



Education Inspectorate
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

INSPECTION FRAMEWORK SECONDARY EDUCATION

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1 INTRODUCTION

This 2017 Inspection Framework, issued by the Netherlands Inspectorate of Education, describes the inspection regime for Dutch secondary education, including the Inspectorate's assessment framework and working methods. This introduction first outlines the legislative framework for that regime, then its scope and finally provides a brief reader's guide to the rest of this document.

1.1 Legislative framework for the inspection of primary education

The basic foundation for the schools inspection regime is provided by the 2002 Education Regulation Act (Wet op het onderwijstoezicht, WOT). It entrusts that regime to the Inspectorate of Education (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, hereafter "the Inspectorate"), charging it with the task of assessing and promoting quality of educational provision, including that of teaching personnel, at institutions governed by the following statutes.

- The Secondary Education Act (Wet op het voortgezet onderwijs, WVO).
- The Recognized Educational Institutions Act (Wet op de erkende onderwijsinstellingen, WEO).
- The education laws of Bonaire, Sint-Eustatius and Saba (the Dutch "special municipalities" in the Caribbean).
- The 1969 School Attendance Act (Leerplichtwet).
- The School Councils Act (Wet medezeggenschap op scholen, WMS).
- The Miscellaneous Education, Culture and Science Subsidies Act (Wet overige OCW-subsidies).
- The Educational Experimentation Act (Experimentenwet Onderwijs).

The Inspection Framework covers all institutions providing education under the above legislation. That is: secondary schools, technical schools, educational facilities for recent immigrants, providers of Dutch education abroad and in the Caribbean "special municipalities", remedial education centres and non-maintained schools. The Inspectorate also regulates tailored education partnerships. Separate inspection frameworks have been compiled for regulation of the non-maintained sector and providers of Dutch education abroad.

1.2 Statutory requirements and self-defined quality factors

The WOT is due to be amended with effect from 1 July 2017¹. For the Inspectorate, one of the main changes is that a distinction will now be drawn between statutory requirements and quality factors defined by schools themselves or their governing bodies. Covering quality of educational provision and financial management, statutory requirements are general, objectifiable quality standards, are defined in law as far as possible and are sufficiently clear-cut that they guarantee freedom of direction and structure. We also use the term "basic quality" to encapsulate them.

¹ This Inspection Framework has been compiled based on the legislation expected to be in force on 1 August 2017. Proposed amendments to sectoral education acts and other statutes which have yet to complete their passage through Parliament are cited in square brackets: [---]. As and where necessary, these references will be updated in the definitive version of this document. Because the amendments to the WOT itself have already been adopted, they are not shown in square brackets.

A school which fails to meet the statutory requirements is providing education of inadequate quality, or has inadequate financial management. This can result in sanctions being imposed on it – and, as a last resort, intervention by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. As part of its remit to guarantee the basic quality of educational provision in the Netherlands, the Inspectorate is responsible for ensuring that schools' comply with the statutory requirements set out in the respective sectoral education acts.

Self-defined quality factors pertain to the objectives and ambitions a school or a governing body sets itself, above and beyond the basic quality level. Under its quality-promotion remit, the Inspectorate considers how these factors contribute to better quality of educational provision in a continuous and sustainable manner, and it discusses their effect with schools and governing bodies. In its reports, the Inspectorate draws a clear distinction between judgements related to statutory requirements and assessments of self-defined quality factors.

1.3 Subjects of regulation and inspection

The subjects of legal regulation by the Inspectorate are the forms of education provided by a school – a distinct institution with its own number in the Basic Register of Educational Institutions (Basisregister Instellingen, BRIN) – and school governing bodies, which may be responsible for a number of different schools. Any interventions of a statutory nature pertain to one or other of these levels. A subject of inspection is anything examined by the Inspectorate with a view to forming a judgement or an assessment of a school or its governance.

1.4 Effectiveness and evaluation

The Inspection Framework applies to all institutions, maintained and otherwise, providing education under the statutes listed in 1.1. That is: secondary schools, technical schools, educational facilities for recent immigrants, providers of Dutch education abroad and in the Caribbean "special municipalities", remedial education centres and non-maintained schools.

The framework takes effect on 1 August 2017. Up until that date, ongoing interventions and agreements made under the pre-existing regulatory frameworks remain in force. [For details of transitional arrangements in the run-up to the introduction of the new regime, see the Inspectorate's website.]

In accordance with the provisions of the WOT, the Inspectorate has consulted with all relevant parties concerning the new Inspection Framework. In refining the statutory requirements for inclusion in the assessment framework it will be applying in practice, the Inspectorate believes it has adopted a reasonable interpretation of the wording of the law. That interpretation has been arrived at with the consent of the education sector.

A full evaluation of the workings and effects of the new Inspection Framework will be conducted by 1 January 2022 at the latest, by which time the first quadrennial cycle of inspections will have been completed.

The new framework remains subject to change at any time, either in whole or part, as a result of experiences with its use or wider political, societal or educational developments.

1.5 Document structure and guide for readers

This document provides a full description of the new Inspection Framework, including the work of the Inspectorate and its assessment framework. The Inspectorate's basic approach and the fundamental principles behind it are set out in chapter 2. The assessment framework can be found in chapter 3 and the benchmarking and judgement protocols in chapter 4. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 describe the Inspectorate's working methods when inspecting schools and their governing bodies. Chapter 8 explains how the results of the quadrennial inspections are reported and otherwise communicated by the Inspectorate, whilst chapter 9 covers follow-up activities, in particular possible remedial and restorative interventions and sanctions. In chapter 10 we explain how we organize systemic inspections. Finally, chapter 11 looks at special cases: educational facilities subject to specific legislation and hence a modified assessment framework (see also 1.1). To ensure that the picture is complete, the full assessment frameworks can be found in the appendices.

2 **BETTER EDUCATION, GOOD GOVERNANCE, APPROPRIATE REGULATION**

The Dutch education sector is performing better all the time. The number of schools judged “Inadequate” is falling and more and more “Weak” or “Very weak” schools are managing to bring the quality of their provision up to an acceptable level and to keep it there. This is good news. But schools which are already performing well also need to seize every opportunity they can to improve. This will benefit their pupils, as well as society at large.

This is where the principle challenge of the next few years lies, for every sector of education. A challenge which demands of governing bodies that they strive to build a culture of quality, where it goes without saying that everyone pursues continual improvement. Even if the basics are sound.

Our activities as an Inspectorate reflect this quest for improvement, in part by helping to ensure that the basic quality of schools and their financial management is in order and remains so, and in part by inspiring governing bodies to make the most of all the potential they have to improve even further. In other words, we have a dual remit: to function as both a guarantor and a promotor of quality.

In this chapter we describe our basic approach to the regulation of education: what we want it to achieve and the fundamental principles behind it.

2.1 **Basic principles and the role of the inspectorate**

“Ownership” of the quality of educational provision rests with schools and their governing bodies, with the latter ultimately responsible for the standard and continuity of the education their pupils receive. For this reason, we as an inspectorate apply a governance-led approach. Given our dual remit as both a guarantor and a promotor of quality, in our assessment framework we draw a clear distinction between basic quality (what the school has to do) and self-defined ambitions (what it wants to do). With these, the starting point is the school plan. We operate transparently, with all quality information in the public domain. At the systemic level, meanwhile, we want to find solutions to problems common to multiple schools and so are quite prepared to set agendas in this respect. One objective of this Inspection Framework is to encourage more self-evaluation and peer evaluation of schools, and so we have tailored our approach accordingly.

More specifically, the framework is intended to support us in the following tasks.

- *Ensuring* that, at the very least, schools meet the basic quality standard.
- *Intervening*, at either school or governance level, to bring failing schools up to that standard as quickly as possible.
- *Encouraging* both schools and governing bodies to formulate their own ambitions and to pursue them actively.
- *Reporting* on the state of education at both institutional and systemic levels.
- *Highlighting* problems in the education system which need to be resolved.
- *Communicating* with stakeholders about inspections and about performance, at both the institutional and the systemic level.

2.2 The inspection regime in brief

This Inspection Framework is constructed around the following fundamental principles.

2.2.1 Basic quality is guaranteed

Society expects its schoolchildren to receive an adequate education. We call this basic quality of educational provision. Its core criterion is that schools and their governing bodies comply with the statutory requirements for that quality and its assurance, as well as their financial management, as set out in the assessment framework.

In upholding this standard under our remit as the guarantor of educational quality, it is important that we properly understand both risks to it at the school level and the financial continuity of governing bodies. We therefore monitor both on a constant basis, conducting a performance analysis at least once a year.

In addition, we undertake quadrennial inspections of all governing bodies and at least some of their schools. This exercise tells us whether the governors are paying sufficient attention to the quality of educational provision and to financial management. If an analysis or inspection reveals that a school is failing to meet the basic quality criteria, we initiate interventions designed to ensure that the governing body corrects the situation within an acceptable period. The same applies to shortcomings at the governance level.

