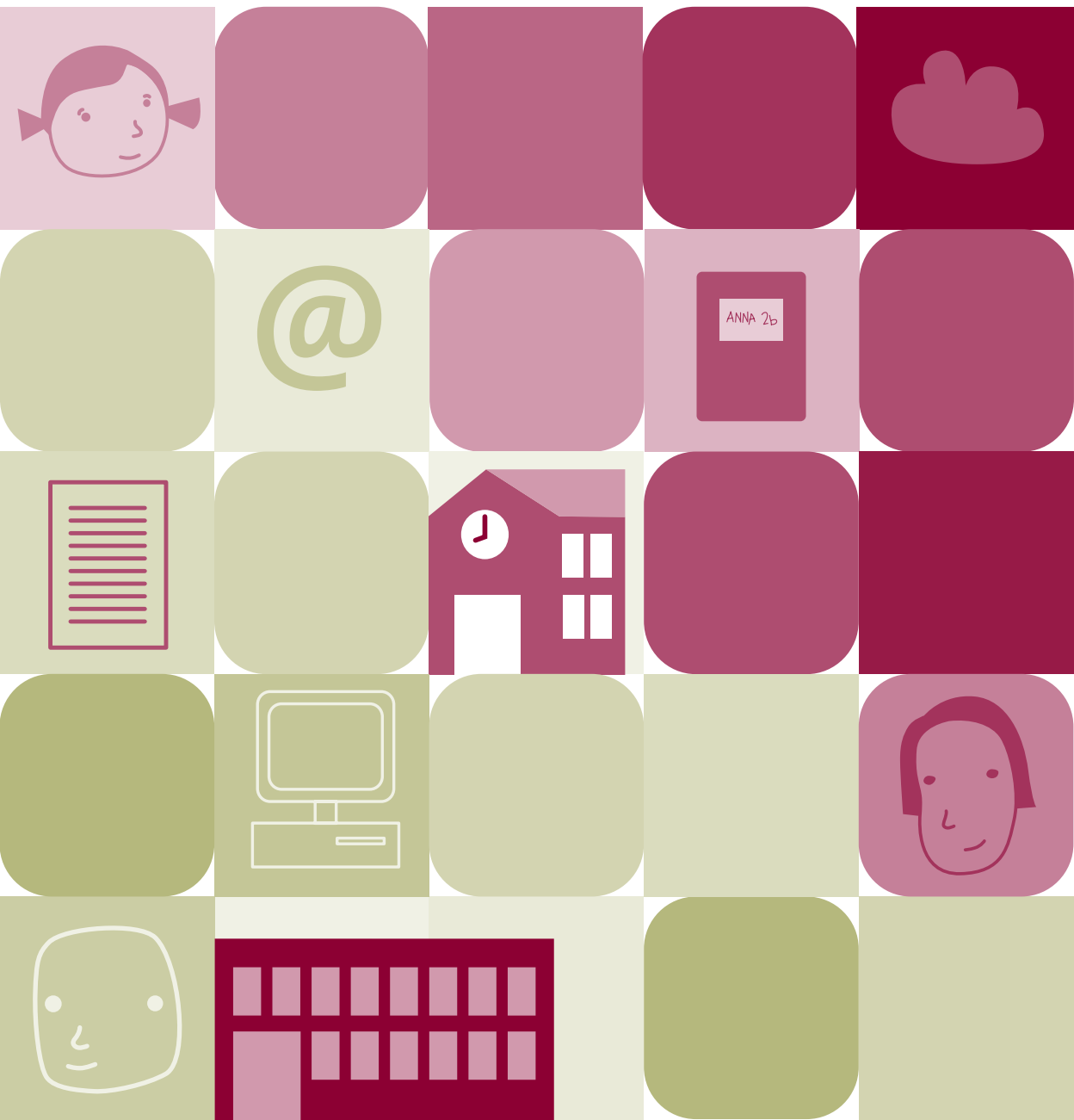


# Educational inspection 2004

Summary of inspection results



Order address:  
Fritzes kundservice  
SE-106 47 Stockholm, Sweden  
Phone: +46 8 690 95 76  
Fax: +46 8 690 95 50  
E-mail: [skolverket@fritzes.se](mailto:skolverket@fritzes.se)  
[www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se)

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# Educational inspection 2004

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## Foreword

In the appropriation directions for 2003, the Government commissioned the National Agency for Education to carry out educational inspections covering every municipality and all schools every six years. The inspection of school activities in 21 municipalities was carried out in the latter half of 2003. In the second round of inspections, carried out in 2004, the National Agency for Education inspected the school activities of the responsible organisations in 34 municipalities, covering a total of 846 schools at preschool class, compulsory and upper secondary school level. In addition to this, there was an inspection of adult education and an audit of the responsible organisations' duties in terms of pre-school activities and childcare for school children.

The inspections were carried out by counsellors from the National Agency for Education's Department for Educational Inspection. The work also involved externally recruited experts who were temporarily seconded to the department's inspection units in Umeå, Stockholm, Linköping, Gothenburg and Lund. In all, over 100 inspectors and experts took part in the inspection work.

The National Agency for Education's decision, based on the inspections, sets out what needs to be improved (areas for improvement) and what must be remedied immediately (critical areas) within each responsible organisation's sphere of responsibility. Within three months of the decision, the organisations responsible for schools must report to the National Agency for Education on the measures taken in light of the criticism received. The National Agency for Education will also follow up the effects of the inspection at local level within around two years of the inspection being completed.

Inspection work carried out so far has provided the National Agency for Education with valuable experience on which to build. The inspection methods will be subject to constant evaluation and development. The effects of the inspections from a national perspective have been assessed by the Swedish National Financial Management Authority (ESV), as reported in two interim reports during 2005. A full report is planned for January 2006.

An annual report *Educational inspection 2004 – survey and analysis of inspection results* has been drawn up by a project group within the National Agency for Education, comprising Tor Andersson, Anna Barklund, Eleonor Duvander, Clas-Uno Frykholm, Monica Gillenius, Liselotte Hakeberg, Simon Jernelöv, Gösta Karlsson, Magnus Lindblå, Andreas Pierrou and Birgit Skjönberg (project manager). Expert Kenneth Pahlsson was also involved. This report in English is a summary of the annual report.

