

Inspectorate Profile

Inspection générale de l'éducation, du sport et de la recherche (IGÉSR)

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Useful link

<https://www.education.gouv.fr/mission-et-organisation-de-l-inspection-generale-de-l-education-du-sport-et-de-la-recherche-41687>

1. Overview of the Inspectorate

1.1. Age of inspectorate

IGÉSR (*Inspection générale de l'éducation, du sport et de la recherche*) was established in 2019 after the merging of four general inspectorates covering

- primary and secondary education (*Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale*, 1802),
- education administration, higher education and research (*Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche*, 1965),
- youth and sports (*Inspection générale de la jeunesse et des sports*, 1946),
- and public and university libraries (*Inspection générale des bibliothèques*, 1822).

1.2. Structure of inspectorate

IGÉSR is a national inspectorate placed under the direct and joint authority of the Ministers responsible for Education, Youth, Higher Education and Research, and Sports. Its scope extends across education, research, youth, sports, libraries. Missions are carried out at the request of the ministers, within annual work programmes, or by mandate of the Prime Minister or international organisations.

IGÉSR is led by a Head of Service, who ensures independence, defines the annual work programme, manages staff and resources, and oversees internal audit and health and safety missions. Governance is supported by a management committee bringing together heads of colleges (covering areas such as pedagogy, administration, youth and sports, higher education and research, libraries, and primary education) and divisions (in charge of legal affairs, international relations, vocational education, human resources, and communication). The inspectorate also carries out cross-cutting missions such as territorial follow-up, internal ministerial audit and health and safety at work.

1.3. Size

- About 250 general inspectors

- 35 support staff

1.4. Remits

- IGÉSR's missions range from ministerial advice to the monitoring of policy implementation and the evaluation of national policies. It is also in charge of staff inspection and exam monitoring.

IGÉSR does not take part in the evaluation of primary and secondary education providers, which is supervised by the *Conseil d'évaluation de l'École* (CEE).

The *Conseil d'évaluation de l'École* (CEE) was created by the July 2019 School Act. It is an independent body (10 out of 14 members of the 'official council' are not appointed by government) within the Ministry. CEE does not inspect schools *per se* but designs and monitors the whole process. Its stated purpose is summed up in the primary aim of school evaluation, *i.e.* improve the quality of education provision and well-being in primary and secondary schools. Therefore the focus is on improvement rather than accountability. Though the framework is national, the organisation of self-evaluation and external evaluation is left to regional education authorities (*académies*) and, partially, schools themselves, with variations in visit and report length, evaluating team size and contextualised evaluation content. External evaluations can be carried out by regional and local inspectors and school heads.

<https://www.education.gouv.fr/CEE>

- However, IGÉSR visits schools as part of thematic studies or evaluations on any education-related subjects (including joint reviews with the general inspectorates of other ministerial departments), or when it is mandated to carry out inquiries into educational institutions (as a response to complaints for example).
- Some general inspectors audit the finances of higher education and research institutions, and carry out internal ministry audits.
- It can also examine the functioning of local education authorities.

1.5. Unit of inspection

In the French educational system, the notion of inspection refers to an individual evaluation of teaching and educational staff.

General, regional and local inspectors inspect individual teachers on a systematic basis (set career visits).

There is no subject department inspection as such, though inspectors may convene subject-centred meetings when they come to evaluate individual teachers. Teacher inspections and subject meetings are never mixed with school evaluation as these are different processes.

1.6. Purpose of inspectorate

IGÉSR's main mission is to provide comprehensive expertise to the Ministers responsible for education, higher education, research, youth, sports, public libraries. It carries out inspection,

control, audit, investigation, evaluation, advisory and support activities, and participates in international cooperation. It contributes to the design and implementation of the Ministries' internal audit policies and takes part in the control of institutions or services under the Ministers' authority. IGÉSR also intervenes at the request of the Ministers or the Prime Minister, within the framework of annual or multiannual work programmes, including urgent audits or missions linked to European funding.

1.7. What is your strapline/motto?

No strapline.

1.8. Relationship with government

- IGÉSR depends directly on the Ministers and reports directly to them. However, it remains independent in its writings and recommendations.
- IGÉSR acts *before* and *after* policy decision making, advising the Ministers prior to decisions and monitoring the implementation of policies.
- It is often asked to assess the implementation and (early) results of policies, though it is seldom a decision of its own and reports are not published unless approved by the Ministers.

