Inspectorate of Education
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

State of Education

System section

2022

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Foreword

'We need to renovate not just repair.' This was the key message of last year's *State of Education* report. We pointed out the declining performance of our pupils and students in language, mathematics and in citizenship skills. Our appeal for renovation was made in the hope that the pandemic was largely behind us.

The consequences of a pandemic
Things did not turn out that way, and we faced another school year marked by significant disruption. Schools and educational programmes had to focus their efforts on day-to-day crisis management, with quarantines, infections among staff and students, and absence of teaching personnel. Keeping our education system going was the first priority – there was no time to focus on renovation.
Staff, pupils and students all deserve enormous praise for their resilience and perseverance in the face of this significant adversity. The toll that two years of pandemic restrictions has taken on pupils and students is now clearly visible, and also shows in the research that we have done. Some pupils and students are now finding it hard to focus and enjoy learning once again. In MBO and higher education, remote learning continued for even longer – a total of forty weeks and sixty weeks, respectively. This compromised the quality of the education provided. We saw a stripped-down version of education – one which left far too much of the talent and richness in our education system untapped. Inevitably, students suffered and they are now hoping that the their remaining time in education will make up for that learning loss.

Last year's appeal is more urgent than ever
Another year has passed, and in this year's *State of Education* report, we conclude that the appeal made last year is now more urgent than ever. Renovation is desperately needed: the situation remains worrying and inequalities between schools and pupils have exacerbated further over the past year. These inequalities require a targeted focus, and so do the school careers of pupils and students. These school careers are developing differently due to the effects of the pandemic, special focus on equal opportunities related to recommendations for secondary education and a relaxation of the requirements for entry into higher levels of education. A different type of support for students and pupils is required, as they progress through the education system, so that their chances of success are maximized despite the difficulties they have faced over the past two years.

Action on basic skills is required urgently
As we indicated last year, we at the Inspectorate of Education are focusing specifically on basic skills this year, and will continue to do so in the years to come. Why so? The best contribution education can make to tackle the challenge of inequality of opportunity is to ensure that all students leave the education system with the skills they need to participate in society. Maths skills, language skills and citizenship skills are essential. If young people are not adequately equipped with these skills by the time they leave education, this will not only disadvantage them at an individual level, but we will also have a growing group of Dutch citizens who are less equipped to participate in society, who feel excluded or who find it hard to manage their own lives. Ultimately, this will do untold damage to the quality of our society – and we are already witnessing this on a daily basis. Equipping young people with adequate skills is the core function of our education system. And the Inspectorate has a key role to play in achieving this.

The solution: professional skills for staff...
This year, our in-depth studies show that the key to getting the basics right is, above all, equipping our education professionals with the right skills. This may seem like a statement of the obvious, but it seems that more attention is still needed. When they were asked what is needed to bring language and math skills up to the required standard, 20 percent of schools, educational programmes and institutions answered that targeted training or additional training for staff is essential. In the Netherlands, we invest less in continuous education and additional training than many other countries. And the training that is provided is often not targeted enough.

...and proven interventions
In the meantime, education seems to have found its way to interventions that are proven to be effective, thanks in

part to the National Education Programme. But applying these interventions successfully also requires knowledge and skills. This knowledge is certainly available in the Netherlands, but it is not always in the right place. Everybody in education has a role to play in improving this: academics and curriculum developers as well as teachers, school governors, school leaders and education directors. After all, when investing in professional development we must ensure prerequisites are in place. Investing in professional development is not always easy in these times of increasing staff shortages. Schools and educational programmes that cannot manage this on their own –for example due to the challenging circumstances in which they are operating – deserve extra help and support. Our inspectors indicate that a growing number of schools fall into this category. A differentiated approach is required.

It is possible to turn things around!
The need for renovation is urgent, but this is an eminently achievable goal. We are not the only country to have faced these challenges, and several others have managed to break out of a similar downward spiral. Ireland and Sweden are two such examples: these countries have achieved good results through long-term, focused efforts and good coordination – both nationally and at individual schools and institutions. This provides grounds for optimism. There are also some wonderful examples in our own country: schools which, sometimes after being judged by the Inspectorate to be Unsatisfactory or Very Weak, have made very powerful moves towards improvement and recovery. Often, we see that job satisfaction and motivation among the teaching staff in these schools show a similarly strong improvement. Such examples should give us confidence that we can turn things around at the national level, too.

From crisis to improvement
The 2022 coalition agreement mentions a Master Plan for basic skills and targeted investment to ensure that this plan can be carried out effectively. The momentum is there to support a stable, long-term approach to strengthen our education with clear focus. So that future generations of young people are equipped to participate in Dutch society to the full.

Alida Oppers
Inspector General for Education

Reflection

Education resilient in the face of major challenges • Teachers, school leaders and school governors have once again ensured continuity of education, despite very difficult circumstances. The fact that this has been achieved in most places across the system is vital for our society and deserves praise. In many places, we have seen that the lessons from the first period of school closure due to lockdown have been learned, and that those insights have been used to improve education (including remote education) during subsequent periods of lockdown. The extent to which the education system is fulfilling its obligations to society is more or less stable, despite the major challenges. Primary school pupils who had fallen behind during previous school closures in 2020 and early 2021 had, in part, made up that lost ground by the autumn of 2021. The commitment to education in citizenship is growing. Responsiveness to the labour market is also stable, and indeed good from an international perspective.

Unfortunately, not all pupils and students are benefitting • Nevertheless, the challenging circumstances of 2021 had a major impact on pupils and students. In addition to pupils falling behind, as mentioned, there are concerns about the socio-emotional development and well-being of pupils and students (Inspectorate of Education, 2021a). Also, it is still not the case that all pupils have the same opportunities to benefit from the most appropriate school career. And not all pupils are being equipped with the minimum set of skills that they require. There are large and persistent differences between schools (Inspectorate of Education, 2019a). Pupils whose parents have a lower level of education, pupils from single-parent families and pupils in schools that serve a more challenging pupil population were all more likely to fall behind during the pandemic period. Pupils with a non-Western migration background and pupils whose parents have a lower level of education are less likely to pass school exams, more likely to drop out of school and less likely to find employment. It also appears that our education system creates greater barriers for certain groups of pupils than for others. Newcomers to the Netherlands, pupils with special educational needs and pupils with parents with a lower level of education have a structurally less favourable path through the education system than others.

Sustainable renovation required in several areas • Teachers, school leaders and school governors do everything they can to continue to provide daily education to pupils and students, even under difficult circumstances. Schools and institutions are working hard to repair the damage caused by the pandemic and the associated disruption. In combination with resources from the National Education Programme (NPO) and external support, including from parents, there is every reason to hope that those efforts will be successful. But as we indicated in last year's *The State of Education* report, repairing the damage alone is not enough. Because too many pupils and students will not be helped by simply returning to the situation before 2020. What is needed is sustainable renovation in order to strengthen the foundations of our education system, which are under pressure in several areas. To ensure equality of opportunity for groups that continue to be left behind and who in some cases are not even being equipped with the basic skills they need.

The challenges to education continue unabated • The basics of education are being challenged, and school governing boards, school leaders and teaching teams cannot respond to those challenges alone. There is a structural shortage of teachers, and also a shortage of school leaders. That is a problem in its own right but it also has all kinds of knock-on effects, such as excess workload and the decision-making that takes place under those conditions. In addition, schools indicate that teachers do not always have the skills needed to ensure that pupils are equipped with basic skills. Some pupils and students struggle to gain the required basic skills. Too many of them never get beyond a basic level, and not every pupil achieves their full potential as a result. Private and supplementary education continue to grow, and this can lead not only to inequality of opportunity, but also to the outsourcing of core educational responsibilities. As a result, parents, pupils and students do not always know clearly what they can expect from schools (Inspectorate of Education, 2020d).

Sustainable improvements in education are possible • In recent years, several countries, including Ireland and Sweden, have shown that a turnaround in education is possible. These countries have succeeded in developing

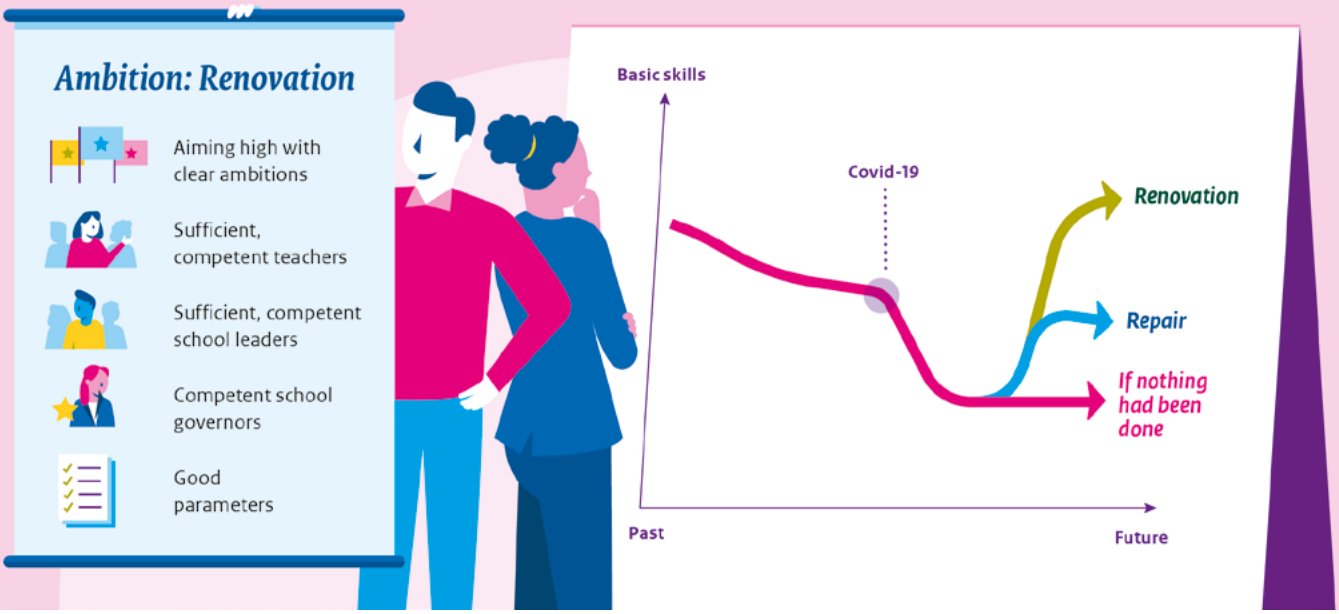


Figure 1 Sustainable improvement in basic skills.

an approach that improves pupils' basic skills. Collaboration between the various players in the education sector – including national government, local government, unions and regulators – appears to be important in this. Substantial and targeted investment has also been made in strengthening the substantive expertise and didactic skills of teachers and school leaders, for example. Measurable targets have been set and assessment and evaluation tools have been developed at the school and national levels (see inset below for more information on these successful approaches).

International examples of sustainable improvement in education

Ireland

In Ireland, basic skills hit an all-time low in 2009. This became known as the 'big shock' and prompted the development of a robust national strategy for improving literacy and numeracy. Since then, the literacy and numeracy of pupils in Ireland has improved significantly (Department of Education and Skills, 2011).

The strategy outlined in 'Literacy and Numeracy of Learning and Life – The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020' is based on the following six pillars.

- Pillar 1: Empowering parents and communities to better support the development of children's literacy and numeracy.
- Pillar 2: Professionalizing teachers, including in preschool and early childhood education, both during training and while practising the profession.
- Pillar 3: Establishing a centre for school leaders to help them develop their leadership, with a focus on improving education and evaluating literacy and numeracy.
- Pillar 4: Improving the curriculum by setting clear goals with regard to expected levels in literacy and numeracy throughout children's school career, and increasing the number of teaching hours devoted to achieving these.
- Pillar 5: Developing effective and differentiated inclusive education to help pupils with special educational needs to achieve their potential.
- Pillar 6: Improving data on pupils' literacy and numeracy in order to monitor trends and manage these effectively.

Sweden

In 2012, a sharp decline in the basic skills of pupils in Sweden became apparent. The country identified a lack of effective professionalization among teachers in languages and maths as the main bottlenecks and, in response, set up programmes known as 'A Boost for Teachers', based on the principles described below. Since 2015, Sweden has again seen a major improvement in achievement across all areas (OECD, 2017).

- The 'Boost for Teachers' programmes are open to all teachers and school leaders from all education sectors and in all subject areas.

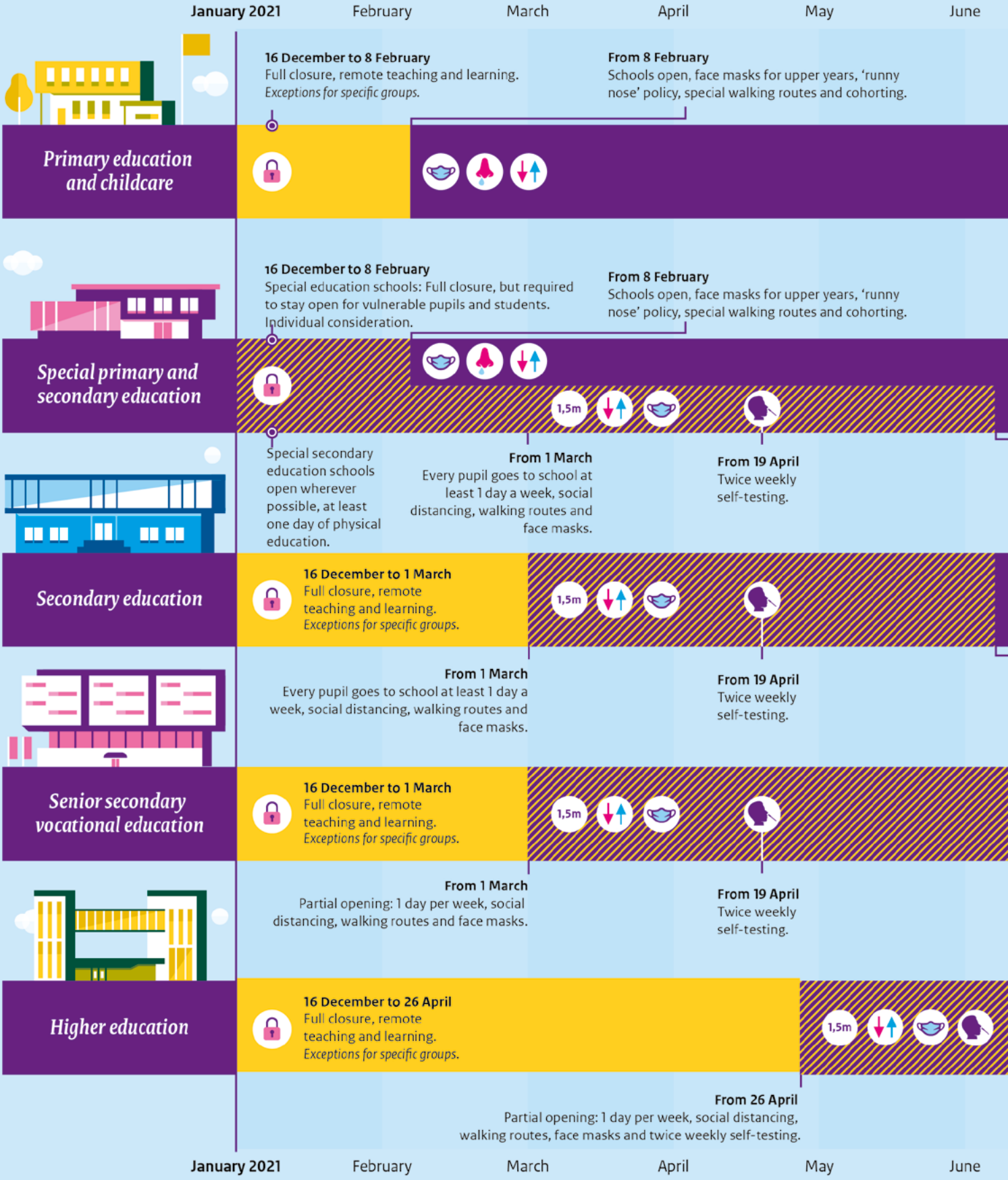
- The programmes are evidence-based, and are designed and implemented by government, universities and education.
- Teachers and school leaders follow a training programme of either five days or eight days at one of the participating universities. They acquire the expertise to become tutors and to help their school and colleagues to improve education.
- After the programme, the tutors guide teacher groups through peer learning and discussions. They discuss the theoretical input and then design a lesson or activity together, based on the input from the material they have studied. They then try out the design in their classes, and meet again to evaluate. Universities provide teachers with research and didactic materials.
- Participants indicate that they now have better methods and tools available for teaching, that they feel more self-confident, more aware of their role as teachers and more aware of standards in the classroom, and that their lessons are more rooted in didactic principles.

Investing in stronger professional groups: school governors, school leaders and teachers • Teachers and school leaders determine the quality of education. School governors create the conditions required for this, and are responsible for the quality of education in their schools and institutions. Targeted investment in these three professional groups leads to stronger education. It is important that we can identify more clearly which skills and competencies are required by these professions, and which quality requirements apply. School governors, school leaders and teachers are taking important steps in this area, by establishing professional codes or registers, for example. However, their use remains optional for school leaders and school governors, and is not yet widespread. Professional standards also often focus on values and less on knowledge and skills, even though steps in the latter area still need to be taken. In addition, the formal tools that are designed to promote skills, such as skills dossiers and the professional statute, are only available to teachers and remain unused by much of the wider professional group. Investing in the professional profiles of school governors, school leaders and teachers would make it possible to strengthen these professional groups in a more targeted manner.

Strengthen education's capacity for improvement now • In the Netherlands as elsewhere, addressing issues bottlenecks in the education system transcends the level of individual classes, schools or governing boards. Far-reaching cooperation and effective management are required for this. The first step is to identify weak points, because effective collaboration and management are not possible without an adequate insight into the bottlenecks that exist. Improved monitoring of the teacher shortage is an encouraging sign in this regard. Attempts to tackle the teacher shortage at a higher level than that of governing board and even above that of region, including the involvement of the 'G5' (a group consisting of the Netherlands' five large municipalities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Almere), are a good example of how to strengthen the education system as a whole. This is also the type of approach that is needed to strengthen basic skills: a thorough review of the problem, widely available knowledge about effective interventions, collaboration, measurable goals and appropriate monitoring.

Involve everyone in sustainable improvement • At the time of writing, we still do not know how the coronavirus pandemic will play out. What is clear is that over the past two years, education has often shown its best side. The system has proven resilient in the face of a crisis. That is a good place to start from. Because more progress is required. All pupils and students are entitled to a suitable place in the education system that equips them to achieve good results and find an appropriate place in society. The goal must be to leave no pupil behind. This can only be achieved if our ambition extends beyond catching up and clearing the backlog following the pandemic. We will need to make smart choices in and around our education system and focus on what really matters: basic skills, opportunities and participation in society – for everyone. There are a number of headwinds, of course: there is a shortage of teachers, resources are not unlimited and expectations are often high. But this is precisely why it is important to join forces. To make sure that we are aware of these challenges, that we make clear choices together, set measurable goals, invest and monitor. So that we can achieve a robust, sustainable education system for everybody, and particularly for pupils and students who are not benefitting fully in our current education system.