Our annual working plan states which requirements we are currently examining as part of our regime of systemic inspections (see chapter 10).

2.2.2 Improvement is encouraged: self-defined quality factors

We are strict where necessary, but encouraging where possible. When schools and their governing bodies are struggling to meet the basic quality standard, we keep our finger on the pulse. In particular, we check whether there is a culture of improvement: a collective effort not only to bring the quality of educational provision up to an adequate level, but also to keep improving in the long term. If such a culture is present, there is scope for remediation and we do all we can to promote it. This is reflected in our way of working. First, as well as judging a school as "Adequate" – meaning that it fulfils the statutory requirements – we can also rate it "Good". This assessment takes into account quality factors defined by the institution itself, above and beyond those enshrined in law. On the other side of the coin, failure to achieve self-defined goals results not in the judgement "Inadequate" but in the assessment "Could do better". In this way we hold up a mirror, in which the school and its governing body see a reflection of its progress towards its own objectives. This encourages them to pursue improvements effectively, but in their own way and by their own means.

Our role as a promotor of quality is also noticeable in the style of our interactions with schools and their governors. We allow them to present their own visions and ambitions, and to explain how they are translating these into practice in the classroom. The dialogue thus centres on their self-defined quality factors (a number of possible topics in this respect can be found in the assessment framework). Once our inspection is over, we organize so-called feedback meetings. These help schools and governors understand how we arrived at our conclusions in their particular case,

and provide them with specific pointers for improvement. This role is reflected in our reports, too. If the statutory requirements are not being met in any way, we of course state that. But the same also goes for any good practices we come across. This ensures that we present a balanced picture of a school's quality, as found in our inspection.

Excellent schools

A school can also be rated as "Excellent". Such schools stand out from those classified as "Good" because they shine in some specific area, such as a particularly interesting and motivational curriculum or a distinctive approach to a particular group of pupils. Excellent schools deserve as much scope as possible to achieve their own vision and ambitions. When a school is being considered for this rating, the final decision on it is taken by an independent assessment panel².

2.2.3 Regulation is straightforward and bespoke

Schools and their governing bodies organize their educational provision in the way they think best serves their pupil population by ensuring its continuing intellectual development. As an inspectorate, we are observing increasing diversity in didactic and organizational approaches to schooling, including more and more experimental forms, as well as a rise in the number of combined governing bodies (responsible for schools of more than one type). For this reason, we have compiled common and largely identical assessment frameworks for the primary (PO), secondary (SO), special education (SO/VSO) and vocational further education (MBO) sectors, applicable to the very wide range of institutions we find ourselves dealing with in practice. This enables us to keep their regulation straightforward, even when the governing body is subject to multiple sectoral statutes. Our inspections are organized in such a way that they produce meaningful outcomes, and we structure our activities accordingly.

The bespoke approach we aspire to is not only about tailoring our work to the organization of educational provision, but also about the governing body's accountability for its quality. In this respect, our primary source is the school plan.

2.2.4 Responsibility rests with the governing body

A school's governing body is responsible for the quality and continuity of the education it provides. Every such body has its own process for maintaining and improving that provision, which we take as our starting point in regulating it.

In addition to our annual performance analysis, once every four years we conduct an inspection of the governing body to examine its quality assurance and financial management. First and foremost, we look at whether it has a good overview of the quality of the education it is providing, is implementing any necessary improvements and has its finances in order. This quadrennial inspection process includes so-called verification inspections of selected schools, to check educational quality and financial management at that level. We also inspect schools identified as "risk-affected" and, at the request of the governing body, those it believes rate as "good" (see 5.2.4).

² For more information about the Excellent Schools Procedure, see the Inspectorate's website.

The school plans of the establishments to be inspected should provide us with a description of their educational policy, their staffing policy and their quality assurance system. We conduct our inspections with this information in mind. As well as judging whether the school plan fulfils the statutory requirements, we may also report our findings concerning its implementation, particularly in respect of objectives the school has set itself.

The better the guidance and guarantee processes put in place by schools and their governing bodies, the more reliable the information they provide about the quality of their education is likely to be, and the better the education itself will be. When a school is governed well, society can be assured that it is upholding quality. In such cases, we put greater trust in schools and give them more freedom of movement. But in cases where the basic quality standard is not being met and the governing body appears incapable of rectifying the situation, we adjust our regulatory regime accordingly. We describe this approach as "appropriate regulation": a lighter touch where possible, a heavier one where necessary.

3 THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

In this chapter we describe the assessment framework. After a summary of the statutory tasks of secondary education (3.1), we explain the structure of the framework (3.2). We then present the complete assessment framework for the secondary education sector (3.3), before ending with details of additional statutory requirements (3.4).

3.1 Statutory tasks of secondary education

The Secondary Education Act (Wet op het voortgezet onderwijs, WVO) imposes a number of obligations on a school's governing body. In particular, it must organize its educational provision to comply with defined core objectives and reference standards (Section 11c-1, WVO, and also Sections 2 and 3, WPO Order on Reference Standards for Dutch Language and Numeracy). It must also adopt a structural and recognizable approach to combating educational deficiencies, especially in command of the Dutch language (Section 6c, WVO), and to pursuing minimum educational outcomes in core subjects (Section 23a-1, WVO).

In addition, the governing body must organize its educational provision in such a way that pupils can undergo an unimpeded process of intellectual development, with teaching adapted to suit their progress (Section 2-2, WVO), and it must ensure their social, psychological and physical safety (Section 3c, WVO). To maintain quality of provision, it has to operate a system of quality assurance (Sections 23a and 24-4, WVO) and be accountable to its stakeholders: parents, staff representative bodies, the internal regulator and the government (Sections 24a, 24d, 24e, 24e-1 and 103, WVO, as well as the WMS).

Finally, the governing body must spend its state maintenance funding effectively and lawfully (Section 99, WVO, and also Section 21, WVO Maintenance Funding Order).

3.2 Structure of the assessment framework

The assessment framework covers five quality areas: (i) educational process; (ii) school climate; (iii) learning outcomes; (iv) quality assurance and ambition; and (v) financial management. This breakdown allows us to answer three fundamental questions about the schooling pupils are receiving: (a) are they learning enough (learning outcomes)?; (b) are they being taught well (educational process)?; and (c) are they safe (school climate)? Together, our findings in these three areas reveal the overall standard of education the school is providing in the classroom. The other two areas, quality assurance (coupled with ambition) and financial management, reflect quality of educational provision – by which we mean the school's aggregate performance in these domains – and its continuity. We define the overall quality of a school's educational provision as the aggregate of its performance in all these areas.

Each standard within the quality domain is operationalized, based on the relevant statutory requirements. But there is also room for dialogue about those quality factors displayed or aspired to by the governing body, which we classify using a non-exhaustive list of topics. Moreover, we consider these self-defined factors in judging whether a school is rated as "Good" (see chapter 4). In addition, we check

whether the school is achieving its own ambitions and, by empirical standards, delivering good education.

Specific versions of the assessment framework

Specific legislation and regulations pertaining to other forms of educational provision listed in 1.1, aside from primary education, are translated into separate assessment frameworks. A list of these, together with the relevant statutory provisions, is provided in chapter 11. To ensure that the picture is complete, the full frameworks can be found in the appendices.

The structure of the assessment framework for primary education is as follows ³.

QUALITY AREAS AND STANDARDS

OP	EDUCATIONAL PROCESS
OP1	Provision
OP2	Development perspectives and supervision
OP3	Didactics
OP4	Additional support
OP5	Learning time
OP6	Cooperation
OP7	Practical education and work placement
OP8	Testing and progression
SK	SCHOOL CLIMATE
SK1	Safety
SK2	Teaching climate
OR	LEARNING OUTCOMES
OR1	Results
OR2	Social abilities
OR3	Subsequent achievement
KA	QUALITY ASSURANCE AND AMBITION
KA1	Quality assurance
KA2	Quality culture
KA3	Accountability and dialogue
FB	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
FB1	Continuity
FB2	Efficiency
FB3	Legitimacy

³ As far as possible, the assessment frameworks for all sectors are identical. The same two-letter codes for the quality areas are used in all of them. The numbering schemes for the standards do not always match, however, since the sectors differ in their manner of compliance in each quality area and so the number of applicable standards in an area may also differ between them.

3.3 Quality areas and standards

Each quality area in the assessment framework for primary education comprises a number of standards, with nineteen in total. In the descriptions of these below, the red fields indicate what we mean by basic quality: what the school and its governing body must achieve. In the green fields we mention a number of possible topics for the school's own ambitions and objectives: what it and its governing body might want to achieve. Finally, in order to substantiate our interpretation of the basic quality criterion, we summarize the statutory requirements applicable to the standard in question.

Educational process

EDUCATIONAL PROCESS (OP)

OP1. Provision

The education provided prepares pupils for their subsequent education and for society.

