that school governing boards pull their weight when it comes to improving results together with the schools, especially when it comes to multiple schools or constantly changing schools within a school governing board. It is the job of school governing boards to provide a good education to all pupils. If boards are too inclined to accept the bare minimum when it comes to quality, or have too little information about educational results, the talents of pupils and students will remain underutilized and underdeveloped: a missed opportunity.

Differences between schools' approach to remote teaching and learning • It is already well-known that there are major differences in the quality provided by schools (Inspectorate of Education, 2018) and in the results that schools are able to achieve with their pupils (Inspectorate of Education, 2020); indeed, these differences are persistent. Differences are also evident in the way that schools are dealing with the consequences of the pandemic, including when it comes to remote teaching and learning. Our inspectors see that the quality of remote teaching and learning varies; they come across some wonderful examples, but also situations where distance teaching is falling short of the mark. It is unsurprising that schools with good quality assurance cycles and an established culture of quality have been able to continue providing their pupils and students with a good education during the pandemic. But there are also schools which are struggling. As long as the differences between schools remain so significant, more central coordination, better cooperation and knowledge sharing are needed to ensure that pupils and students everywhere are getting a good education and equal opportunities.

Schools benefiting from an established culture of quality • Schools vary in the quality of remote teaching and learning they are providing. This was evident, for example, in the speed with which schools and institutions were able to switch to remote learning during the school closures: some schools managed this in a day, while others took longer. A small number of schools continue to struggle to arrange high-quality remote teaching and learning. At other schools, highly structured remote teaching and learning is taking place, using adapted timetables or even regular timetables. Schools which have an established culture of quality (and good quality assurance) seem particularly well-placed to provide good remote teaching and learning. A culture of improvement and organizational flexibility are also positive predictors of success. Many schools report that, in response to the current circumstances, they are able to make changes more quickly and to embrace the good aspects (permanently). Schools which undertook an evaluation of remote learning after the initial school closure also seem to be benefiting from this.

Which factors play a role in administrative capacity?

Figure 8 Administrative characteristics associated with quality in schools

Bron: Inspectie van het Onderwijs: 2021d

Role of the school governing board in facilitating remote teaching and learning • Teachers often encounter purely practical problems with remote teaching and learning, such as pupils who are absent and pupils who are have their webcam switched off. Too many teachers seem to be left to resolve these practical problems themselves, rather than being able to rely on a school-wide or board-wide approach. This is a waste of teachers' time and energy. In schools where practical problems have been tackled by teacher teams and/or the school leader, remote teaching and learning goes more smoothly and teachers have more time to prepare and teach their lessons. Not every school provides support, facilitation and professionalization for teachers, either.

Quality in higher education is satisfactory, but there is limited information regarding remote teaching and learning • The institutional assessment of quality assurance shows that managers in higher education are achieving satisfactory levels of quality with respect to their educational programmes and that quality assurance and the culture of quality are also satisfactory. However, there is limited information on the quality of remote teaching and learning. Additionally, there is currently no clear national picture of the academic progress made by specific groups of students during the pandemic. Information from internal evaluations is not made available to external stakeholders. If inspections and accreditations continue, it is unclear whether all forms of education will be involved. In any case, inspection reports do not provide systematic, specific information about the quality of student supervision. Other information is also missing: academic success rates for educational programmes are not discussed in assessment reports and, partly due to this, there has been a lack of insight into the differences in success rates between institutions in recent years.

Financial reserves increase further • Most school governing boards run little risk of financial problems. On the contrary, reserves in the sector have increased further. We note that in 2019 a significant number of school governing boards had capital reserves that were higher than seemed reasonable (Inspectorate of Education, 2020c). The Inspectorate encourages boards to use these resources for education. This will help us to keep our education system in good health, both financially and in terms of quality. Right now, governing boards could consider introducing a detailed policy for high-quality remote teaching and learning, and providing for the relevant investment. Particularly when the

circumstances are challenging, school governing boards need to invest in the future of the education of their pupils and students.

Risk management by governing boards is often inadequate • In their annual report, each school governing board must state which risks it has identified and which measures it is taking to mitigate those risks. However, in only 62 percent of cases does this occur in a satisfactory manner. Governors also need to explain what arrangements they have made for managing risks and which results have been achieved. Only 31 percent of school governing boards had made plans that could be assessed as adequate. Risks are often identified, but it appears that decisions on what action to take are often made intuitively rather than on the basis of any systematic analysis. The question is therefore whether the risks identified are being managed adequately in a systematic and coordinated manner.

Insufficient accountability for internal supervision • The internal supervisory body plays an important role in linking the policy choices made by the governing board with the budget. One specific aspect of this is, for example, monitoring the effective allocation and use of the school's or institution's resources. However, the internal supervisory body accounts for this in its annual report at only 9 percent of institutions. In almost all cases the annual report includes a statement from the supervisory body, but this is often limited to a description of the number of meetings that have taken place, the general points on the agenda and other activities. There is often no description of what actions were taken and which results these led to. That is also why less than 40 percent of these reports were assessed as satisfactory.

Looking to the future • In 2020, school governing boards had to make a great deal of policy on the hoof. It was more difficult than usual to monitor the quality of education in their schools and there were sometimes major staffing problems. The challenge now is for school governing boards not to lose sight of their longer-term ambitions. The main responsibility of governors is to assure the quality of education in their schools and educational programmes. The autonomy of individual schools should not prevent them from setting appropriate goals, monitoring and intervening. With their detailed knowledge of education and the pupils and teachers at their schools, school governing boards can set the right course, so that schools and educational programmes – sometimes under difficult circumstances – can still manage to serve their pupils in the best possible way.

Quality of inter-institutional partnerships

A suitable place for the majority of pupils • We see a positive trend in the fulfilment of the most important task of inter-institutional partnerships: ensuring that a suitable place is available for pupils who need extra support (a comprehensive network of facilities). This means that in every region, the supply matches the demand among children who need special support in terms of quantity and quality. The vast majority of partnerships, 94 percent, provide a comprehensive network of facilities, are able to allocate support adequately and have made agreements with chain partners in order to coordinate with youth welfare support. Of that 94 percent, 13 percent were rated as 'good'. There are gaps in the network of 6 percent of inter-institutional partnerships. We have identified quality shortcomings due to, for example, inadequate or very weak special schools or because there are simply not enough places available in special primary education, special education or special secondary education.

Customization and options being increasingly well utilized • Good coordination with chain partners, including municipalities and youth welfare support, means that pupils can (continue to) take part in education through education and care packages and to receive the care they need from youth welfare support. Good agreements with other inter-institutional partnerships or pre-school partners lead to smoother transitions between schools. By becoming involved with pupils at an early stage, support can be deployed at an early stage or appropriate support can be arranged in the next school place. We have found that 11 percent of inter-institutional partnerships succeed in shaping and implementing the mission and purpose of inclusive education in their region in a convincing manner.

Quality assurance needs to be improved in order to continue making progress • In inter-institutional partnerships, the standard of quality assurance is the most often unsatisfactory (22 percent), but it is also singled out for praise as 'good' the most often (13 percent). Compared to last year, there were less unsatisfactory and more good ratings. Quality assurance therefore appears to be moving in the right direction, but it remains an important point for attention in order to continue improving the quality and performance of inter-institutional partnerships. The most important area where improvements can be made is in formulating goals and intended outcomes more specifically in advance. Another area for attention is the link between policy, as described and elaborated in the agreements in the support plan, and the distribution of resources, visibly translated into a (multi-year) budget.