Stockholm 7 October 2005

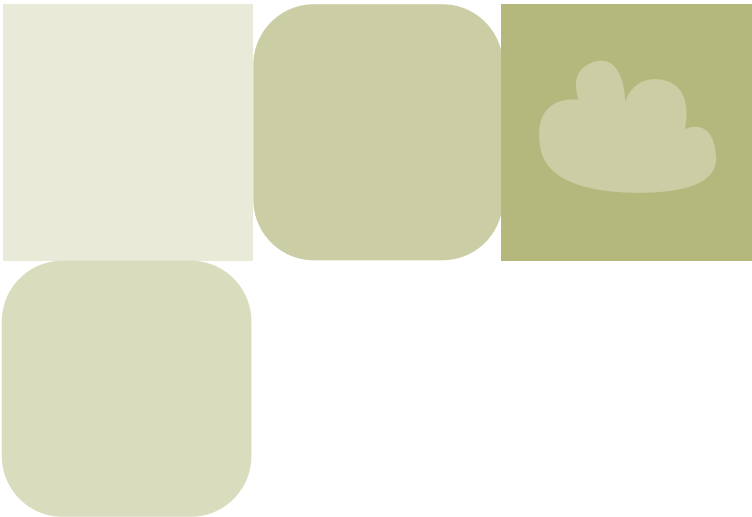
Leif Davidsson  
*Director-General*  
*Head of Dept. for Educational Inspection*

Birgit Skjönberg  
*Director of Education*  
*Project Manager*





# 1. SUMMARY



## 1.1. The purpose, basis and structure of the report

### Purpose

This annual report presents the results of the second stage of the National Agency for Education's educational inspection, carried out in 2004. The purpose of this report is to give an overall picture of the inspectors' observations and assessments in compulsory and upper secondary schools across 34 municipalities. The report also includes the results of the educational inspection of adult education in the municipalities visited, and an audit of the responsible organisations' duties in terms of pre-school activities and childcare for school children. The inspection covered municipal and independent schools.

Important target groups for the report include municipalities and schools, both those which were inspected and those facing an educational inspection in the future. It is hoped that the content of the report will make it possible and useful to use the material as study material at various levels within the responsible organisations' activities and provide the content on which to base a discussion of management by objectives in schools.

### Basis of report

The inspected schools included 765 compulsory schools (of which 45 are independent) and 81 upper secondary schools (of which 11 are independent), giving a total of 846 compulsory and upper secondary schools. The inspection covered over 200,000 children in preschool classes, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools, including over 2,000 students in compulsory schools for students with learning disabilities and over 1,000 students in upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities. The adult education activities inspected in 2004 covered over 25,000 students. There were also a number of children in a limited sample of the inspected municipalities' pre-schools and childcare facilities for school children.

The National Agency for Education has published inspection reports for each school management district/school and for each responsible organisation. For each responsible organisation there is also a decision, whereby the National Agency for Education sets out critical areas and areas for improvement. A total of 104 reports with descriptions and assessments have been published. The information in this annual report is based on these inspection reports. This means that the basis of the annual report on the National Agency for Education's educational inspection 2004 is extremely extensive. It has therefore been necessary to make certain representative selections from the collected documents,

particularly with regard to work on compulsory schools and upper secondary schools. It should also be noted that not all inspected upper secondary schools have been included in the analysis material. The City of Gothenburg was inspected in the second half of 2004 and the first half of 2005. Consequently, all the upper secondary school reports for Gothenburg have been included in the analysis material for the 2005 inspections, together with those compulsory schools in Gothenburg which were inspected in spring 2005.

In line with the National Agency for Education's obligations, this report also addresses the responsible organisations' duties in terms of pre-school activities and childcare for school children. The report is based on assessments in the municipal reports for the inspected municipalities. A selection of pre-schools was inspected on visits in the 34 municipalities. For some municipalities, the inspectors have written special reports on the inspection of the pre-schools visited. These pre-school reports can be found in the municipal reports for Borlänge, Gothenburg, Mark, Piteå, Kiruna, Strömsund and Nordmaling.

The inspection reports for inspections carried out in 2004 are listed in Appendix 1 and are published at <http://www.skolverket.se>. Appendix 2 lists a number of further sources used in compiling this annual report for the 2004 educational inspection.

## Structure and reading guide

The report presents trends and tendencies at school level, based on the inspectors' assessments of the quality of the activities inspected. One section of this summary also sets out the National Agency for Education's reflections on the results of the inspection. The aim is to encourage discussions about the results and the continued drive for improvements.

The report has separate sections reporting on the various types of school activity: preschool class, compulsory school, upper secondary school and adult education. The information in these sections of the report follows the structure used in the municipal and school reports. The report also contains thematic sections addressing steering and management, access to care and education, and resources for the activities. The idea is that a reader who is only interested in one particular type of school or one theme does not need to read the whole report, but can instead go straight to those sections which are of particular interest.

The report presents highly generalised descriptions of the schools' results and activities. However, in order to show concrete examples of the way schools operate successfully or less successfully, the generalised text is accompanied by examples from individual schools.

In its appropriation directions regarding the National Agency for Education's work in 2005, the Government commissioned the agency, in its status report for 2005, to highlight municipalities/schools with a high proportion of teachers with no teaching qualifications, plus the results of in-depth analyses including educational circumstances of children and young people in segregated areas. As part of the National Agency for Education's overall assessments in these areas, analyses of the educational inspection reports have been carried out with regard to compulsory schools in segregated areas and compulsory schools in municipalities with a low or high proportion of teachers with teaching qualifications.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Cf. The appropriation directions for the financial year 2005 for the National Agency for Education, point 1.2 Other objectives and feedback requirements – the National Agency for Education's status report 2005

## **1.2. The National Agency for Education's inspection function**

### **The scope of the educational inspection**

In 2003, the Government commissioned the National Agency for Education to carry out an educational inspection covering every municipality and all schools every six years. All municipal and independent schools are to be inspected. In terms of pre-school activities and childcare for school children, the National Agency for Education is required to focus on the way the responsible organisation takes responsibility for these activities.

Sweden has a total of almost 5,800 municipal and independent compulsory and upper secondary schools, which means that a complete inspection programme would have to cover just under 1,000 schools a year. During 2003 and 2004, the National Agency for Education built up, developed and quality assured the educational inspection system. As of 2005, the inspection programme is fully operational, covering 1,000 schools every year until 2008. The six-year task set by the Government is due to be completed in 2009, with the inspection of the remaining 600 of the 5,800 schools scheduled for that year.

### **The purpose of the educational inspection**

It is municipalities and other responsible organisations which, together with teachers, head teachers and other staff, have primary responsibility for organising and running the activity in such a way that the national educational objectives can be achieved.

The purpose of the educational inspection is to assess how the activities are working towards the national objectives and to check that national requirements set out in the school statutes are being followed. A crucial element of the inspection is auditing the quality work of municipalities and schools and their ability to improve their activities. As part of the inspection, the National Agency for Education assesses the extent to which the activity creates the necessary conditions for children, young people and adult students in the municipality to achieve the national objectives. Although the inspection as a whole is an external audit, it depends to a certain extent on self-assessment, presented in the local quality report, or on other self-initiated evaluation.

## The educational inspection model and implementation

The inspection is based on an inspection model with seven main areas within which all local activities are assessed. The model takes into account the results, operations and circumstances of the municipalities and schools. The audit work forming the basis for the National Agency for Education's current inspection model is not built solely on the agency's experiences from previous inspections and quality audits – it is also based on knowledge of similar models in other inspection contexts, both nationally and internationally. The National Agency for Education works constantly to exploit new experiences and continuously improve the inspection model.

