

Regional Inspectorate of Education Autonomous Region of Madeira

INSPECTORATE PROFILE

December 2024

1. OVERVIEW OF THE INSPECTORATE

Age of the Inspectorate

The Inspectorate was created in 1982, with the pedagogical area integrated with one regional directorate and the administrative-financial area in another distinct regional directorate. It became dependent on the office of the Regional Secretary of Education in 1997 and, from 2015, directly dependent on the Regional Secretary. Since 2024, the inspectorate has become equivalent to a regional directorate.

Structure of the Inspectorate

The Inspectorate is a service of the Department of Education. It is centrally organized with the Office of the Chief Inspector based in Funchal.

Size

13 inspectors (5 inspectors are working in other services), 11 teachers in mobility for inspection functions, 2 senior technicians – one in the financial area (working in another service) and the other in the legal area –, 3 technical assistants in the administrative area, 1 cleaning person under the Employment Programs of the Madeira Employment Institute, 1 Chief Inspector and 2 directors.

Remits

Nursery, pre-school, primary to secondary school, both public and private.

Unit of inspection

We inspect schools, teachers, school administration and management, and the services of the Regional Secretary of Education.

Purpose of the Inspectorate

The Inspectorate exercises oversight of the school as an educational organization and of the services dependent on the Regional Secretariat for Education, namely through monitoring, evaluation, auditing, verification, and technical support actions.

What is your strapline/motto?

To ensure the quality of education for children and the teaching of students, from a perspective of education for all, human rights, and inclusion.

Relationship with government

The Inspectorate is equivalent to that of a regional directorate and reports to the Regional Secretary of Education (parallel to the Minister of Education). The Regional Secretary may occasionally request that a particular activity be carried out, for example, a specific thematic evaluation, to assist them with policy decisions.

Accountability

The Inspectorate is accountable to the Regional Secretary (equivalent to the Minister of Education) for exercising its functions. The accountability functions of the Inspectorate are set out in its organic law.

Impact of inspections

Having concluded the inspection activity, a final activity report is prepared, subject to the approval of the Chief Inspector and the ratification of the Regional Secretary of Education. This report is made publicly available on the Inspectorate's website. It is forwarded to the responsible directorates, mainly in pedagogical matters, human resources, administration and management, and finance.

Quality assurance of inspections

The Inspectorate uses a variety of mechanisms to ensure that its work is conducted according to professional standards and that its judgments are valid and reliable:

- publication of the standards and procedures that the Inspectorate is committed to in its work, namely in its organic law and in the law that regulates the inspection procedure (the acts and formalities, as well as the principles and rules applicable to its activity);
- the recruitment of inspectors from among highly qualified, experienced teachers/technicians, using a multi-stage recruitment and interview process;
- investment in the long-term professional development of inspectors, including the funding of post-graduate study in inspection;
- supporting inspectors through comprehensive internal guidance and data collection systems.

2. EVALUATION PROCESS

In the Madeira Autonomous Region, a formal evaluation process has not yet been established. There is only a self-evaluation procedure monitored by another service. However, we have a set of activities that we would designate as informal evaluation processes, namely “development of learning”, “operating conditions for the academic year”, “Internal control”, “working hours”, and “organization of professional courses”, among others.

Focus of inspection

Most activities focus on the quality of teaching, learning, student achievement, the quality of support for students, the quality of action planning for improvement, and the quality of leadership and management. There is also some focus on compliance with safeguarding legal requirements.

During inspections, inspectors rely on evidence from a wide range of sources. Inspectors interact with students, teachers, parents and guardians, community leaders, and other staff who work at the school but are not teachers, as a normal part of the inspection activity, in the region where the school is located.

Depending on the activity model, sources of evidence also include meetings and interviews with school stakeholders, reviews of school policy and planning documents, and surveys completed by teachers, parents, or students.

In all inspections, inspectors are asked to consider context factors such as school size, location, and the socioeconomic circumstances of the students and community.