Good quality assurance never loses sight of the people involved • One of the most important factors that we encounter in inter-institutional partnerships that ensure good quality assurance is that they have appropriate arrangements within their operations without losing sight of the fact that inclusive education is all about people. Inter-institutional partnerships require both hard and soft forms of evaluation as part of quality assurance, so not only internal data and/or external studies, but also the lived experiences of schools and parents. We also see a clear link between the intended outcomes that are described in the support plan and those visibly reflected in the annual report. This is how the inter-institutional partnership shows that it actually puts the joint agreements into practice and ensures accountability.

Formulation of intended outcomes needs to improve • The intended outcomes of a partnership must be the starting points for quality assurance, but too often these are not formulated specifically enough. A lack of clarity about desired outcomes or effects at the outset makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the final results achieved. It also complicates the process of improving quality, and makes internal dialogue, including with the internal supervisory board and the support plan council, more difficult. All these elements are essential in order to continue improving quality and performance in inter-institutional partnerships.

Financial management is satisfactory, but accountability is limited • Financial management continues to be satisfactory in all inter-institutional partnerships, but the thoroughness and quality of accountability (including financial accountability) often leaves something to be desired. In more than 90 percent of the cases, the standard of Accountability and Dialogue is rated as 'satisfactory', but almost never as 'good'. Mandatory aspects of the annual report are often missing, including a report from the internal supervisory board that genuinely reflects on and accounts for the performance of its work. Legislation on inter-institutional partnerships also requires results to be included in the support plan. This reflection on results, in relation to the (multi-year) budget, is only partially reflected in accountability. This is partly due to the lack of proper accountability by affiliated school governing boards regarding resources received or agreements made (Inspectorate of Education, 2020d). However, proper accountability for financial reserves also merits more attention in the annual reports.

Insight into the deployment and effect of funding for inclusive education remains limited • Inter-institutional partnerships only provide a general account of the results achieved in education for pupils who need extra support. In order to meet this requirement better, the inter-institutional partnerships need more *and* more specific information from affiliated schools. Although the legal mandate for inter-institutional partnerships is clear, there is no specific legal requirement for school governing boards to provide this. The law assumes that the parties concerned will communicate properly regarding the use of these resources: "The provision of (financial) resources must go hand in hand with clear accountability. Horizontal accountability is the most important element of accountability in this system: schools will ask each other how they are using the resources." (House of Representatives, 2011-2012). The Improvement Approach for inclusive education continues to focus on greater transparency in the use of financial resources (ref Policy Note).

Governance of inter-institutional partnerships is improving • In an increasing number of cases, the culture of quality in inter-institutional partnerships is satisfactory (80 percent) or even good (8 percent). Inter-institutional partnerships are responding to the call to add an independent member to their internal supervisory bodies. A number of inter-institutional partnerships are actually going a step further than this and opt for several independent members, or even a completely independent supervisory board consisting of only external members. Progress is being made on structure, and culture is more focused on ensuring cooperation and mutual trust. Where there is still room for improvement is in the internal communication between the various bodies, such as the school governing board, the internal supervisory body and the support plan council. A clearer separation between the school governing board and the internal supervisory body makes it easier for scrutiny to take place (ref report governance for partnerships, 2019), helping to take accountability within the inter-institutional partnership to the next level.

The importance of a dialogue with the support plan council is not always recognized • Another communication channel that too often remains underutilized is that between the internal supervisory body and the support plan council. A dialogue between the two was added as a legal requirement in 2018, with the aim of strengthening internal communication. This is meant to help ensure that the internal supervisory body is kept properly informed about developments within the inter-institutional partnership, enabling it to provide better feedback on the performance of the school governing board, for example. This dialogue is important for the support plan council, too, helping it to stay fully updated on activities and points for attention in internal supervision. For both these bodies, and therefore for the inter-institutional partnership as a whole, the benefit

is that developments and achievements within the partnership are scrutinized and discussed from a range of different angles and perspectives.

Cooperation remains key to achieving improvements required in inclusive education • The general evaluation of inclusive education has led to an improvement plan, in which cooperation is identified as the main requirement for achieving more in this area. If we want to arrive at a regional vision together, this is a task for inter-institutional partnerships as well as for individual school governing boards. Cooperation with municipal partners is indispensable to this regional vision. Inter-institutional partnerships and school governing boards can use the Schedule of Requirements drawn up to reflect critically on their own performance and their collective performance to date, but most of all on the best route towards achieving more inclusive education. In the years to come, we will be conducting various (thematic) studies to monitor developments and identify bottlenecks. As part of the supervision of schools, school governing boards and inter-institutional partnerships, we are also focusing more specifically on inclusive education in schools and the responsibilities that partnerships and school governing boards have in this regard.

Quality across the system

The requirements for good education.

Shortage of teachers is an ongoing challenge across the system • The number of online vacancies in primary education, secondary education and MBO has continued to rise in the past year. The total number of online vacancies in primary education, secondary education and MBO in the 2019/2020 school year was 8.7 percent, compared with 7.2 percent the year before. The largest increase took place in secondary education, where online vacancies increased from 10.5 percent (2018/2019) to 14.4 percent (2019/2020). Teachers of Dutch and mathematics were the most sought after. In reality, the teacher shortage is even more serious than these figures suggest. Schools and institutions indicate that often they do not post vacancies, because they view the chance of finding a suitable candidate as very low. Neither are teachers who fill vacancies without having the right qualifications taken into account here. We have no information on the true extent of the shortage of teachers. A questionnaire that the inspectorate sent out to 267 primary school directors revealed that 23 percent of the schools surveyed had unfilled vacancies in the period between January 2020 and the summer holidays. The most frequently mentioned solutions for this staff shortage were increasing the number of part-time staff, bringing in supply teachers, teaching assistants, trainee teachers, or splitting up groups or sending pupils home.

More pupils per school leader • The number of vacancies for school leaders in primary education and secondary education fell slightly in the past year, by 0.8 and 1.5 percentage points respectively. However, over the past 5 years, the number of pupils per school leader (FTE) has increased from 172 to 187. This may be due to the fact that smaller schools have closed or merged due to falling pupil numbers. Nevertheless, it is important to monitor this trend carefully because school leaders are an important factor in the quality of education at schools. In addition, more professionals are expected to leave the profession in the years to come. A declining number of school leaders may also lead to an increase in the workload.

Teachers' workload is increasing as a result of the pandemic • Teachers indicate that their jobs have become more difficult during the pandemic. Remote lessons require more preparation than regular lessons, and preparation work is often done in teachers' own time. In addition, teaching classes online is more difficult: interaction requires more effort, pupils need to be brought up to speed and vulnerable pupils and students need extra time and attention (whether or not they are in emergency care). Teachers also indicate that the dividing line between work and private life becomes blurred and that it is more difficult to achieve a balance between the two. The pandemic has also led to an increase in workload in higher education. The situation has led to the accelerated introduction of plans for blended education, more digitization and flexibility, and a shift towards formative assessment. However, this has meant that the carefully planned implementation process has been abandoned, resulting in an increased workload.