Covid-19 restrictions in education in 2021



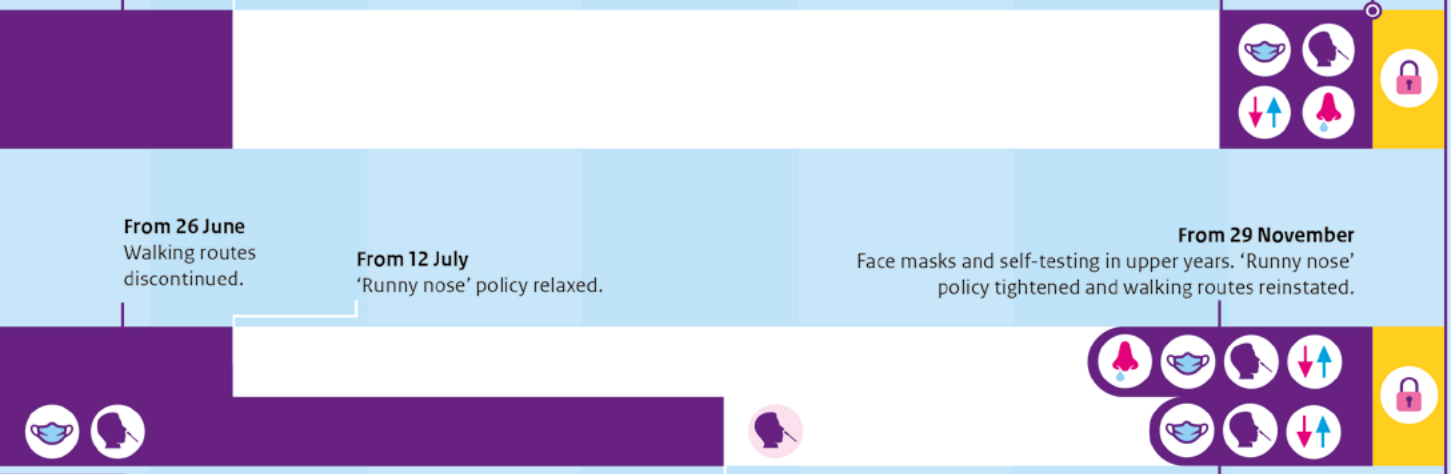
July August September October November December **January 2022**

From 26 June
Walking routes and cohorting discontinued.

From 12 July
'Runny nose' policy relaxed.

From 29 November
Face masks and self-testing in upper years. 'Runny nose' policy tightened and walking routes reinstated.

From 20 December
Full closure.
Exceptions for specific groups.



From 26 June
Walking routes discontinued.

From 12 July
'Runny nose' policy relaxed.

From 29 November
Face masks and self-testing in upper years. 'Runny nose' policy tightened and walking routes reinstated.

From 7 June
Social distancing discontinued, full physical education possible again. Face masks and self-testing continue.

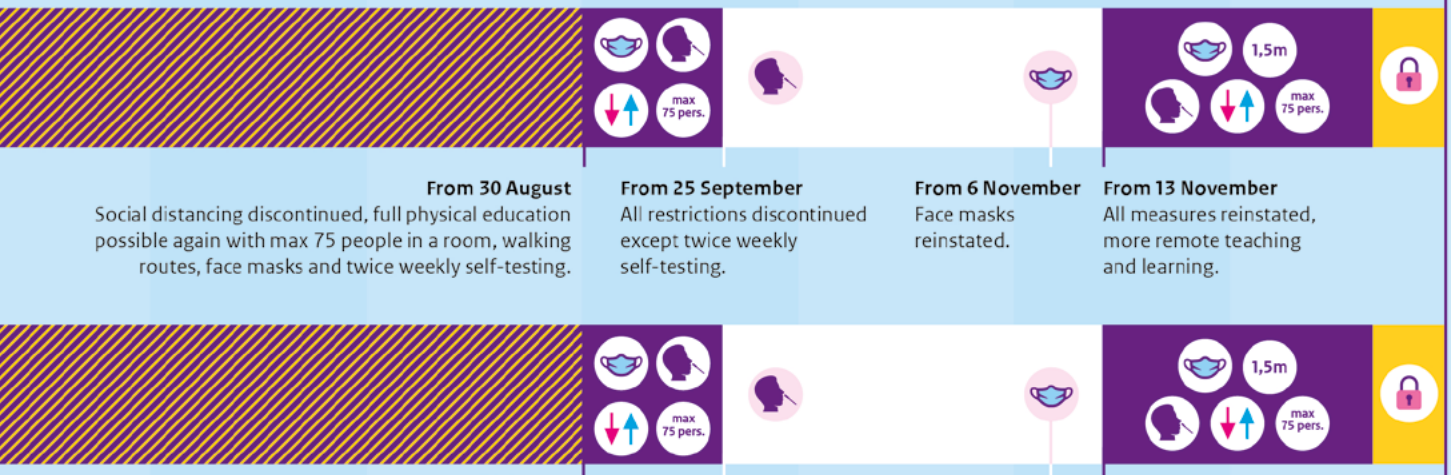
From 25 September
All restrictions discontinued except twice weekly self-testing.

From 29 November
Face masks, walking routes reintroduced, breaks are staggered.

From 7 June
Social distancing discontinued, full physical education possible again. Face masks and self-testing continue.

From 25 September
All restrictions discontinued except twice weekly self-testing.

From 29 November
Face masks, walking routes reintroduced, breaks are staggered.



From 30 August
Social distancing discontinued, full physical education possible again with max 75 people in a room, walking routes, face masks and twice weekly self-testing.

From 25 September
All restrictions discontinued except twice weekly self-testing.

From 6 November
Face masks reinstated.

From 13 November
All measures reinstated, more remote teaching and learning.

From 30 August
Social distancing discontinued, full physical education possible again with max 75 people in a room, walking routes, face masks and twice weekly self-testing.

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July August September October November December **January 2022**

Introduction: Coronavirus pandemic

Pandemic restrictions have undermined continuity in education • Over the past year, education has again had to cope with a multitude of different restrictions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. At the start of 2021, educational institutions had to close their doors for a second time. Primary schools and schools for special primary education reopened on 8 February 2021, and secondary education partially reopened from 1 March 2021. Until 7 June 2021, only limited physical education could take place in secondary education. In vocational education and higher education, social distancing rules continued to be observed until 30 August 2021. That date marked the end of a period in which there was very limited in-person education on location (one day a week). Initially, however, a number of measures continued to apply in MBO and higher education, such as mandatory face masks and a maximum group size. In many places, there were repeated cases of coronavirus which meant that pupils and teachers had to go into quarantine, sometimes resulting in cancelled classes or entire groups being sent home. Four hundred cases of temporary school closures were reported in 2021. In November 2021, the restrictions were tightened once again and from 20 December 2021, five days before the Christmas holidays, all educational locations closed their doors entirely once again. Educational institutions faced a major challenge to ensure continuity due to all the restrictions in 2021.

Pupil development in primary and secondary education at risk • On average, pupils in primary education are now performing less well in reading comprehension, maths and spelling than they were before the pandemic (Haelermans et al., 2021). At all levels of secondary education, too, the decline in basic skills was clearly larger than it had been in previous school years (Zijlstra et al., 2021). Nevertheless, school leaders and school governors indicated that they were more concerned about the socio-emotional development and well-being of pupils than about their cognitive development (Inspectorate of Education, 2021a). Schools with a more complex student population evaluate these risks as higher than schools with a lower school weighting. In secondary education, school governors, school leaders and teachers were concerned about certain groups of pupils being at a persistent disadvantage, and raised the need for additional measures, particularly in the basic skills of language and reading.

Concerns about well-being in MBO and HO • In MBO education, most teaching teams and governing boards indicated that a large number of students have missed social contact, experienced psychological challenges and had difficulty staying motivated (Inspectorate of Education, 2021). These students had to take part in remote education over the longest period of time, which in some cases continued for up to 60 weeks. The education provided in MBO and HO also suffered the most from the pandemic restrictions; practical vocational training, internships, work experience places and career orientation have all deteriorated over the past two years because remote alternatives were not readily available. Many teams had concerns about students falling behind, especially in vocational skills and theory. It was emphasized that the impact varied between different types of educational programmes and different groups of students. In higher education, students identified the lack of contact and interaction with teaching staff and fellow students as the biggest drawback: the lack of social and personal development and the failure to develop soft skills. The well-being of students has declined due to the pandemic and the associated restrictions. Many students have experienced feelings of despair, uncertainty and loneliness (NVAO & Inspectorate of Education, 2022). The academic progress of students in higher education has not generally been adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. However, about one third of students indicate that they have achieved lower grades, particularly in the case of students with disabilities and HBO students. There are concerns about backlogs and falling behind.

Relaxation in the number of requirements that pupils and students have to meet • Unlike in 2020, both the final test in primary education and special education and the central exam in secondary education went ahead in 2021. Schools in secondary education were able to adjust their testing and graduation programme, there was an

extra resit opportunity for the central exam and there was extra time to allow pupils to spread their exams out. There was also an option for pupils to discount one subject (with the exception of core subjects) in the final result. In MBO and higher education, adjustments were made with respect to the binding study recommendation (or BSA). These adjustments generally gave students more time to meet the standards required for the binding study recommendation. Under certain conditions, students were also able to register for a follow-up MBO programme, Bachelor's programme or an associate degree programme, or register for a Master's programme without having fully completed their previous education first.

Coronavirus pandemic has also led to new insights and skills • In primary education, schools want to continue certain practices, such as more frequent contact with parents, and using digital resources to communicate more efficiently and give instructions to smaller groups and individual pupils. In MBO, some students indicated that a small number of lessons should continue to take place online. Teachers, team leaders and school governors also saw advantages to a 'healthy mix' between in-person and online classes. They mainly mentioned practical benefits, such as increased efficiency by teaching multiple groups at the same time. Many teachers also argued in favour of retaining smaller class sizes and closer personal supervision for students. Online meetings also save time, as do remote meetings on practical vocational training. Some school governors in MBO see the pandemic as a springboard towards more flexibility and tailored supervision in education, for example in terms of teaching time and forms of education.

The societal tasks of our education system

The societal tasks of our education system • In *The State of Education*, we provide an annual overview of the current situation with respect to the core societal tasks of our education system. The core tasks are the following:

- Every pupil and student leaves the education system with adequate literacy and numeracy.
- Every pupil and student knows themselves and has learned how to make choices independently.
- Every pupil and student contributes to the cohesion of our society.
- Every pupil and student is able to succeed in further education and in the labour market.
- Every pupil and student has equal access to education that is tailored to their needs.

To participate effectively in society, it is important that pupils and students master the basic skills in language, maths and citizenship. Learning outcomes in language and maths are discussed below under the heading 'Every pupil and student leaves the education system with adequate literacy and numeracy', and the development of citizenship skills is discussed under the heading 'Every pupil and student contributes to the cohesion of our society'.

Every pupil and student leaves the education system with adequate literacy and numeracy

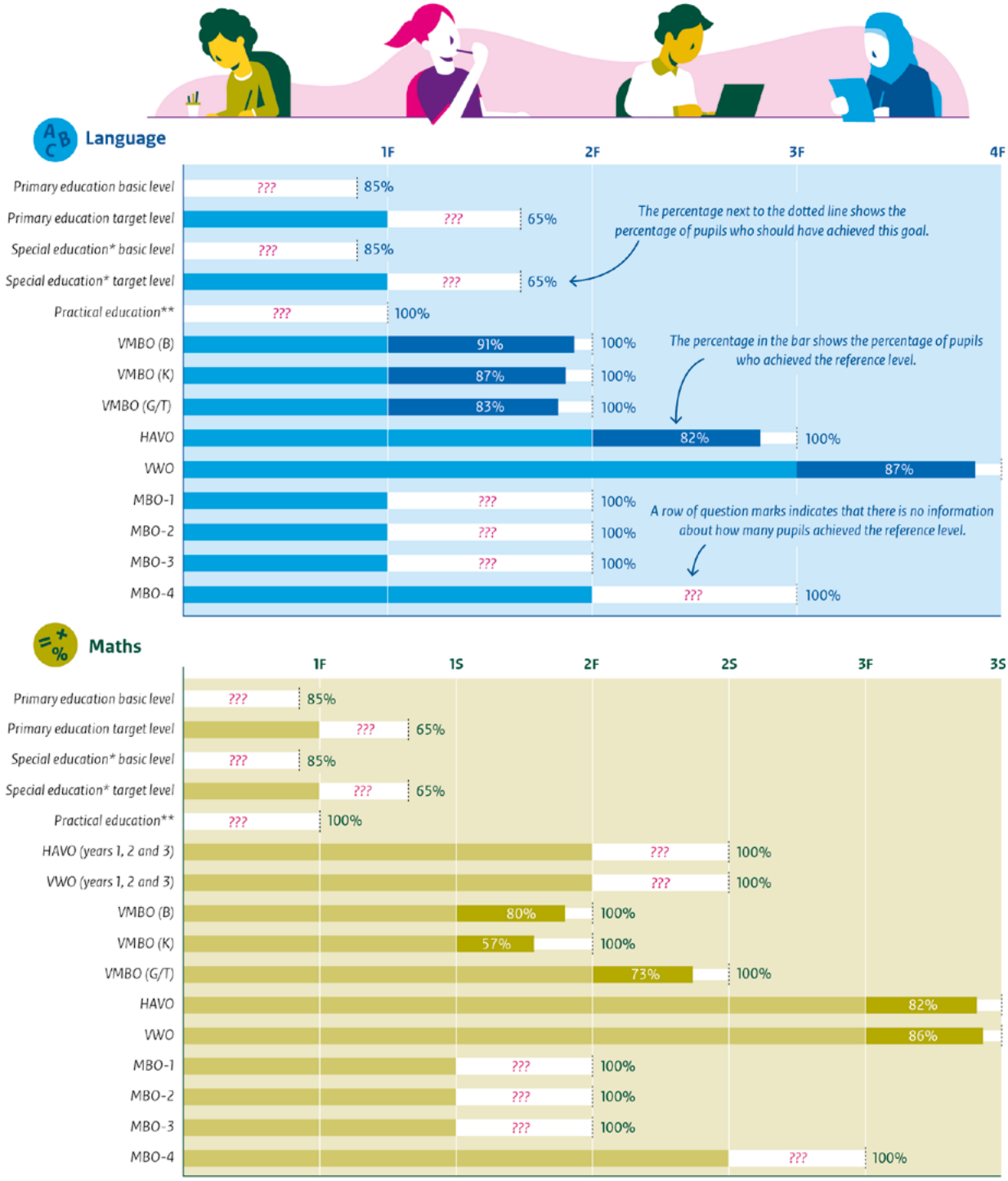
For several years now, we have been reporting that the level of basic skills in language and maths is declining (Inspectorate of Education, 2021a). *Increasingly, young people are at risk of leaving the education system without adequate literacy and/or numeracy skills. School closures during the coronavirus pandemic have only increased the challenge with respect to basic skills. A significant proportion of pupils in primary and secondary education have fallen behind in language and maths. It is not clear whether this also applies to students in MBO and HO. In order to improve basic skills, it is important that we understand the problem more fully. It is therefore concerning that in many sectors no national information is available (see figure 2). Many schools and educational programmes indicate that they also have limited information about pupils' and students' command of basic skills. This is an impediment to improving those skills.*

Command of basic skills at various levels of education

Reference levels include specific targets for language and maths • In order to gauge the level of basic skills in language and maths, reference levels were introduced in 2010 for primary education, (secondary) special education, secondary education and MBO. These standards indicate the minimum level of language and maths skills that pupils and students must achieve by the end of their period in school at a given level of education (see figure 2). For language, there are four basic levels (1F, 2F, 3F and 4F) in four skills areas: oral language skills (speaking, conversation and listening), reading, writing, and vocabulary and use of language. For maths, in addition to three basic levels (1F, 2F and 3F), there are also three target levels (1S, 2S and 3S) for more able pupils. The reference levels for maths are related to four domains: numbers, fractions, measuring and geometry and ratios.

Almost no national information regarding command of basic skills • Until a few years ago, the annual picture of educational achievement in primary education at the system level was based on reference levels measured in the final test. However, since the introduction of multiple test providers in 2015, the results of the final tests can no longer be compared. This situation has yet to be resolved, and as such there is currently no national-level information on pupils' abilities at the end of primary school in terms of reading, use of language and maths. Since the 2017-18 school year, there has been no annual information on the numbers of primary school pupils who have achieved the reference levels. In other sectors, no such national-level information on reference levels among outgoing students was ever available (see figure 2).

Figure 2 Current nationwide picture with regard to reference levels for language and maths at the different levels of education (2020-21 school year).



The reference levels show the intended overall goal for each type of education.
There is little information on what percentage of the pupils achieved the reference levels.

The percentages achieved are the percentages of all pupils who passed the central exam in Dutch/maths.
A grade for the central exam in Dutch/maths only gives an indication of how far the reference levels for language and maths have been achieved.
** The reference levels to be achieved do not apply to pupils with severe learning difficulties and multiple disabilities*
*** In practical education, a best-effort requirement is in place with respect to pupils achieving reference level 1F*

Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c)

Schools and educational programmes also lack information on the reference levels attained • Many schools and educational programmes indicate that they also lack information on the reference levels attained by pupils who are leaving education (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c). Most primary schools and schools for special education only have information on reference levels in the areas that are measured by the final tests. Secondary schools indicate that they are unable to estimate the reference levels attained for between one-third and half of their pupils. Schools and educational programmes are unable to provide an estimate for approximately one-third of students in (secondary) special education and approximately half of students in MBO.

Target level in writing, oral language skills and maths was seldom achieved • Polling data from a representative group of primary schools in 2019 does provide some information regarding reference levels before the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The majority of pupils in year group 8 of primary education achieved the basic reference level (1F) in writing (73 percent), oral language skills (listening: 95 percent; speaking: 92 percent; conversation: 87 percent) and maths (82 percent). However, the same did not apply to the target levels (2F/1S) for writing (28 percent), and oral language skills (listening: 62 percent; speaking: 40 percent; conversation: 49 percent) and maths (33 percent). For pupils in special primary education, the percentages of pupils achieving the reference levels were lower in both writing (1F: 33 percent; 2F: 9 percent) and maths (1F: 15 percent; 1S: 2 percent) (Inspectorate of Education, 2019b, 2021d, 2021c).

Not many pupils begin VMBO having achieved the target level • Reference levels achieved in the final test a few years ago provide a partial national picture of the extent to which pupils had achieved a command of basic skills upon entering secondary education a few years ago. Of pupils who were attending VMBO in year 3 in 2018-19, slightly over half (57 percent) had achieved the target level (2F) for reading skills by the time they entered the first year. For use of language (2F) and maths (1S), this was the case for only 29 and 15 percent of VMBO pupils, respectively (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c). That means that a pupil is not yet able to calculate fractions, ratios and percentages, for example. To ensure that all pupils achieve the intended reference level of 2F/1S for language and maths by the end of VMBO, schools must actively aim to improve basic skills among pupils. Pupils need to have achieved the relevant target level (1S/2F) in order to function properly in society.

Fewer pupils achieve reference levels in the first year of secondary education than at the end of primary school • Some secondary schools carry out pupil monitoring tests in the lower years. The results of these tests are available for the previous school year. In the 2021-22 school year, some first-year VMBO pupils, in particular, performed below the basic level (1F) in Dutch reading skills (VMBO-B: 87 percent; VMBO-K: 70 percent; VMBO-G/T: 29 percent; HAVO: 12 percent; VWO: 1 percent) and maths (VMBO-B: 90 percent; VMBO-K: 74 percent; VMBO-G/T: 40 percent; HAVO: 10 percent; VWO: 1 percent) (Koops et al., 2022). The results achieved in the first year of secondary education with respect to the reference levels were lower than those achieved at the end of primary education. This may be partly because the test has no immediate consequences for the pupils and the method of standardization, unlike the final test.

Differences between schools in proportion of pupils achieving a pass in Dutch and/or maths • Across all levels of education, there were pupils who had not achieved a pass in Dutch upon leaving secondary education in the 2020-21 school year (VMBO-B: 8.9 percent; VMBO-K: 13.1 percent; VMBO-G/T: 16.8 percent; HAVO: 18.0 percent; VWO: 12.8 percent). This was also the case for maths (VMBO-B: 20.5 percent; VMBO-K: 42.9 percent; VMBO-G/T: 26.7 percent; HAVO: 18.3 percent; VWO: 13.8 percent). There are differences in the proportion of pupils achieving a pass grade in the central exam between departments that provide the same level of education, even when certain characteristics of the pupil population (gender, migration background and living in an area with multiple deprivation-related problems) are taken into account. The size of the difference between the departments with the lowest and highest proportions of fail grades varies according to the level and subject (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c). The results achieved in Dutch and maths in the central exam provide some insight into pupils' skill levels in Dutch and maths, but the extent to which the exam can provide information about pupils' command of the reference levels is unclear.

New students joining educational programmes in MBO have broadly similar basic skills • There is little difference between educational programmes in MBO in terms of the proportion of new pupils joining who have achieved a pass in Dutch and/or maths. The small differences that do exist between educational programmes were partly explained by the type of programme. A higher percentage of pupils with a fail grade in maths entered educational programmes in 'tourism and recreation' and 'beauty therapy', for example. In HBO, too, there were few differences between educational programmes in the percentage of

incoming students who had achieved a pass in Dutch and/or maths. Students with a HAVO diploma who had a fail grade are not more likely to opt for certain types of educational programme (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c).