Basic quality

The school provides a broad education based on the core objectives, in line with the reference standards for literacy and numeracy. This provision reflects examination syllabi, prepares pupils adequately for the next phase of their education and incorporates career learning.

Pupils are growing up in a pluriform society. The school therefore encourages active citizenship and social integration, as well as knowledge of and interaction with peers from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds. In particular, it fosters the basic values of a democratic society.

Educational provision is tailored to pupils' abilities and should be broadened and supplemented during pupils' school career in order to facilitate their unimpeded development. For example, the school provides additional language support for those with a deficiency in this area.

Moreover, the unfolding curriculum is taught in a balanced and coherent manner. The school describes its educational provision and objectives in the school plan.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- talent development;
- future-oriented provision;
- provision with a focus on acquiring learning strategies;
- an attractive, challenging learning environment.

Summary of statutory requirements

The law requires the school to provide a coherent curriculum during the foundation phase, working towards the core objectives and compliant with the reference standards for literacy and numeracy (Section 11c-1, WVO, and Sections 2 and 3, WVO Order on Reference Standards for Dutch Language and Numeracy). The school must also prepare pupils to progress into the next phase of their education (Sections 7-10, WVO), with career learning playing a central role in the examination syllabus (Syllabus Regulations for Secondary Education). According to the regulations, "The candidate [must be] in a position to shape their own career development. They do that by reflecting on their own actions and experiences as orientation for their future education, training, job or career."

The school's provision also fosters active citizenship and social integration, as well as

knowing and learning about peers from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds (Section 17, WVO).

The curriculum should be tailored to pupils' different learning needs (Section 2-2, WVO), meaning that the school's educational provision should address deficiencies of all kinds, and in particular insufficient command of the Dutch language, in an evident and structured manner (Section 6c, WVO).

For pupils' progress to be unimpeded, it is essential that the school present curricula in a logical fashion, progressively pursuing standards appropriate to the pupil's age at all times.

The school plan should detail how it intends to fulfil its statutory tasks in respect of starting positions, objectives and the curriculum (Section 24-2a, WVO), including its educational targets and those concerning the structure of its provision.

OP2. Development perspectives and supervision

The school monitors its pupils' development effectively enough that they are able to progress unimpeded.

Basic quality

From the moment pupils enter the school, it systematically collects information about their knowledge and skills. This is compared with the benchmarks for their expected progress, thus allowing the school to tailor its provision to the learning needs of groups and individuals alike.

If pupils do not appear to be benefiting sufficiently from their education, the school analyses where their development is stagnating and why that might be. It then decides how to tackle any deficiencies found.

Thus, pupils receive the supervision they need in order to progress through the curriculum as smoothly as possible. Where necessary, this should include extracurricular support programmes and individual supervision. For pupils with educational deficiencies, the provision is organized in such a way that these are addressed in a structural and recognizable manner.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- externally regulated examinations in subjects relevant to further progress and reference standards;
- pupil involvement in setting goals.

Summary of statutory requirements

The law requires that pupils' development be monitored in a reliable manner (Section 2-2, WVO). This ensures that the school really is able to foster unimpeded progress and that its educational provision suits different pupils' learning needs, not least if monitoring reveals that their development is stagnating. In such cases, the school looks for possible reasons so that it can adjust its teaching accordingly (Sections 2-2 and 6c, WVO).

The law further states (Section 6c, WVO) that, where educational deficiencies are identified, the school works to combat them in a structural and recognizable manner. This implies that the school knows who is affected by such deficiencies and what they entail, and organizes additional activities to tackle them. The official explanatory note to Section 6c, WVO, states, "Educational provision is organized in such a way that it adopts a structural and recognizable approach to combating educational deficiencies, especially in command of the Dutch language." "Structural" here means that efforts to overcome deficiencies are embedded in the school's provision, whilst "recognizable" means that these efforts are clearly discernible in its classroom practice. Educational deficiencies are not confined to language alone, so the school must also consider those affecting pupils in other subjects.

Finally, the school plan describes how it tailors its provision to pupils' progress (Section 24-4a, WVO).

OP3. Didactics

The teachers' didactic activities enable pupils to learn and develop.

Basic quality

The teachers plan and structure their activities using the information available to them about their pupils. They ensure that the didactic level of their lessons is suited to pupils' intended learning outcomes. The syllabus is structured logically, both within individual lessons and over series of lessons.

The teachers create a learning climate in which pupils are active and engaged. With the help of appropriate assignments and clear explanations, they are able to transfer knowledge effectively to each pupil. They tailor instructions, assignments, classroom time and supervision to the needs of groups and individual pupils alike, in such a way that – depending on those needs – these activities are both supportive and challenging.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- high pupil expectations;
- feedback to pupils;
- evidence-based working by teachers;
- pupils reflect on their own learning;
- evaluation of set goals with pupils;
- modern learning methods.

Summary of statutory requirements

The school has set out its teaching and didactic policy in the school plan (Sections 24-2 and 24-3, WVO) and implementation of that policy is evident in teachers' day-to-day work.

The law requires that pupils receive an education tailored to their personal development process (Section 2-2, WVO). To achieve this so-called "unimpeded development", it is essential that the school's didactic approach correspond with the pupil's current developmental level. From this requirement, it follows that a number of conditions must be met:

- the learning climate enables the acquisition of knowledge;
- explanations are clear;
- lessons are properly structured; and,
- teaching is adapted to the pupil's level and tailored to their target learning outcome.

The school's didactic quality is determined by factors including its ability to tailor its teaching to its pupils: teachers must be able to bring about an effective learning process in all pupils, from those with educational deficiencies to those in need of additional challenges.

OP4. Additional support

Pupils who need it receive additional teaching, support and supervision.

Basic quality

The school offers those pupils at a different stage of development from the majority of their peers an adapted curriculum, support and/or supervision appropriate to their particular educational needs and designed to ensure their unimpeded development. The school regularly evaluates the effectiveness of this provision, and if necessary adjusts its

interventions.

The school has, in the form of a support profile, set out its vision of these activities and described the facilities it is able to offer over and above the level of basic support provided by the regional alliance for tailored education. For those pupils requiring additional support, the school has compiled a development plan defining how its provision is tailored to their needs.

Summary of statutory requirements

The school's support profile describes the facilities in place for pupils in need of additional support (Section 1, WVO). This profile is established at least once every four years, by the competent authority (Section 17-7, WVO). The school plan sets out how the support profile is incorporated into the school's overall educational policy (Section 24-2, WVO). Once this has been established, the competent authority consults parents with a view to reaching agreement on whether their child needs additional support (Section 26-1, WVO). It is a statutory requirement that development plans be compiled for the pupils concerned and that these be evaluated together with their parents at least once a year (Section 26-3, WVO). Such a plan includes information about the additional support the pupil is to receive, the type of qualification they are expected to obtain at the end of their secondary-school career and both the hindering factors and any favourable ones affecting their education (Section 26-5, WVO, and Section 15c, WVO Educational Organization Order).

OP5. Learning time

Pupils are given sufficient time to master what they are being taught.

Basic quality

The school provides a curriculum compliant with the statutory requirements for learning times. It divides classroom time between subjects in such a way that pupils are able to master the contents of the statutory curriculum. Moreover, teachers use that time effectively. The school has a policy to deal with missed lessons and pupil absences.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- rules for the use of learning time;
- compliance with these rules;
- agreements in respect of special arrangements.

Summary of statutory requirements

Pupils must be given sufficient time to learn the subject matter they are being taught. The law requires that each pupil in vocational secondary education (VMBO) receive at least 3700 hours of schooling. For general secondary education (HAVO) that figure is 4700 hours and for academic secondary education (VWO) it is 5700 hours. Under certain circumstances, individual exceptions to these norms may be allowed. In the case of technical education, each year pupils must receive 1000 hours of schooling in the form of activities making up part of the educational curriculum (Sections 10f-3a and 6g-2. WVO). Learning time matters. Being given enough time to learn – providing it is spent properly – is essential to a good education (source: explanatory note to parliamentary bill for the modernization and simplification of norms for learning time in secondary education). The first key criterion in this respect is that the time must be devoted to educational and related activities delivered by the responsible education provider, as defined in Section 33, WVO. The second is that it must be properly planned and delivered. The school is

responsible for the design, teaching and evaluation of the curriculum, and hence for the overall learning process and for its pupils' socialization and personal and social development. Thirdly, agreements need to be reached at school level as to what types of activity constitute learning time; in the first instance, these are made by the relevant professionals, but on the following points they require the subsequent approval of the staff representative body (source: explanatory note to parliamentary bill for the modernization and simplification of norms for learning time in secondary education).

- The types of activity scheduled in learning time.
- The school's policy regarding missed lessons.
- Days on which the school does not provide teaching ("non-timetabled days" for pupils).