Salaries in primary education lag far behind targets • The growing teacher shortage and the pandemic are adding to the workload of teachers. However, at the same time, we are still not making real progress on improving teachers' salaries, broadening their set of responsibilities and wider professionalization. There is also a great deal of room for improvement when it comes to, for example, support for professionals joining the teaching profession from other sectors. These are all factors that could help make the teaching profession more attractive and help equip teachers better. With respect to salaries, in 2008 a target was set that 40 percent of primary school teachers should be on the LB salary scale by 2014. That target has never been met. Far from it, in fact: by 2014 only 24.2 percent of teachers were on that salary scale. Progress on salary scales has stagnated further since then. In 2019, 28.1 percent of teachers were assigned to L11 (which is comparable to the old LB scale). Teachers in secondary education and MBO are assigned to a higher scale than teachers in primary education, but since 2014 we have seen a downward trend, with more and more teachers on lower salary scales.

Not enough targeted professionalization • Dutch teachers take part in additional training less frequently than teachers from other countries (Meelissen et al., 2020). Compared to other countries, the percentage of pupils in the Netherlands whose primary teacher has completed additional training in maths is lower than in other countries in almost all areas. In nature studies, only 8 percent of the pupils are taught by a teacher who has completed additional subject-specific training in that subject in the past 2 years. When Dutch teachers do take part in additional training, this is more likely to focus on general didactic skills, even though improving learning outcomes mainly requires additional subject-specific didactic skills. Governments and schools are only held accountable for the professionalization of their teachers to a limited extent, and it is often up to individual teachers to arrange this with the school. This means that there is not enough information about this – about resources, how they are spent and how efficiently they are used.

Improving teachers' position and professional skills • The Teaching Profession Act (WBL) dating from 2017 defines what it means to be a teacher and guarantees professional quality standards and practices. The idea is that teachers take responsibility for ensuring the quality of their professional practice through a set of instruments consisting of a description of the profession, professional freedoms and a professional statute, as well as a teacher portfolio. The intended effect is to strengthen the position of teachers and improve professional quality. This requires the creation of a strong professional organization for teachers as a group, which sets requirements for professional practice and expresses its opinion on professional ethics and training (Van den Ende, Driessen, & Bartsch, 2019).

Limited use of professional statute • Some 55 percent of school leaders indicate that no professional statute has (yet) been drawn up (Inspectorate of Education, 2021j). Among the schools which have done this, 54 percent indicate that they discuss the document within their team every year; about 20 percent do so every six months. At the time of the baseline measurement for the Teaching Profession Act in 2019, 32 percent of primary schools had drawn up a statute and 32 percent were still working on this (Van den Ende et al., 2019). So there has been an increase since 2019. However, three years after the introduction of the legislation, less than half of the schools have drawn up a professional statute. This raises the question of whether all schools are aware of the professional statute as an instrument, and to what extent its significance is appreciated. The same applies to the skills dossiers. Teachers and school leaders indicate that they are striving for goals that these instruments are intended to achieve, but that the instruments themselves are not making a positive contribution to professional experience and the professional realm. There is a different way of doing things. If teachers have control over how these resources are used, this can contribute to their feeling of autonomy and to a positive professional experience.

Assurance in the education system

No final test, no national exams • In 2020, the final test for primary education and the national exams for secondary education were all cancelled. In special education, the final test was due to become compulsory for the first time, but this was also cancelled. For children in primary education, this meant that they progressed to secondary education purely on the basis of the school recommendation, and without any objective final test result that could have been used to justify a higher recommendation. The cancellation of the final test also meant it was unclear whether and to what extent pupils had mastered the reference levels in language and maths. For pupils in secondary education, the cancellation of the national exams meant that they only took school exams, after which there were additional retake opportunities in the form of result improvement tests. As a result, in 2020 it was not possible to compare the average standardized exam results in Dutch or maths with previous years.

Some schools are testing less, others are testing selectively • By the summer of 2020, some primary schools had tested fewer pupils using their pupil-monitoring system than normal, and in some cases no tests at all had been carried out (Lek et al., 2020). There are regional differences: the most tests were performed in Friesland and Limburg before the summer, and the least were performed in Zeeland, Drenthe and Groningen. There are also differences between groups of pupils: in maths and spelling, the better-achieving pupils were tested more often, while in reading comprehension the lowest-achieving pupils were tested slightly more often. After the summer, many primary schools held the test for the pupil-monitoring system, which would normally be taken just before the summer. But even when we take that into account, the number of schools that have held tests and the number of students that have been tested remains lower than before the pandemic.

Despite lower recommendations from primary schools, some school leaders unconcerned about lack of final test • Despite the fact that an estimated 14,000 pupils received a lower school recommendation than expected in 2020, primary school leaders believe that correct recommendations were issued even without the final test (Inspectorate of Education, 2021a). In June, about two-thirds of primary school leaders indicated that they had no pupils in year 8 whom they would have

liked to refer to the final test results before making their school recommendation. In particular, the argument was frequently made that they already knew enough about their pupils to make this judgement.

School leaders with many pupils with a non-Western migration background recognize importance of the final test • There were also some school leaders who would have liked to refer more often to the final test when making their recommendations; this mainly concerned school leaders who have many pupils with a non-Western migration background. Among school leaders with the lowest percentage of pupils with a non-Western migration background, only 20 percent would have liked to include the final test in their recommendations. By contrast, among school leaders with the highest percentage of pupils with a non-Western migration background, 34 percent would have liked to include the final test in their recommendations. The idea that for a few students the final test could have led to a higher recommendation was also more widely held among school leaders with many pupils whose parents have a non-Western migration background.

Information on important aspects of the system

Inadequate information on some pupils, made worse by the pandemic • Every pupil is entitled to a good education that suits his or her abilities. Unfortunately, for many years we have noticed that there are some students who do not get this. One result of this is that the number of pupils not in school at all has been steadily increasing in recent years. It is concerning to note that the pandemic has meant that even more pupils have not been attending education, at least for the time being, or have even fallen off the radar completely. An additional worry is that these are often the pupils who were already in a vulnerable position.

Systematic information on progress of pupils and students is lacking, made worse by the pandemic • The instrumentation used to monitor the progress of young children systematically has disappeared in recent years, along with the national final test at the end of primary education, based on the assumption that this would increase the freedom that pupils and education professionals have. Due to the pandemic, last year it was even decided to cancel the final test and the national final exams altogether. We are now seeing the consequences of this decision. It has become apparent that these instruments provide an important way for teachers and schools to monitor pupils' development and to evaluate the education that is being provided. These instruments also need to be made by specialists.

Lack of information on some parts of the curriculum • Schools and institutions in the Netherlands have a high degree of autonomy when it comes to the education that they provide. Many schools make the most of this autonomy, and quite rightly so, which means that the range of education provided is diverse and unique. However, it also means that with respect to various parts of the compulsory curriculum it is not possible to make statements about the quality of education or what pupils are learning. This is particularly true in areas where no (clear) goals and learning outcomes have been formulated, such as education in citizenship and personal development. Sometimes, there seems to be a prevailing feeling that better information on (the effectiveness of) these parts of the curriculum would deprive schools and institutions of their autonomy. But as a consequence, we have no clear picture of how and to what extent the Dutch education system is managing to fulfil certain societal tasks.

Private & supplementary education

What is private education?

Private education refers to education outside the publicly funded system. In primary and secondary education, private education is provided by B2, B3 and B4 schools. B2 schools are schools that offer secondary education and general secondary adult education at the levels of VMBO-G/T, HAVO and VWO. These B2 schools are allowed to hold their own exams. B3 schools can offer primary education and/or secondary education, but secondary pupils cannot take regular exams there. These pupils need to take part in state exams. Non-publicly funded education also includes B4 schools (non-publicly funded international and foreign schools), private institutions for MBO and higher education which are recognized by the government as legal entities and meet the relevant quality requirements, and pupils who have been exempted from attending school and who are receiving home schooling.