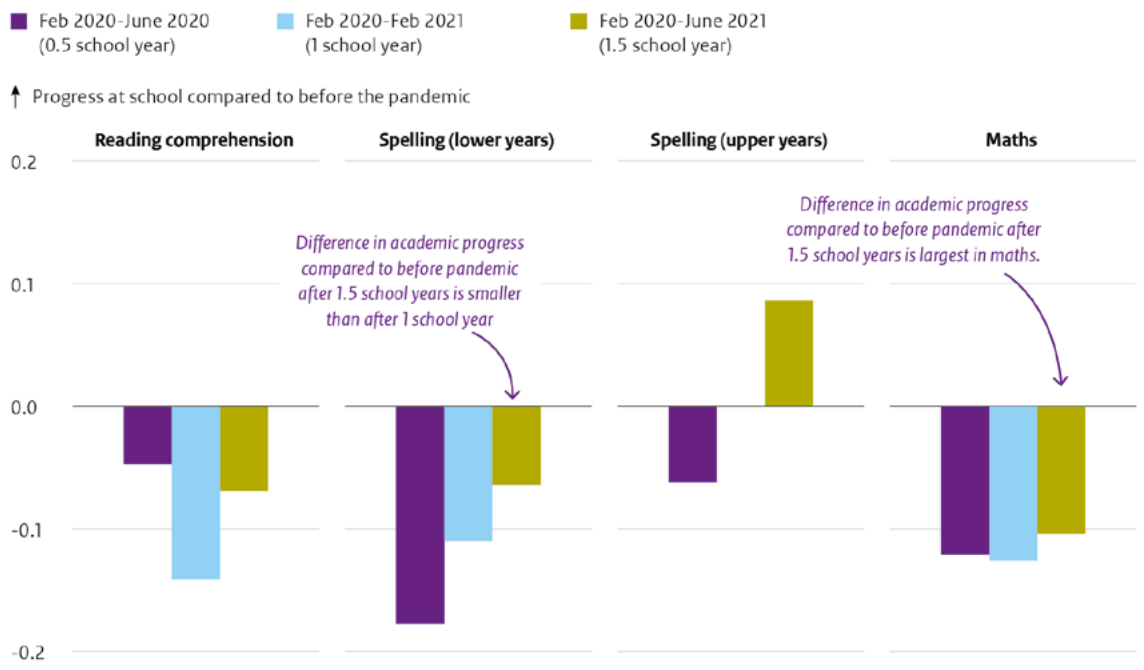
Pupils and students who have fallen behind as a result of the pandemic

Primary school pupils have fallen behind • The effects of the pandemic and the resulting school closures on cognitive performance among primary school pupils are clear to see. On average, pupils are now performing less well in reading comprehension, maths and spelling than they were before the pandemic (see Figure 3). This applies across all year groups, with the exception of spelling in the upper years. The problem is greatest in reading comprehension and maths in year group 7, and in spelling in year group 4. More recently, however, schools and pupils have managed to catch up to some extent, following the first and second periods of school closure. This may be due to the extra work that schools have been doing with the help of funding from the National Education Programme. In general, there are differences between groups with respect to how far pupils have fallen behind. Pupils whose parents have a lower level of education (see Figure 4), those from a family on a low income and those from a single-parent family are more likely to have fallen further behind (Haelermans et al., 2021).

Primary school pupils whose parents have a lower level of education are more likely to have fallen behind • There are notable differences between primary schools. In a few primary schools, pupils have not fallen behind at all, while pupils at other schools have fallen significantly behind. The problem is most acute at schools that serve a pupil population that faces more challenges. The higher the school weighting – i.e. the more pupils there are whose parents have a lower level of education – the further the average pupil at the school has fallen behind. In general, pupils in non-urban areas have fallen behind the most. We also see that pupils in larger schools have fallen behind less, on average. This applies to reading comprehension, maths and spelling (Haelermans et al., 2021).

Policy on remote teaching and learning in primary schools appears to be significant • Based on a non-representative sample (n<100), primary schools with a more detailed policy on remote teaching and learning (i.e. better agreements, better design and more contact with pupils) appear to have been less affected by school closures, on average. In primary schools which, according to the school leader, have made team-wide agreements

Figure 3 Progress made by primary school pupils compared to before the pandemic at various intervals following the start of the lockdown (0.5 school year, 1 school year and 1.5 school years)



Source: (Haelermans et al., 2021)

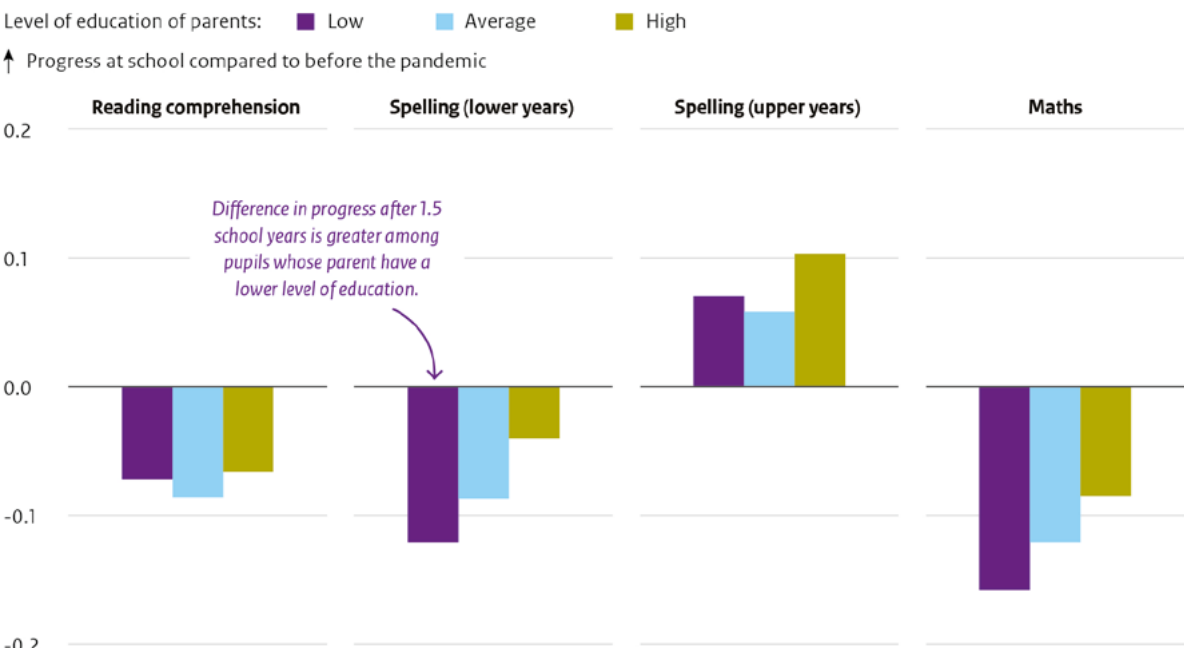
regarding remote teaching and learning, pupils have fallen behind by between a third and a half less. That proportion is a quarter to a third in primary schools which say they have continued to implement the regular curriculum wherever possible. In addition, it seems to make little difference whether schools have spent more or less than 75 percent of teaching time on the basic skills areas of language and maths (Inspectorate of Education, 2022d).

Pupils in special education are positive about their attainment during the pandemic • The vast majority of pupils of average ability in the final and penultimate years of special education indicated that their grades had remained the same or had even improved since the pandemic. According to most school leaders and teachers, too, the attainment of these pupils in the area of cognitive skills has been better than expected. However, they still have concerns about risks to their progress in core subjects, especially in reading, but also in language and maths (Inspectorate of Education, 2021i). The question is to what extent these pupils have indeed fallen behind in these subjects.

Fall in attainment in maths and Dutch reading skills in early years of secondary education • By the end of the 2020-21 school year, pupils in the early years of secondary education had achieved lower levels of attainment in Dutch reading and maths than pupils of previous years (Zijlstra et al., 2021). This also applied to first-year pupils at the start of the 2021-22 school year (see Figure 5) (Koops et al., 2022). Across all levels, the downward trend in attainment in these areas is more pronounced than before the pandemic. No such deterioration is evident in Dutch vocabulary, maths or English reading skills, since the school closures. In English vocabulary, there has actually been a slight improvement. The differences in the skills of pupils at different schools are generally larger than before the pandemic (Zijlstra et al., 2021).

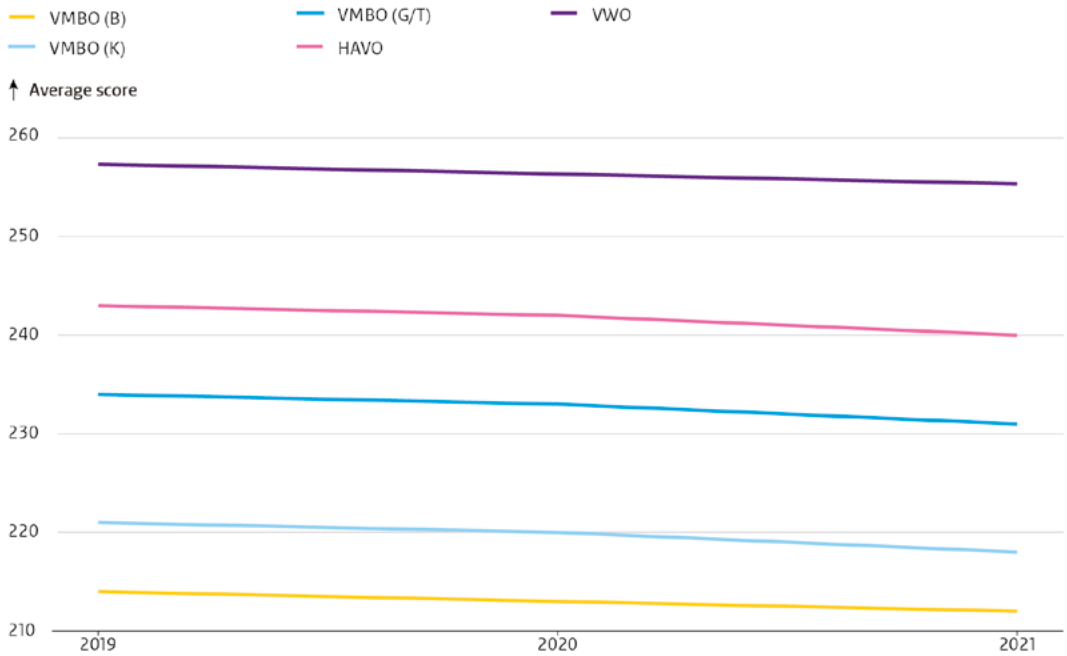
More fail grades in maths in the central exam last year • Across all levels of secondary education, last school year a higher proportion (22.9 percent) of pupils failed the central exam in maths than in the 2018-19 school year. The percentage of pupils with a fail grade increased the most in VMBO-K, by more than 15 percentage points. At other levels, the increase in fail grades in maths was around 5 percentage points (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c). The larger percentage of fail grades can be explained partly by the strategic use of the opportunity to discount one subject from the final result (Education Executive Agency, 2021). However, the rise in the proportion of fail grades may also indicate that the maths skills of those leaving secondary education are lower than in previous years.

Figure 4 Progress made by primary school pupils compared to before the pandemic 1.5 school years after the start of the lockdown, categorized by parents' level of education.



Source: (Haelermans et al., 2021)

Figure 5 Dutch reading skills of pupils in the first year of secondary education



Source: (Koops et al., 2022)

MBO students report they have fallen behind • Around 40 percent of students in MBO indicated that they had fallen behind in their studies by the end of the 2020-21 school year. Three quarters of students who said they had fallen behind indicated that they knew (to some extent) how they could catch up. Nevertheless, almost half of them indicated that they do not believe they will manage to do this, or are uncertain about whether they will. Students believe that they have fallen behind by between one month and six months (JOB, 2021).

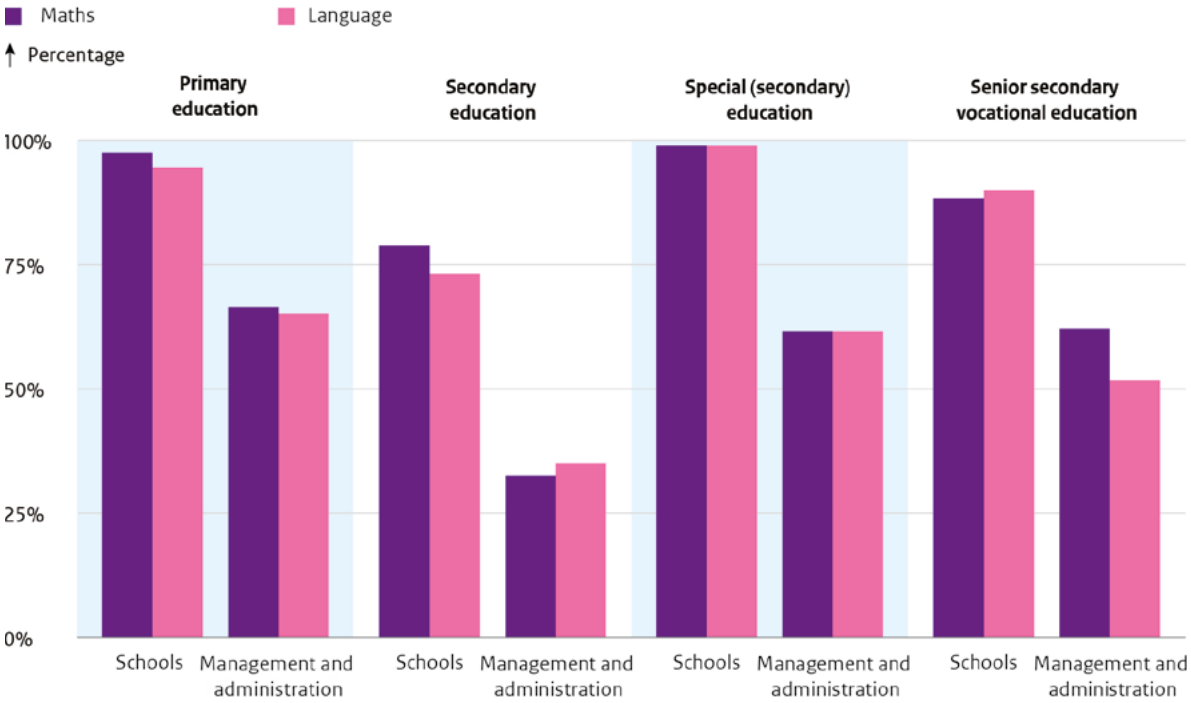
Academic progress among students in higher education generally good • Generally speaking, for most students academic progress has not been adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Most students have obtained around the same number of credits as before the pandemic (NVAO & Inspectorate of Education, 2022). Around one third of the students surveyed indicated that they have achieved lower grades (Inspectorate of Education, 2021f). Some students have fallen behind, mainly due to internships or theses not being completed. Some students, such as those whose binding study recommendation has been amended or postponed, may fall behind later in their studies.

The focus on basic skills

Schools and educational programmes are fairly satisfied with the results achieved • At the end of 2021, staff in schools (primary education, secondary education and (secondary) special education) and educational programmes (MBO) and the relevant governing boards completed a survey regarding quality assurance of the teaching of basic skills (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c). Between one fifth and one third of schools and educational programmes indicated that they are very satisfied with the results achieved in language and maths. Half are fairly satisfied and between one tenth and a quarter are only satisfied to a limited extent. A large number of schools and educational programmes are concerned about results in maths: around 30 percent in primary education and MBO, 25 percent in (secondary) special education, around 20 percent in secondary education and around 15 percent in special education. Secondary schools are also critical of the results achieved in reading, use of language and/or writing (25 percent). One fifth of primary and special education schools are not satisfied with the results achieved in writing. An equally large percentage of primary schools are also critical of the results achieved in use of language (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c).

Quality assurance in language and maths is often limited • In order to aim for good language and maths teaching, schools, educational programmes and school governing boards need a vision, ambitions and goals with respect to these areas. About a quarter of the schools and educational programmes indicate that they do not have a vision document for language and maths. The same

Figure 6 Percentage of schools and their governing boards that indicate that they have set specific goals in language and maths



Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c)

applies to half of their governing boards. The majority of schools and educational programmes indicate that they have specific, measurable goals in language and maths. This applies to a lesser extent to their governing boards (see figure 6). Almost two thirds of primary schools and schools for (secondary) special education say their governing boards encourage them to set ambitious goals. This figure was roughly one third for schools providing secondary education and a quarter for educational programmes in MBO. These differences between sectors are also reflected in the frequency with which schools and educational programmes discuss their results with the school governing board (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c).

Schools and educational programmes are working actively to improve basic skills • Almost all schools and educational programmes indicate that they are working on improving basic skills. They chiefly mention providing pupils with additional support or supervision and improving their curriculum. In primary education, (secondary) special education and secondary education, a large majority of schools are also focusing on monitoring the development of pupils better, and improving teaching strategies. Half of educational programmes in MBO are also doing this. Three quarters of schools in primary education and (secondary) special education are working on improving teachers' substantive knowledge. The same applies to half of schools in secondary education and educational programmes in MBO. Almost two thirds of schools in primary education, special secondary education and secondary education also mention improving the analytical skills of teachers, compared to a quarter of educational programmes in MBO. Most schools are instructed to draw up an improvement plan in the event that the governing board is disappointed with the results achieved (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c).

Schools encounter obstacles with respect to improving basic skills • Three quarters of schools and educational programmes encounter obstacles when it comes to improving language and maths. A quarter to a half of schools in primary education, (secondary) special education and secondary education that encounter such obstacles indicate that not all teachers have the skills to analyse and interpret test results properly. In such cases, it is the responsibility of schools to ensure that teachers acquire these skills. In primary and secondary education, a quarter of schools indicate that they are critical of teachers' substantive and didactic expertise. Almost a quarter of schools in special education and secondary education believe that they lack appropriate instruments for monitoring the development of language. In (secondary) special education, approximately one third of schools are dissatisfied with the educational resources available. In addition, one third of schools in secondary education and a quarter of schools in primary education and a quarter of educational programmes in MBO report

a lack of planned teaching time. The lack of a sense of urgency in the team is also mentioned by a quarter of schools in secondary education and educational programmes in MBO. Finally, one third of educational programmes in MBO see obstacles in the legislation and regulations regarding maths (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c).

Schools, educational programmes and school governing boards favour improving the skills of teachers • Schools, educational programmes and school governing boards see opportunities for improving basic skills. A large majority across all sectors indicate that improving the knowledge and skills of teachers is the most important means of realizing those opportunities. Respondents also mention improving knowledge regarding effective interventions, developing or improving instruments to monitor pupils' development, improving teaching materials and ensuring that pupils and students can progress to subsequent education as seamlessly as possible. One third of educational programmes in MBO also indicate that including basic skills as part of the exam could help improve students' results (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c).

Every pupil and student knows themselves and has learned how to make choices independently.

It is important for everyone to be aware of how they relate to themselves, to others and to their environment, as well as how to deal with challenges. One of the specific tasks of the education system is to help young people develop as individuals. It is up to schools and institutions themselves how they address this specific societal task of education. The government is therefore reluctant to intervene in this regard. There are hardly any statutory requirements with respect to personal development, and few guidelines outside the statutory frameworks. This means that the Inspectorate of Education is not able to provide a systematic overview of what is happening in schools and educational institutions in this area.

Welfare

The pandemic has affected older pupils and students the most • The Inspectorate of Education has investigated the consequences of 16 months of the pandemic restrictions across all sectors of education. The findings show that older pupils and students have been affected more than younger pupils. Older pupils and students received remote education for much longer than younger pupils (Inspectorate of Education, 2021h, 2021j, 2021g, 2021f).

Younger pupils mainly positive • The Inspectorate's 16-month coronavirus survey shows that pupils in primary education have felt safe and comfortable at school, and have been satisfied with their education over the past sixteen months. They are well-motivated and feel that they have been given sufficient support by their school. They were, however, critical of the restrictions put in place to contain coronavirus (Inspectorate of Education, 2021h).

More issues involving motivation and stress in secondary education • Pupils in secondary education indicated that they experienced a decline in motivation during the pandemic. This applies more to pupils in HAVO and VWO than to pupils in lower years or in other levels of education (Inspectorate of Education, 2021j). In addition, almost half of pupils in secondary education indicate that they have experienced more stress than before the pandemic (Reef & Hupkens, 2021).