The law states that a pupil must be able to attend school for at least 189 days a year, although this is reduced to 184 days in years when holiday schedules mean that a week less is available. They also receive less formal schooling in the year of their final examinations: none is required from the start of the first period in which the central examinations are held (Section 6g-1, WVO).

By law, all schools are required to compile and implement a policy to deal with missed lessons and pupil absences (Sections 24-1c and 24-1h, WVO).

OP6. Cooperation

The school works with relevant partners in providing its pupils with their education.

Basic quality

The school works with other providers of secondary and/or special education as part of a regional alliance for tailored education. In the case of pupils in need of additional support, where necessary it acts in consort with other institutions. And it consults effectively with other local schools, and with the local authority, to combat educational deficiencies, to promote social integration and to prevent segregation arising out of enrolment and admission procedures. It also provides the local authority with information about premature school leavers and implements local educational agreements.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- parental involvement;
- cooperation with chain partners.

Summary of statutory requirements

In the case of pupils in need of additional support, the school works with the regional alliance for tailored education – a group of cooperating secondary and special schools – and with partners in the care sector (Sections 17a and 17b, WVO).

The law requires schools to consult on an annual basis amongst themselves and with their local authority to prevent segregation, to promote social integration, to combat educational deficiencies and to implement agreements reached under the local education agenda (Section 118a, WVO). They must also report premature school leavers to the local authority (Sections 28a and 118h, WVO).

OP7. Practical training and work experience

Practical training and work experience are prepared, conducted and supervised effectively.

Basic quality

Work placements make a positive contribution to planned learning activities. A personal placement plan describes the purpose, content, scope and organization of each work placement, and also includes agreements with the pupil about the learning objectives it is intended to fulfil. The school supervises the pupil in choosing and preparing for their

placement and compiles the compulsory placement agreement jointly with the pupil and the host organization. Supervision and assessment are conducted as agreed, with the school monitoring the pupil's performance during the placement and making any adjustments found to be necessary.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- finding an appropriate placement;
- career guidance.

Summary of statutory requirements

A work placement may be organized during the third or fourth year of the basic, practical or mixed stream of vocational secondary schooling (VMBO) and of technical schooling. The law (Sections 31 et seq., WVO Educational Organization Order) states that the purpose, content, scope and organization of this component must be described in a placement plan. Furthermore, the competent authority signs a written agreement with the pupil and the placement provider containing the intended learning objectives of the planned placement. Matters covered by this agreement include the manner of supervision, the nature of learning activities during the placement and who is responsible for their provision. It must also provide for regulation by the Inspectorate of those activities at the host organization.

OP8. Testing and progression

Testing and then guiding pupils into the next phase of their education are conducted with care.

Basic quality

The school has a testing and progression programme and a set of examination regulations, both of which comply with the statutory requirements. These documents explain clearly how examinations are conducted and what sanctions are imposed on pupils who break the rules. They also describe arrangements for resits, what material is examined when, how results are weighted and what exemptions are permissible. Examinations are actually conducted in accordance with the programme and regulations.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- a testing policy, covering such aspects as test matrices and requirements for the organization, conduct and assessment of tests and examinations;
- compliance with and evaluation testing policy.

Summary of statutory requirements

The law requires that school compile both a testing and progression programme and a set of examination regulations and that both be supplied to the Inspectorate and to pupils sitting examinations. It also sets out minimum requirements for the contents of these documents (Section 31, Order on Final Examinations in Secondary Education).

School climate

SCHOOL CLIMATE (SK)

SK1. Safety

The school's leadership and teachers provide pupils with a safe learning environment.

Basic quality

The school assures its pupils' social, psychological and physical safety on and around its premises throughout the school day. Amongst other things, this is evident from the pupils' own feeling of safety and well-being, which is measured by the school at least once a year.

The school operates a safety policy, described in either the school plan or a separate document, designed to prevent, manage, record and evaluate any incidents. Should the findings of its monitoring procedures so dictate, the school takes adequate measures to improve the situation. The school has a contact person for cases of bullying and to coordinate its anti-bullying policy. The school's leadership and teachers make every effort to prevent bullying, aggression and violence in any form, and act quickly and decisively against these phenomena. Verbal and other expressions by both pupils and staff are in line with the basic values of a democratic society.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- social media policy;
- preventive measures;
- coordination with relevant outside actors.

Summary of statutory requirements

The law requires that, at the very least, the school compile and actually implement a safety policy covering social, psychological and physical factors, that this include a cohesive set of measures to prevent and deal with incidents and that it be rooted firmly in the school's educational policy and day-to-day teaching practice (Section 3b, WVO). The official explanatory note to the amendment adding this provision to the statute book states that the minimum requirement for a school to qualify as "safe" is that the psychological, social and physical safety of its pupils are not compromised by the actions of other persons.

The law states that the school must monitor the safety of its pupils on an annual basis, using a tool able to provide a representative and current picture of the situation (Section 3b-1b, WVO). A school can only operate an effective policy in this area if it properly understands both the actual and the perceived safety and well-being of its pupils.

For parents and pupils alike, it is important that there be an accessible point of contact in the event of bullying incidents. For this reason, the law (Section 3b-1c, WVO) requires that every school entrust the following tasks to a nominated person:

- coordinating its anti-bullying policy; and,
- serving as point of contact for bullying-related matter

The school's educational provision must foster active citizenship and social integration (Section 17, WVO). To this end, verbal and other expressions by teachers should reflect the basic values of a democratic society and they should intervene in the event that pupils make statements at odds with those values.

SK2. Teaching climate

The school has a supportive teaching climate.

Basic quality

No statutory requirements.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- codes of conduct for pupils and teachers;
- pupil involvement in creating a positive school climate.
- teachers act as role models;
- practical exercises to help pupils develop social abilities;
- layout of the school premises.

Learning outcomes**LEARNING OUTCOMES (OR)****OR1. Results**

At the very least, the school achieves learning outcomes in line with the prerequisite standards.

Basic quality

The school's learning outcomes in the past three years have corresponded with those expected of it, given the characteristics of the pupil population. In particular, this means that average final examination results and rates of progression into various subsequent forms of education equal or exceed the relevant benchmarks. Moreover, incoming pupils go on to achieve the qualifications envisaged in the recommendation issued at the end of their primary school careers, and their progress is not delayed unduly in the process.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- expectations concerning the cognitive results pupils can achieve, based on their particular characteristics;
- objectives with regards to progression and results in each phase of education;
- objectives for learning gain.

Summary of statutory requirements

The law (Section 23a1, WVO) states that schools must achieve adequate learning outcomes, meaning that average examination results and rates of progress into different subsequent forms of education, as measured over a period of three years, equal or exceed the set standard as established in the Regulations for Secondary Education Learning Outcomes (Regeling leerresultaten VO).

OR2. Social abilities

The school's pupils acquire social abilities at least in line with the defined goals.

Basic quality

No statutory requirements.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this

and is it succeeding?

Possible factors:

- the goals the school aspires to in terms of its pupils' social abilities;
- achieving the goals set.

OR3. Subsequent achievement

Pupils' next destination after leaving the school is known and matches or exceeds expectations.

Basic quality

No statutory requirements.

Self-defined quality factors

What task has the school set itself in its school plan, how is it going about achieving this and is it succeeding?

Quality assurance and ambition

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND AMBITION (KA)

KA1. Quality assurance

The school and its governing body have put in place a system to assure quality and actually use this to improve the quality of their educational provision.

Basic quality

The governing body has provided its schools with a quality assurance system. Described in detail in each establishment's school plan, this allows the governors to monitor and improve the quality of the didactic process and its outcomes.

Both the governing body and the school have a true insight into the quality of their educational provision. Measurable goals have been formulated, and their fulfilment is monitored on a regular basis. The causes of any shortcomings in quality are analysed and improvements, if necessary, are implemented effectively. Proper division of accountability between governors and schools makes it possible to operate a functional quality assurance system.

Self-defined quality factors

Is any additional policy to maintain and improve quality in place, how is it being implemented and is it effective?

Possible factors:

- ambitious goals appropriate to the school's public duty;
- stakeholder and independent expert involvement in evaluations;
- strategic financial planning.

Summary of statutory requirements

The competent authority must ensure the quality of the education provided by a school, by which is meant that the school at least complies with the law and operates the mandatory quality assurance system (Section 23a, WVO).

The quality assurance system is described in the school plan (Section 24-4, WVO). More specifically, the law requires that this system provide for pupils' unimpeded development, enable the school to tailor their progress in this respect and identify where any improvements are needed. These requirements assume that quality is assured in a cyclical, systematic and planned manner, with the intention of maintaining standards achieved. For this, verifiable goals and regular evaluations of progress towards them are needed.

In addition, the statutory requirements imply that the competent authority and the school

need to organize their quality assurance activities in a manner which provides them with a true insight into their own level of quality and into any improvements needed. This means that responsibilities must be divided in such a way that relevant quality information always reaches the right people and that improvements are actually implemented; the arrangements for doing this are described in the management statute (Section 32c, WVO).