Increase in private education for primary pupils • In recent years, the number of primary pupils in non-publicly funded schools has grown from 532 in 2015/2016 to 919 in 2019/2020. In absolute terms, this number is modest, representing around 0.07 percent of the total population of primary pupils (Inspectorate of Education, 2021i).

Increase in the number of secondary pupils in private schools • The total number of secondary pupils in private B3 schools has also been increasing in recent years, from 380 pupils in 2015/2016 to 650 pupils in 2019/2020. The number of pupils up to the age of 18 in private B2 schools

fell slightly between 2015/2016 and 2019/2020, from 1,860 students in 2015/2016 to 1,740 students in 2019/2020. The absolute number of secondary pupils in private education is also modest, representing around 0.2 percent of the total number of secondary pupils.

More boys in private secondary schools • The pupil population of private schools is not a representative reflection of the country's pupil population as a whole. Of pupils attending secondary education at a private B2 school, 64 percent are boys and 36 percent are girls. The percentage of secondary school pupils with a second-generation non-Western migration background is slightly lower in private B2 schools, while the percentage of pupils with a Western migration background is slightly higher. Pupils in private B2 schools are more likely to have higher-income parents than students in regular secondary education. The parents of 67 percent of these pupils fall into the highest income category, compared to 24 percent in regular secondary education. The parents of these pupils are also more likely to be better educated than the parents of pupils in regular secondary education. The background of pupils from B3 schools is unknown from current registrations.

School careers of pupils prior to private education are diverse • Pupils in year 6 of VWO and year 5 of HAVO in private B2 education are more likely to have to repeat a year than their counterparts in publicly funded education (Inspectorate of Education, 2021i). Among pupils in year 6 of VWO, 17 percent in non-publicly funded secondary education had to repeat a year at least once in the previous 3 years, compared to 11 percent of pupils in regular education. For pupils in year 5 of HAVO, 27 percent of pupils in non-publicly funded education have had to repeat a year at least once in the previous 3 years; among the same group in publicly funded schools, that figure was 21 percent.

Arrangements for special needs care in special education • There are no private schools in special education. However, there are B3 schools in primary and secondary education that pupils with special educational needs can attend. It is sometimes the case that children who are exempt from compulsory education still attend private education, and there are children who attend institutions that are not recognized as schools, such as care farms. These are not suitable for children who are required to be at school, and those who attend them are often exempt from compulsory education or would not otherwise be in any form of education at all. In order to gain a better insight into the successes and challenges of providing special needs care, both inside and outside the publicly funded system, the Education Inspectorate completed a study into this in the autumn of 2020. The results of that study will be published in the summer of 2021.

Potential conflict between use of private providers with the duties of inter-institutional partnerships • Although the curriculum at private educational institutions and institutions that are not recognized as schools may sometimes be suitable for certain pupils, this is at odds with the duty of inter-institutional partnerships to provide a comprehensive network of facilities for learners who need additional support. However, this only becomes a systemic shortcoming if parents are making use of the private facility due to the lack of a suitable place in the public system. Where a place is available, this may be perceived as unsuitable. A decision by the Disputes Committee for Inclusive Education can provide clarity regarding whether a place should be considered suitable for a particular pupil's support needs. If this decision is affirmative, the relevant school governing board has complied with its duty of care and its duty to provide a suitable place, and the partnership has fulfilled its responsibility to provide a comprehensive offering. Cases are not always submitted to the Disputes Committee, however, so differences of opinion over whether or not places offered are suitable may continue.

A significant number of MBO students are enrolled in non-publicly funded programmes • A significant number of MBO students are following a recognized MBO programme at a non-publicly funded MBO institution. In the 2018/2019 school year, there were 40,794 students in this situation, or approximately 7 percent of the total number of MBO students. Over half of the students enrolled in non-publicly funded MBO programmes were following a programme in the field of care and welfare. In addition, students enrolled in non-publicly funded MBO programmes are often older than students enrolled in publicly funded MBO programmes; over half of them are over 30 years old and only 17 percent of them are younger than 23 years old.

Within non-publicly funded higher education, most students are studying part-time in HBO • Within non-publicly funded higher education, a total of 57,589 students were enrolled at 67 non-publicly funded institutions in 2019. The vast majority of these students (84 percent) were registered as diploma students. These students are following a fully accredited programme and intend to obtain a diploma. Among diploma students, 85 percent are studying in HBO and 15 percent at a university. The majority of both HBO and university students are following a part-time educational programme. A large proportion of students in non-publicly funded higher education are following an educational programme in the field of economics; this is the case for 48 percent of HBO students and 73 percent of university students in non-publicly funded higher education.

Featured: Supplementary education

Use of supplementary education before and during the pandemic • The study below relates to the use of supplementary education before the pandemic. Supplementary education is arranged at the initiative of – and paid for by – the pupils, students or parents themselves. Since the pandemic, supplementary education has become more widely used to help pupils and students to achieve the levels of attainment that are required of them. The government has invested €282 million in additional support in the period up to January 2021. The schools and institutions which have received this funding have often used it to extend the school day or provide summer, autumn or weekend programmes (DUSI, 2020). In their efforts to help pupils and students catch up, schools and institutions regularly contract private actors to provide homework supervision (15 percent) or partner with the business community (7 percent) (DUSI, 2020). We have no information on the effectiveness of individual initiatives. In February 2021, the government announced another round of investment, this time totalling €8.5 billion. It is important that schools focus on interventions that have been proven to be effective, as described in, for example, Kortekaas-Rijlaarsdam, Turkeli, de Vries, Ehren, & Meeter (2020).

Increase in use of supplementary education • The use of supplementary education has increased. Annual household spending on supplementary education has increased from €26 million in 1995 to €284 million in 2018 (Statistics Netherlands, 2020). This increase is also evident in the turnover of private companies registered with the Chamber of Commerce which offer supplementary education; this increased by 43 percent from 2015 to 2017, from €48.5 million to €69.2 million (Bisschop, van den Berg, & van der Ven, 2019). However, this is less than the amount that is actually spent by parents, because parents also spend money on supplementary education services from non-profit organizations, and in the informal sector (Bisschop, van den Berg, & van der Ven, 2019; Elffers & Jansen, 2019). Supplementary education in the Netherlands is relatively modest compared to other countries (Elffers & Jansen, 2019). The use of supplementary education has historically been particularly high in East Asian countries, and also higher in Southern and Eastern Europe. The increasing use of supplementary education in the Netherlands is consistent with a trend that is seen across other Western European countries too (Bray, 2011; Bray, 2020).

A quarter of primary school pupils receive supplementary education • In year 8 of primary education, a quarter of pupils were receiving some form of supplementary education in 2018/2019, mainly involving practice outside school hours (5 percent paid; 10 percent unpaid), private tuition (6 percent paid; 4 percent unpaid) and additional support for specific learning needs (4 percent paid; 6 percent unpaid (Bisschop, van den Berg, & van der Ven, 2019). A survey of parents of year 7 pupils carried out by the inspectorate showed that 20 percent of pupils had made use of supplementary education in the previous year, 2019. Private tuition was the most common form of supplementary education. Half of the cases involved free private tuition provided by the school, the municipality or by friends or acquaintances; and in half of the cases, the private tuition was paid for. The average amount paid by parents who arranged private tuition from a professional organization was €718 in 2019.