Concerns regarding the well-being of students in MBO and higher education • Most of the education received by students in MBO and higher education has been remote education since the start of the pandemic. Several studies have shown that the well-being of students in MBO and higher education has deteriorated since the pandemic began. This includes issues with motivation, loneliness, stress, as well as psychological problems such as anxiety and depression (Inspectorate of Education, 2021g, 2021f; JOB, 2021; NVAO & Inspectorate of Education, 2022; OCW, 2021a; Reef & Hupkens, 2021; RIVM et al., 2021).

Every pupil and student contributes to the cohesion of our society

The results of education for society and citizenship

By outcomes in citizenship skills, we mean the knowledge, attitudes and skills of pupils and students in the social and societal domains. Unfortunately, we have relatively little insight into the development of citizenship skills among pupils and students. The data that is available suggests that citizenship skills are below the level that we would expect, and that no progress has been made in recent years.

No improvement made in primary education in last ten years • The recent survey of citizenship skills in primary education (Inspectorate of Education, 2022b) shows a slight decline in learning outcomes compared to more than a decade ago (Wagenaar et al., 2011). The conclusion then was that results were lower than they should have been and than was to be expected based on the core objectives. The results also show that there are sometimes significant differences between pupils when it comes to knowledge, attitude and skills in the field of citizenship.

Figure 7 Well-being during the pandemic.

Limited progress in secondary education too • In secondary education, we know similarly little about the results achieved through education in citizenship. The last available data was collected in the 2019-20 school year among a representative but limited group of schools (Daas et al., forthcoming). A comparison of the data from that study with an international survey in which the Netherlands took part a few years ago (2016) (Munniksma et al., 2017) shows no progress in secondary education either. Pupils' knowledge, attitudes and skills in the area of citizenship in the second year of secondary education are at the same level as they were three years ago. An international comparison has shown that the citizenship skills of secondary school pupils in the Netherlands were below those in comparable European countries (Schulz et al., 2018). In that respect there has been little change.

Limited data available on social and societal benefits in MBO • Data on the benefits of citizenship education in MBO are scarce. As a result, we have very limited insight into progress in this area. However, recent research (Holman et al., 2021) shows that there are no major differences between educational programmes or institutions in MBO when it comes to students' citizenship skills. Neither are there many differences between first and second-year participants, or between older and younger students. However, female students generally achieve better results than male students with respect to knowledge, attitudes and skills. This is most often the case when it comes to interacting with others and orientation towards society.

Education in citizenship

Developing education in citizenship is a challenge for many schools • The Inspectorate notes that there remains much work to be done in developing education in citizenship in both primary and secondary education and MBO. Around half of schools in primary education, (secondary) special education and secondary education say they have little or no knowledge of the (recently amended) legislation on citizenship. Their governing boards also indicate that it is unclear what exactly is expected from schools in the field of civic education. Many schools in primary education have no concrete learning objectives to improve education in citizenship. The curriculum also needs to be improved, including the breadth and quality of the curriculum (Inspectorate of Education, 2017). This is a long-standing situation and the Inspectorate has been aware of this for some time already (Inspectorate of Education, 2020c). For example, schools have been saying for some time that they see promoting citizenship as an important task (Inspectorate of Education, 2022b), but there remains much work to be done with regard to developing the right kind of education. In many schools, the emphasis is on the social elements of promoting citizenship, such as good relations with other people, while societal elements, such as learning to handle diversity and promoting democratic values, feature less prominently. Finally, if we have no data on what pupils and students have learned, we cannot know in what areas need attention. Understanding the citizenship skills of pupils and students is an essential part of ensuring good quality.

Quality assurance in civic education • A large majority of schools and educational programmes and half of governing boards indicate that they have adopted a vision document for citizenship. Educational programmes in MBO are more likely to say they have concrete goals for citizenship (more than 80 percent) than schools in (secondary) special education (60 percent) and schools in primary and secondary education (both 40 percent). One third of governing boards across all sectors indicate that they set have specific goals. Less than half of schools and educational programmes across all sectors say that their governing board encourages them to set ambitious goals with respect to citizenship. Most schools and educational programmes say they discuss the results of education in citizenship with the governing board at least once a year; a quarter never do so. According to the schools and educational programmes, one third of governing boards review and evaluate the results achieved. Because these findings are self-reported, it is not known what form this evaluation takes or what the results are.

Limited oversight and moderate satisfaction with civic education • About 60 percent of schools in primary and secondary education and about 40 percent of schools in (secondary) special education say they do not make use of an instrument to evaluate citizenship skills. One tenth of schools in primary education, special secondary education and secondary education indicate that they use an instrument to evaluate both social and societal competences. The remainder mainly measure perceptions of safety and/or social competences. The picture in MBO differs from other sectors: 65 percent say they evaluate citizenship skills; a quarter do not use an instrument. Educational programmes in MBO indicate that to do this, they use components from the method, tests they have developed themselves, assignments, presentations, reports and portfolios. Educational programmes and governing boards in MBO report the highest satisfaction with the results of education in citizenship; this applies to half of educational programmes and one third of governing boards. In primary and secondary education, 10 percent of governing boards indicate that they are very satisfied.

Better instruments and greater sense of urgency required • Around 80 percent of schools in primary education, (secondary) special education and secondary education and 40 percent of educational programmes in MBO encounter obstacles in promoting civic education. Of the schools that say they experience obstacles, half of those in primary education, (secondary) special education and secondary education indicate that appropriate instruments for monitoring development are lacking. The lack of a sense of urgency in the team is also mentioned, particularly by schools in secondary education and educational programmes in MBO (around 40 percent). Around 30 percent of schools and educational programmes indicate that they lack substantive expertise. Around one third of schools in primary education, (secondary) special education and secondary education also say there is a lack of appropriate teaching materials. And 30 percent of schools in primary education and secondary education believe that not enough planned teaching time is available.

Schools require support • It is clear that the current situation falls significantly short of the requirements set out in the new Citizenship Act. As the Inspectorate has already pointed out (Inspectorate of Education, 2017), it is unlikely that new legislation alone will lead to improvements. Active support must be provided for the developments that are needed. The supervision of the Inspectorate in relation to citizenship education during and since the introduction of the new legislation has shown this. Schools do not always find it easy to interpret new statutory requirements, such as the need for targeted and coherent education. Keeping track of results also requires considerable effort. But if we

have no data on what pupils have learned, we cannot turn our attention to what other needs they may still have. Understanding the citizenship skills of pupils and students is an essential part of ensuring good quality. Support is required in relation to the development of education in individual schools, making knowledge available, promoting approaches that are known to be effective, and providing tools to monitor results.

The Inspectorate encourages schools and holds them accountable • The Inspectorate encourages schools to give adequate priority to the need for improving quality. This applies in MBO as well as in primary and secondary education, which are subject to new statutory requirements. We are increasing our supervision gradually and incrementally. Where essential aspects of good education in citizenship are absent (such as education that conflicts with fundamental values or risks that are not being taken into account), the Inspectorate will take enforcement action. If there is not enough focus on important elements (such as a lack of learning objectives or a coherent curriculum), the Inspectorate will act to encourage action or prescribe remedial action.

Every pupil and student is able to succeed in subsequent education and in the labour market

The coronavirus pandemic has affected the number of pupils and students joining and leaving the various phases of education, and the number progressing within the education system. Pupils and students were given additional opportunities to progress, as a result of which some began the next stage of education with less knowledge and skills than is usually the case. It is therefore important to monitor how these students are doing and provide them with extra support where necessary. Employment opportunities in the labour market have improved since the start of the pandemic. However, the situation is not yet back to pre-lockdown levels across all groups.

Subsequent education

Recommendations issued by primary schools back to pre-pandemic levels • In 2019-20, primary school pupils received lower school recommendations than in previous school years, on average. Pupils were unable to revise those recommendations due to the cancellation of the final test. In 2020-21, it was once again possible to revise the recommendation based on the results of the final test. The average final school recommendation was therefore higher than in 2019-20, and approximately the same as in previous school years. For pupils with a migration background, the average recommendation was even higher than before the pandemic (Inspectorate of Education, 2022i). This may be a result of the call for more inclusivity in the recommendations.

Less divergence between school recommendations and test recommendations • In the last school year, the final test recommendation was at least one whole level higher than the recommendation for secondary education in case of 11.8 percent of pupils. This difference was smaller than the 2018-19 school year, when this applied to 13.5 percent of the pupils. In addition, more recommendations that were eligible for revision were actually revised last year than two years ago (40.5 percent in 2018-19; 46.6 percent in 2020-21). In schools with a higher school weighting, pupils were more likely to be eligible for revision and the recommendation was more likely to be revised upwards. The reasons given by schools for not revising recommendations included the belief that the original recommendation matched the all-round picture that the school had of a particular pupil, and that parents had indicated that they did not see any need to revise the recommendation (Inspectorate of Education, 2022i).

Final test compulsory for pupils in special primary education and special education • Pupils in special primary and special education were required to participate in the final test for the first time in the last school year. There were exceptions for pupils with very severe learning difficulties or multiple disabilities, and for pupils who have been in the Netherlands for four years or less and whose Dutch is not yet at the required level. The final test can provide the school with additional information when issuing a recommendation for secondary education, and can therefore lead to additional opportunities for the pupils concerned. The final test was taken by nearly 5,600 pupils in special primary education (77 percent of the total number of pupils) and about 2,800 pupils in special education. Of the recommendations issued for pupils in special primary education that were eligible for revision, over 26 percent were actually revised. That was the case for over 19 percent of the recommendations issued in special education (Inspectorate of Education, 20220).

More pupils moved up to a higher level of secondary education and fewer pupils moved down to a lower level • In the past school year, more pupils with a single recommendation for secondary education moved on to a higher level of education than in the previous year (2021-22: 11.5 percent; 2020-21: 10.6%). The number moving on to a lower level was lower than in previous years (2021-22: 13.3 percent; 2020-21: 14.1%). Pupils leaving primary education with a double recommendation for secondary education were also more likely to move on to the higher level within that recommendation (2021-22: 45.6 percent; 2020-21: 43.5%). These changes applied across all levels of education (Inspectorate of Education, 2022n).

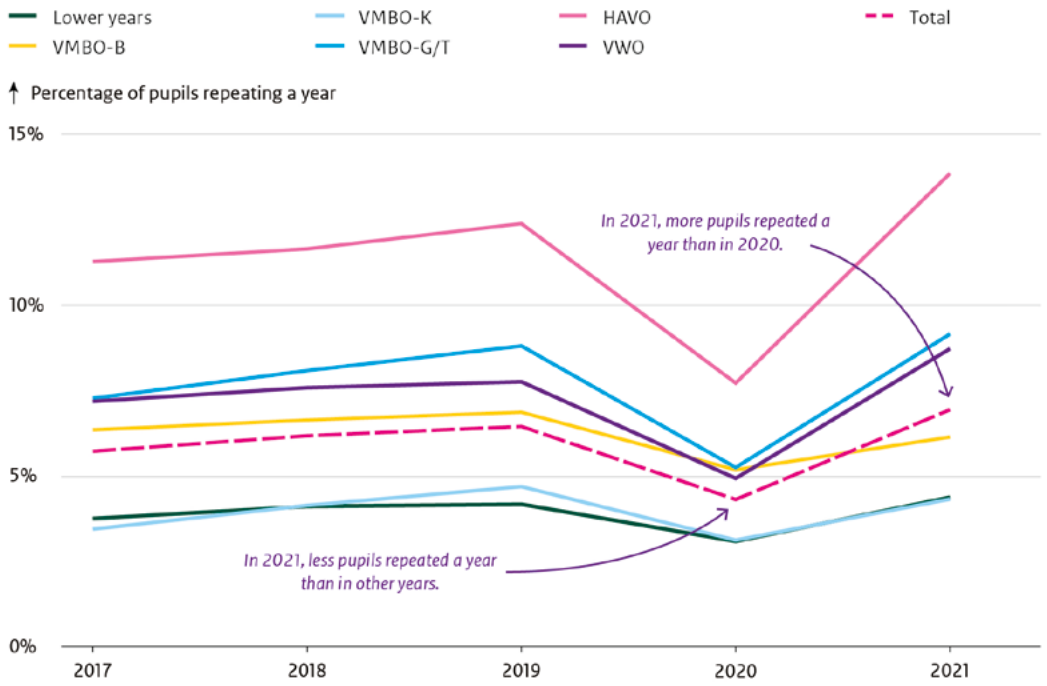
More pupils moving up a level in secondary education, after graduating • The percentage of pupils that stayed in secondary education after obtaining a VMBO-G/T diploma increased considerably compared to the previous year – from 13.8 percent to 17.2 percent. That increase is particularly large among pupils with a non-Western migration background of the first generation (8.9 percent). Boys with a VMBO G/T diploma are more likely to move up a level than girls with the same diploma. A similar picture can be seen among those successfully obtaining a HAVO diploma. More pupils from this group moved up to VWO in 2020-21 than in the previous school year (1.8 percentage points). In this group, too, this was more often the case for pupils with a migration background, and more often the case among boys than girls (Inspectorate of Education, 2022n).

Fewer pupils in HAVO and VWO • The percentage of pupils in the third year of HAVO or VWO education fell last year for the first time in many years (2020-21: 48.5 percent; 2021-22: 47.9 percent), despite improved attainment – fewer pupils moving down and more pupils moving up – with respect to the school recommendations issued by primary schools (Inspectorate of Education, 2022n). The improved position in year 3 compared to the school recommendations can be explained in part by the lower average recommendation issued in 2019 (Inspectorate of Education, 2022i).

More pupils repeated a year in secondary education than in 2019-20 • In the 2019-20 school year, the proportion of pupils in secondary education who had to repeat a year (4.3 percent) fell sharply compared to a year earlier (6.5 percent). That fall was visible across all year groups and at all levels. However, in the past school year (2020-21), the proportion of pupils who had to repeat a year was higher again (7.0 percent) (Inspectorate of Education, 2022n). In the lower and upper years of VMBO-G/T, HAVO and VWO, more pupils had to repeat a year than before the pandemic. In the upper years of VMBO-B and VMBO-K, on the other hand, fewer pupils had to repeat a year.

More pupils graduating than before the pandemic • Last school year, fewer of the pupils (94.8 percent) participating in the exam passed the exam than in the previous school year, when no central exams were held (98.7 percent). However, the pass rate was still higher than in the years before the pandemic. Once again, it seems that the allowances that pupils were granted in the final exam resulted in more pupils passing than before. In particular, pupils with a non-Western migration background were more likely to pass last year than in the 2018-19 school year (first generation: 91.0 percent vs. 86.1 percent; second generation: 90.5 percent vs. 87.0 percent) (Inspectorate of Education, 2022n). More than 10 percent of all pupils passed by using the opportunity to discount

Figure 8 Percentage of pupils who had to repeat a year in secondary education



Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022n)

one subject from the final result. Not many pupils (0.5 percent) took up the option of resitting the exam in an extra subject (Education Executive Agency, 2021).

More students dropping out of MBO • The percentage of students who left MBO without graduating increased in 2020-21 compared to the previous year (from 18.8 percent in 2019-20 to 19.5 percent in 2020-21). However, the dropout rate is still lower than in previous years (20.8 percent in 2018-19) (see Figure 9). Students in MBO-3 and MBO-4 switched educational programmes more often last year than the previous academic year. In addition, in the 2019-20 school year, more MBO graduates moved on to a higher level than in previous years. In the past academic year, those percentages fell again for all levels and were (almost) the same as before the pandemic (Inspectorate of Education, 2022h).

Fewer first-year students dropping out of higher education • In 2020-21, fewer students dropped out after their first year than before the pandemic, especially in HBO. However, the percentage of first-year students who quit their studies last academic year was higher than in 2019-20. In HBO, the binding study recommendation was also delayed this year, while universities only lowered the standard for the binding study recommendation by 10-15 percent. Whether these first-year students can successfully complete their studies will become clear in the next few years. The dropout rate in senior years rose again in the 2020-21 school year and almost equalled the average dropout rate from before the pandemic (HBO: 5.9 percent; university education: 2.3 percent in 2020-21) (Inspectorate of Education, 2022f).

Academic success in HBO not equal among all students • Among students who transferred directly to HBO after completing HAVO, 12 percent are no longer enrolled in HBO after one year. These students have either moved down to MBO, moved up to university or left education (possibly temporarily). Of the students who do not drop out, approximately one third obtain a propaedeutic diploma at the end of the first academic year. Female students achieve better academic results than male students. Students whose parents are wealthier and students from two-parent families fare better in HBO. The level of education of students' parents makes no difference to their academic success. Students who had to repeat a year in secondary education or who did not pass their exams in one go achieve less success in HBO, and there is a positive correlation between the average grade achieved in the central exam and subsequent academic success (Inspectorate of Education, 2021e).

Differences in academic success of students from different HAVO departments • When it comes to the percentage of students still in HBO after one year of studying, there are differences between the HAVO departments that supply students. Pupils from some HAVO departments are almost all successful, while among pupils from other departments fewer than 80 percent are still in HBO. These differences cannot be explained by differences in the student population (Inspectorate of Education, 2021e). It appears that certain departments prepare their pupils for studying at HBO level more successfully than others. The question is what these departments are doing to prepare pupils for the transition to further education. This school year, a study has been started to identify possible differences between HAVO departments.

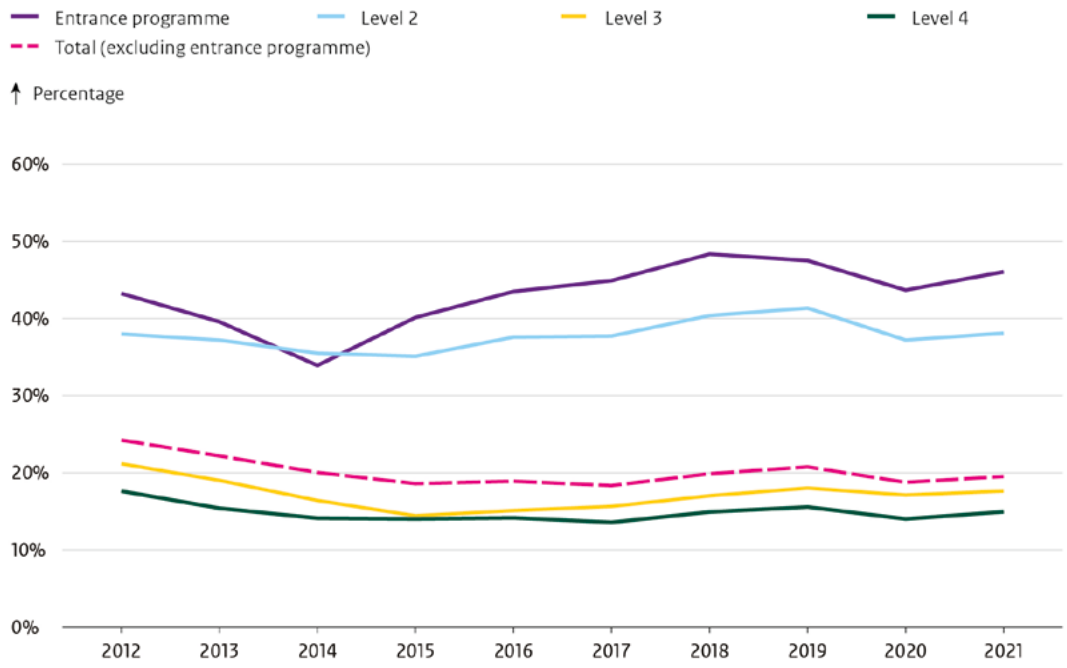
Level of graduation diplomas achieved is no longer rising • After years of rising gradually, the proportion of young people who leave with an HBO diploma or higher is no longer increasing and appears to be stabilizing. In 2018-19, over 23 percent of students graduated with an HBO diploma and over 15 percent graduated with a university degree. The level of the diploma achieved by second-generation students with a non-Western migration background continues to rise (Inspectorate of Education, 2022m). As mentioned previously, women leave the education system with a significantly higher level of diploma than men, on average (Inspectorate of Education, 2021a). Almost two thirds of women leave education with an MBO-4 diploma or a higher education diploma, while only half of men do so. That difference has been stable for a number of years.