The main areas of the inspection model are as follows:

*Results:* Norms and values, Knowledge

*Activities:* Work on norms and values, Teaching, Steering, management and quality work

*Conditions:* Access to information and education, Resources

The inspection model adopts a holistic approach based on current curricula. However, the purpose of the inspection is not to create a complete picture of all pre-school and educational activities at the time in question, but to focus on what is good or bad.

There are various phases to the educational inspection. The first phase involves compiling a list of the municipal and independent activities which each inspection period will cover. Visits and interviews can then be carried out. The collected inspection material is analysed, the responsible organisations are given the opportunity to review the factual description and a report is written. In a return visit to the municipality, representatives of the inspection team run through the conclusions and assessments in the report.

Based on the inspection, the National Agency for Education's decision sets out any shortcomings which require immediate action (critical areas). Within three months of the decision, the responsible organisation must report to the National Agency for Education on the measures taken in light of the criticism received. The National Agency for Education's decision also includes a report on areas which the agency believes require development (areas for improvement). The National Agency for Education does not give concrete proposals on how the schools or responsible organisations are to approach the measures for improvement. It is up to the responsible organisation and those with operational responsibility to decide what means and methods are needed to improve the activity. Any measures taken within the areas for improvement must be reported to the National Agency for Education within approximately two years.

Mutual respect is fundamental to the inspection and its implementation. The inspection shall focus on the issues which are important to everyone at the school. The assessments shall be based on the actual activity carried out. The entire inspection process shall be carried out professionally, with objectivity and with respect for local conditions, for the responsibility of the local provider and for individuals during visits at every operational level, as well as when writing the report.

### 1.3. Inspected municipalities 2003 and 2004

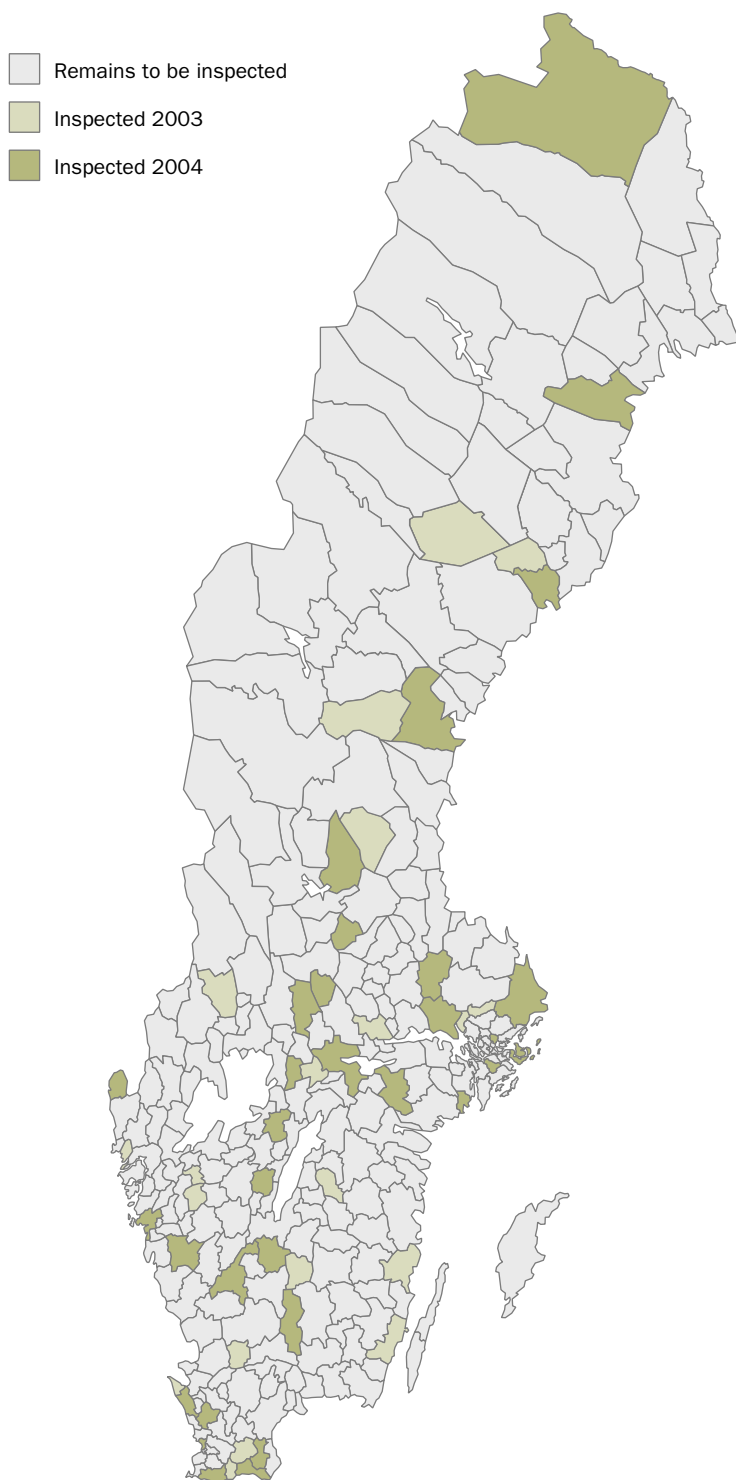
The following municipalities (in order of size) were inspected in 2003:

Bjurholm, Åsele, Munkfors, Boxholm, Essunga, Lekeberg, Markaryd, Vårgårda, Ånge, Sävsjö, Ovanåker, Knivsta, Sunne, Skurup, Lysekil, Sjöbo, Håbo, Höganäs, Köping, Oskarshamn and Kalmar.

The following municipalities (also in order of size) were inspected in 2004:

Ljusnarsberg, Nordmaling, Hällefors, Töreboda, Degerfors, Hylte, Trosa, Rättvik, Strömsund, Oxelösund, Tomelilla, Tidaholm, Vaggeryd, Svalöv, Heby, Lomma, Alvesta, Kiruna, Ystad, Gislaved, Katrineholm, Värmdö, Mark, Enköping, Trelleborg, Piteå, Borlänge, Norrtälje, Täby, Huddinge, Sundsvall, Helsingborg, Örebro and Gothenburg.





## 1.4. Trends and tendencies

During their audit of the schools, the inspectors determined whether the activity “must/should be improved” or whether the activity is “good/very good”. As mentioned above, the National Agency for Education’s decision, based on the inspection, sets out what the responsible organisation must remedy (critical areas) and what should be improved (areas for improvement). This section on trends and tendencies presents the inspectors’ assessments with the emphasis on what “must/should be improved”. Within these areas for improvement, the responsible organisations have already taken action or will be implementing changes in the long term. The National Agency for Education checks on the responsible organisations’ development work by following it up three months after the decision based on the educational inspection, and through follow-ups two years after the inspection was completed.

### Results in compulsory schools and upper secondary schools

#### Results of work on norms and values

##### *Compulsory school*

Students, teachers and parents are overwhelmingly positive about happiness and security at compulsory school. The working climate is usually felt to be good. In the majority of schools, based on their capabilities, students are able to work within a democratic framework and are reasonably aware of democratic principles. Students understand the importance of being able to and wishing to influence the activities of the school. Students show respect for the views, convictions and arguments of others. They respect the intrinsic value of others and the equal value of all people. Students do not tolerate offensive behaviour from other children or from adults. Students take responsibility for their education and the environment in which they work to a reasonable extent. The National Agency for Education’s inspectors conclude that the vast majority of compulsory schools function well in these respects.