What is supplementary education?

The provision of education outside school hours, by schools or other actors, whether or not this involves payment, which supports children with their regular programme of education (Bisschop, van den Berg, & van der Ven, 2019).

Who provides supplementary education? Providers may be private for-profit companies, but also the child's own school, local municipality or a charitable organization, which may well provide supplementary education free of charge. Individuals can also provide supplementary education, either paid or unpaid. More structured partnerships between schools and providers of supplementary education are common (Elffers & Jansen, 2019).

What forms of supplementary education are there? In primary and secondary education, there are six forms of supplementary education:

1. private tuition
2. homework supervision
3. training for tests / exams
4. extra support for specific learning needs
5. study skills training
6. extra practice outside of school hours (Bisschop, et al., 2019).

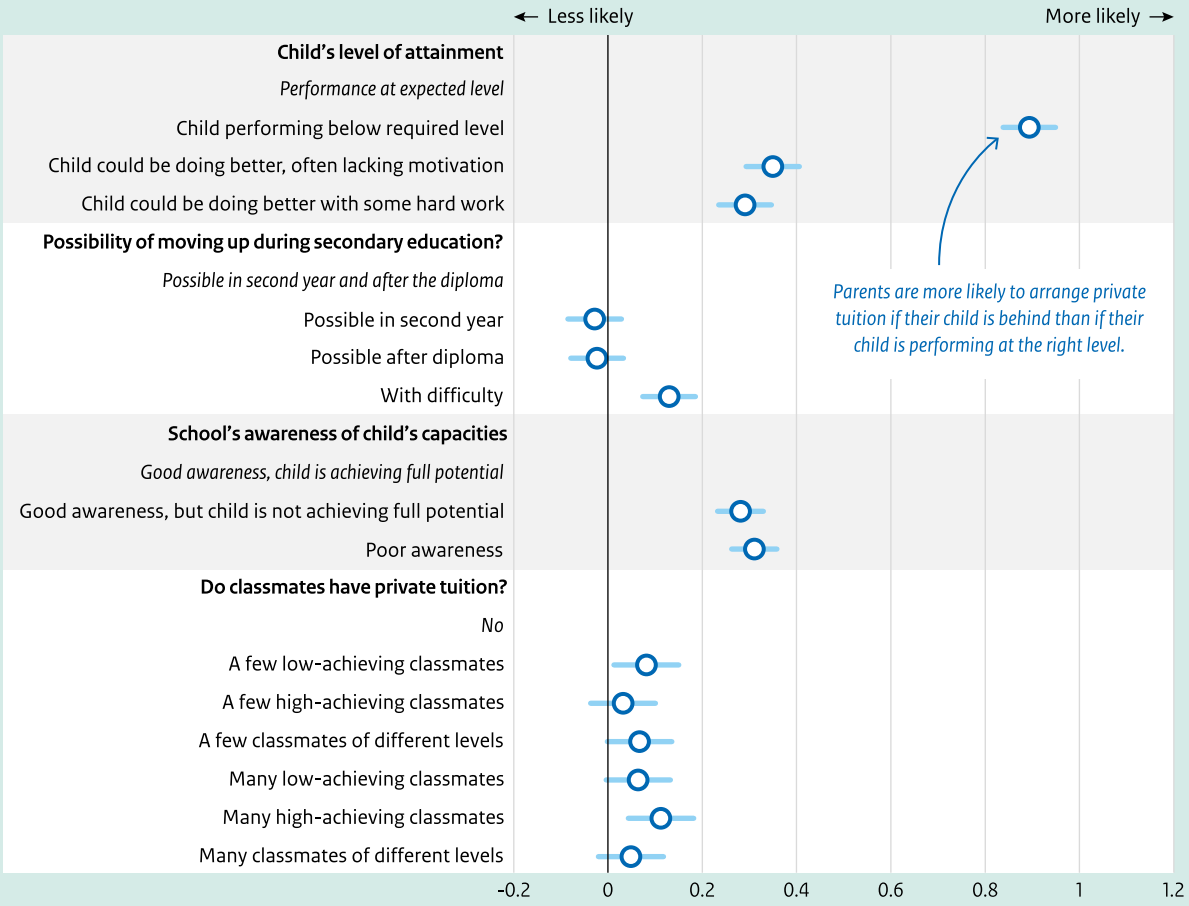
In higher education, supplementary education can be defined as paid teaching or support outside what is offered through the student's own educational programme or institution for higher education, with the aim of improving academic performance (faster graduation, higher grades). This can include exam training, private tuition or commercial thesis supervision.

Majority of parents helped their own child with their schoolwork before the pandemic • In a survey carried out by the inspectorate, some 58 percent of parents of year 7 pupils indicated that they helped their child with their schoolwork. This usually involved help with maths (27 percent), reading (25 percent) or general homework support (25 percent). 23 percent of parents indicated that they use (online) practice exercises for this. Parents with different levels of education help their child by roughly the same amount, although the kind of support they provide differs somewhat. During the pandemic, parents have been using additional online learning resources more frequently, in addition to home schooling. The increase in the use of these educational resources was greater in areas with a higher socio-economic status (Smeets, ter Weel, & Zwetsloot, 2020). International research has revealed similar differences between areas that are more and less vulnerable (Bacher-Hicks, Goodman, & Mulhern, 2021).

Children's attainment at school is the biggest predictor of the use of private tuition • Parents of year 7 pupils are most likely to arrange private tuition for their child when their child has fallen behind at school. In cases where a child could be studying more but has poor motivation, or could attain a higher level by working harder, parents are also more likely to arrange private tuition than if the child is performing at the level that the parent thinks is appropriate. This is particularly true of university-educated parents. They are more likely to arrange private tuition in these circumstances than parents with an HBO-level education. Parents with an MBO-level education are the least likely to arrange private tuition for their children.

The role of the primary school is also important • If parents feel that the primary school knows what their child is capable of and is helping their child to perform as well as possible at school, they will be less inclined to

Figure 9 Parent's motivation when choosing private tuition



Italics shows category that is being compared. This has the value of 0. In the first situation, for example, we compare how likely it is that someone will want to arrange private tuition if the child is not performing as expected, compared to if the child is performing at the right level.

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2021c

resort to private tuition, according to research carried out by the inspectorate. Parents are more likely to opt for private tuition if the school does not seem to be aware of their child's potential, or if the school is unable to get the most out of the child.

Private tuition more likely when moving up within secondary education is a possibility • In situations where parents of primary pupils feel that their child may face challenges moving up within secondary education, they are more likely to opt for additional tuition than parents who do not foresee any such problems. It does not matter whether their child may have the opportunity to move up in the second grade or at the end of secondary school, or both. It is often said that the increase in the use of supplementary education is partly because it has become more difficult to switch between levels during secondary education. As a result, it is more important that the child enrols at the highest possible level at the start of secondary education and then does not move down to a lower level; this belief means that parents are opting to arrange supplementary education more frequently (De Geus & Bisschop, 2017; Elffers, 2019).