Labour market

Youth unemployment is low in the Netherlands compared to other European countries • The proportion of young people in the Netherlands between the ages of 15 and 29 who are not in education or employment has been one of the lowest in Europe for some years. Indeed, in the first quarter of 2021, the Netherlands (at about 5 percent) had the lowest rate of youth unemployment in the whole of Europe (around 13 percent). The impact of the pandemic on the proportion of unemployed young people has also been more limited in the Netherlands than in any other European country (Konle-Seidl & Picarella, 2021). The decrease in the numbers dropping out of education combined with strong economic growth and good employment opportunities (which recovered quickly following the pandemic) seem to play a role in this.

Employment opportunities have not returned to pre-pandemic level for everyone • The percentage of graduates and school leavers who found employment

Figure 9 Percentage of students in MBO leaving without graduating, by year of graduation and level



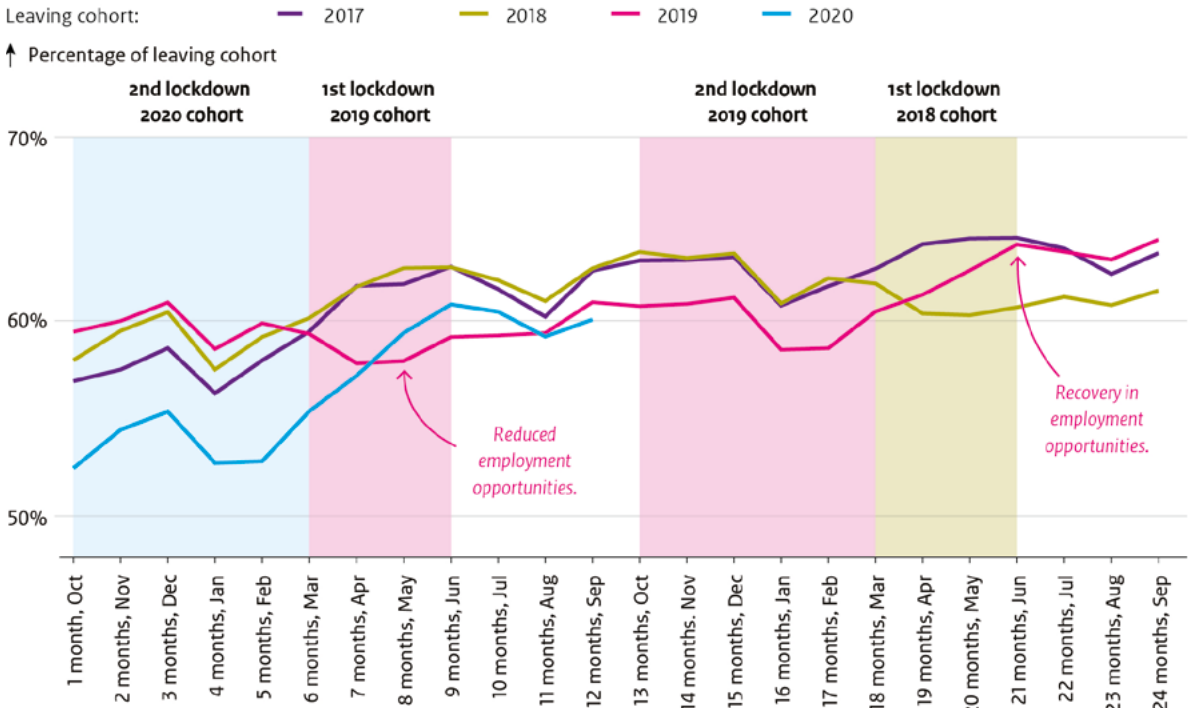
Source: (Inspectorate of Education (2022h)

within three months of leaving education was the same at the end of 2020 as it had been before the coronavirus pandemic (around 70 percent) (Zwetsloot et al., 2021). However, as noted previously, crises seldom affect everybody equally (Inspectorate of Education, 2021a). Those without qualifications, students with an MBO-1 or MBO-2 diploma and graduates from (secondary) special education are more affected by periods of economic uncertainty. This also applies to the period of the pandemic. The percentage of those in employment among graduates with an MBO-2 diploma (of those leaving education in 2019) has only recently recovered to the level of the cohort that left education two years earlier (see figure 10). Among those leaving education with an HBO or university degree, the percentage of those in employment had recovered within a few months of the first lockdown, and is now actually higher than it was before the pandemic struck (Inspectorate of Education, 2022m).

Chance of finding employment lower among those leaving (secondary) special education • Before the coronavirus pandemic, young people completing (secondary) special education had a 15 percent chance of finding employment within four months of leaving education. For students who left education in 2019-20, that likelihood fell by one percentage point. Nine months after leaving school, the difference with the 2018-19 cohort had risen by 2 percentage points. Less than a quarter of students who left the 'employment' profile of (secondary) special education in 2019-20 are in employment; a quarter are unemployed but do not receive benefits; and 18 percent are unemployed but receive benefits (Inspectorate of Education, 2022m).

Young people with a non-Western migration background find employment less quickly • The percentage of young people with a non-Western migration background who find employment shortly after leaving education is lower than among those without a migration background (Inspectorate of Education, 2022m). In addition, students with a non-Western migration background have been hit harder by the pandemic than students without a migration background. The percentage of young people with a migration background who are in employment and who graduated in 2019 with an MBO-3 diploma has only just recovered to the same level as before the pandemic struck. For young people without a migration background, this was the case less than one year after the pandemic struck. The difference in employment opportunities between these groups of young people is concerning (Inspectorate of Education, 2022m).

Figure 10 Percentage of young people with an MBO-2 diploma in employment (split by cohort) over time (number of months after leaving education)



Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022m), own calculations based on microdata from Statistics Netherlands

Every pupil and student has equal access to education that is tailored to their needs.

It is still not always the case that pupils and students with the same level of ability but from different backgrounds enjoy equal opportunities. Pupils and students with special educational needs are less likely to be successful at school. Pupils and students with a migrant background experience obstacles more frequently, even though these obstacles have been reduced in recent years. Pupils and students whose parents have a lower level of education often do less well at school. For this group, too, the gap has been narrowing with respect to some of these differences.

Pupils and students with special educational needs

Information on pupils with special educational needs is still limited • Since the introduction of inclusive education, national data on pupils with special educational needs in regular education has practically disappeared. Schools are required to keep a record of which pupils have a progress and development plan, but in practice these records still fall short. A progress and development plan has been registered for 0.5 percent of pupils in primary education and for 2.1 percent of pupils in secondary education (2020/2021), while an estimated 8.2 percent of pupils in regular primary education receive additional support (Inspectorate of Education, 2020e). Although schools, school governing boards and inter-institutional partnerships may have a good idea of which pupils have a progress and development plan, the national picture is limited due to the issue of under-registration. This is problematic, because an accurate national picture is required to monitor trends in the number of pupils with special educational needs, whether their educational progress is improving or deteriorating, and whether additional measures are needed. The Inspectorate intends to hold school governing boards and schools more explicitly accountable with respect to the registration of progress and development plans, and will impose remedial action orders where necessary.

Better information is required regarding pupils with special educational needs • Given the issue of inconsistent registration and the lack of national criteria for special educational needs, we seek to derive information about pupils with special educational needs using anonymized data on pupils who receive youth welfare support, on pupils who are taking prescribed medication for internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety or externalizing problems such as ADHD, and on pupils who are subject to youth protection measures. This is no substitute for education-specific definitions, but it can help to provide an insight into pupils who have special educational needs in the education system (Inspectorate of Education, 2022j).

Less successful school careers • There are differences between the school careers of pupils with special educational needs and those without. These differences cannot be attributed to differences in gender, parents' level of education or migration background. During primary education, pupils with special educational needs are more likely to have to repeat a year. On average, repeating a class does not lead to sustainable learning gains (van Vuuren & van der Wiel, 2015). It is unclear whether this also applies to this specific group of pupils or whether they actually benefit from the additional teaching time. Upon completing primary school, the test-based recommendation for pupils with special educational needs is often higher than the teacher's recommendation, but the recommendation is not revised any more frequently than for pupils without special educational needs. In secondary education, pupils in the third year with special educational needs are more often placed below the level of the final recommendation than pupils without special educational needs, and they are more likely to have to repeat a year. Pupils with and without special educational needs are just as likely to pass the final exam, but pupils with special educational needs are more likely to take the final exam at a lower level than the primary school recommendation. Furthermore, pupils with special educational needs are more likely to leave school early, less likely to go on to further education after their final exam, and more likely to start further education below the level of their final exam result (Inspectorate of Education, 2022j).

Pupils with special educational needs are more likely to progress to primary special education and secondary special education • Pupils with special educational needs are significantly more likely to move on to special education, primary special education, secondary special education and practical education. Among pupils without special educational needs, only 4 percent have gone to primary special education five years after year group 3 of primary education. Among pupils with special educational needs, that proportion is much higher – for example 34 percent of pupils who are taking medication for externalizing problems such as ADHD. These are pupils who have received the relevant help and medication at a young age, which may indicate a more serious problem that primary special education is better equipped to deal with. Pupils in secondary education who have special educational needs are also more likely to move on to secondary special education (Inspectorate of Education, 2022j). Whether pupils with special

Figure 11 School careers of pupils who are at risk of educational disadvantage

		Primary education: Move to special education	Primary education: Final test higher than teacher's recommendation	Secondary education: Move down in third year	Secondary education: Move up in third year	Secondary exams: Exam higher than primary school's recommendation	Further education: Education below exam level
Medication for ADHD	No	4,3%	34,3%	12,5%	11,0%	17,7%	7,8%
	Yes	34,1%	38,7%	21,3%	8,2%	12,7%	10,2%
Youth welfare support	No	3,3%	34,2%	12,5%	10,9%*	18,0%	7,8%
	Yes	22,3%	36,7%	15,9%	11,1%	12,1%	9,0%
Pupil-specific budget before 2014	No	4,5%	**	13,7%*	11,5%*	18,7%*	10,0%
	Yes	38,1%		15,3%	12,5%	17,0%	14,8%
Parents with low level of education	No	3,5%	32,0%	11,8%	10,8%*	17,9%	7,3%
	Yes	10,3%	40,3%	16,6%	11,3%	15,9%	7,7%
Newcomer	No	3,8%*	37,6%*	16,5%	9,9%	18,0%	10,4%
	Yes	5,9%	44,7%	14,6%	16,8%	23,9%	4,7%

* Differences not significant after correcting for background characteristics

Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022k, 2022j), own calculations based on microdata from Statistics Netherlands

educational needs make better progress at these schools is unclear from this research. The proportion of pupils in secondary special education has been rising in recent years. More research is needed to discover exactly what is causing this rise, but the figures are a cause for concern, in light of the goal of achieving more inclusive education.

Unclear whether the extra support is of adequate quality • Pupils with special educational needs do less well in our education system, and are more likely to move on to secondary special education (Inspectorate of Education, 2022j). These differences are greater than those between pupils whose parents have a higher or lower level of education. These findings raise certain questions. Are these differences to be expected as a result of these pupils' special educational needs? Do these pupils receive support (and does this come early enough)? Are they ending up in the right place within the education system? And is quality in regular education adequate? The Inspectorate of Education is therefore planning to examine the quality of the additional support provided in regular primary and secondary education. Both inter-institutional partnerships and school governing boards play an important role in the quality of the education provided. Inter-institutional partnerships and school governing boards both have a role to play in improving quality, each based on their respective role.

Pupils and students with a migration background

Decline in segregation by migration background • Previously, a gradual decline in school segregation by migration background was evident in primary education in a number of the larger cities. This trend has continued over the past year. As such, pupils with and without a migration background have increasingly been mixing at school in recent years. By contrast, segregation by parents' level of education and parents' income has increased. In secondary education, school segregation by migration background, parents' level of education and parents' income is lower than in primary education, possibly due to the smaller number of secondary schools. However, when we take into account differences between the various levels of education, there has actually been no decline in segregation according to migration background in secondary education (Inspectorate of Education, 2021k).

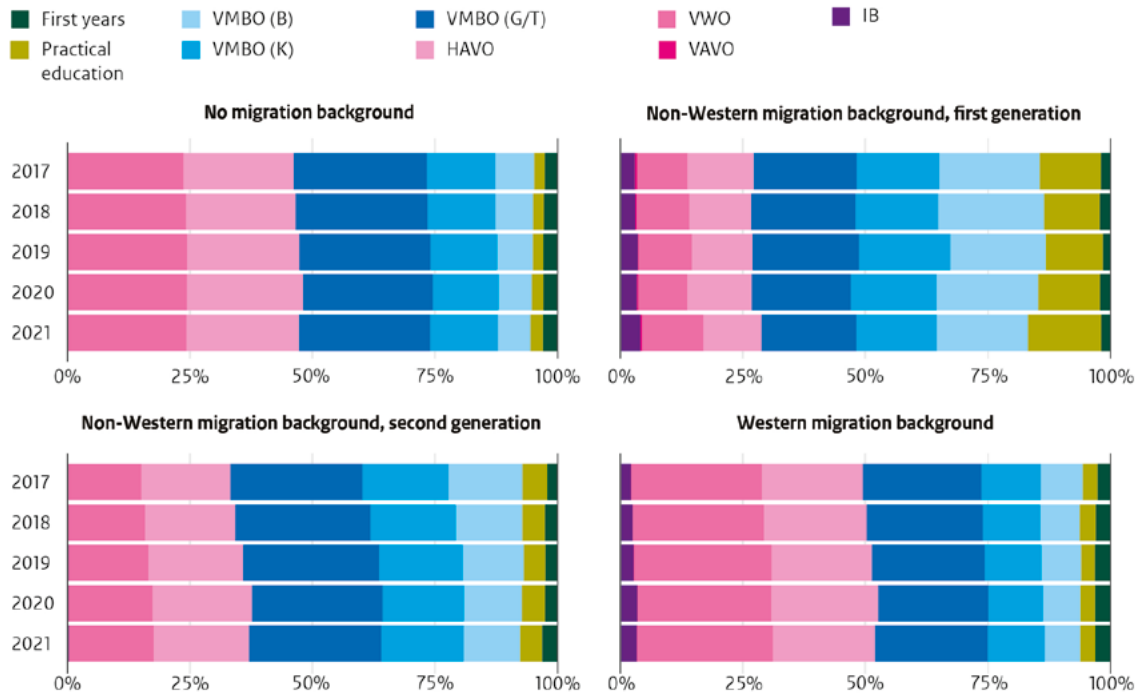
More pupils with a migration background in HAVO or VWO • In the 2021-22 school year, over a quarter of pupils with a migration background (first generation) are in HAVO or VWO (26.3 percent) or studying for an international baccalaureate (4.1 percent). This is an increase compared to previous years (see Figure 12). More than 40 percent of second-generation pupils are studying at one of these levels, which is almost unchanged from the previous year. The percentage of pupils without a migration background who attend HAVO or VWO education actually declined last school year (2020-21: 50.9 percent; 2021-22: 50.2 percent). This means that the difference between these groups has decreased slightly (Inspectorate of Education, 2022n).

Drop in number leaving MBO without a diploma • Students with a non-Western migration background (first generation: 30.2 percent; second generation: 25.4 percent) are more likely to leave MBO without graduating than students without a migration background (16.9 percent). However, the gap between students without a migration background and second-generation students with a non-Western migration background has narrowed in recent years (Inspectorate of Education, 2022h).

Newcomers get off to a late start and change school more often • In recent years there has been an increase in the number of pupils who are newcomers – i.e. who were not born in the Netherlands. Over half of newcomers of primary school age only join regular primary education in the Netherlands after the age of seven. For almost one third of those in secondary education, this is only after the age of twelve. These figures are even higher among the children of refugees than children of migrant workers. In both primary and secondary education, approximately half of newcomers have changed schools at least once. For pupils born in the Netherlands, this figure is around a quarter. A large number of newcomers start education with lower levels of knowledge and ability than other pupils in the system, partly due to their late start (Inspectorate of Education, 2022k).

Lower average school recommendations, but more newcomers move up to a higher level of education later on • Newcomers often need extra time to complete primary school. Some 54 percent of newcomers make less progress than average in primary school. This figure is much lower for non-newcomers, at just 8 percent. Even after correcting for background characteristics (gender and pupil weighting), the difference between these groups remains large. On average, newcomers are given a lower recommendation for secondary education at the end of primary school. Pupils with an asylum background are even more likely to receive a lower recommendation than the children of migrant workers. However, newcomers are able to catch up during secondary education to some extent, by making use of opportunities to move up to higher levels of education. By the third year of secondary education, newcomers are much less likely to have moved down to a lower level of education than non-newcomers, and are notably more likely to have moved up to a higher level. Newcomers are

Figure 12 Distribution of pupils across the different levels of education in secondary education, broken down by migration background



Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022k)

also more likely than non-newcomers to take their exams at a level higher than the primary school recommendation, and less likely to do so at a lower level. However, newcomers are slightly less likely to pass their final exams at the first attempt (Inspectorate of Education, 2022k).

Newcomers who arrive as older children have non-standard school careers • Newcomers who have arrived in the Netherlands at a younger age (lower years of primary school) generally progress through the education system in a way that is broadly similar to non-newcomers. But newcomers who arrive when they are older are more likely to fall behind, to change schools, to move to practical education/secondary special education and to fail their final exams (Inspectorate of Education, 2022k). Newcomers who arrive in the Netherlands as older children are a particularly vulnerable group within the education system. This applies not only immediately after they arrive in the country, but throughout their whole time in education. Continuous extra attention and an appropriate curriculum are therefore needed for these pupils.

Pupils and students whose parents have a lower level of education

School recommendation more likely to be revised • In the 2020-21 school year, the school's recommendation for pupils whose parents have a maximum of MBO-2 education was more likely to be revised based on the test result than that for pupils whose parents have a higher level of education (maximum MBO-2: 13.9 percent; MBO-3/4: 10.8 percent; HBO associate degree/Bachelor's degree: 9.0 percent; HBO Master's degree or university Bachelor's/Master's degree: 7.5 percent). This means that the difference in the level of the recommendation between these groups was smaller than in 2019-20, when there was no opportunity for revision. That difference was also smaller than the difference in the 2018-19 school year (Inspectorate of Education, 2022i).

Differences in drop-out rates from higher education have got smaller • In the 2020-21 school year, students whose parents completed secondary education or HBO were more likely to leave education early than students whose parents have a university degree. However, the difference between these groups of students has narrowed in the past year. For example, the dropout rate from HBO has fallen by more than 5 percentage points among students whose parents have a maximum of MBO-2 education and by 3 percentage points among

students whose parents have a university education (Inspectorate of Education, 2022f).

Prerequisites

Professional profile of school governors, school leaders and teachers

Teachers, school leaders and school governors provide high quality education • It is widely known and recognized that good teachers and good school leaders are important prerequisites for high quality education (Inspectorate of Education, 2018; Education Council, 2018). Similarly, school governors' activities appear to be an important determinant of the quality of education, something that we are beginning to grasp understand better through our school board level supervision.

Defining the professional profile of teachers more clearly • The Teaching Profession Act (WBL) of 2017 defines the teaching profession and seeks to guarantee professional standards and practices. The required qualifications for teachers are set out in the Decree on Required Qualifications and Competencies for Teaching Staff. This lays down minimum standards

Figure 13 The position of the school governing board in the Dutch education system

for what teaching staff are required to know and be able to provide in terms of their subject area, teaching methodology and teaching skills. These requirements were drafted by teachers' committees. The professional profile for teachers and lecturers is therefore clearer than the requirements for school leaders, education programme managers or school governors, since there are no statutory requirements for those roles.

Professional profile for school leaders and school governors under development • There is diversity in the ways in which school governing boards allocate tasks and responsibilities between school governors and school management. We also see substantive differences in the way these tasks are carried out. The collective labour agreement for primary education stipulates that school leaders must complete school leadership training, so that requirements relating to knowledge and competences are specified indirectly. This does not apply to other sectors of education. School leaders and school governors play a central role in developing their own professional profiles, such as by drawing up professional codes (Inspectorate of Education, 2020a, 2020b; MBO-raad, 2020; PO-raad, 2020, 2020). However, the focus is mainly on defining values and less on knowledge and skills.