However, the inspectors found that around one in ten of the inspected compulsory school management districts have deficiencies when it comes to the results of work on norms and values. This relates in particular to a number of schools with students in Years 7-9, where the climate is tough, where bullying and other offensive behaviour occurs and where language use needs to be improved. Criticism or need for improvement in around one in ten of the inspected compulsory school management districts can be seen as serious in the light of the provisions in the Swedish Education Act for combating all forms of offensive behaviour.

### *Upper secondary school*

As at compulsory school, students and teachers overwhelmingly see upper secondary school as a place where you can express your own opinions and where students show respect for the views, convictions and arguments of others. The vast majority of students take responsibility for their education and the place where they study. The inspectors found that most students do not tolerate offensive behaviour and that the students perceive the environment in which they study as safe, physically and socially. The inspectors also found that around one in ten of the inspected upper secondary schools have deficiencies when it comes to the results of work on norms and values.

## Knowledge results in schools

### *Compulsory school*

According to the National Agency for Education's statistics, a tenth of students at Swedish compulsory school are not qualified to be accepted on an upper secondary school programme and a quarter of students do not achieve the educational objectives in one or more subjects. This situation also applies to those compulsory schools inspected in 2004. The National Agency for Education's inspectors have concluded that over a quarter of school management districts with students in Year 5 should improve their work to ensure that students achieve the objectives. Around a third of school management districts with students in Year 9 are urged to do the same. In a number of municipalities, the inspectors have deemed the variation in results between different schools to be too large.

An important factor in being able to achieve good knowledge results is for students to be aware of the school's objectives. In over 40 percent of compulsory schools, the inspectors found that students were not sufficiently aware of the objectives for their own education.

### *Upper secondary school*

Students at upper secondary school are able to work well independently, but do not always have much of an insight into their own way of learning. The inspectors found that students at almost one third of inspected upper secondary schools do not know the objectives of the activity well enough. At 15 percent of upper secondary schools, the inspectors determined that the results need to be improved in terms of the knowledge objectives for students on national and specially designed programmes, and that improvements also need to be made in terms of the degree to which the students complete their education. On individual programmes (IV), the proportion of students who switch to national and specially designed programmes needs to increase at one in ten schools, according to the inspectors.

## Student participation in compulsory schools and upper secondary schools

### Work on norms and values

#### *Compulsory school*

The National Agency for Education's inspectors found that many schools have collaborative bodies such as class councils and student councils. However, the students do not feel that they have any real influence over life at school. The decisions taken within the collaborative body are not always seen as being particularly important. Norms and regulations for work and co-operation in the school are not always in place. Where they do exist, they are not always kept up-to-date or known about by the students. A common finding by inspectors is that the school does not co-operate enough with parents and students in establishing norms and attitudes or in relation to the physical and psychosocial work environment in general. In a third of the compulsory school management districts, the inspectors established that students and parents do not have sufficient influence over objectives and quality reports.

For almost half of the inspected school management districts, the inspectors stated that improvements should be carried out with regard to students' opportunities to exercise influence over their education and the inner workings of the school. It is the inspectors' view that influence, as prescribed in the national statutes, does not increase as students become older and more mature.

The work on a school's core values must constantly be maintained and renewed. Many compulsory schools are carrying out extensive and responsible work on norms and values, but in other schools this work needs to be improved. One in five compulsory school management districts were found to be working very well in combating all forms of offensive behaviour, bullying and harassment. The staff consciously work to prevent bullying and take immediate action if anyone is bullied. It was found that one in ten school management districts need to improve their work on preventing offensive behaviour or taking immediate action if someone is bullied.

However, the schools are not making use of all the available resources to further improve the results of their work on norms and values. The preventive work could be improved both in terms of relations between students and relations between students and adults in the school. The work on core values needs to be planned better. An action plan against offensive behaviour is vital if every school is to meet the objective of the Swedish Education Act for schools to be free of all offensive behaviour. The schools do not make use of this tool in the manner recommended in, for example, the National Agency

for Education's general guidelines on offensive behaviour<sup>2</sup>. The inspectors felt that over half of the compulsory school management districts had scope to improve their action plan against offensive behaviour in a manner which could support the preventive work and help ensure that the objectives regarding norms and values were better met.

### *Upper secondary school*

The co-operation between students and their school is deficient in a number of respects at upper secondary school level. It was found that over a quarter of the inspected schools need to improve their work on maintaining formal collaborative bodies. As with compulsory schools, as they move up the school students at almost half the upper secondary schools are not able to exercise an increasing level of influence over their education and the inner workings of the school. Work to counteract offensive behaviour should be improved. This can be achieved by the staff working more actively to counter all forms of offensive behaviour and by improving the action plans against offensive behaviour. Almost half the schools have been informed of the need to improve their action plans.

## Teaching

### *Compulsory school*

Around a quarter of the compulsory school management districts need to remedy or improve teaching in a number of areas. According to the inspectors, there is scope to strengthen the teaching process and to work to ensure that students achieve the knowledge objectives to a greater extent by improving:

- students' awareness of the course objectives
- the way working and teaching methods in the classroom are formulated to promote development of knowledge and skills
- the way courses are designed to meet the need for special support for students who are entitled to such support
- the way individual study plans, action programmes and other written agreements and plans to promote participation and opportunities for taking responsibility are tackled

One of the issues relating to both influence and teaching is how students are offered entitlement to a number of options within the timetable's flexibility to deal with student choice, language choice and school choice. These are areas

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2. The National Agency for Education's General Guidelines 2004: General guidelines and comments regarding work to combat all forms of offensive behaviour

where the statutory regulations are felt to be extremely difficult to follow and where the inspectors noted shortcomings at over half of the compulsory school management districts. One in ten school management districts also do not always offer first language tuition or tutoring in students' first language in line with the rights which students with a first language other than Swedish have.

Personal development reviews at compulsory school are considered to be functioning well. Regular personal development reviews which meet the needs of parents and students for information and guidance are being carried out to a large extent.

A quarter of compulsory school management districts need to improve when it comes to teachers and students openly assessing learning together. This applies to all years, not least the lower age groups. The inspectors found that almost a third of school management districts with students who are graded at compulsory school need to develop their work on assessment and grading. Decisions are not always supported by a comprehensive base, taking various forms of knowledge into account. Grading was found not always to follow national regulations.

When results are followed up, reports usually only include Swedish, mathematics and English teaching. This creates a risk of focusing on a "three-subject school" and watering down the commitment to knowledge. There is often a lack of analyses to provide a clearer picture of the differences in results between boys and girls.

Another area in which there is room for improvement at compulsory school is computer equipment and other technology. Over one in five school management districts need to improve this support function.