KA2. Quality culture

The governing body and its schools have a professional quality culture and operate transparently and conscientiously.

Basic quality

The governing body observes the code of good governance and answers for any deviations from it. This approach results in a transparent and conscientious institutional culture. From their own professional perspective, everyone contributes towards improving the quality of education.

The governing body ensures that all its schools are staffed by qualified personnel and enables employees to maintain their professional status. This includes obtaining the full qualifications required to teach their subject, if they do not already have these.

The school leadership and staff work together to improve their professional standards on an ongoing basis, with teachers taking into account the qualifications and abilities required for their positions as well as the results achieved by their pupils. They are provided with all necessary means to do this, the arrangements in this respect being described clearly in the school plan.

Self-defined quality factors

Is any additional policy concerning professionalization and the culture of quality in place, how is it being implemented and is it effective?

Possible factors:

- clear educational leadership;
- teacher "ownership" of the educational and didactic concept;
- use of the register of qualified teachers;
- a strategic HRM policy.

Summary of statutory requirements

Integrity, care and awareness of the effects of one's actions are all generally accepted basic quality principles associated with professional conduct in education and are therefore reflected in the code of good governance the competent authority is expected to enforce, with any deviations from it being accounted for in the annual report (Section 103-1, WVO).

Compliance with the statutory requirements concerning quality assurance (Sections 23a and 24-4, WVO) requires a collective effort, rooted in professionalism and a culture of improvement on the part of the school community, and hence effective education. This in turn necessitates good educational leadership, effective division of responsibilities, a focus on results and accountability on the part of the school's personnel.

Organizing the school's educational provision in such a way that pupils' development is unimpeded, tailoring that provision to their progress (Section 2-2, WVO) and implementing improvements arising out of the quality assurance system are only possible with a consistently professional workforce. The school plan must therefore describe its personnel policy (Section 24-3, WVO), including the manner in which staff are enabled to maintain and extend their professional abilities and how this joint responsibility of the leadership and the team is incorporated into general school policy. Naturally, the competent authority must actually allow staff to do this, too.

In this respect, it is also important that records of qualifications are maintained (Section 37b, WVO). Where staff are teaching subjects they are not yet fully qualified to give,

agreements must be in place with the competent authority to ensure that they obtain the necessary qualifications as soon as possible (Section 33, WVO).

KA3. Accountability and dialogue

The governing body and the school are accountable internally and externally, in an accessible and reliable manner, for their objectives and their results. And they engage in an active dialogue in this matter.

Basic quality

The governing body and the schools are subject to checks and balances, at the very least by involving the staff council in policymaking and decision-making.

At least once a year, the governors and schools report, in an accessible manner, on their objectives and the results they have achieved. The governing body is accountable to the internal regulator, and both it and the schools are accountable to their stakeholders and the government.

Self-defined quality factors

Is any additional policy concerning the manner of accountability in place, how is it being implemented and is it effective?

Possible factors:

- An active external dialogue about ambitions and results.

Summary of statutory requirements

The school's governing body and leadership are accountable to the staff council and must involve it in policymaking and decision-making (Sections 8, 10, 11, 12 and 14, WMS).

The governing body is accountable for its actions and performance through its annual report (Section 103, WVO). In its prospectus, the school clearly explains its educational goals and the learning outcomes it has achieved (Section 24a, WVO), as well as presenting the Inspectorate's findings with regard to the quality assurance system and describing any measures taken into response to them (Section 24a-1 I, WVO]). The governing body is also accountable to the internal regulatory body, which is given all the powers, duties and information it needs to be able to perform its task effectively and independently (Section 24d, 24e and 24e1, WVO).

Financial management

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (FB)

FB1. Continuity⁴

The governing body is financially healthy and able to meet its short and long-term financial obligations.

Basic quality

To ensure continuity, it is important that the governing body be aware of its current financial position and of likely developments over the next three years, and has formulated a policy accordingly. The continuity section of the annual report should describe these expected developments and their financial repercussions. The governing body discusses this matter with the internal regulator and the staff council, and if

⁴ With respect to statutory requirements for schools, the Inspectorate believes that those related to financial continuity would best be regulated in the sectoral statutes. A proposal to this end might eventually result in expansion or modification of the factors described under "basic quality". Until then, however, the items concerned will continue to fall under "self-defined quality factors" and as such will be regulated by the Inspectorate as part of its quality-promotion remit. In the meantime, financial continuity will only be judged "Inadequate" if a governing body fails to comply with the "basic quality" standard as currently worded.

necessary takes corrective action. It accounts for all these activities in the annual report.

Self-defined quality factors

Is any additional policy concerning the continuity of the governing body and the schools in place, how is it being implemented and is it effective?

Possible factors:

- how the governing body safeguards the long-term survival of the institution;
- the financial position of the governing body and its ability to meet all its short and long-term obligations;
- analysis of key figures and their comparison with alert values.

Summary of statutory requirements

The requirement that the competent authority include a continuity section in its annual report derives from Article 4-4 of the National Directive for Annual Reports in Education (Richtlijn Jaarverslag Onderwijs, RJO).

The sectoral statutes require that the internal regulator approve the annual report, including the continuity section, and account for this in the report itself (Sections 24e1-1a and 1e, WVO).

The internal regulator's mandatory duty to perform the tasks and exercise the powers necessary in order to undertake sound regulation can be satisfied by means of "regular discourse" enshrined in institutional policy (Section 24e1-2, WVO).

Each annual report, including the continuity section, must be submitted to the staff council for its consideration (Article 8-2b, WMS). Between reports, the council should be notified of any developments likely to affect the continuity of the school or institution. It may also take the initiative to discuss such developments with the governing body.

FB2. Efficiency

The governing body makes efficient and effective use of its maintenance funding.

Basic quality

The governing body, in its capacity as competent authority, spends government maintenance funding in such a way that this contributes effectively towards achieving the ambitions set out in the school plan for good educational provision and the development of all pupils.

Summary of statutory requirements

In the event that any of the school's maintenance funding is spent inappropriately, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science is empowered to correct it (Section 21, WVO Maintenance Funding Order). As a consequence of these powers, the competent authority is required to ensure that the funds in question are spent in an efficient and effective way, not only in the sense that unnecessary expenditure is avoided but also by making sure that funds do not go unspent without good reason.

FB3. Legitimacy

The governing body secures and spends its maintenance funding in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.

Basic quality

The governing body possesses the necessary expertise and acts in a transparent and conscientious manner. It accounts fully for its income and expenditure, with these records audited by a qualified accountant appointed by the internal regulator and operating in accordance with the professional standards of the NBA⁵ as well as the special Educational Accountancy Protocol (Onderwijsaccountantprotocol) compiled by the Inspectorate.

⁵ Royal Netherlands Institute of Chartered Accountants (Nederlandse beroepsorganisatie van accountants).

Summary of statutory requirements

The sectoral statutes contain various provisions governing how maintenance funding is secured and spent. The requirement that the governing body ensure a well-managed school (Section 24d, WVO) implies that it must be expert in its task.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science is empowered to impose sanctions if a governor is found to have engaged in mismanagement (Section 103g, WVO).

The annual report must be transparent and present a truthful picture of the situation. Volume 2, chapter 9 of the Dutch Civil Code (Burgerlijk Wetboek, BW), Article 3a, RJO, and the Educational Accountancy Protocol all contain numerous rules to ensure this. An auditor's opinion is mandatory under Article 2, RJO, and Section 2:393, BW..

3.4 Other statutory requirements

The assessment framework does not contain all the requirements imposed under every education law and sectoral statute. For example, there is no mention of the Certificate of Good Conduct (Verklaring omtrent gedrag, VOG) or the voluntary parental contribution. This is because they are not associated with a standard part of the framework. We classify them as "other statutory requirements".

Our annual working plan, published on the Inspectorate website, states which themes and specific requirements we are currently examining as part of our regime of systemic inspections (see chapter 10). Failure to fulfil one or more of these "other statutory requirements" will not in itself result in a school's quality being judged as "Inadequate" or its teaching as "Very weak", but it or its governing body will be expected to rectify the situation within a deadline set by the Inspectorate and included in our report.

4 BENCHMARKING AND JUDGEMENTS

In this chapter we describe how, using the assessment framework from chapter 3, we arrive at judgements concerning the quality of schools' educational provision and of quality assurance and financial management by their governing bodies.

4.1 Judgements at three levels

The quality of educational provision, quality assurance and financial management are judged primarily at the level of individual standards. In 4.2 we describe the benchmarks applicable to statutory requirements and in 4.3 the guidelines for the assessment of self-defined quality factors.

As explained in the subsequent sections, the aggregate outcomes for the individual standards produce judgements for each quality area (4.4) and for the school as a whole (4.5).

4.2 Standard-level benchmarks

Our defined standards for schools and their governing bodies include both statutory requirements and self-defined quality factors. In determining whether performance in respect of a particular standard is judged "Adequate" or "Inadequate", we consider only compliance with the statutory requirements. The rating "Good", however, also takes into account fulfilment of the self-defined factors.