Requirements for professional development of teachers in anchored in the law • Teachers and school leaders together are required to keep a record of the teacher's personal and professional development in a qualifications and competencies record. Certain requirements may also be set in this regard, such as the requirement to maintain a particular competency or qualification. In order to give teaching teams a say in how they practise their profession at school, each school is also required to draw up a professional statute. This can be used to record agreements between teaching teams and school management. These agreements concern the professional freedom of teachers in relation to the teaching content, teaching methodology and teaching strategies. There must also be sufficient professional freedom to maintain teachers' qualifications and competencies as part of the team. There is no prescribed structure by which school leaders and school governors should make such agreements. School governors indicate that they regularly discuss their professional development, especially with the supervisory board, but also with the joint participation council or with school leaders. However, these actors do not generally play an active role in making agreements about the professional development of school governors (Schenke et al., 2018).

However, statutory instruments are often not used in practice • Since 1 August 2017, every competent authority in primary education, special (secondary) education, secondary education and MBO has been required to draw up a professional statute. However, by no means every school has a professional statute, and not every school that does have a professional statute actually makes use of it. A random sample study indicated that in the 2019-20 school year, 45 percent of primary schools had such a statute; in 2020-21 this was 35 percent (Inspectorate of Education, 2021a). In about one third of the schools that do have a professional statute, this had never been discussed by the teaching team since being drafted. There is no information available on the extent to which the qualifications and competency record are actually used. When those records are not being used, it means that school management is not keeping a record of the training and professional development of teachers in a transparent manner, and quality assurance is inadequate as a result. Schools and educational programmes frequently indicate that targeted professional development of teachers is required in order to improve pupils' and students' basic skills, and therefore this must be a priority.

Quality of school governing boards and inter-institutional partnerships

Quality assurance of school governing boards is often unsatisfactory • In the Dutch education system, governing boards are responsible for the quality of education in the schools and institutions that they serve. Between 2017 and 2021, school governing boards were assessed on quality assurance using the 2017 inspection framework, which includes looking at evaluation, accountability and dialogue. On the basis of the most recent judgements – i.e. after school governing boards had been given the opportunity to rectify any initial shortcomings – quality assurance in primary and secondary education was found to be unsatisfactory in 13 percent of school governing boards. In special education, that figure was 29 percent and in MBO 12 percent. Those school governing boards were not doing enough to monitor and promote quality of education. There are relatively few statutory requirements relating to the quality assurance of school governing boards, and boards are often only judged as unsatisfactory on this standard when multiple requirements have not been met (Inspectorate of Education, 2021a). Nevertheless, the percentage of boards judged as unsatisfactory with respect to quality assurance has been high for some years.

Quality assurance in inter-institutional partnerships also requires attention • Between 2017 and 2021, the Inspectorate also assessed the quality of the governing boards of inter-institutional partnerships for the first time. Quality assurance in inter-institutional partnerships

requires the most attention, because it is unsatisfactory in about one third of these partnerships. The quality culture, by which we mean the structure and functioning of the governance structure, is satisfactory in 85 percent of inter-institutional partnerships. Accountability and dialogue are satisfactory in more than 90 percent of inter-institutional partnerships, however, the substantive quality of accountability (in the annual report) still has considerable room for improvement. We also assess the governing boards of inter-institutional partnerships regarding the fulfilment of their statutory duties. Their most important duty is to provide the best possible inclusive education for all pupils. Over 90 percent of inter-institutional partnerships succeed in this.

Good quality assurance contributes to achieving inclusive education • In order to provide inclusive education, inter-institutional partnerships need to assess the educational needs of pupils in their region and be able to tailor their services accordingly. A solid quality assurance system enables a targeted provision of suitable services. Inter-institutional partnerships achieving this are providing a comprehensive network of education and support facilities, have a strong regional cooperation and a careful and swift allocation of extra support. They utilize opportunities for customization and invest in regular education, which means that participation rates in specialized forms of education are low. Good examples of coordination with municipal partners are a proactive policy regarding young persons not in school, the involvement of the inter-institutional partnership in procuring youth welfare support and the realization of special educational needs care packages, which involve an integrated service of education and care.

Division of responsibilities between school governing board and internal supervisory board is important for quality culture • Inter-institutional partnerships with a good quality culture have a clear division of responsibilities between the school governing board and internal supervision, and demonstrate that each works within its own role to improve the quality of the inter-institutional partnership. Closer to the level of pupils, these inter-institutional partnerships also work from the agreements that have been made towards the agreed goals and ambitions. In inter-institutional partnerships that have an unsatisfactory quality culture, the internal supervisory board is not sufficiently independent of the governing board. In these inter-institutional partnerships, internal supervision is exercised by the affiliated school governors and too often, they approach their supervisory duties from the perspective of their own organization and interests. This means that an important internal check is missing with respect to providing inclusive education as part of their societal task. Sometimes difficult choices may be necessary, which may not be beneficial for individual school governing boards, but are required in order to make further progress towards inclusive education.

School governing boards are a crucial link in inclusive education • School governing boards fulfil a dual role in inclusive education – as a participant in the inter-institutional partnership and as governing board – and they therefore play a crucial role in achieving inclusive education. Within the inter-institutional partnership, the affiliated school governing boards make agreements regarding inclusive education at the affiliated schools. As such, they contribute to determining policy and ambitions related to inclusive education in the region. The school governing boards are then responsible for implementing this policy within the schools. In our supervisory activities, we plan to focus more explicitly on the implementation on the ground as well as the accountability around it, because more and better insight is required into the quality of education and support for pupils with special educational needs, and the outcomes being achieved for those pupils.,. This information is also needed within inter-institutional partnerships in order to better match demand and supply in relation to support for pupils with special educational needs. This is necessary in order to allow pupils to benefit from the support that is available, more than they do now.

Sufficient teachers and school leaders

Teacher shortage has grown across all sectors, most in secondary education • The shortage of teachers has continued to increase across all sectors. The percentage of online vacancies compared to the total number of positions in education has grown the most in secondary education, from 10.5 percent in 2018-19 to 16.9 percent in 2020-21. In the same period, the shortage in primary education rose from 6 percent in the 2018-19 school year to 8.6 percent in 2020-21, and in MBO from 5.9 to 8.8 percent. In reality, the shortage is even more severe than this: not all schools and educational institutions post vacancies online, because they see the chances of success are very limited. No data is available on staff shortages in higher education.

Shortage of school leaders has also been increasing • The shortage of school leaders has grown even more: nationally, in primary and special (secondary) education, 12.9 percent of the total number of positions are vacant. The estimated shortfall is 1,100 FTEs. The vacancy rate among school leaders in secondary education is 11 percent. Many additional support staff are also needed (14.7 percent). The estimated shortage of school leaders in special (secondary) education is as high as

14 percent (Adriaens et al., 2021). The labour market is tightening across all sectors and the number of vacancies increased in the 2020-21 school year compared to the 2019-20 school year, among teachers, support staff and managers.

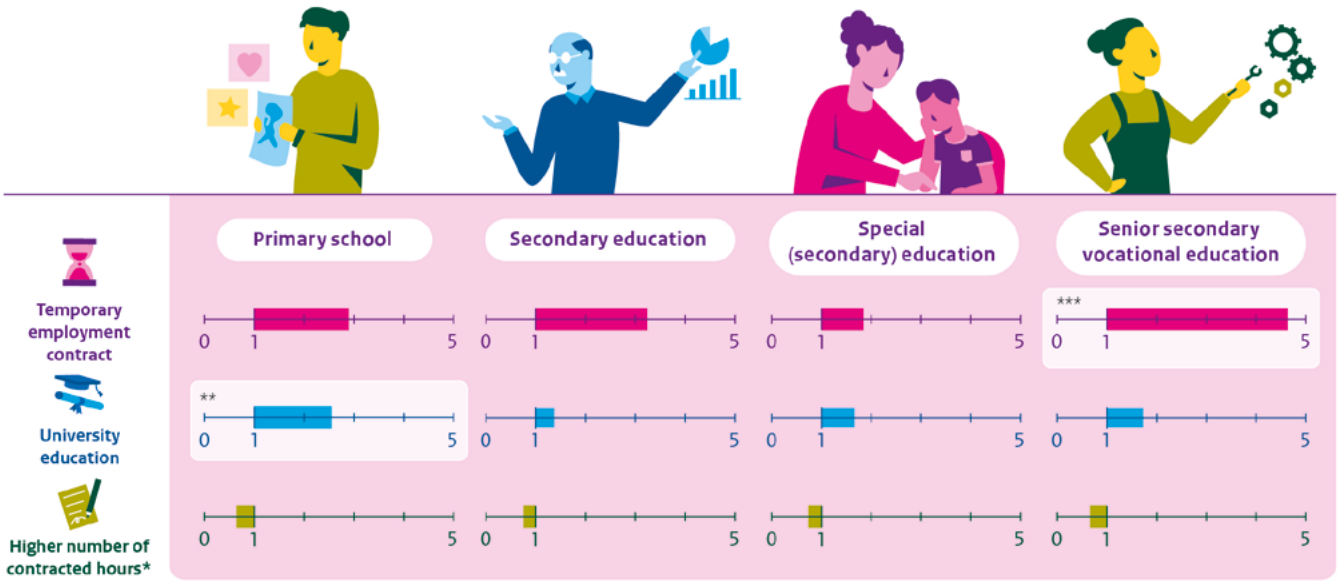
Shortages are not spread equally • In primary education, teacher shortages are not spread equally between schools (Adriaens et al., 2021). Particularly schools in the west of the country are experiencing significant teacher shortages. Just 11 percent of primary schools in the largest five municipalities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Almere) have no vacancies at all, while the figure is 41 percent outside these cities. The shortage of staff is the most acute at primary schools with a higher weighting – i.e. schools with more pupils from socio-economically deprived backgrounds. The teacher shortage is also more severe at schools judged as 'Very Weak' schools (Inspectorate of Education, 2019a). We also see that shortages in special primary education are more acute than in primary education, and those in special secondary education are more acute than in secondary education. In secondary education and MBO, the shortages are concentrated in particular subjects, including Dutch, German, French, computer science, physics, chemistry and mathematics. In MBO, the shortage also affects specialist technical subjects (OCW, 2021b).

The shortage of teachers is having a major impact • The shortage of teachers in primary education is visible to all those involved: pupils, parents, teachers, teaching assistants, school leaders, school governors and inspectors. While the shortage is most acute in the five most populous municipalities in the Netherlands, it is also affecting other regions. The extent of the teacher shortage became painfully clear during the pandemic. Inspectors noted that school leaders were spending much of their time on arranging staff for the various groups. School leaders often find this very stressful, and it prevents them from focusing on their primary tasks. Teachers are constantly being asked to be more flexible and to work additional hours. As a result, pupils received teaching from many different faces. This has a negative impact on all pupils, however, on vulnerable pupils in particular. School governing boards are in competition with one another when it comes to recruiting teaching staff, and they are also concerned about the resilience of their existing staff. Parents are concerned about whether their children are able to attend school every day, and whether they are learning enough.

Solutions outside the regular statutory framework are required • The Inspectorate has no data on how often schools have to implement emergency solutions, and whether or not those solutions comply with the law. But schools and school governing boards do tell inspectors

Figure 14 Likelihood of new teachers leaving the profession

There are many factors that influence the likelihood of new teachers leaving the profession. Three of these play a role in multiple sectors of education. A value below 1 means a lower chance of leaving; a value above 1 means a higher chance of leaving.



* The more hours new teachers are contracted to work, the lower the chance of them leaving the profession.
** New primary school teachers with a university degree are 2.5 times more likely to drop out than new teachers with some other kind of diploma.
*** The chance of a new MBO teacher with a temporary employment contract leaving is more than 4.5 times greater than that of a new teacher with a permanent employment contract.

Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l), own calculations based on microdata from Statistics Netherlands

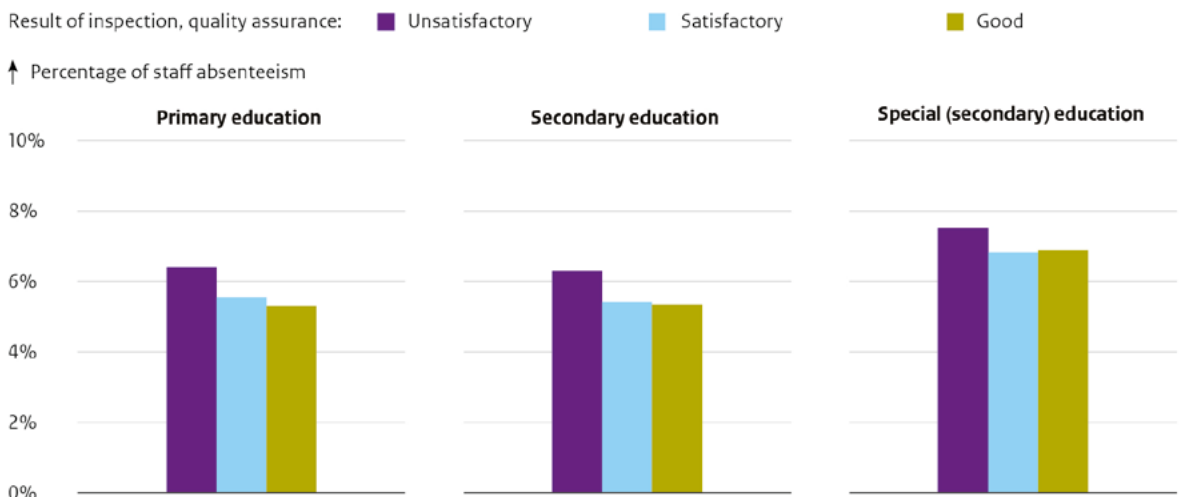
what efforts they are making to ensure continuity. Examples that fall outside the statutory framework include the deployment of unqualified teachers and four-day school weeks, with no school on the fifth day or alternative activities being arranged. In such situations, school governors and school leaders indicate that no other solutions are available. Examples that fall within the statutory framework include assigning staff with teaching qualifications to teach groups when they actually have a different role or position. As a result, school leaders, internal supervisors, teaching assistants, and students are unable to focus on their own work and specific roles within the school. This creates further challenges around school development, educational care and the provision of extra support to pupils with special educational needs. In addition, demanding too much from trainee teachers can cause them to fall behind or even to drop out before qualifying. In the search for structural solutions to the shortage of teachers, safeguarding the quality of education should be the priority. This requires some flexibility in the legislation and regulations around education, childcare and (youth) care.

Strategic staffing policy

The important role of school governing boards • It is up to school governing boards to ensure that there is sufficient and qualified staff in schools, despite the challenge of finding staff. Strategic staffing policy means that the organization's vision and goals are translated into commitment and professional development among all staff. However, in many educational institutions, the focus of staffing policy is mainly on administration. In almost half of all primary schools, for example, the vision on education is not translated into concrete professional standards.
Good staffing policy at the level of the school governing board can help to attract and retain teachers and contribute to the composition of a strong team. Moreover, school governing boards can enhance teachers' expertise – in the field of basic skills, for example – by means of a targeted policy on professional development.

Highest dropout rate among new teachers is in secondary education • It is important to retain newly qualified teachers in education, especially in view of the shortage of teachers. Of the primary education teachers who joined the profession in 2018 working at least 0.5 FTE, over 3.5 percent were no longer working in education two years later. This percentage has fallen slightly in recent years. In special (secondary) education too, the number of teachers leaving the profession within their first two years of employment fell, to around 6 percent. In secondary education, approximately 11 percent of new teachers leave the profession within two years. In MBO, however, the dropout rate is rising: 8 percent of new teachers had stopped working in education after two years. New teachers with a university education are more likely to drop out than those with an HBO background – in primary education they are 2.5 times more likely to drop out, for example. In secondary education, male teachers with an academic background are the most likely to drop out (14 percent), while in MBO, female teachers with an academic background are the most likely to leave (12.5 percent) (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l).

Figure 15 Higher staff absenteeism is associated with lower quality assurance by school governing boards Grouped according to lowest judgement by the Inspectorate during 2017-2021



Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l)

Type of employment contract affects new teachers' likelihood of leaving the profession • Across all sectors, the likelihood of a new teacher leaving is related to the number of hours they are contracted to work. The greater the number of hours, the lower the chance that the teacher will leave (see figure 14). This takes into account various characteristics of the school and the team that the new teacher joins. In all sectors except for special (secondary) education, whether a new teacher has a temporary or permanent employment contract is also relevant. A permanent contract reduces the chance of the teacher leaving. This is especially true for new female teachers. In primary education, the proportion of temporary employment contracts is decreasing, but in secondary education and MBO it has increased in recent years. The likelihood of teachers with a university degree leaving the profession is also higher than teachers with a different educational background. Moreover, ever fewer teachers with a university education are joining secondary education. In this sector, it also matters whether a teacher teaches in several education type new teachers are more likely to stay in the profession if they begin teaching in one education type. New teachers in primary education are more likely to leave the profession if they teach in schools with more pupils from areas with multiple deprivation-related problems. (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l)

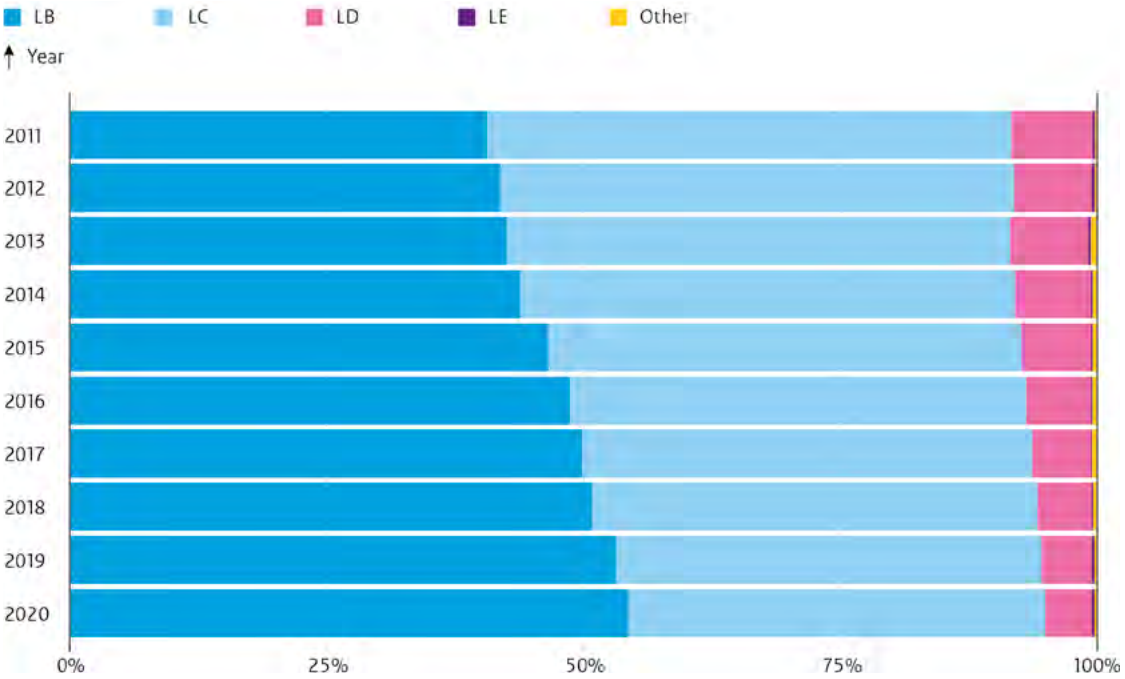
Better quality assurance by school governing boards is associated with lower rates of absenteeism • Perceived workload has increased during the pandemic period (Inspectorate of Education, 2021h, 2021j, 2021g). Teachers indicate that support from management has helped them to keep going during this period. One possible consequence of an elevated workload is increased absenteeism. At school governing boards where quality assurance was judged to be unsatisfactory, absenteeism among teaching staff in its schools is, on average, higher than at schools where the board is keeping close track of the quality of education. In addition, for school governing boards that have a good overview of quality of education, the duration of absenteeism is shorter than for other governing boards. As with the teacher shortage, teacher absenteeism is more common in schools that serve vulnerable pupils than other schools (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l).