### *Upper secondary school*

As with compulsory schools, upper secondary schools also need to improve their action programmes and work to ensure that teaching meets students' need for support. The need for improvement applies to between three and four schools in ten. Access to first language tuition is unsatisfactory at almost one in five schools.

One area in which the assessment of the upper secondary schools' work differs a great deal from the assessment of compulsory schools is how regular personal development reviews which meet the needs of parents and students for information and guidance are carried out. It was found that over a third of the inspected upper secondary schools needed to improve their work in this regard. The evaluation of teaching plus assessment and grading are other areas of development for upper secondary schools. Almost half of schools need to improve their work so that grading is carried out to a greater extent from a comprehensive base, taking various forms of knowledge into account.

## Steering, management and quality work in compulsory schools and upper secondary schools

### Quality work

The work of auditing and improving compulsory schools and upper secondary schools has systematic deficiencies. The work does not follow a chain of management by objectives and results, which involves setting targets, carrying out the activity, assessing it, developing it and setting new targets based on the assessment work carried out. Over 50 percent of the compulsory school management districts and over 60 percent of the upper secondary schools do not apply the National Agency for Education's general guidelines on quality reporting in schools. Either there is no quality report, or any quality reports which do exist are not drawn up in line with the basic requirement to report the achievement of objectives and any measures planned to develop the activity over the next year.

### The head teacher's overall responsibility

In over a quarter of compulsory school management districts and a quarter of upper secondary schools, the inspectors found a need to improve the way the head teacher takes overall management responsibility for teaching, staff and administrative development. The conditions under which head teachers work are not always considered to be ideal. The municipality, school authority and school management should improve their ability to communicate and work together to steer operations effectively. The municipal organisation can be unclear for the school management, e.g. with regard to decision making. The school management finds it difficult to gain an overview and to know where to turn for help on various issues. There are examples of schools where the head teacher has sole responsibility for managing 70 people. The turnover of head teachers is relatively high at the inspected schools.

### A few legal issues

In a quarter of compulsory school management districts and one in five upper secondary schools, documentation needs to be improved with regard to enrolment in education for students with learning disabilities, action programmes, grade directories, etc.

## **Fees in compulsory schools and upper secondary schools**

The National Agency for Education's Educational Inspection 2004 has found that schools both at compulsory and upper secondary level do not always follow the provisions stating that education must always be free of charge for students. They are supposed to have access to books, stationery, tools and other aids needed for a modern education without having to pay anything. However, there may be individual occasions when students may incur an insignificant cost. At upper secondary school, it is up to the responsible organisation to decide whether students will have to provide their own materials in certain circumstances. In around one in five compulsory school management districts and a quarter of upper secondary schools, the inspectors have stated that action must be taken to change the situation regarding student fees.

## **Results in adult education**

The students in adult education have plenty of scope to express their own views. They respect each other and do not tolerate offensive behaviour. The adult students are good or very good at working both independently and with others. Awareness of the objectives of adult education needs to be improved, particularly for students taking Swedish for immigrants (sfi). Improvements should also be made in order to ensure that students achieve the objectives of the education to a greater extent.

## **Student participation in adult education**

There are deficiencies in the way schools co-operate with students in establishing norms and attitudes and in relation to the physical and psychosocial work environment in general. The inspectors find that the students have far too little opportunity to influence the objectives of their education.

The work on individual study plans needs extensive improvement within adult education. Support for adult students is not sufficiently tailored to the individual. The organisation of the teaching needs to be more flexible, particularly with regard to the times when study starts and ends. Other key areas for improvement include assessment of the adults' learning plus quality assurance of grading.

The inspectors have given highly positive assessments of the way adult education works with the world of work, unions and society at large.



## **Steering, management and quality work in adult education**

The inspectors find that communication between the managers of adult education on the one hand and municipality and administrative managers on the other needs to be improved. Further work is also required to ensure that, for a number of adult education courses, the head teachers are better able to take responsibility for the overall management of the teaching, staff and administrative functions at their adult education facility. Auditing and improvement work at the school management level needs considerable improvement.

## **Pre-school activities and childcare for school children**

In the majority of municipalities inspected in 2004, objectives for pre-school activities are formulated in local school plans and the pre-schools' own work plans. The inspectors find that the objectives can generally be traced back to the national steering documents. However, both at municipal and operational level, there is a major lack of concrete objectives for childcare for school children. Instead, it appears that childcare for school children is covered by the objectives set out for compulsory school. While common objectives can promote co-operation and a shared vision, there is a risk that this approach could marginalise the specific tasks and activities of childcare for school children.

The National Agency for Education's 2004 inspections show that issues regarding influence and participation are a priority area in overall municipal work and in the work of pre-schools and leisure-time centres. Several inspections have also shown that quality reports are produced for pre-school activities, but that assessment of childcare for school children is scarce at municipal level. The 2004 inspections suggest that municipalities' work on offering support to children within pre-school activities and childcare for school children varies in quality from municipality to municipality and from school to school.

## **Education for students with learning disabilities**

In a quarter of compulsory school management districts and one in five upper secondary schools, documentation needs to be improved with regard to enrolment in education for students with learning disabilities, action programmes, grade directories, etc.

## Compulsory school for students with learning disabilities

For the majority of the schools inspected, the inspectors find that schools for students with learning disabilities are developing norms and values in line with national objectives. However, there are examples of schools where improvements need to be made.

Staff at the inspected schools for students with learning disabilities report that students in general have a desire to learn. The schools base their work on the circumstances and needs of each student. However, some of the inspection reports express concerns that there is too great a focus on emotional, social and mobility knowledge development, which means that not all students are sufficiently challenged when it comes to acquiring knowledge.

The overall picture of teaching in schools for students with learning disabilities is positive. Many students with learning disabilities are integrated into compulsory school. These reports also state that the quality of the teaching depends on the competence of the individual teacher, and that the inspection has identified a lack of knowledge about the steering documents relating to schools for students with learning difficulties.

Some of the inspection reports for compulsory schools for students with learning disabilities make it clear that not all such schools regularly inform students and parents of the entitlement to receive grades and the option of a tenth school year.

## Upper secondary school for students with learning disabilities

For norms and values and knowledge, the overall finding for upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities is that the results are relatively good, but that work is required to improve the way upper secondary school and upper secondary school for students with learning disabilities are merged when they are to be run as an integrated unit. With regard to the knowledge development of students, there is cause to review the instruments available for assessing the extent to which the national objectives are being achieved.

There are differences between upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities when it comes to how strictly they follow the syllabi for education for students with disabilities. There is a need for staff to study and put into practice the content of the syllabi in order to ensure that students receive the education to which they are entitled. This applies particularly to students who are integrated into upper secondary school.

The inspection shows that the way of working at the majority of schools is varied in order to meet the needs and circumstances of the students. The staff at upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities often consciously focus on giving students experiences of life outside school.

At practically all the inspected upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities, individual study plans are drawn up for the students, who also, to a lesser extent, receive an action programme. Individual adaptation is well developed at schools for students with learning disabilities.

At upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities, it has been found that, in breach of the national statutes, the students are not graded, but instead only receive a certificate confirming that they have completed their education.