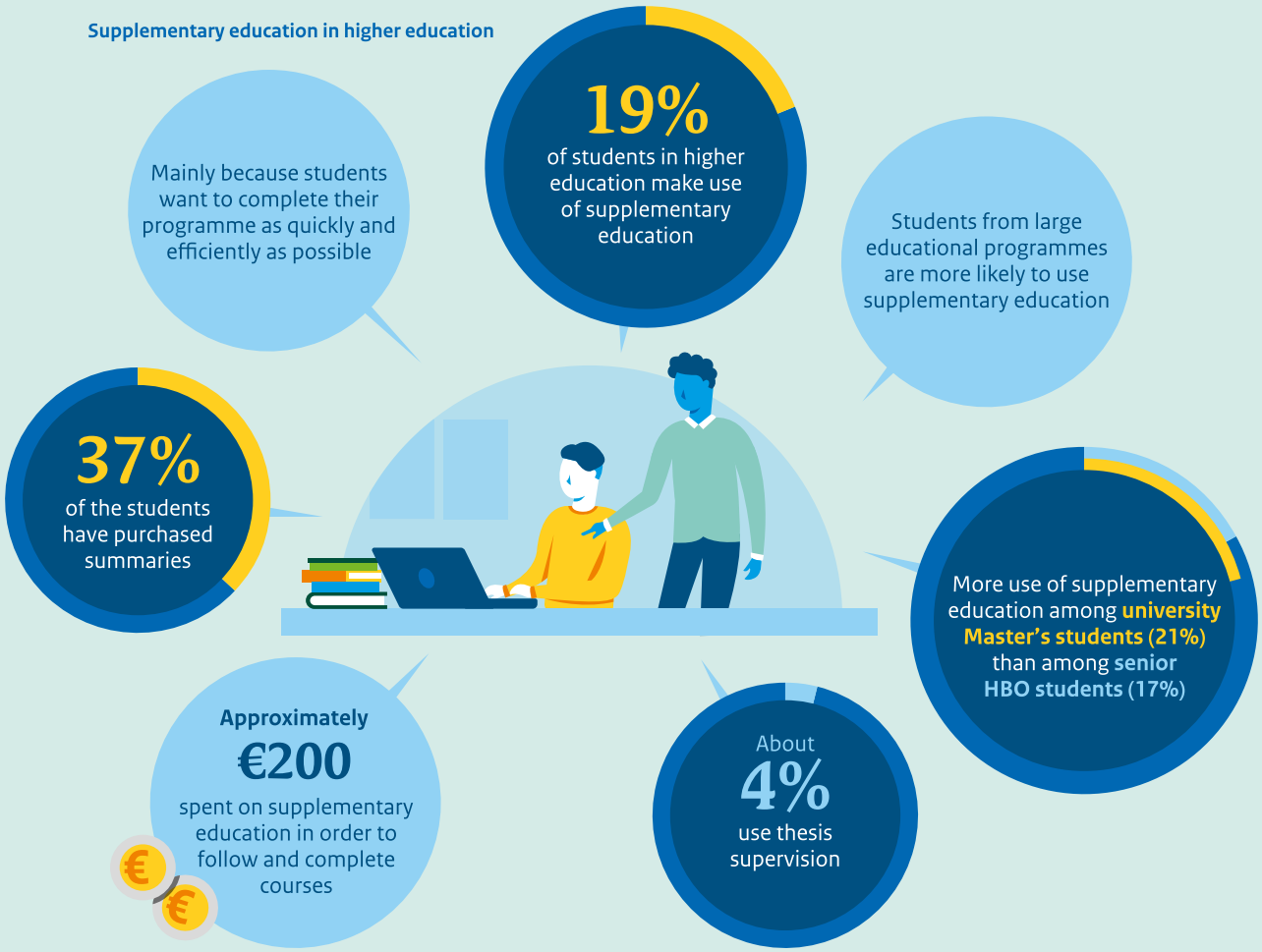
Classmates play a limited role • Although it is sometimes argued that the increase in supplementary education is due to peer pressure (Elffers, 2019), this is not identified as an important motivation in our research. Whether a child's classmates also receive private tuition plays little or no role in whether the parents of year 7 pupils opt for private tuition. The expectation was that parents would want their children to receive private tuition if their high-achieving classmates were also receiving it. Similarly, in the study by Oberon/SEO in which parents were asked directly about their motivation for arranging paid private tuition, the fact that friends or classmates were also receiving private tuition was hardly cited (De Geus & Bisschop, 2017).

The choice between free or paid private tuition differs according to the educational level of the parents • Regardless of their educational level, parents pay attention to the same aspects when choosing whether or not to arrange private tuition. The child's level of attainment (whether he or she is making the progress that is required) is the most influential factor in the decision to arrange private tuition, followed by the role of the school and the opportunities for moving up to a higher level. However, the higher their level of education, the likely parents are to arrange private tuition in these situations, which suggests that university-educated parents are more likely to intervene than parents with an HBO-level education, followed by parents with an MBO-level education. The choice between free or paid private tuition also varies in line with the educational level of the parents. Parents who have completed vocational education are the most likely to arrange free private tuition, followed by parents with HBO-level education and, finally, parents with a university education. When it comes to paid private tuition, this is the other way around and the likelihood of opting for this is the highest for university-educated parents, followed by parents with an HBO-level education and finally parents with an MBO-level education. This is in line with the findings of previous research (Bisschop et al., 2019; Bisschop, van den Berg, & van der Ven, 2019).

Almost one third of secondary school pupils receive supplementary education • The most supplementary education is provided during secondary education. In 2018-2019, 31 percent of pupils in secondary education received supplementary education, mainly private tuition (10 percent paid; 6 percent unpaid), homework supervision (7 percent paid; 5 percent unpaid), and practice outside school hours (6 percent paid; 4 percent unpaid) (Bisschop, van den Berg, & van der Ven, 2019). Of the total amount spent by households on supplementary education of €284 million, some €254 million is spent during secondary education. Spending on supplementary education during MBO was €12 million in 2018, and the remaining €18 million was spent during primary education. Spending on supplementary education in special education is unknown. Neither is there any data on the use of supplementary education in either MBO or special education.

One fifth of students in higher education make use of supplementary education • In higher education, too, a substantial proportion of students receive supplementary education: 21 percent of university Master's students and 17 percent of senior HBO students receive paid supplementary education during higher education. The use of supplementary education is higher among students in larger educational programmes such as nursing, teacher training, psychology and law. Female students also use supplementary education more than male students, and students who indicate that their parents have a higher disposable income than the average Dutch family are more likely to receive supplementary education than students who indicate that their parents have about the average disposable income for families in the Netherlands. Students with a non-Western migration background are more likely to use supplementary education, in relative terms, than students who do not have a migration background. Furthermore, students who received supplementary education before they began studying in higher education are also more likely to use supplementary education during higher education. Students who indicate that their parents have a lower or much lower disposable income

Figure 10 Supplementary education in higher education



Bron: Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2021c

than average are also more likely to say that they do not use supplementary education because it is too expensive. These differences in participation show that the use of supplementary education risks undermining equal opportunities in higher education.

Supplementary education most likely to be used to complete specific courses • Students who use supplementary education are the most likely to do so in order to get support for specific courses (71 percent). Other reasons for arranging supplementary education include getting support for a thesis or final project (22 percent) and help to cope with workload, stress and anxiety (18 percent). The median amount spent on supplementary education in 2019/2020 was €200 for additional education in order to complete specific courses. That means that half of students who received supplementary education spent over €200, and half of students spent less than €200. The median amount for paid thesis supervision is €247. An estimated 4 percent of all university Master's and senior HBO students received support in relation to their thesis. The number of agencies registered with the Chamber of Commerce that offer thesis supervision doubled between 2015 and 2019, from 63 to 128 (De Nies, 2019). Other forms of support from outside the educational programme are also used relatively often: 38 percent of university Master's students and senior HBO students received extra help or support from friends and family members during their studies, 12 percent received extra support free of charge or at a reduced cost through their study association, and 37 percent of students purchased summaries.