Teacher remuneration in primary and secondary education is stagnating • One of the ways to make the teaching profession more appealing is to offer teachers better career prospects. Rewarding good teachers may be one way to ensure that they stay in their profession. Nationally, however, remuneration for teachers in primary and secondary education has not changed much in recent years, despite the objectives formulated in 2008. Since 2017, about three quarters of teachers in primary education have been on salary scale 10 (LA), with the other teachers on higher pay scales. Teachers in the north of the country are much more likely to be on scale 10 than teachers in urban areas. In special primary education and special (secondary) education, most teaching staff (about 80 percent) have been on scale 11 for years. In secondary education, teachers' salaries have been stable since 2014, with the proportion of teachers on the LC scale increasing very gradually at the expense of the proportion of teachers on the higher LD scale. There are also regional differences in remuneration in secondary education. In the north of the country, teachers are much more likely to be on scale LB than in the urban areas in the west of the Netherlands, where teachers are more often assigned to scale LC due to targeted efforts by school governing boards (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l).

Lower remuneration more common in MBO • In MBO, teaching staff are increasingly placed on the LB scale. Ten years ago, 40 percent of teachers were on the LB scale, while in 2020 the number was 55 percent. The proportion of teachers on the higher LC scale has fallen in particular, while the proportion of teachers on the LD scale has fallen slightly. This fall may be related to lower remuneration for new teachers and to the number of years of professional experience in MBO that teachers have. The average age of teachers in MBO is falling – from 50 years old in 2013 to 46 years old in 2020. Most teachers with less than eight years of professional experience are on the LB scale. The majority with more than eight years of experience are on scale LC (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l).

Composition of teaching team affects exam results • At schools with school governing boards with an adequate overview of the quality of education and learning outcomes, pupils achieve better learning outcomes. This may be due to the way in which those governing boards compose the teaching teams. In secondary education there is a clear relationship between the composition of the teaching team and pupils' learning outcomes. When allowing for pupils' backgrounds, it appears that being taught by a team made up of relatively older teachers (regardless of their experience), by many teachers on the lowest salary scale, or by many teachers on temporary employment contracts, increases the likelihood that pupils will achieve a lower mark in the central exam. Being taught by a high number of newly qualified teachers or a high number of male teachers also reduces the likelihood of a high mark. The strength of this effect varies according to the type of education; for example the effect of newly qualified teachers is especially important in VMBO-GT departments (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l).

Figure 16 Salary mix at MBO institutions



Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l), own calculations based on microdata from Statistics Netherlands

Opportunities for greater differentiation between tasks and roles • New training routes into the teaching profession are slowly changing the composition of teaching teams in primary and secondary education. For example, in recent years more teachers with an HBO education have joined secondary education, while the number of teachers with a university education has declined. In primary education, by contrast, there has been an increase in teachers with a university education, also in addition to an increase in subject-specific teachers and teaching assistants. The number of teachers entering from a different profession after retraining is also increasing. These staff bring a very diverse palette of experience and (practical) knowledge. This increase in diversity creates opportunities to differentiate more between the tasks and roles of staff and to offer differentiated career paths, resulting in stronger teaching teams and greater job satisfaction.

Limited differentiation in tasks and roles of teachers with a university education • Among teachers in primary education with a university education, 60 percent believe that school leaders have few ideas on how to make use of their academic background. Only 3 percent of schools have developed policies around teachers with a university education, according to the respondents. The lack of knowledge and policy around teachers with a university education can lead to demotivation and even the departure of these teachers from the profession (Coenen et al., 2021). School governing boards can help schools to develop policies in this area. Below we indicate the added value of teachers with a university education in the view of our inspectors, as well as the obstacles that they see in practice.

The added value of teachers with a university education, from an inspector's perspective • Teachers with a university education can bring significant added value because of their academic skills, such as their capacities for critical thinking, investigation and reflection. This is the view among our inspectors (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l), who often see that this added value comes to the fore during the specific additional tasks or roles that these teachers can fulfil, both inside and outside the classroom. Outside the classroom, this can include acting as a behavioural coach or maths specialist, or working on quality assurance or educational development within a school or school governing board. Inside the classroom, these teachers may be experts on particular subject areas or teach all the school's lessons on inquiry-based learning, for instance. What matters is that these teachers with a university education are deployed on the basis of the talents that they have. The added value of teachers with a university education can be undermined by resistance to the term 'academic', however. This can inadvertently create the impression that they are 'better educated' than teachers with a non-academic background. According to our inspectors, it is important that school governing boards, school leaders and teaching teams understand that

making a difference for pupils is a matter of teamwork. Different skill sets (including those of teachers with a university education) are contributing to this. For example, if teachers with a university background are assigned certain tasks or roles, other teachers can take over and teach their class. The positioning of academically trained teachers must be incorporated into staffing policy in a structural manner. It is up to the school governing board and school management, in consultation with the teaching teams, to develop a vision for the allocation of tasks between teachers based on the skills and ambitions of the members of the team, and to ensure that this is reflected in teachers' day-to-day work.

Not every teacher participates in training • By implementing a targeted policy on training, school governing boards and school management can enhance the knowledge and skills of teachers in the areas that are most important according to the board's vision and goals. At about 13 percent of primary schools, teachers are receiving little additional training or not every teacher participates in additional training . For example, just under 10 percent of school leaders indicate that teachers with over 20 years of experience take less than 12 hours of additional training per year (Inspectorate of Education, 2022i). Teachers sometimes attain an (extra) formal qualification. Most teachers who take additional training on a formal basis do so in the first five years of their career. In primary education, every year approximately 1 percent of teachers achieve an (additional) Bachelor's or Master's degree. This number is only slightly higher in special (secondary) education. In secondary education and MBO, 3 and 2 percent of teachers respectively gain an (additional) diploma in higher education. This often concerns teachers who do not yet have a diploma, such as those entering teaching from another profession after retraining. Primary school teachers who follow formal additional training usually follow a Master's degree in Special Educational Needs. Teachers in special (secondary) education do the same, but also often opt for a second-level teacher training programme in secondary education. Teachers in secondary education and MBO who undergo formal additional training often follow this programme too (Inspectorate of Education, 2022l).

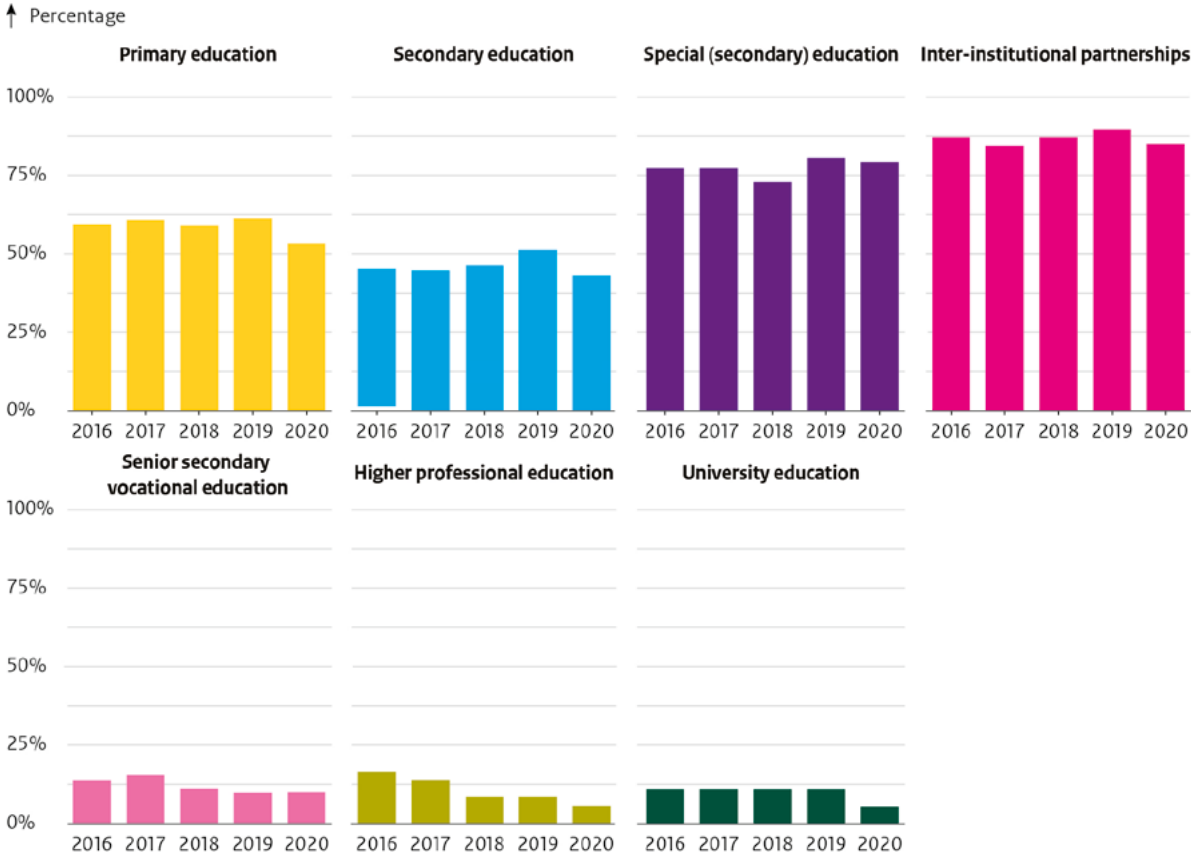
Training for teachers is often not targeted enough • Dutch teachers participate in additional training less frequently than teachers in other countries (Meelissen et al., 2020). In the Netherlands, the percentage of pupils whose teacher has taken additional training is lower than in other countries. In nature studies, for example, only 8 percent of pupils are taught by a teacher who has completed additional subject-specific training in that subject in the past two 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 primarily requires additional subject-specific didactic skills. In our research into basic skills, schools in primary and secondary education cite as an important limitation the fact that not all teachers have the skills to analyse and interpret test results properly (Inspectorate of Education, 2022c). This is considered necessary in order to promote pupils' basic skills. If a strategic staffing policy were to be introduced, this ought to play an important role in the professional development of the team and/or individual teachers. There is a role here for school management and the school governing board, but this is currently not being addressed adequately.

Financial management

Decrease in potentially excess capital reserves of school governing boards in 2020 • Many school governing boards finish each year with a financial surplus. This means that they have some money to spare. If that money is not spent in the same year, it becomes part of the reserves of the governing board. In 2020, the Inspectorate published guidance for school governing boards regarding the level of public capital reserves that is reasonably required to ensure operational continuity. Reserves that are above these levels may be seen as excessive, and the starting point for a dialogue on this subject within the institution and with the Inspectorate. Compared to the 2019 reporting year, there was a decrease in potentially excess reserves in the 2020 reporting year. This decrease can be explained in part by covenant funding and one-off benefits in the collective labour agreement which school governing boards in primary and secondary education received in 2019 to be spent in 2020. Across all sectors, there has been a decrease of approximately 21 percent (€310 million): from €1.45 billion in 2019 to €1.14 billion in 2020. The number of school governing boards with potentially excess capital reserves also decreased by approximately 14 percent, from 883 in 2019 to 759 in 2020 (Inspectorate of Education, 2022e). The table below shows how (potential) reserves have changed across various sectors since 2017.

Prudent budgeting often leads to large reserves • For many of the school governing boards with large reserves cautious budgeting practices and the desire to spend government funding carefully are an important factor . The forecasts made by governing boards regarding results in the following financial year often prove to be conservative. In addition, governing boards indicate that they hold on to funds to save for future investments, because of unpredictable funding caused by fluctuations in pupil numbers or because of uncertainty about whether or not they are entitled to funding tied to educational disadvantage policies.

Figure 17 Changes in the percentage of school governing boards with potentially excess reserves in each sector

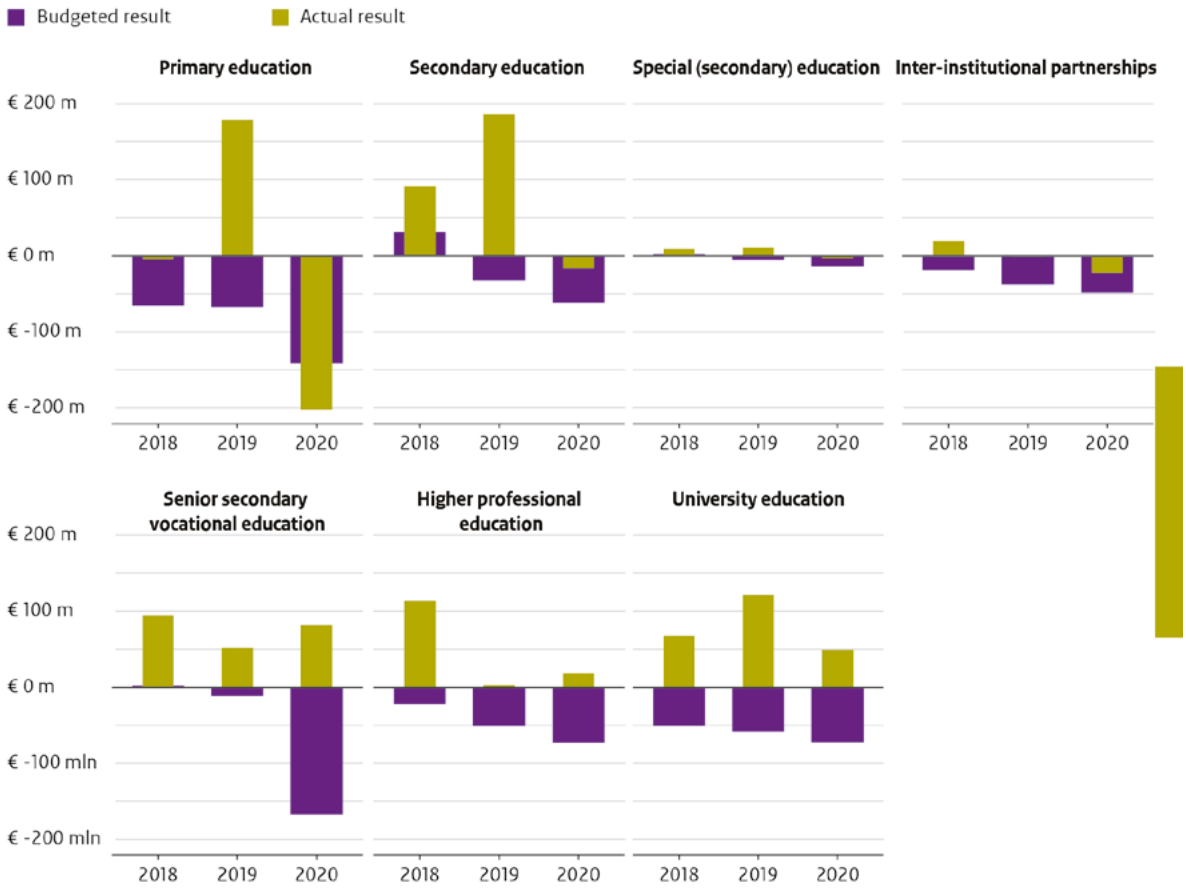


Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022e)

School governing boards plan to reduce reserves • Many school governing boards intend to reduce potentially excess reserves in line with the required levels. The extent to which this reduction is actually happening differs between different governing boards. Many school governing boards stated their intention to do this in their 2020 annual report, but they have not yet published the relevant figures in their multi-year budgets. This is remarkable because, after all, the multi-year budget is intended precisely to present future financial developments.

Uncertainty around the effects of major maintenance and simplification of funding • School governing boards indicate that they are uncertain about the effects of large-scale maintenance work, on the one hand, and the lapse of their claim to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science based on a simplification of funding processes in primary education on the other hand. The legislation regarding budgeting for major maintenance will apply from 1 January 2023. Governing boards need to choose whether to make provisions (move from capital reserves to provisions) or to activate the maintenance. In view of the figures to date, the activation of maintenance appears to be the preferred option for primary education: total tangible assets have risen sharply over the past five years, while total provisions have barely increased in the same period. Due to the switch to funding per calendar year as a simplification of funding processes (expected by reporting year 2023), primary school governing boards' claims to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will lapse. This will lead to a decrease in total capital reserves of approximately €500 million. Many governing boards have not yet incorporated this effect into their multi-year budgets.

Figure 18 Budgeted result and actual result compared across different education sectors



Source: TR financieel

Reserves mainly used on an incidental basis • Plans to reduce financial reserves often relate to improving the quality of education, for example by investing in training for teaching staff. Governing boards also indicate that they have set aside money for specific matters such as dealing with declining pupil numbers buildings (including maintenance) and ICT resources. Temporary hiring of staff is also often mentioned. Like the often entrenched habit of cautious budgeting, the perceived need to spend the money on incidental matters is an important impediment to reducing capital reserves.

Governing boards need time, space and information • The introduction of guidelines on excess reserves coincides with some movement in the desired direction. However, governing boards are predicted to need more than the intended two years to achieve the desired reduction. School governing boards need time to be able to spend those reserves effectively, partly because of the extra resources that are being made available through the National Education Programme, which may make it more difficult to reduce reserves. Governing boards would also like to be less restricted by legislation and regulations when it comes to investing in buildings and educational care in primary and secondary education. School governing boards themselves could try to make less distinction between incidental and structural spending, and start planning how to spend unexpected funds or unplanned growth in capital reserves. Finally, a number of school governing boards need support with good risk analysis and an understanding of education finances and how other school governing boards are reducing their capital reserves.

Degree of inclusion determines options for financial management • The financial continuity of inter-institutional partnerships has so far been satisfactory. This means that inter-institutional partnerships can meet their financial obligations in the short term. However, the resources available to inter-institutional partnerships (after the deduction of the costs for special (secondary) education) are falling because the total number of pupils is declining while the number of pupils in special (secondary) education is on the rise. For the first time,

that number has surpassed the number of pupils when inclusive education was introduced in 2014. In the case of inter-institutional partnerships, if they do not have enough funds to carry out their tasks, the affiliated school boards will make contributions from their own funds. If that situation arises, those school governing boards will have less money to spend on support to pupils with special educational needs within the regular schools.

The use of funds for inclusive education is changing, effect remains unclear • A larger proportion of the money received by inter-institutional partnerships is being passed on to the affiliated school governing boards, especially in secondary education – up from 65.7% in 2017 to 78.8% in 2020. Among inter-institutional partnerships in primary education, the transfer of funds to school governing boards has remained fairly stable in recent years (from 77.7% in 2017 to 76.2% in 2020) (Inspectorate of Education, 2022e). It is unclear from the annual reports of school governing boards and inter-institutional partnerships what effect this is having, and whether pupils are benefiting from this. Setting specific goals linked to the use of these funds and a clearer focus on accountability will be necessary to ensure this. In 2022, the Inspectorate will begin a study into insight in and management around the effective spending of funds for inclusive education, and accountability in this regard.

Inter-institutional partnerships are reducing their reserves • Inter-institutional partnerships also have (potentially) excess financial reserves that need to be reduced by the end of 2023. An initial step in that direction was taken in 2020. The capital reserves of inter-institutional partnerships in primary education fell from €115 million in 2019 to €103 million in 2020. The capital reserves of inter-institutional partnerships in secondary education fell from €144 million in 2019 to €133 million in 2020. Primary and secondary inter-institutional partnerships cite the continuation of current activities as their main spending goal (around 30% in 2021, and around 18% in 2023). In addition, many inter-institutional partnerships are opting to improve the basic support level for pupils (Inspectorate of Education, 2022e), with an increasing percentage in 2023. It is not known what these spending targets mean in specific terms for the options and opportunities for pupils. It is therefore essential that inter-institutional partnerships have full oversight of the spending of these resources (and whether this is done in accordance with spending objectives), verify what results have been achieved and then account for these properly.

Number of school governors receiving excessive remuneration has fallen • The Standards for Remuneration Act (WNT) took effect on 1 January 2013. This legislation specifies the maximum levels of remuneration and severance pay for senior officials at institutions with a public function and/or which receive public funding. It aimed to limit the remuneration for senior officials in the public and semi-public sector to a socially acceptable level. The Inspectorate of Education investigates violations when these are reported by institutional auditors, when signals are received from other parties or when the annual accountability report on remuneration and severance pay indicates that this is required. There were fewer violations of this legislation in 2020 than in the previous year across all sectors. The fall was particularly noticeable in MBO, where the number of school governors who were paid above the applicable maximum decreased from 20.6 percent in 2019 to 7.7 percent in 2020.