## Independent schools

There is great diversity among the independent schools, with the group showing major variations in their organisation and way of working. The independent schools differ from the municipal schools not only in the respect that on average they have fewer students. They are also more likely to have their own teaching profile. It is also the case that the staff at independent schools have made an active choice and that this affects the working climate in the schools. The inspectors' findings regarding the results and activities in the independent schools are generally positive. The inspectors often stress that the fact that parents and students have selected their school has a major impact on student commitment and the school's good relations with parents. The atmosphere in what are often small schools is usually calm and secure. However, the inspectors' findings on students' knowledge development and student influence over the running of the school are mixed.

In the national report in which the National Agency for Education published the results of the inspections carried out in 2003<sup>3</sup>, the number of independent schools inspected was so small that it was impossible to present a general picture of these schools. This report on inspections carried out in 2004 provides general statements under each section of the report regarding the results of inspections of 45 independent compulsory schools and 11 independent upper secondary schools. The proportion of reports from independent schools amounts to six percent of all the reports which form the basis for the national report.

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3. The National Agency for Education (2004) The National Agency for Education's latest analyses 2004, Educational Inspection 2003 from a national perspective – an analysis of the inspection results, summary

The number of independent schools is still not large enough to make a more in-depth comparison of results, activities and conditions in relation to the municipal schools. It will be possible to make such a comparison once more independent schools have been inspected. At that point, the independent schools should be compared with municipal schools which match the independent schools in terms of student numbers, age profile and geographical distribution.

## 1.5. Reflections on the results of the inspection

### Background

In the first comprehensive analysis carried out by the National Agency for Education based on the 2003 inspections, it became clear that the basic data was limited and there were certain deficiencies in the methods employed. Despite this, a consistent picture of Swedish pre-schools and schools was discernible on many points. This year's report is based on considerably greater and more varied material. For example, the inspection has involved more medium-sized and large municipalities. The basic data for analyses of upper secondary schools is also much more comprehensive.

Considerable improvements have also been made in terms of methodology, including the way the inspections were carried out and the quality assurance of the reports. We therefore have an improved foundation from which to draw more reliable conclusions about the state of Swedish pre-schools and schools. However, the results – and the conclusions which may be drawn from them – come with certain caveats. The individual school reports are based on relatively few lesson observations and interviews with a limited number of students, parents and staff. There is naturally a possibility that the inspectors may have missed something important or misinterpreted something they observed. Different inspectors may also make different assessments of similar phenomena, although a great deal of work has gone into designing common criteria for the assessments.

While the qualitative methods may have certain inherent weaknesses, it is the personal visits “in reality” which make the material unique and interesting. What is more, the body of material is extremely comprehensive. In the 34 municipalities inspected, almost 850 compulsory schools and upper secondary schools were visited, around 5,000 lessons observed and more than 1,000 head teachers, administrators and education politicians were interviewed, along with many times that number of students, parents, teachers and other staff. Added to that is the extensive written material which has been gathered.

The reliability of the results was confirmed with the responsible organisations and schools, in part through the fact checking carried out before the reports were completed and also during discussion of the results and assessments as part of the feedback process. The inspectors have found so far that the responsible organisations and schools almost always agree that the National Agency for Education's inspection reports give a true and fair picture of their

activity. This is also the conclusion reached by the Swedish National Financial Management Authority in its external audit of the National Agency for Education's inspections.<sup>4</sup>

## Overall picture

The results and the overall picture of Swedish pre-schools and schools which came out of the first national report<sup>5</sup> are strengthened and given more depth in this latest report. Only in a few cases does a different picture emerge.

The overall impression is still that many aspects of Swedish pre-schools and schools work well and that the conditions for achieving the national objectives are good. Most municipalities and schools offer an acceptable range of care and education. Premises, equipment and teaching materials are generally of good quality. The supply of teachers with teaching qualifications in the inspected municipalities is on a par with the country as a whole.

The school environment is overwhelmingly perceived as calm and secure. According to the inspectors' reports, many schools have gone to great lengths to strengthen students' values. In many places, this work is considered to have yielded positive results, as has the systematic work of schools to combat bullying and offensive behaviour. To a large extent, students take responsibility for each other and for their school environment.

However, the essentially positive picture is not as universally positive in this year's data, which includes more compulsory schools and upper secondary schools in medium-sized and large municipalities. In the later years of compulsory school, and on certain programmes at upper secondary school, there are reports of truancy, graffiti, vandalism, bad language, threats of violence, bullying and offensive behaviour.

In the area of development, learning and knowledge, there is also cause to slightly revise the relatively positive picture from last year's report. This applies largely to compulsory schools, where a greater proportion are now being urged to take action to improve students' knowledge results. Of particular concern are the knowledge results for boys at certain inspected schools.

At upper secondary school, students are able to take a range of programmes, with the picture varying a great deal from one programme to another. Students following the natural sciences and social sciences programmes generally have

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4. The Swedish National Financial Management Authority (September 2005), Rolf Sandahl, Sara Bringle, The National Agency for Education's educational inspection – an assessment of its effects, Interim report 2: Second round of inspections, spring 2004

5. The National Agency for Education (2004) The National Agency for Education's latest analyses 2004, Educational Inspection 2003 from a national perspective – an analysis of the inspection results, summary

a higher grade average compared with students on other programmes. The proportion of students who receive a Fail grade for one or more courses, or who receive no grades at all for courses or project work so that no final grade can be given, is far too high at many schools. The knowledge results on the individual programmes also need to be improved to facilitate a swifter transition to national and specially designed programmes.

The educational inspection and other studies carried out by the National Agency for Education show that work initiated by students and ways of working which engage students have become more common in compulsory school and upper secondary school. According to the inspection reports, this has led to an increased desire to learn. At the same time, considering this year's results, there may be reason to reflect on whether these ways of working serve all students equally well. Ways of working which require the individual student to take major responsibility for his or her own learning appear to be less suitable for boys and for students from a home environment with no tradition of study.

The need to improve measures for students with special needs was highlighted in last year's summary of the 2003 inspection. The report stated that there were shortcomings in terms of both allocating resources for this purpose and the way the special support was given. These comments remain valid today.

Research into what makes a successful school points to the importance of an effective system for steering, management and quality work. The focus is on steering and management issues, with the head teacher as pedagogical and didactic leader constituting the single most significant success factor. This year's inspections show that there is considerable room for improvement in this area.

The 2004 report contains special studies and in-depth examinations of the issues which arose in the National Agency for Education's report Educational Inspection 2003 from a national perspective<sup>6</sup>. The issues include schools with high or low proportions of teachers with teaching qualifications, individual adaptation and measures for students with special needs, students at compulsory school with a foreign background and the variations in results between boys and girls.

Below are a number of reflections on some of the key areas covered in the report. The purpose of these reflections is to identify areas which require closer scrutiny in future inspections. The purpose is also to provide a basis for discussions and proposing initiatives, both at local and national level.