1.9. Accountability

- IGÉSR must provide an annual report to the Ministries and Parliament.
- It is also accountable to the Ministers for the year's work programme, which includes the thematic studies to be carried out as well as the supplementary studies, inspections, and controls decided upon by the Ministers depending on emerging situations and events, especially those that have received media coverage.

1.10. Impact of inspections

The impact of IGÉSR's inspection missions is mainly observed at ministerial decision-making level, through the delivery of annual or thematic reports that aim to inform and guide public policy. These reports cover public policy evaluations, controls of institutions or services, as well as forward-looking reflections, and are intended to support decision-making by the relevant authorities.

1.11. Quality assurance of inspections

IGÉSR ensures the quality, independence and impartiality of its work through several mechanisms defined by regulatory texts. The Head of Service oversees a collegial organization (management committee, colleges, divisions, working and exchange groups) to guarantee the quality of outputs. All inspectors carry out their missions in compliance with a code of ethics, internal methodological frameworks and guidelines.

2. Evaluation process

2.1. Self-evaluation

IGÉSR does not organise or supervise school self-evaluation nor school evaluation. However, it may conduct thematic studies that include visits to schools, during which inspectors analyse school functioning, compliance with regulations, or the impact of national policies. These missions are not part of the legal framework of compulsory self-evaluation, but rather policy-oriented evaluations or control activities.

2.2. Focus of inspection

IGÉSR's missions are broader than school evaluation. They include thematic assessments on education, research, youth, sports and libraries. Inspections may cover schools in the context of specific themes (e.g. equality policies, digital learning, teacher training), compliance checks in private independent schools, or audits in higher education institutions. Unlike the *Conseil d'évaluation de l'École* (CEE), IGÉSR's missions are not designed to assess schools systematically but to support policy monitoring and ministerial decision-making.

2.3. Inspection framework

IGÉSR relies on its own methodological guides, charters and reference frameworks depending on the type of mission (audit, inspection, thematic evaluation). These internal documents are meant to guarantee the impartiality, independence and quality of the reports addressed to the Ministers.

2.4. Inspection time and resources

The length and resources of IGÉSR's missions vary depending on their nature. Urgent ministerial audits can be completed within weeks, while thematic studies or large-scale evaluations may extend over several months and involve numerous hearings, site visits and document analysis. Teams are made up of general inspectors with diverse complementary expertise (education, higher education, sports, research, libraries) and often work in multidisciplinary groups.

2.5. Frequency of inspections

IGÉSR's missions do not follow a fixed cycle. Their frequency depends on the annual or multiannual work programme validated by the Ministers, on urgent requests (for example following a media-covered issue or a parliamentary referral), or on audits required under European or international commitments.

2.6. Non-inspection activities

General inspectors supervise the development of national curricula under the authority of the *Conseil Supérieur des Programmes* (CSP).

They chair national competitive exams for the recruitment of secondary school staff (teachers, head teachers), psychologists and guidance counsellors as well as regional and local inspectors.

They also provide national guidelines for the training of regional and local inspectors, teachers, management and support staff.

They are involved in the review of complaints.

General inspectors take part in the approval process of *lycées français* (French schools abroad).

3. Consequences of inspection

3.1. Reporting

IGÉSR's reports are intended for the Ministers, who are their primary recipients. Certain reports remain restricted to the ministerial level, while others may be sent to other institutional recipients or made public after ministerial agreement. IGÉSR also produces an annual report summarising its main missions and findings, which is sent to the Ministers and to Parliament. This annual report is public and available online.

3.2. Grading

In the French education system, schools are not subject to grading. Accordingly, IGÉSR does not grade or rank schools. Its missions are evaluative, advisory, audit- or control-based depending on ministerial priorities. However, in the case of private, independent schools or higher education institutions, IGÉSR may detect regulatory non-compliance and propose a range of recommendations or sanctions. In such cases, the Ministers may impose sanctions, ranging from corrective measures to, in very rare situations, closure of the institution.

3.3. Sharing inspection findings

Thematic studies and evaluation reports conducted by IGÉSR are sent to the Ministers and, when authorised, made public. They may be used to inform parliamentary committees, public debate and policy reform. In addition, some findings are shared at international level in the context of comparative analyses or cooperation programmes.

3.4. What happens following an inspection?

When IGÉSR's inspections or audits identify compliance issues (e.g. in private schools, higher education institutions, sports federations or other organisations), follow-up measures are decided by the Ministers. These may include recommendations, requests for corrective action, or sanctions. For thematic and advisory missions, the main follow-up is policy adjustment, the design of reforms, or the publication of ministerial guidelines.