Increased number of accountant's reviews not satisfactory • The financial accounts provided by school governing boards are checked every year by an accountant. The accountant checks whether the school governing boards have complied with the requirements set for annual reports, financial lawfulness and funding

Table 1 Number of school governors receiving amounts above the applicable maximum (possibly due to transitional arrangements)

	% of school governors above relevant maximum 2019	% of school governors above relevant maximum 2020	Total 2019	Total 2020
Primary education	3.3%	3.4%	41	38
Secondary education	7.3%	7.3%	34	29
MBO	20.6%	7.7%	28	11
HBO	11.5%	9.5%	10	8
University	33.9%	20.4%	19	11
Inter-institutional partnerships	1.2%	0%	2	0
Total	**not analysed**	**5.2**	**134**	**97**

Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022e)

information. The Inspectorate carries out reviews for a random sample of these accountants to determine whether the checks they have carried out meet the relevant requirements. We thereby indirectly determine whether governing boards are complying with the requirements set. In 2021, we conducted 72 reviews relating to 2020 annual accounts, lawfulness and data on public funds. Of those 72 reviews, 9 (12.5 percent) were found to be unsatisfactory. That is an increase compared to the previous year (6.7 percent), and the year before that (10.8 percent).
There is no unequivocal explanation for this year's increase. It may in part have been caused by the methodology used, which does not always provide easy comparability due to the changing sample that is used over the years. For example, last year six small firms (with fewer than 10 assignments in the education sector) were involved, while this year there were 13 different small firms.
It is known from past experience that maintaining the required level of expertise is a major challenge for firms of this size. This seems to be the reason why several firms are unwilling or unable to continue providing services to the education sector. Employee turnover seems to have played a role in the lack of sufficient capacity at a number of larger firms, possibly due to the effects of the pandemic. This could give rise to (temporary) problems in both capacity and expertise at accountancy firms. We note that smaller school governing boards in particular are having (or will have) difficulty finding an accountant.

Buildings

Quality of school buildings falls short • The quality of school buildings in primary, secondary and special education falls below societal expectations. There are many old and outdated buildings and some school buildings do not meet statutory requirements (Government Finance Inspectorate, 2021). This concerns current statutory requirements in relation to ventilation, health and safety regulations and accessibility, but also future statutory requirements in the area of sustainability which have already been announced (Government Finance Inspectorate, 2021).

Too little investment in buildings for education • McKinsey (2020) argues that general underinvestment in buildings for education is leading to poorer conditions for education, and cites this underinvestment – along with the shortage of teachers and growing inequality of opportunity – as one of the three national challenges that are continuing to undermine the achievement of learning outcomes in the Dutch education system. School governing boards in primary and secondary education spend more on material upkeep than the amount they receive for this in the lump sum grant (Netherlands Court of Audit, 2013, 2014; Berenschot, 2017). The Court of Audit also concludes that the standard amounts used by municipalities for the construction of new schools is insufficient for the construction of a primary school that meets the statutory requirements (Netherlands Court of Audit, 2016).

Ventilation in schools is inadequate • Around a quarter of schools in primary and secondary education do not meet the minimum requirements concerning ventilation: the CO_2 concentration in these buildings was too high when measurements were being taken (Ruimte-OK, 2021). This could be an underestimate, however, because the study was conducted during a period of relatively warm weather, when classrooms could be ventilated by opening windows without reducing the temperature in the room. Ventilation is not a new problem. The Health Council stated in 2010, for example, that CO_2 concentrations in school classrooms were too high and that schools should improve their ventilation systems (Health Council of the Netherlands, 2010). TNO (the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research) showed in 2007 that Dutch pupils perform better in well-ventilated classrooms (TNO, 2007). International research also shows that investing in ventilation in schools improves pupils' academic performance (Stafford, 2015). The covid pandemic has shown the importance of good ventilation even more clearly. Now that it seems increasingly likely that the coronavirus is here to stay (Philips, 2021), it is important to invest in good ventilation, partly to ensure that pupils are not sitting in the cold in wintertime. In the autumn of 2020, the government made €360 million available to improve ventilation in schools. Although this funding is helping a significant number of schools to improve ventilation, it is not sufficient to improve ventilation in all Dutch schools (Ruimte-OK, 2021).

More schools that meet ventilation standards in deprived areas • Newer schools are more likely to meet ventilation standards than older schools (Ruimte-OK, 2021). There are no differences in school weighting between primary schools that meet and do not meet the ventilation standards. Those primary schools which meet the ventilation standards have slightly more pupils with a non-Western migration background (17.8 percent) than the schools that do not meet the ventilation standards (15.4 percent), on average. There is a similar picture of secondary education, where schools that meet the ventilation standards serve more pupils from areas with multiple deprivation-related problems (21.2 percent) and more pupils with a non-Western migration background (also 21.2 percent) than schools which do not meet the ventilation standards (15.6 and 16.9 percent) (Inspectorate of Education, 2022g). This indicates that

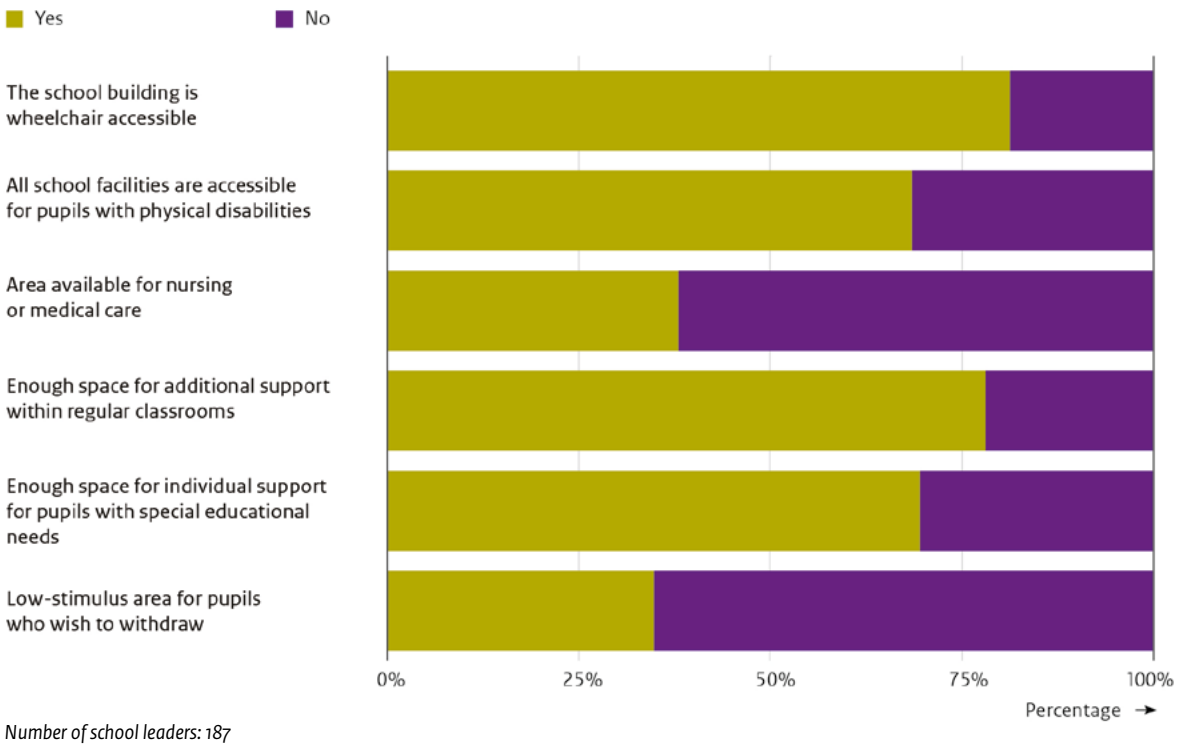
school buildings are not currently exacerbating inequality of opportunity between different groups of pupils.

Poor air quality has a negative effect on learning outcomes • A pleasant interior climate is about more than just ventilation; temperature, particulate matter, sound and lighting are also important factors (Government Finance Inspectorate, 2021). Eichholtz et al. (2018) show that the interior climate in Dutch schools varies between classes and throughout the day. We know from international research that pupils perform lower when there are high levels of particulate matter in the air (Ebenstein et al., 2016) and when their school is located close to sources of pollution (Persico & Venator, 2021). Pupils are also absent from school more often when there is more carbon monoxide in the air (Currie et al., 2009). The effects found in these studies cannot be explained by demographic differences between neighbourhoods, for example. Of course, poor air quality also has an adverse effect on the staff who work inside the affected school buildings.

High temperatures adversely affect learning outcomes • The temperature in school buildings is also important. Various international studies have shown that pupils perform lower when there are more hot school days, and that students perform lower when they have to take exams on hot days (Park, 2020). It is likely that this is caused by the heat, and the effect of heat is mitigated by the presence of air conditioning in the school (Park et al., 2020). In the Netherlands, too, the outside temperature affects pupils' performance. Pupils in secondary education appear to perform lower in final exams that are taken on warmer days: on hot days, pupils achieve an exam score that is on average 0.034 points lower than on days with normal temperatures (Inspectorate of Education, 2022g). The magnitude of this effect is slightly more than half the average effect of evidence-based interventions in mathematics or reading in secondary education (Kraft, 2020). Because climate models predict that the Netherlands will have to deal with more frequent hot summers in the years to come (KNMI, 2015), the temperature in school buildings, both during the exam period and at other times, is part of ensuring a pleasant interior climate.

Too many school buildings are inaccessible to pupils with a physical disability • Among school leaders in primary education, 81 percent indicate that their school building is wheelchair accessible, even though the general accessibility benchmark stipulates that all school buildings must be accessible for people with a disability. In fact, only 69 percent of school buildings allow full access to all facilities for pupils with a physical disability. Facilities for providing treatment or medical care are available at 38 percent of schools, while only 35 percent of

Figure 19 Accessibility and facilities for pupils with special educational needs in primary school buildings



Number of school leaders: 187

Source: (Inspectorate of Education, 2022g)

schools have facilities for pupils who wish to withdraw to a low-stimulus environment (Inspectorate of Education, 2022i).

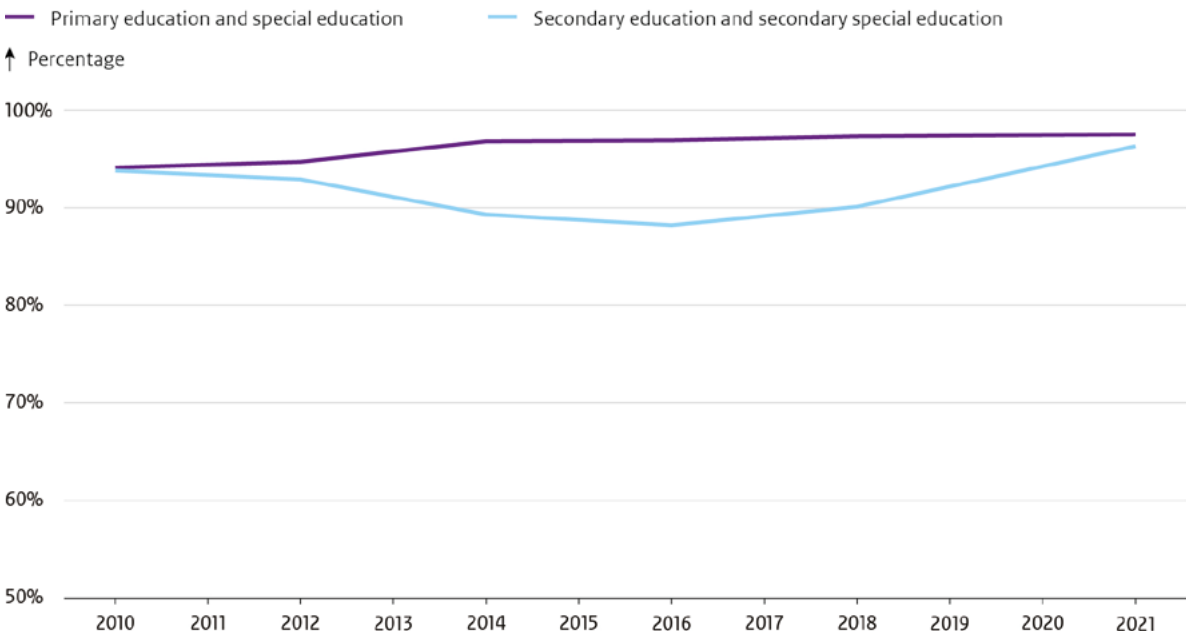
Space for carrying out support for pupils with special educational needs under pressure • Among school leaders in primary education, 78 percent indicate that there is enough space in the school building for the current number of pupils with special educational needs to allow individual support by teaching assistants within regular classes. Seventy percent of school leaders indicate that the building has enough space for the individual support of pupils with special educational needs. If the number of pupils with special educational needs were to increase, 52 percent of school leaders estimate that there would be enough space for individual support within regular classes, and 45 percent that there would be enough space in the building for individual support. Around half of school leaders in primary education (45 percent) indicate that they are satisfied with the extent to which their school building is equipped to teach pupils with special educational needs. One third of school leaders indicated that they were unsatisfied, while the rest were neutral on this point (Inspectorate of Education, 2022i). In order to increasingly make inclusive education possible, steps are therefore also needed in the school buildings.

Safety and Security

Most pupils feel safe at school • The vast majority of pupils feel safe at school (van den Broek et al., 2022). However, this is not true for 2 percent of pupils in primary and secondary education. In primary and secondary schools, 3 and 5 percent of pupils, respectively, indicate that they are bullied often or very often, and 8 and 7 percent, respectively, say that this happens occasionally. This concerns over 250,000 pupils, and can have serious and long-term effects on those concerned. In HBO and university education, 94 percent indicate that they have never encountered transgressive behaviour. When students are asked about the image they have of their own institution, however, 8 percent of students reported having witnessed bullying or social exclusion within their educational programme and about 10 percent indicate that they have witnessed discrimination (Inspectorate of Education, 2022a). Around 85 percent of students indicate that they feel safe enough to be themselves, while about 4 percent do not (Inspectorate of Education, 2022f). Unsafe situations can also arise during remote teaching and learning.

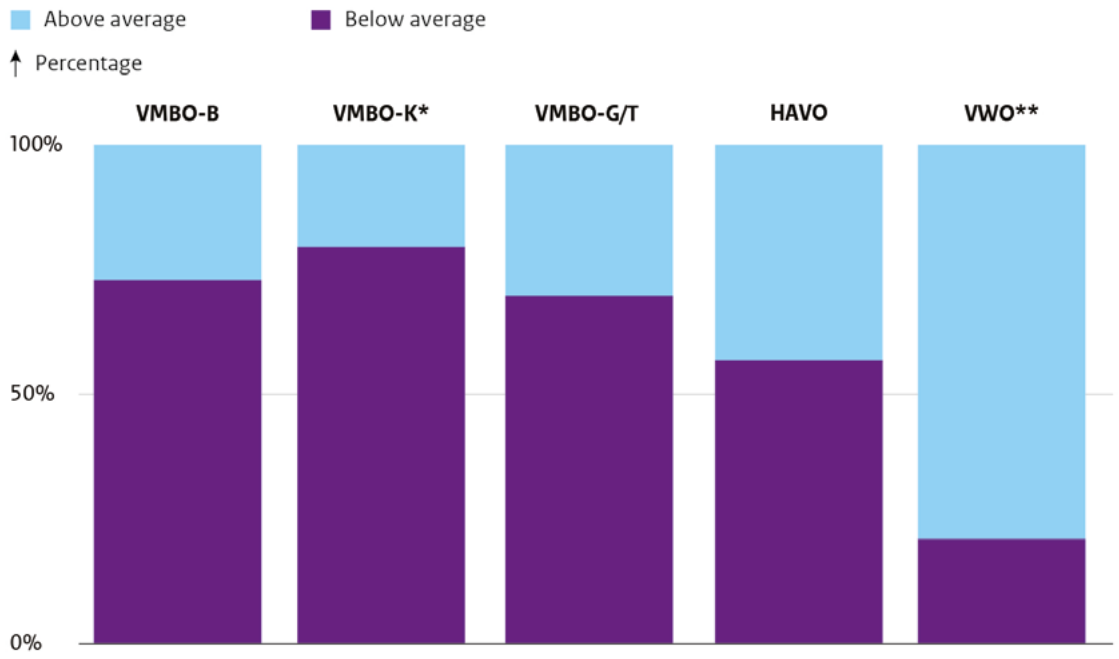
Reports to confidential inspectors more likely to concern transgressive behaviour by people in positions of responsibility • In the 2020-21 school year, approximately 1,300 reports were made to confidential inspectors. These mainly related to psychological and physical violence and to a lesser extent to sexual

Figure 20 The percentage of pupils who indicate that they feel safe at school in primary and secondary education since 2010.



Source: (van den Broek et al., 2022)

Figure 21 Percentage of departments where pupils report above-average or below-average well-being, in each level of education



Based on social safety monitor data from 904 secondary education departments. Wellbeing is rated on a scale of 1 to 10. In order to be able to analyse the data from different monitoring instruments together, the scores for each instrument have been categorized as above or below average
Source: TR safety monitor

intimidation and sexual abuse. The number of reports in the latter two categories has risen in recent years. It is noteworthy that reports of transgressive behaviour increasingly involve people in a position of responsibility. It is also notable that the number of reports from young pupils (under the age of 13) is rising, especially with respect to physical violence and discrimination. In higher education, the number of reports is limited (28 reports) compared to the other sectors of education, however, this has increased compared to previous years.

Differences in wellbeing of pupils between schools • Pupils in schools in highly urban areas, schools in primary education with a high school weighting, schools in secondary education with a high percentage of pupils from areas with multiple deprivation-related problems, and schools with more pupils with a non-Western migration background are all more likely to experience lower wellbeing and lower social safety. This is evident from the social safety monitor that pupils take part in every year. Pupils in VWO departments score relatively high, while pupils in VMBO departments often score lower on wellbeing and social safety. It is also clear that the percentage of pupils who are excluded or expelled (in secondary education) is highest in schools where pupils experience lower levels of wellbeing and social safety. Final test scores (in primary education) are higher in schools where pupils experience higher levels of wellbeing and social safety (Inspectorate of Education, 2022i).

Monitoring social safety is important for several reasons • Schools' statutory duty of care requires them to evaluate perceived social safety among their pupils. Data on the perceived safety of pupils provides information about the extent to which schools are providing a safe pedagogical climate for all pupils, the extent to which policy measures taken are effective, and whether improvement is needed. Annual monitoring by the school is therefore an important requirement for fulfilling the duty of care and provides information on pupils' perceived safety.

Monitoring requires attention • Since the introduction of the statutory duty of care, the number of schools that make monitoring data available to the Inspectorate has – following a relatively long implementation period – finally increased significantly from 20 and 30 percent in primary and secondary education respectively in 2016-17, to 80 and 84 percent three years later. The sharp drop in the numbers of schools with monitoring information in the 2019-20 school year was also due to the effects of the

pandemic, which made it difficult for many schools to gather this information. Although the numbers increased again in the 2020-21 school year (73 and 60 percent in primary and secondary education, respectively), these are still far below what is required. Although the Inspectorate understands the difficult circumstances that some schools face, it underlines the importance of achieving a fuller understanding of perceived social safety among pupils, and also holds schools to account in this regard.

Limited use of data from the safety monitor survey to improve safety policy • Accurate information on perceived social safety among pupils and students is essential, not least because it is necessary to improve safety policy. However, even those schools that do monitor safety still make limited use of the data obtained (Wartenbergh-Cras et al., 2021). Another point that requires attention is the still limited use of the data from monitoring to make actual improvements in safety policy (Wartenbergh-Cras et al., 2021). Systematic use and targeted analysis show opportunities to make improvements, and can provide information on specific risks, even in schools that are safe for the majority of pupils.

Digitization poses challenges in the field of cybersecurity • In recent years, several hacks have occurred in the computer networks of secondary vocational and higher education institutions. Such events can have major consequences at the individual level or for the education system as a whole. They could bring education to a temporary halt, for example, or result in privacy-sensitive data about students or teachers being made public. Our research into cyber security in higher education shows that at successful institutions, cyber security is part of the governing board's risk management activities (Inspectorate of Education, 2021b). This also means that governing boards need to be discussing this subject and trying to raise awareness about the need for cybersecurity throughout the organization.

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Abbreviations

H

HBO	Higher professional education

M

MBO	Higher vocational education

P

PO	Primary education
PRO	Practical education

V

V(S)O	Secondary (special) education
VAVO	General secondary education for adults
VMBO	Lower vocational education
VO	Secondary education

W

WO	Higher education

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