Judgement/rating	Benchmark (norm) for standards with statutory requirements
Good	The school complies with all the statutory requirements for the standard in question, and also convincingly fulfils its own self-defined quality factors.
Adequate (basic quality)	The school complies with all the statutory requirements for the standard in question.
Inadequate	The school does not comply with the statutory requirements for the standard in question.

4.3 Assessment of self-defined quality factors

Self-defined quality factors are assessed in one of two ways, depending on the standard concerned.

1. In the case of those standards with statutory requirements, assessment of the self-defined quality factors determines whether the rating "Good" is awarded (see 4.2).
2. In secondary education, the standards "Teaching climate", "Social abilities" and "Subsequent achievement" have no basis in law and hence no statutory requirements. If the school sets itself no aspirations or targets in any of these areas, or fails to achieve those it has set itself, this results in the rating "Could do better" rather than the statutory judgement "Inadequate".

If the school does set itself ambitious targets, and achieves them convincingly, it is rated "Good" in respect of the standard concerned.

Rating	Guideline for assessment of self-defined quality factors
Good	The school convincingly fulfils its own self-defined quality factors.
Adequate	The school fulfils its own self-defined quality factors.
Could do better	The school fails to fulfil its own self-defined quality factors or has not defined them.

4.4 Quality-area benchmarks

In the quality areas "Educational process", "School climate" and "Learning outcomes", we have defined so-called "core standards". Weighted more heavily than the others in judging the school's performance in their respective areas as "Adequate" or "Inadequate", they are "Development perspectives" and "Didactics" (Educational process), "Safety" (School climate) and "Results" (Learning outcomes). Bearing this in mind, the aggregate judgements at individual standard level result in the following outcomes for each quality area.

Educational process	Benchmark (norm)
Good	All six standards in this area Adequate or better, with at least two Good.
Adequate	Both "Development perspectives and supervision" and "Didactics" Adequate or better, and no more than one of the others Inadequate.
Inadequate	Either "Development perspectives and supervision" or "Didactics" Inadequate, or two of the other standards Inadequate.
School climate	Benchmark (norm)
Good	Both standards in this area Adequate or better, with at least one Good.
Adequate	"Safety" Adequate or better.
Inadequate	"Safety" Inadequate.
Learning outcomes	Benchmark (norm)
Good	All three standards in this area Adequate or better, with at least one Good.
Adequate	"Learning outcomes" Adequate or better.
Inadequate	"Learning outcomes" Inadequate.
Quality assurance and ambition	Benchmark (norm)
Good	All three standards in this area Adequate or better, with "Quality culture" Good.

Adequate	All three standards Adequate or better.
Inadequate	One or more standards Inadequate.
Financial management⁶	Benchmark (norm)
Adequate	All three standards in this area Adequate or better.
Inadequate	One or more standards Inadequate.

4.5 School-level benchmarks

Our judgement or assessment of a school's quality is based on the following benchmarks.

Judgement/ rating	Benchmark (norm)
Good	All standards Adequate or better, with "Quality culture" plus at least two standards in the quality area(s) "Educational process" and/or "School climate" Good.
Adequate (basic quality)	"Development perspectives and supervision", "Didactics", "Safety" and "Results" all Adequate or better, and no more than one standard in the quality area "Educational process" Inadequate.
Inadequate	Any of "Development perspectives and supervision", "Didactics", "Safety" or "Results" Inadequate, or two or more standards in the quality area(s) "Learning outcomes", "Educational process" and/or "School climate" Inadequate.
Very weak	"Results" plus any of "Development perspectives and supervision", "Didactics" or "Safety" Inadequate.

At the school level, we award the rating "Good" only if the governing body has requested us to undertake a voluntary inspection to that end. This can be done to coincide with the quadrennial inspection (see chapter 7).

4.5.1 Statutory benchmark for very weak education

The benchmark for the judgement "Very weak" is established in law (Section 23a, WVO). This states that a school's educational provision is deemed "Very weak" if its overall learning outcomes are seriously and enduringly below the required standard, with these shortcomings attributable to a failure on the part of the competent authority to comply with one or more of the statutory criteria. Our interpretation of this legal benchmark for the assessment framework is given in the table above.

A governing body can lodge objections and appeals against the judgement "Very weak" (Section 20-6, WOT).

⁶ For the standards "Legitimacy" and "Efficiency", the judgement "Inadequate" is based on objective findings.

Benchmarking of unjudgeable results

The law [Section 23a1-3, WVO] states that, in the event that it is not possible to judge a school's learning outcomes using the rules in place, the quality of its educational provision will be deemed "Very weak" if it fails to comply with two or more of the statutory criteria and, as a result thereof, either does not provide pupils with the standard of safety at school required under Section 3b, WVO, or has not organized its provision in such a way that pupils enjoy both unimpeded development and an education adapted to suit their progress, as defined in Section 2-2, WVO.

Based on this definition, we apply the following benchmarks whenever we are unable to judge outcomes.

Benchmarks (norms) for unjudgeable outcomes in primary education	
Inadequate	Any of "Development perspectives and supervision", "Didactics", "Safety" or "Quality assurance" Inadequate, or two or more standards in the quality area "Educational process" Inadequate.
Very weak	Any two or more of "Development perspectives", "Didactics", "Safety" and "Quality assurance" Inadequate.

4.6 Governance-level benchmarks

At the governance level, we issue two judgements, in the quality areas "Quality assurance and ambition" and "Financial management" respectively. The benchmarks for these are as follows.

Judgement/ rating	Benchmark (norm): Quality assurance and ambition	Benchmark (norm): Financial management
Good	All three standards Adequate or better, with "Quality culture" Good.	Not applicable.
Adequate (basic quality)	All three standards Adequate or better.	All three standards Adequate or better.
Inadequate	Any standard Inadequate.	Any standard Inadequate.

Phased introduction of the "Quality assurance and ambition" standards

In our first round of quadrennial inspections, at governance level we will issue judgements on each of the three standards making up "Quality assurance and ambition" but not an overall verdict on this quality area. Our report will instead provide a subjective description of performance in it, based on those three judgements. Following subsequent quadrennial inspections, a judgement of "Quality assurance and ambition" will be issued.

In the "Financial management" quality area, the benchmark as described above will apply as soon as the new Inspection Framework takes effect.

4.7 Judgements and assessments

4.7.1 Compliance with statutory requirements

In reaching our judgements, we use the above benchmarks as guidelines. The key determining factor in our verdicts is the extent to which a school's educational practice reflects the essence and intent of the statutory requirements, in particular. The basic principle we apply is that those requirements must be met, standard by standard, in order for performance in each to be deemed "Adequate". We do not assess compliance with each individual requirement in itself, however, but in relation to the overall level of quality the standard seeks to assure. It is thus possible for a school to be judged "Adequate" in respect of a particular standard even though it does not yet comply strictly with all its constituent requirements, as long it is addressing the shortcomings positively and so is likely to rectify the situation relatively easily and quickly, whilst in the meantime the overall impact of its non-compliance is limited. The governing body is responsible for doing this, and is expected to notify the Inspectorate once the matter has indeed been rectified (see also 9.2.1).

4.7.2 Assessment of self-defined quality factors

Whilst we apply clear guidelines, based on the basic quality criteria, in determining whether performance on any given point is "Adequate" or "Inadequate", the terms of reference for the rating "Good" are not so well-defined. Obviously, all the statutory requirements must be met or exceeded. But on top of that we also look more particularly at the self-defined quality factors: can the school demonstrate convincingly that it is applying and achieving its own quality objectives for the item in question and is it thus delivering good education by empirical standards? The school plan is our most important source of information here, but with greater room for interpretation the primary bases for our assessments are the governors' own ambitions and the choices the school makes.

4.7.3 Contextual factors

Contextual factors – essentially, the environment in which the school operates – can affect the quality of its educational provision and its financial continuity in either a positive or a negative way. Such factors may include the composition of the pupil population and workforce, premises, past mergers, organizational and governance developments and internal regulation. Our judgements always concern the quality of the education pupils are currently receiving, regardless of such outside influences. But whilst they do not affect our findings, contextual factors may play a part in designing any remedial interventions they give rise to. The effect of non-compliance with a particular statutory requirement can vary according to the group directly affected by it, and this is something we take into account when imposing any restorative measures. Depending on the contextual factors, for example, the preferred intervention might be more or less directive in nature. We discuss this further in chapter 9.

4.7.4 Expert opinion

An assessment framework combining a solid statutory basis with the more discretionary nature of self-defined quality factors makes great demands on our expertise. Within that framework, we use our own guidelines to judge the education pupils are receiving. Because of this approach, we consider our verdicts "expert

opinions". By combining our expertise as a regulator with a thorough knowledge of the specific quality areas we are examining, we are in a position to reach comparable judgements in comparable situations. But we also want to be able to make differentiated judgements in differentiated situations.

