

Press release

Inspection detects persistent problems in education

The Dutch educational system has some serious and persistent problems. A large amount of youngsters have insufficient basic skills, too many youngsters leave education too soon, many pupils continue towards a lower educational level and a large part of special education does not deliver. School fulfils an important role while tackling problems. The Board of Inspection states this in the annual Education report, which appears today.

Most schools in the Netherlands are doing fine actually. The quality of primary education is fair, the level of turnout is sufficient for 93 percent of the schools. The quality of secondary education is alright in most cases. The quality in vocational training has improved with respect to four years ago, although the number of weak educational institutions has increased. And almost all training in higher education fits the bill.

Get the most out of pupils

The inspection notices that not all pupils receive the opportunity to develop their talents. One out of four pupils cannot read easily at the end of primary school, whereas, in principle, all pupils are capable of learning this. Dutch primary school pupils are good in arithmetic compared with other countries, but the command of basic skills is declining. A large group of pupils cannot read or do arithmetic on a sufficient level at the beginning of secondary school. Too many pupils experience very little joy in learning. Good instructions are needed to keep pupils' attention. The inspection indicates that schools which score good, have a better offer of training material and that they provide better care to their pupils.

Quality school directive for premature school leavers.

The number of premature school leavers is still too high. In the academic year 2005/2006, almost 5.000 pre-SECT pupils (12-15 year-olds) leave secondary education. In addition, 7.500 post-SECT pupils drop out. More than 9.000 school leavers have a preparatory vocational training, but do not continue to secondary vocational college. In professional education, the number of premature school leavers is the highest: some 41.000 pupils. The inspection notices significant differences between schools when it concerns premature school leavers and schools underestimate their own role. Schools which offer more coherence in learning topics, which offer pupils sufficient training time and which ensure proper assistance of pupils, have fewer premature school leavers. What is more, teachers and pupils have a more positive relation in these schools and teachers are committed to let pupils enjoy learning.

One out of nine pupils falls towards lower educational level

Many pupils in the third grade of secondary education are no longer on the level of their original school advice. Part of them moves up to a higher level, but approximately one out of nine pupils goes to a lower level. In schools where this happens frequently, the explanations of teachers are less clear, educational activities are less structured and pupils are less involved in the learning process. These pupils also experience their school as less safe.

Half the schools special primary education under intensive supervision

In special primary education, pupils often do not attain a higher level than that of group 5 (grade 3) of regular primary education. Too many schools for special primary education do not get the most out of pupils. Teachers in these schools do not draw up goals for their pupils, they analyse the progress of their pupils insufficiently, they do not give sufficient feedback on learning and development processes and they do not balance instruction and progressing sufficiently. Inspection has placed half of these schools under intensive supervision.

Significant growth youngsters with behavioural problems

The number of pupils attending schools for pupils with behavioural problems is also increasing. The waiting lists for these schools are growing. The number of pupils with backpack also increases strongly (note: children with behaviour problems, attending regular schools which entitles the child/carer to additional money/time). Inspection worries about the quality of care and assistance of these backpack pupils within the regular education system.

Inspection researched the quality of education in the cluster 4 institutions. Few of these schools for pupils with behavioural problems are capable of actually justifying their turnout. They barely evaluate the quality of their turnout. Only one quarter of the schools determines a development perspective for all pupils and one third does not consult the parents while drawing up action plans. For more than half of these institutions, inspection applies a form of intensive supervision.

Difficult task for education

Education is on the move, mostly in the right direction, although concern continues in some important parts. The core problems in the educational system are mostly connected to the lagging quality of a school. Boards and their schools are assigned to make sure that everybody's possibilities and talents are tapped into. The inspection realises that education faces a difficult task these coming years.

Note for the editors

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The report can be found at www.onderwijsinspectie.nl