Supplementary education used to complete studies quickly and efficiently • 76 percent of university Master's students and senior HBO students who have used supplementary education during their studies indicate that one important or very important motivation for

using supplementary education was completing their studies quickly and efficiently. Other aspects that are seen as important or very important are the desire to graduate with the highest possible grades (44 percent), problems with motivation (45 percent) and difficulty with concentration (43 percent). Factors in the educational programme that were important or very important for students who use supplementary education are: inadequate personal support and feedback (55 percent) and inadequate explanation of the materials during lectures and seminars (48 percent). Students who receive supplementary education are generally satisfied with it, rating it with an average score of 7.5.

Institutions have limited information on how many of their students receive supplementary education • A majority of students (72 percent) indicated that their teachers were not aware of the fact that they use supplementary education. Often, the students wanted to tell them but the subject was never raised; sometimes students did not mention it because they expected a dismissive or more critical attitude from their teachers. In cases where teachers are aware that supplementary education is being used, many see this positively, however. In more than a quarter of the cases the teacher had referred the student for supplementary education, and in almost half of cases the teacher thought it was a good idea. It is important that teachers and institutions have information about how many of their students receive supplementary education. If teaching staff discuss students' use of supplementary education with their students, this helps them to understand how students view the support and teaching provided by the institution and their students' needs. This is more useful than feedback from course evaluations alone. This knowledge can be helpful when it comes to designing and organizing the curriculum, didactics and student support in a way that is more appropriate for all students. In addition, the more accurate picture of the use of supplementary education that is gained by discussing this with students and reporting transparently and explicitly on the use of supplementary education within the accreditation system, would facilitate a more productive discussion of the risks to equal opportunities, for example, and whether support for students needs to be expanded.

Increase in supplementary education is a risk to equal opportunities • The increase in supplementary education is placing equal opportunities among pupils and students under further strain. Not all parents and students can afford supplementary education. In primary and secondary education, children whose parents have a higher level of education are more likely to receive paid supplementary education. In secondary education, wealthier parents are more likely to arrange paid private tuition, homework supervision and exam training for their children, and they also spend more money on this (Bisschop et al., 2019; Bisschop, van den Berg, & van der Ven, 2019). These patterns are not unique to the Netherlands: international research shows that parents with a higher level of education or parents on a higher income are more likely to arrange supplementary education for their children (Zwier, Geven and van de Werfhorst, 2021; Bray, 2020). It is likely that supplementary education improves the academic performance of pupils. For example, a recent meta-analysis of international research shows that private tuition programmes have a significant and consistent positive effect on pupils' performance at school. There are, however, significant differences between programmes: programmes that are given by teachers, for example, are more effective than programmes by non-professionals or parents (Nickow, Oreopoulos and Quan, 2020). It is important that children of parents who are unable to arrange supplementary education do not fall further behind as a result.

What kind of support can be expected from regular education? • Partnerships with providers of paid supplementary education are nothing new (see, for example, Inspectorate of Education, 2016), and may serve the interests of individual pupils. The question that arises, however, is to what extent support within the regular education system is meeting the expectations of parents and pupils. Are parents expecting too much, or are schools and educational programmes – consciously or unconsciously – outsourcing some of their responsibilities? It would pose risks to the education system if schools were, in effect, transferring tasks such as extra instruction or individual supervision to paid supplementary education (Elffers & Jansen, 2021). These risks primarily concern accessibility and equal opportunities in education, but a narrowing down of the responsibilities of the regular education system is also undesirable from a system-wide perspective. A shared vision of what should be part of regular education and what can be provided through supplementary education would provide useful clarity in this regard. For schools, this would clarify what is expected of them, and for parents and pupils it would clarify what they can expect from the school.

1.4 Reflection

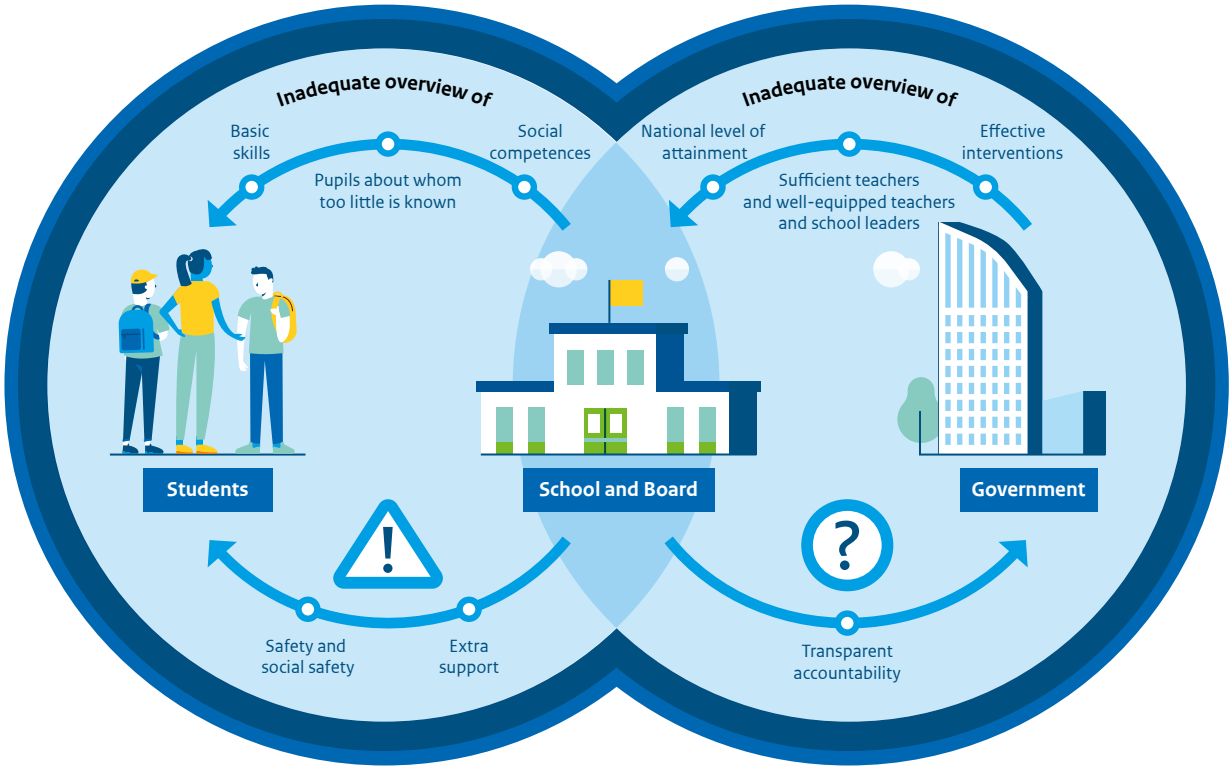
Education system is demonstrating its resilience and innovative strength • The pandemic has had – and continues to have – major consequences for the state of education in the Netherlands. Under very demanding circumstances, the education system has worked enormously hard to ensure continuity and maintain the best possible quality of education. Teachers, school leaders and governing boards have demonstrated enormous resilience and an unprecedented capacity for innovation, when the urgency of the situation left no time for deliberation. In many cases, remote teaching and learning was up and running within a matter of a few days. We are full of praise and admiration for what has been achieved. There are also some lessons to be learned: that remote teaching and learning can sometimes be an alternative to in-person education; that some (groups of) pupils can even flourish through remote teaching and learning, but that for the vast majority of pupils and students, and also for their teachers, in-person education is ultimately crucial.