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6. The National Agency for Education (2004) The National Agency for Education's latest analyses 2004, Educational Inspection 2003 from a national perspective – an analysis of the inspection results

## Teaching

### Head teacher as pedagogical leader

As mentioned above, research into successful schools stresses the importance of the head teacher as a pedagogical leader.<sup>7</sup> A pedagogical leader is generally understood to be a head teacher who is interested in the way teaching is carried out at his or her particular school, and the results achieved. A good pedagogical leader takes responsibility for the quality of teaching by initiating pedagogical discussions, preferably based on classroom observations, during which the head teacher is able to form an opinion of the way different teachers teach and what the students learn. The head teacher's observations of the teaching will then form the basis for formal and informal discussions focusing on the pedagogical issues and students' results.

Once again, the inspections highlight major problems regarding head teachers' ability or desire to act as a pedagogical leader. The reasons given are often lack of time, far too heavy an administrative workload and the large number of day-to-day problems which have to be solved there and then. Regular changes to the role of head teacher are also said to make it more difficult to demonstrate pedagogical leadership.

Some municipalities report difficulties in recruiting competent head teachers. It is not uncommon for someone to become head teacher of a type of school for which they have no actual training. For example, head teachers for compulsory schools are frequently recruited from pre-schools. It is also the case that head teachers are recruited from other sectors in society, for example from public agencies or the armed forces. This can cause certain difficulties when it comes to exercising pedagogical leadership. As well as a person feeling that they do not have sufficient knowledge to be a pedagogical leader, there is also the problem of lacking the legitimacy to act as a pedagogical leader in the eyes of the teachers to be managed.

All this is something which needs to be discussed openly in schools and municipalities. The head teachers need better conditions to function as pedagogical leaders. All head teachers, whatever their background, must be given skills development that is relevant to their work. The National Agency for Education has previously expressed serious concern that only half of all head teachers have completed national head teacher training, and that 27 percent

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7. Grosin, L. (2004): "Forskningen om framgångsrika skolor som grund för skolutveckling" (Research into successful schools as a basis for school development) in "Skolutvecklingens många ansikten" (The many faces of school development), Berg, G & Sherp, H-Å. (ed.), The Swedish Agency for School Development, *Forskning i fokus* (Research in focus), no.15.



of head teachers have not taken part in either national or municipal school management training.<sup>8</sup>

## Ways of working and teaching

Key to the fundamental view of teaching as expressed in the national steering documents is the stipulation that all children, students and adult learners must be given the opportunity to achieve the national objectives and optimum development based on their circumstances and needs. Schools should strive to ensure that every student takes personal responsibility for his or her studies and working environment. Students should be given real influence over the lesson content and teaching methods. The role of the teacher as a facilitator in the students' learning process is emphasised more than used to be the case.

The success of such an approach to teaching depends in part on making the objectives for the activity clear and constantly following up the extent to which the objectives are being met. If the objectives are not being met, various actions must be taken. However, this is not currently how things stand. Students' knowledge of the objectives is poor in many schools, and a large proportion of the inspected schools are being urged to take a more systematic approach to monitoring the development of students' knowledge.

As with the previous inspections, in visits to compulsory and upper secondary schools inspectors have encountered a number of different ways of working and teaching – everything from the teacher being responsible for activities and reflection to teaching where students, in groups or individually, reflect for themselves and try to find answers to questions or solutions to problems. Group work, project work and themed studies are commonplace, as are other forms of self-initiated individual work.

As in last year's national report, it is clear that approaches which actively involve students, with students independently having to seek knowledge and take responsibility for their education, place great demands on teachers and students alike. The teachers must be knowledgeable and well-prepared with ideas and materials, they must always be active and aware of how things are going in the various groups, they must be able to inspire and ensure that everyone keeps up, and they must be able to offer support and help to those experiencing difficulties. The students have to learn to take responsibility for their studies, to get the most out of the freedom and opportunities given and to make good use of their time.

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8. The National Agency for Education (2004), The National Agency for Education's status report 2004 on pre-school activities, childcare for school children, schools and adult education, report no. 249

There is no doubt that actively involving the students increases their desire to learn, but it would appear that this approach does not suit all students equally well. One hypothesis supported in several school reports is that the approach of actively involving students is less suitable for boys and for students from home environments with no tradition of study.

It would generally seem to be the case that a situation where objectives are unclear but where the way of working offers great freedom for the individual rarely leads to successful fulfilment of the objectives. This particularly applies to students who are not used to taking responsibility and who may need more support and clearer structure in their work.

Several school reports state that teaching, particularly where it is largely of the type that actively involves students, can be perceived as undemanding, with low expectations of students' progress. Organisationally, it can also be difficult for teachers to find the time to give support to everyone who needs it.

It is vital that different ways of working and teaching are subject to constant pedagogical discussion based on the ability of the students and the school to achieve the objectives. As mentioned above, the school's head teacher has a particular responsibility in this context.

### *Individual adaptations and measures for students with special needs*

The education received in each type of school must be equal, wherever in the country it may be. The Education Act states that the education shall provide the pupils with knowledge and, in co-operation with the homes, promote their harmonious development into responsible human beings and members of the community. Consideration must also be given to students with special needs<sup>9</sup>.

The curricula for the various types of school (Lpo 94 and Lpf 94) clearly state that the teaching must be adapted to the circumstances and needs of each student. The national objectives provide the standards for achieving equivalence. Equal education does not mean that teaching must be carried out in the same way everywhere or that school resources must be allocated similarly. Account must be taken of the students' varying circumstances, needs and also, for the voluntary types of school, level of knowledge. There are various ways of achieving the objectives.

The Education Act and the curricula clearly describe the requirement for equal education. It is therefore remarkable that one quarter of the compulsory school management districts need to improve their work to meet students' needs for special support and that over a third of upper secondary schools were criticised or urged to improve their work on identifying the need for and implementing measures for special support. It is also unacceptable that some

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9. The Education Act, Chapter 1 Section 2

head teachers still state lack of resources as the primary reason for students not receiving the support they need.

Unfortunately, the action programmes for students with special needs often contain a description of what the school requires from the student in terms of behaviour and work. It is much rarer to find a statement of what the school intends to do to individualise the teaching and support the student. Compulsory schools and upper secondary schools often set up small groups or employee student assistants so that the students can have access to more help. Creating small groups is an organisational solution; it is difficult for the schools to see what further action needs to be taken in terms of increasing the effectiveness and quality of the teaching if they fail to systematically assess and analyse the effects of the teaching and the students' learning. Many schools have shortcomings in this area.

Individualisation is often well-developed within compulsory school for students with learning disabilities and upper secondary school for students with learning disabilities, but here too there is room for improvement when it comes to action programmes. However, some of these schools have problems when it comes to what staff know about the content of the steering documents and especially the syllabi. This can particularly affect students who are integrated into various classes and groups in compulsory school and upper secondary school.