Our judgements in respect of statutory requirements have a legal basis and are reached after consulting a variety of sources, including internal documents from the institution being inspected and conversations with its teachers, pupils, parents and representative bodies. Whenever we make a judgement, we offer the right of reply. We work in teams, with our final opinions reached by consensus between the inspectors concerned. At the reporting stage, the justifications for our findings are subject to peer review. Thanks to this way of working, we reach well-substantiated conclusions.

In assessing self-defined quality factors, our approach is similar although our role in this case is as a "critical friend". The initiative here lies with the school and its governing body, so we adapt our approach accordingly.

Whether judging or assessing, our first priority throughout the inspection process is to do proper justice to the quality of the educational provision we encounter. We have succeeded in doing this if the schools and governing bodies concerned consider our opinions fair.

5 QUADRIENNIAL INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS AND GOVERNING BODIES

In this chapter we describe the organization of the quadrennial inspection. This is conducted in line with the principles outlined in chapter 2 and using the assessment framework and benchmarks set out in chapters 3 and 4. The overall process has three phases: preparation (7.2), the inspection itself (7.3) and completion (7.4). But we begin here with the underlying research questions.

5.1 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the quadrennial inspection is to find answers to the primary question below and its associated secondary questions.

Primary question

Is the school properly managing the quality of its educational provision and its finances?

Secondary questions

1. Has the governing body agreed objectives with its schools, does it have sufficient insight into the quality of the education they provide and is it endeavouring to improve that quality?
2. Does the governing body have a professional quality culture and does it operate transparently and conscientiously?
3. Does the governing body communicate actively about its own progress and achievements, and those of its schools?
4. Is the financial management sound?

In seeking the answers to these secondary questions, we focus on standards in the quality areas "Quality assurance and ambition" and "Financial management"

5.2 Preparation

5.2.1 *Expert analysis of governor accountability*

Purpose: to gain an initial impression of quality assurance, the quality of educational provision and financial management.

Result: expert analysis, as a basis for the governors' meeting.

Every inspection begins with an expert analysis of the information available to the inspectorate. We analyse the school plan (does it comply with the statutory criteria, and what ambitions does it set out?), the annual reports and other relevant documents, such as policy plans, as well as materials related to quality assessment and evaluation. Alongside these items, we also consider external and internal signals, inspection history, examination results and other key figures.

Data for the analysis may be collected on paper or electronically, on location or by gaining remote access to the school's systems. In exceptional cases, we may ask the governing body for additional documentation.

We check that our information concerning the institution is up to date and addresses our research questions (see 7.1), and hence covers the quality areas defined in the assessment framework.

The results of the expert analysis form the basis for the agenda of the initial governors' meeting.

5.2.2 *Initial governors' meeting*

Purpose: to gain an initial impression of the current performance of both the governing body and its schools, and to outline the structure of the forthcoming inspection process.
Result: agreements concerning the selection of schools for verification, quality and voluntary inspections (see 5.2).

At the initial meeting, we ask the governing body to present its analysis of its schools' performance and development. We then compare this with our own expert analysis to gain a first impression of the state of the institution's quality assurance and financial management.

Drawing on both our analysis and the input from the governing body, we also discuss which schools will in principle undergo verification inspections. If the expert analysis identifies one or more schools as "risk-affected", we will subject them to quality inspections. The governors can also request that we conduct a voluntary inspection of what they believe is a "good" school.

For a full description of these three types of inspection (verification, quality and voluntary), see 5.2.

The governing body notifies the selected schools that they are to be inspected, using information provided by us.

5.2.3 *Inspection plan*

Purpose: to inform the governing body and the selected schools about the purpose, structure, content and scope of the forthcoming quadrennial inspection, with justification of the choices made.
Result: an inspection plan compiled and adopted by the Inspectorate.

We translate the results of the expert analysis and the governors' meeting into an inspection plan. This is a clear, well-structured summary of the activities to be undertaken during the subsequent phases of the inspection process. In the case of verification inspections, it states what standards we want to verify and how we intend to do that. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to quality and voluntary inspections (5.2.4). It also contains details of the standards we intend to examine as part of the process of systemic regulation (see chapter 10).

In planning and organizing our subsequent inspection activities, as far as reasonably

possible we wish to co-ordinate with the governing body of the schools concerned. It is therefore expected to check the inspection plan in terms of its organizational and logistical feasibility for the institution. Within reason, we will endeavour to make any adjustments deemed necessary.

Where a governing body is responsible for activities in more than one sector (both primary and secondary education), the plan also sets out which schools we intend to inspect in each sector.

5.2.4 *Presentation by schools*

Purpose: to understand the school's image of itself.

Result: the inspection team has as complete a picture as possible of the school's vision, ambitions, objectives and results.

As far as possible, we seek to appreciate the school's image of itself through the information it provides us with. In this respect, the school plan is particularly important to us. At the start of a verification or quality inspection process, we also offer schools the opportunity to deliver a presentation. This allows its staff team to let us know what they stand for. What is their vision? What are their ambitions? Their goals? What results have they achieved? What do they hope to achieve in the future? The form is free. We watch, listen and ask questions in an effort to obtain as much relevant information as we can for the purposes of the inspection. We also look at how that information relates to the school plan. The presentation is scheduled in consultation with the school.

5.3 **The inspection proper**

5.3.1 *School inspection*

Purpose: to answer the primary and secondary questions from the inspection plan at school level.

Result: preliminary judgements about the governing body's assurance of the actual quality of educational provision by the school and about compliance at school level with the standards being inspected.

The inspection, of whatever type it may be, is conducted in accordance with the inspection plan and our judgements are formed as per the assessment framework. Drawing on multiple sources and reaching a consensus are key principles in this process. The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the inspection can be conducted as planned.

Quality and voluntary inspections always end with a round of feedback, revealing our findings and preliminary judgements.

5.3.2 *Governing body inspection*

Purpose: to share our findings at the school level and to obtain additional information about quality assurance and financing in order to form judgements on those matters.

Result: preliminary judgements concerning the status of quality assurance and financial management.

Based on our findings at the school level, we form preliminary judgements and then discuss these with the governing body to see how closely they reflect its view of the situation. If we have identified any risks, does it recognize them and how is it tackling them? Do our verifications confirm what the governors have told us? If necessary, the governing body can provide additional information at this stage.

5.4 Completion

5.4.1 Report

Purpose: to record and justify our findings and judgements in such a way that both the governing body and the school(s) recognize themselves in the outcome of the inspection and so are motivated to make any necessary or recommended improvements.
Result: draft report of the quadrennial inspection.

Having sufficiently discussed its preliminary findings and judgements, the inspection team compiles its draft report. Regardless of the type(s) of inspection conducted, this provides substantiated answers to the primary and secondary research questions, as well as the inspectors' judgements and assessments concerning the school(s) and details of any remedial action they deem necessary. The report is concise and is written for the governing body.

Once it has received the report, the governing body has the opportunity to correct any factual inaccuracies and to make additional comments in writing.

5.4.2 Feedback meeting

Purpose: to ensure that our judgements and assessments are recognized and acknowledged.
Result: broad support for our judgements and starting points for remedial actions and improvements.

We want our judgements and assessments to be meaningful for the school and its governing body, not only in the sense that they are recognized and acknowledged but also in such a way that they facilitate any necessary improvements. Based on our draft report, we therefore provide both the school and the governors with feedback about our findings.

Only in the case of quality inspections are feedback meetings held at school level, at its request. Feedback following verification inspections is at governance level.

The feedback meeting allows us to explain our judgements, if necessary referring to specific cases and/or answering direct questions. It is also an opportunity to share more information with the teaching staff and school leadership than we are able to provide in our reports. If self-defined quality factors are involved, we relate them to the school plan. The timing of any feedback meeting is decided in consultation with the school or its governors.

5.4.3 *Final governors' meeting*

Purpose: to inform the governing body of the answers to our research questions, and to make any necessary agreements concerning remedial actions and improvements.
Result: final inspection report.

At the final meeting we explain our conclusions and, if necessary, agree on remedial actions and improvements. In this respect we draw a distinction between what *has* to be done better (statutory requirements) and what *can* be done better (self-defined quality factors). We also mention what is being done well and make a link with the school plan. Depending on our findings with regard to quality assurance by the governing body, we may also make agreements concerning its role in any follow-up inspection (see 9.1).

Following this meeting, we compile our final report and send it to the governing body. It is then entitled to submit a formal response (see 8.3).

It may be that the earlier feedback meeting has already discussed our findings and conclusions at sufficient length, making a final governors' meeting unnecessary.

5.5 **Schedule**

The total length of a quadrennial inspection exercise depends first and foremost on the number of schools involved, and so can vary quite considerably.