Key message of last year is now more urgent than ever • Last year in our State of Education report we asked how we could maintain the quality of our education and make targeted improvements, so that we would have a more stable basis on which to build in less economically favourable times. Our analysis was that a great deal was going well in our education system. We pointed to the rising numbers of students graduating with qualifications and the fact that the needs of the labour market were being met. On this last point, we noted that the favourable economic climate was naturally playing a role. On the other hand, even in this favourable economic climate, there were still certain groups of pupils and students whose chances of success in the education system or in the labour market were lower. This included pupils whose parents had a lower level of education, pupils in special education, practical education and entrance programmes, students with a non-Western migration background, and females, despite the fact that they achieve better results at school than males. And this achievement gap was scarcely getting any narrower. We expressed our fear that the dividing lines between different groups of pupils and students would only become clearer as a result of the increasing challenges in the education system, such as teacher shortages and falling pupil numbers, and due to rapid technological developments and changes in the labour market. One year on, we have been through an exceptionally tough year for everybody. The pandemic has made last year's already urgent message even more pressing, as the problems in our education system seem to have become more serious.

Targeted action to promote equal opportunities is more urgently needed than ever • Last year, for the first time in years, we saw equal opportunities stop advancing, and in certain respects even go into reverse. Many initiatives at the level of national and regional policy, school governing boards, schools and teachers, were behind this stabilization. Nevertheless, the pandemic has shown how fragile this success was and inequality of opportunity now seems to be on the rise once again. It is precisely the pupils who were already living in more difficult circumstances at home who have been less likely to be able to participate successfully in remote teaching and learning, have been more likely to fall off the radar, have been more likely to fall behind with their progress at school and then to have received a lower recommendation for secondary education. It is precisely the pupils who were depending on practical education and work placements for their education who saw their range of opportunities narrow. It is precisely those students who found it more difficult to find employment in the past who are now more likely to lose their job and are less likely to find new employment.

Making the most out of the potential for improvement • Tackling persistent bottlenecks in the education system is like swimming against the tide. As soon as the current strengthens or you lose focus, you will be swept rapidly backwards – despite all the positive measures taken in various areas, and despite all the potential for improvement that exists. It seems that none of this is enough to maintain real momentum across the board. Good intentions and incentivizing measures have not been enough. In a number of areas, stronger direction is needed, and governing boards and schools must be given the tools they need. Encouragement through policy alone is not producing the desired results. Naturally, it is up to the education system to take up this challenge – through better cooperation and more learning from each other,

Figure 11 Inadequate information on the education system



for example, based on the premise that all pupils and students should exit the education system properly equipped to participate in society. In many areas, governing boards, schools and institutions are showing that good education is possible for all pupils and students.

Clear societal tasks • The need for clear societal tasks is more relevant than ever. A strong education system benefits from a shared idea of which standards of quality need to be met at all times. This is always the case. But now more than ever, the key question is: what is essential for our pupils and students, both now and in their further school careers and lives? And how we can ensure that the education system can fulfil those societal tasks as effectively as possible, so that today's pupils and students experience the least possible harm from the pandemic?

Tracking the development of pupils and students • It is in the interest of pupils and students that information on their achievements and their need for extra support is available throughout their entire school career. School governing boards, school leaders and teachers can also go about their work more effectively when such information is available. Particularly now that the pandemic is exacerbating existing problems, it is crucial to know which groups of pupils and students are falling behind and in which areas. However, we risk losing sight of this. The importance of national standardized tests, some of which did not take place in 2020, is too often overlooked. These instruments provide an important way for teachers and schools to monitor pupil development and to adapt the education they are providing accordingly. And certainly during this period, tests and exams can be vitally important for pupils and students who are still not always getting the opportunities they deserve.

Oversight in the education system • It is also important to know where we stand at the system level. Without this knowledge, effective management by the government is not possible. Information on important aspects of the system is lacking, such as the level of basic skills, education in citizenship and personal development, information on the education being provided, on (additional) support, and on matters such as well-trained teachers and school leaders. This lack of oversight is the result of decisions. The decision to apply no or few concrete standards to education in citizenship or personal development, for example. And the decision not to apply objective measures when tracking the development of

pupils and students. Or the decision to decentralize policy without imposing clear requirements on transparency and accountability for school governing boards. In some cases, this can be solved at least partly by analysing and combining information from different sources. For example, when it comes to information on basic values, there are the results of national and international tests, information from pupil tracking systems and polls conducted by various parties. However, because we are then measuring different things under different circumstances, the picture is not always unambiguous. This in turn leads to unnecessary debate over which information should be given the most weight, and even about whether there is a problem at all.

Tracking the quality of education • A similar issue is creeping into our conclusions about (changes in) the quality of education. This is therefore a good moment to issue ourselves with a reminder. After all, we are finding fewer and fewer schools to be inadequate or very weak, even though we are seeing problems at the system level. This may be because the standards that every school needs to meet stand for basic quality requirements: the bar that all schools need to clear. In other words, being adequate is not the same thing as achieving good quality. It is the task of the inspectorate to ensure that schools and school governing boards meet basic quality requirements. Beyond that, we can only encourage schools to raise the bar further for themselves. It is also the task of the Inspectorate to keep an eye on the quality of education at the system level, and on those aspects that are always essential for all pupils and students – aspects that for the past few years we have been referring to as the societal tasks of the education system. In order to be able to fulfil these tasks properly, we wish to collect more targeted information from schools and in a more systematic way than we do now, such as by systematically collecting information on important educational outcomes through representative surveys among pupils, without these polls having any consequences for individual schools. In this way, we intend to contribute to a better understanding of the most important aspects of the system.

Direction, cooperation and strong educational management • A qualitative inspection study into the differences in school performance that we cited last year in the State of Education showed that almost all schools with good learning outcomes are characterized by strong educational management. We have already noted that schools with good quality assurance cycles and an established culture of quality have been able to continue providing their pupils and students with good education during the pandemic. So it is possible. But we have also indicated that an effective education system requires more than good teachers, school leaders and school governors. Last year, we cited problems such as teacher shortages and falling student and pupil numbers, the continued fragmentation of supply and increasing inequality of opportunity as problems that require overarching cooperation and strategic direction, both within the education sector and also, increasingly, involving parties outside education. The pandemic has only made the need for good management and good cooperation even more urgent.

Investing in teachers • Ultimately, good teachers are what makes good education succeed or fail. That is precisely why it is still necessary to invest in the attractiveness of the profession and in the quality of the professionals who work in it. An appropriate salary, targeted professionalization, a good and strategic HR policy and a clear view of the professional performance of staff are important requirements for this.

Towards a more sustainable and crisis-proof education system • All pupils and students are entitled to a suitable place in education that equips them as effectively as possible to achieve good results in the education system and occupy an appropriate place in society. It goes without saying that this also applies to the pupils and students who are currently living through the pandemic. It should be clear to everyone what we need to focus on: the societal challenges and the basic level that we provide for all our pupils and students. These are the points that we must never compromise on, even in the face of a pandemic. Teachers, school leaders and school governing boards can all make a difference within their own spheres of influence. But more than this is required. In order to ensure that our education system is on the right footing for the longer term, we must focus on the societal tasks of the education system, on important aspects of the system, and on promoting knowledge sharing and cooperation.

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