

COUNTRY PROFILE [TEMPLATE]

- 1. Basic information** – this should be as short as possible; doesn't need to be in paragraphs or full sentences.

Country name: Lower Saxony, Germany

Structure of inspectorate: Are you organised centrally or by region/state? Does inspection regulation or standards vary across regions or states?

Federal state, external evaluation. Countrywide system.

Age of inspectorate: How long have you been established for? What was your predecessor organisation (i.e. who did inspection before you?)

Established in 2005. Formerly, NSchI (Lower Saxony school inspection), now NLQ (Lower Saxony Institute for school quality development)

Size: How many inspectors do you have? How many central/policy staff do you have?

50 inspectors, 15 staff

Remits: What form of education do you inspect? E.g. early years, schools, universities? Anything that is non-education?

We inspect all forms of schools (primary, secondary, vocational)

Unit of inspection: Do you inspect schools or groups of schools (or both?) Do you inspect teachers, or subject departments? Do you inspect local authorities?

Currently: Voluntary external evaluation and -prospectively- occasion/thematically related evaluation. Currently by special order: All-day-schools and schools in special challenge situation

What is your strapline? E.g. Ofsted's is "Raising standards, improving lives"

"Making education better"

Relationship with government: Do you operate as part of the Education Ministry, or are you independent? Briefly explain the legal relationship you have with the Ministry (e.g. any reporting duties)? Are you allowed to report on government policy? Are you allowed to publish reports without govt approval?

Subordinated, independent authority. Frequent reports provided to and then published by the ministry.

Accountability: What are you accountable for delivering? Where is this set out? (e.g. in legislation or in a policy document?) How are you held to account as an organisation (e.g. must you report annually)?

Frequent reports provided to and then published by the ministry.

2. **Evaluation process** – this should be in short paragraphs

Self-evaluation: Do you have a form of self-evaluation (i.e. do you expect institutions to report on themselves?) If so, briefly explain how this relates to external evaluation.

We provide a number of self-evaluation instruments for the schools (for teachers, students, parents) with online analysis. Parts of the instruments can be added or adapted by the schools.

What do you examine during inspection? Do you look at finances? Do you look at legal compliance? Do you observe and/or grade lessons?

We observe and grade lessons, then report a system-view to the school. Dialogues with heads of school, teachers, students and parents are part of the entire analysis.

Do you have an inspection framework? Is this a quality or compliance model? Do you evaluate the quality of education or teaching, or report against a series of non-qualitative standards? How does this work?

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Inspection time and resource. How long are your inspections? Do they last several days, or shorter? How many people go on inspection? What sort of qualifications/experience do they have? i.e. are they former headteachers, lawyers or accountants?

The evaluation period lasts 18 months. Starting with contacting the headteacher, a half-day meeting follows after ca. 6 weeks. In the first meeting, we support the schools formulating a teaching-related-target, based on our lesson observation form. Seven different observation forms/seven topics are provided (individual learning, education in a digital world, language training, performance orientation, English, Mathematics and German).

The school focuses on detailed features of the lesson observation form, narrows down on grades or/and subjects/participating teachers.

The school plans and works on its processes to achieve its focus-target for a period of 10 months.

After 10 months we visit the school and observe lessons (observations planned by the school) and carry out the dialogues with stakeholders, for three days.

One week later we provide the results to the participants in a half-day-meeting. Two weeks later, the school gets the first written report.

Knowing the results, the school either carries on in its process or/and adapts i. e. the focus-target or the planning, for the coming 6 months.

At the end of the evaluation, after 18 months, the whole process is looked upon by the school and the evaluation team. A second final written overall report is provided.

Frequency of inspections: Do you have set inspection cycles? How long are these? Are they risk-based or not? If risk-based, what information do you use for assessing risk?

Due to the extended evaluation period, the voluntary or thematically related evaluation, evaluation-cycles are not set. Schools can ask for external evaluation at any time.

Main business: Do you do anything that is not inspection? E.g. pre-registration or providers, or other forms of regulation? Are you involved in complaints examination? Do you take part in competition of headmasters?

There is no complaints examination and no competition.

3. Consequences of inspection

Reporting: Do you publish your reports on institutions? If so, who reads them and how are they used? (e.g. to help parents make school choices?)

Only the Ministry of Education gets reports.

Grade: Do you grade institutions? If so, how many do you have? Are there any rewards for getting the top grade? Or any punishment for getting the lowest?

There is no grading.

Knowledge sharing: How do you use the findings of inspection? Do you use thematic reporting, and publish your findings?

We, the National Institute of school quality development, analyse all findings (lesson observations, feedbacks etc.) to either adapt the instruments or adapt the procedures and report to the Ministry.

What happens following an inspection? Do schools shut down? Are the weak ones partnered with other schools; the strong ones allowed to flourish?

Schools are not shut down. The supervising authority provides individual support for the schools and teachers or recommends partnerships with other schools.

What is the stated purpose of your inspectorate? Do you have a theory of action about how improvement is achieved through inspection?

The major aim of this evaluation system is to support and advise the schools narrowing down and agree on specific aspects of teaching. Schools get the opportunity to experience a scientifically based quality management model in order to detect good practice and failing aspects in

process planning. There is no failing approach, but the idea of learning from a (hopefully) successful quality management that enables the school for future lesson-improvement-projects.

The participation groups (headteachers, teachers, students, parents, evaluators) give online feedback to the different phases to help us improving evaluation.