6 REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION

All our inspections end with the production of a final report, and all of these are in the public domain.⁷ This ensures that we are transparent in our approach, judgements and assessments. In this chapter we describe the different types of report we issue, then end by explaining how we wish to encourage the broad sharing of the knowledge and information we acquire through our inspections.

6.1 Quadrennial inspection report

The report of the quadrennial inspection is written for the governing body, to provide it with a complete picture of our findings at the governance level and at those schools subjected to verification, quality or voluntary inspections. In it we distinguish between judgements in respect of statutory requirements – whether the schools and their governing body meet the basic quality criteria – and assessments of self-defined factors, goals and ambitions. By including both in the same report, we present a comprehensive overview of the schools in question and the quality of their governance.

The findings from verification inspections are reported in two ways. We first describe quality assurance at the governance level: what we found at the schools and how that tallies with the picture painted by the governing body. In addition, we set out how the quality assurance system works through to classroom level – an assessment based on objectives defined by the governing body and selected by us. Secondly, we report the outcome of the verification exercise itself: our judgement of the inspected schools in respect of the selected standards.⁸

6.1.1 Governance profile

Our judgements and assessments at the governance level are summarized in the form of a governance profile. Below are two examples.

Example 1. Governance profile, quality assurance and financial management.

QUALITY AREA/standard	Judgement/assessment
QUALITY ASSURANCE AND AMBITION	ADEQUATE ⁹
Quality assurance	Adequate
Quality culture	Adequate
Accountability and dialogue	Good

⁷ Section 15 of the WOT requires that all such reports be published, unless the nature or scope of the inspection dictates otherwise.

⁸ Those in the quality areas “Educational process”, “Learning outcomes”, “School climate” and “Quality assurance and ambition”.

⁹ In our first round of quadrennial inspections, at governance level we will issue judgements on each of the three standards making up “Quality assurance and ambition” but not an overall verdict on this quality area (see 4.6). Our report will instead provide a subjective description of performance in it, based on those three judgements.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	ADEQUATE
Continuity	Adequate
Efficiency	Adequate
Legitimacy	Adequate

In the second example, below, we only report on those particular standards inspected at different schools in order to verify quality assurance at the governance level. Comparing these judgements with the information obtained from the governing body enables us to confirm, or otherwise, that that information is correct and complete.

Example 2. Governance profile, verification of quality assurance in respect of educational provision.

Standard	School 1	School 2	School 3
Development perspectives	Good	Adequate	Inadequate
Didactics	Good	Good	Adequate
Safety	Adequate	Adequate	Inadequate
Quality culture	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate

Further explanation of our judgements concerning the quality of educational provision is provided in a separate chapter of the report.

6.1.2 *School quality profile*

Following a quality inspection of a school identified as “risk-affected” or a voluntary inspection of a potentially good school, we report our findings in respect of the standards examined in tabular form. Referred to as the “quality profile”, this provides a straightforward overview of our judgements and assessments at standard, quality area and school level, including our overall final verdict on the school as a whole (see example 3).

Example 3. School quality profile.

QUALITY AREA/standard	Judgement/assessment
EDUCATIONAL PROCESS	ADEQUATE
Provision	Good
Development perspectives	Adequate
Didactics	Adequate
Additional support	Inadequate
Cooperation	Good
Testing and progression	Adequate
SCHOOL CLIMATE	GOOD
Safety	Adequate
Teaching climate	Good
LEARNING OUTCOMES	ADEQUATE
Results	Adequate
Social abilities	Adequate
Subsequent achievement	Could do better
QUALITY ASSURANCE AND AMBITION	INADEQUATE
Quality assurance	Adequate
Quality culture	Good
Accountability and dialogue	Inadequate
Overall verdict on school	ADEQUATE

6.1.3 *Quality assurance and educational quality development*

As well as governance and school quality profiles, we also describe how the institution has been developing and is likely to develop in the future, complete with details of those contextual factors influencing the quality of the educational provision we found.

6.1.4 *Follow-up inspection*

Finally, the inspection report sets out the restorative or remedial action needed to overcome any non-compliance with statutory requirements, including the deadlines by which they must be completed (see also chapter 9). We also state when we will conduct a follow-up inspection, if required, and explain what the governing body can do in the meantime to ensure that it becomes compliant or otherwise improves quality.

6.2 Report of risk-based quality inspection

If we have conducted a quality inspection prompted by the outcome of the annual performance analysis, we again compile a final report for the governing body. As well as describing our findings, as in example 3 above this also contains a school quality profile setting out our judgements and assessments in respect of each standard and quality area, plus our overall final verdict on the school as a whole. Both the report and the profile are posted on our website.

6.3 Publication, formal response and objections

All our reports are in the public domain. As required by law (Section 21-1, WOT), we post them on our website during the fifth week following completion of the final version. If the governing body has submitted a formal response, this is appended to the published report. Such a response is not intended to correct factual inaccuracies, which should have been addressed when the report was in its draft stage.

Following a so-called "Article 15 inspection" (see 5.3), the governing body can object to the publication of the resulting report (but not its content).

6.4 Online public information

We have a statutory public duty to inform parents and the community about our findings, which we fulfil through our reports, our website and our public helpdesk (Onderwijsloket). All our reports are accessible through the website.

Alongside the complete reports on each governing body and school we have inspected, we also post the accompanying school quality profiles (see 8.1.2) in an easy-to-consult manner. The full final report of a quadrennial inspection can be found on the same page as information about the governing body, together with the governance profile containing our judgements about its quality assurance and financial management.

If a quadrennial inspection has covered one or more "risk-affected" schools, information about them is included in the inspection report. We also post the school quality profile(s) separately, with a link to the full report.

The judgements derived from verification inspections are included in the quadrennial inspection report, and we provide a link to the associated governance-level report. No overall quality profile is presented in this case, however, since we examined only a limited number of standards.

When we have judged a governing body's quality assurance as "Good"^{1 0} and its financial management as "Adequate" (see 4.4), we trust it to provide us with reliable quality information and to implement improvements as and where necessary. In such cases we include a link to the institution's own website and, in the entry for each of its schools (whether or not we have inspected them individually) on our website, we include a statement confirming that we have inspected the governing body and have confidence in the information it issues about its schools, specifically: *"The governing body is fully aware of the quality of its schools and makes*

^{1 0} That is, all three standards in "Quality assurance" are Adequate or better, with "Quality culture" Good (see 4.6).

improvements where necessary. It is also financially healthy. For more information, please refer to its website.” Where we have inspected a school individually, we post its quality profile on our website.

If a follow-up inspection (see chapter 9) confirms that a governing body has taken the measures necessary to correct the shortcomings we identified, our revised judgement appears shortly afterwards in our monitor, in the annual performance analysis of the governing body and its schools and in the public section of our website.

When a governing body conducts its own internal follow-up inspection at our behest and that finds that quality is now adequate, this outcome is reported on our website with a link to the institutional site.

Sectoral councils support institutions in their respective sectors by providing current data about the performance of schools and governing bodies. With our public information as one of the sources they draw on, in so doing they foster transparent accountability on the part of individual governing bodies and the sector as a whole. Once it is comprehensive enough, in the future we will be able to publicize that information more widely as a reliable source.

Our public helpdesk answers questions from parents, schools and governing bodies about education in general and about specific schools they are interested in. They can also register complaints here. These have an indicative function, providing input for our annual performance analyses and the expert analysis conducted prior to each quadrennial inspection. However, we do not resolve individual complaints.

6.5 The state of education

Once a year, in April, we publish a comprehensive national report entitled *The State of Education in the Netherlands*. This describes the current overall performance and quality of the Dutch education system, by sector, and is compiled using research data drawn from our quadrennial inspection reports on schools and their governing bodies, our thematic inspections and specific inquiries.

Issued on behalf of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, *The State of Education* is written primarily for public consumption. Nonetheless, it also provides schools and their governing bodies with plenty of relevant information, particularly when it comes to comparing their own performance with the national picture.

6.6 Sharing knowledge

We are keen to make our professional knowledge of educational quality more easily accessible for schools and their governing bodies. Activities we have introduced to help achieve this include the following.

Feedback meetings

During our inspection, we gather a lot of information. Much of this is included in our reports, but the need to keep them as concise as possible also means that much is excluded.

To prevent that knowledge being lost forever, we organize feedback meetings with

schools and governing bodies at the end of each inspection. These allow us to discuss the findings underlying our judgements in more detail than in the subsequent report, in the hope that they will be recognized and acknowledged and that they will provide good specific pointers for improvement.

Compliance assistance

If a school or governing body has questions about how to comply with statutory requirements it is currently failing to meet, we are happy to answer them. We may also refer it to relevant examples of good practices we have encountered in our work.

Themed meetings and inspection labs

Based on our inspection findings and the overall picture painted in our annual report, *The State of Education in the Netherlands*, each year we select a number of themes on which we want to engage in a dialogue with the education sector. To facilitate this dialogue, we organize themed meetings and so-called "inspection labs". These are intended primarily for school managers, governors and trustees.