Inspection framework

Inspections are informed by the organic law and the law that regulates the inspection procedure - the acts and formalities, as well as the principles and rules applicable to its activity-, evaluation and accountability framework, the strategic and operational objectives of the service in alignment with the government's program for the education sector and the approved annual action plan by the Regional Secretary of Education (equivalent to the Minister of Education).

On the other hand, we must not forget that in a context and time that are simultaneously localized and globalized, where transnational regulatory processes emphasize evaluation as a process of regulation through knowledge, bureaucratic principles of service provision are being replaced by logics of regulatory frameworks and evaluation based on research, where the circulation, use, transformation, and recreation of knowledge allow for the highlighting of best practices and the monitoring of projects, Inspection time and resources.

The inspection type determines the time it takes, the activities undertaken during the inspection, and the number of inspectors involved. Typically, the core inspection activity in schools takes between one to thirty days. For example, unannounced inspections (external evaluation – exams) occur over one day.

Unannounced inspections are frequently carried out by one inspector, whilst “development of learning”, “operating conditions for the academic year”, “Internal control”, “working hours” and “organization of professional courses” involve two inspectors, depending on the size of the school.

Frequency of inspections

In planning its annual inspection program, the Inspectorate adopts a proportionate risk-based approach to inspection planning, based on a range of criteria.

These criteria include the inspection history of individual schools, the medium of instruction in the school, the findings of previous inspections such as unannounced inspections, and other relevant information received by the Department and the Inspectorate about the school. This includes data such as performance in state certificate examinations, student attendance, and student retention.

An inspection visit is conducted in primary and post-primary schools at least once in two years.

This also allows the Inspectorate to recognize, affirm, and disseminate good and exemplary practices across the educational system by publishing reports.

Non-inspection activities

The Regional Inspectorate of Madeira has responsibilities other than inspection. The Inspectorate's key responsibility involves advising the Regional Secretary of Education on educational policy and provision matters. Much of this advice is based on the outcomes of

inspection and research conducted by the Inspectorate, and it may involve the provision of thematic reports.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF INSPECTION

Reporting

The publication of school inspection reports makes the findings and recommendations of inspections available to all members of the school community and the wider public.

Making reports publicly available achieves several purposes, including encouraging school self-review and development and ensuring a wider dissemination of good practice in and among schools and education settings. It is also understood that the publication of inspection reports provides authoritative and balanced information on the effectiveness of schools and education settings, providing valuable information to parents, prospective parents, and learners.

Grading

The Inspectorate does not assign overall ratings to individual schools or education settings.

Published inspection reports contain clear evaluative statements about the quality of provision in the main dimensions of the school or education setting's work, such as teaching and learning, leadership and management, and student support.

Sharing inspection findings

The inspection findings are shared by publishing the final activity reports on the Inspection's website. These reports provide an analysis of and reflection on the quality of education provision in schools and other education settings in Madeira during given periods.

What happens following an inspection?

Without prejudice to the inspectorate's duty to monitor the outcome of the recommendations and proposals made in the activities carried out, educational establishments must provide, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the report, information on the measures and decisions adopted following its intervention and it may also comment on the effect of the action.

While the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the recommendations and improvements in an inspection report rests mainly with the management of schools and education settings, there are a few follow-up actions that help to ensure that schools and education settings act on the recommendations of inspections and to increase the impact of inspection for improvement.

Published inspection reports include a written response, if provided, from the school or education setting outlining what it will do to address the recommendations for improvement in the report.

In some activities, the Inspectorate leads school improvement monitoring, which is initiated for schools where significant weaknesses relating mainly to the level of learning were noted during an inspection and are likely to be addressed through bespoke engagements with the Inspectorate. Typical engagements include support and advisory visits, the conduct of specific types of inspection, and support concerning action planning for improvement, with activities even planned for this monitoring.

Additional information on the Regional Inspectorate of Education in Madeira is available at: <https://www.madeira.gov.pt/ire>