Within upper secondary school individual programmes (IV) (including programme oriented individual programmes – PRIV – and induction courses for newly arrived students with a foreign background – IIVIK), the quality varies greatly from municipality to municipality. According to the

Upper Secondary School Ordinance, the objective is for students to be prepared to study on a national or specially designed programme. However, not all municipalities take this objective seriously and nor do they stress to students that working life requires good basic knowledge of general subjects as well as vocational subjects. A similar concern is that there is a tendency in the schools to reduce the scope of the education<sup>10</sup>, particularly for students on national vocationally oriented programmes, instead of giving support. It is primarily the core subjects, often Swedish B, which are reduced. It is vital that, along with the demands of working life, the schools also emphasise the importance of a good education for the individual student's personal development and future.

Some upper secondary schools have even started making use of the specially designed programme (SM) as some form of support measure, allowing students to “drop” courses which are considered difficult. This is not what the

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10. Cf. Reduced programme, Chapter 5, Section 23 of the Upper Secondary School Ordinance

specially designed programme was created for, and the students should instead receive the support they need. The problem of support only being given in Swedish, English and mathematics often arises and is common to both compulsory and upper secondary schools. Students with special needs must also be able to receive support for other subjects and courses.

The shortcomings of municipalities and schools in assessing their own activities become particularly apparent when inspecting the way schools work with students with special needs. The school's poor monitoring of knowledge in the early school years, deficient analysis of the results at compulsory and upper secondary schools, and a lack of joint discussions on national objectives in curricula and syllabi are some of the shortcomings highlighted by the 2004 inspection. In order for students to receive the support to which they are

entitled, staff at the schools need to discuss, to a much greater extent, what ways of working need to be developed and how teaching is to be organised in order to meet the different needs of the students. The head teacher's role in these discussions cannot be stressed enough. The current trends in teaching methods in school need to be analysed further, with a particular focus on the knowledge results of boys. It is also important to carry out a specific analysis of the results within upper secondary school individual programmes (IV) and the vocationally oriented programmes.

## Assessment, grading and evaluation of learning

The system for assessment and grading is, in formal terms, an exercise of authority. The teacher's assessment of knowledge can have a major impact on the individual student and grades cannot be challenged.

However, there is a whole host of rules regarding grading. The most fundamental rules are addressed in the curricula, which state that students' knowledge must be assessed based on the national objectives and criteria laid down for a subject or a course. More detailed rules are set out in the ordinances for the various types of school. To support the local work of applying the national objectives and grading criteria, the National Agency for Education has also drawn up general guidelines (SKOLFS 2004:23). The National Agency for Education hopes that the general guidelines, the comments and the example evaluations will help to improve the work in schools.

Unfortunately the 2004 inspection clearly shows that teachers and head teachers need to improve their expertise in the area of assessment, grading and evaluation of learning. The rules and information which are easily available via the National Agency for Education website, etc., are not applied sufficiently by teachers and head teachers.

For example, assessment and grading are not always supported by a comprehensive base, taking various forms of knowledge into account. Many schools are still clearly fixated on exams, particularly in mathematics, but also in Swedish, Swedish as a second language, English and other subjects/courses. Nor are the national tests always used in the way described in the steering document. The inspectors note that when deviations occur, they can be considerable, often meaning that high grades are much more common for a course than the results of the national tests suggest would be reasonable. This applies particularly to mathematics. Certain schools are failing to document grades in line with the legislation.

In many cases, staff at compulsory schools for students with learning disabilities and upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities lack knowledge of the national statutes and syllabi. Some upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities fail to grade their students, which contravenes the national statutes, while in compulsory schools for students with learning disabilities there are particular shortcomings regarding information on entitlement to be graded.

It is surprising that head teachers rarely implement any special initiatives to ensure equal and fair grading. It is rare for schools to carry out systematically documented analyses of grading and results, and for staff to then discuss these analyses.

The inspectors found that practically all compulsory schools carry out regular personal development reviews of good quality which meet the needs of students and parents for information and guidance. However, around 40 per cent of the upper secondary schools inspected need to improve their procedures for personal development reviews, and a quarter of upper secondary schools do not meet the statutory requirement for regular reviews.

Teachers and students are supposed to work together to openly evaluate learning. A quarter of compulsory school management districts need to improve their work in evaluating learning. This applies to all years, but particularly to students in the lower age groups and schools which are trialling operating outside the standard timetable. For upper secondary schools, the picture of students' ability to evaluate their own learning is highly mixed. Upper secondary schools also have room for improvement when it comes to the evaluation of learning.

It is vital that schools, both municipal and independent, set up procedures for grading and assessment, as grading is an exercise of authority which has a direct impact on an individual's future opportunities for further study and a career. It is also important to have successful personal development reviews for all students and that the evaluation of learning is satisfactory at all schools.

## Variation in conditions, processes and results

### Compulsory schools in segregated areas

In order, based on the reports from the National Agency for Education's educational inspection 2004, to gain a picture of the educational conditions for students in schools with a relatively high proportion of students from a foreign background, a sample of these compulsory schools has been taken, comprising 29 schools where ten percent or more of the students are immigrants. Does the picture at our sample schools differ from that in other inspected schools?

The answer has to be yes, with the differences disadvantaging schools with a high proportion of immigrant students. In every area in the inspection model, the inspectors' grading of "very good" is achieved three times more often by schools not included in our sample than by our sample schools.

The results of the sample schools' work on norms and values need to be improved. The fact that the students are rarely given any real influence over the way of working and studying also makes it difficult for them to take responsibility for their own studies.

The overall impression is that the way many schools focus on the subjects of Swedish, English and mathematics, which determine eligibility for further study, puts the students in the sample schools at a disadvantage. It is also sometimes the case that a student's choices are restricted to the subjects which determine eligibility and that any action programmes set up only cover these subjects. The question is whether in these cases compulsory school manages to give students the knowledge they need to progress to upper secondary school, even though they may have achieved the formal eligibility requirements.

The analysis also shows that action programmes, which are set up more often for students in schools with high numbers of immigrants than in other schools, only address what the student must do, not the school's measures to improve achievement of the objectives. It should also be pointed out that there is often a shortfall in access to tuition in Swedish as a second language and first language tuition for those students who need it. It is also the case that tutoring in the student's first language is not offered to all those who need it. The schools are not aware of the rules which apply in this area. This is particularly an issue at schools where the composition of students means that knowledge of the rules for students with a first language other than Swedish is especially important.

The conclusion is that the assessment made in the study *Students with a foreign background*<sup>11</sup> has been confirmed and, according to the 2004 inspec-

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11. *Students with a foreign background*, Report to the Government 1 October 2004. Ref. no. 75-2004:545

tion, the situation has not improved. Poor language skills contribute to lack of success at school, but there are shortcomings in first language tuition and the quality of teaching in Swedish as a second language is poor. The National Agency for Education's earlier assessment that more targeted initiatives are required for students who have immigrated to the country, and particularly for those who have immigrated after the usual age for starting school, has been reinforced by the analyses of the 2004 inspection reports.

### Schools in municipalities with a low or high proportion of teachers with teaching qualifications for compulsory school

A comparative study has been made between schools in municipalities with low and high proportions of teachers with teaching qualifications.<sup>12</sup> The survey is based on the collected assessments by the National Agency for Education's inspectors in the areas of Knowledge and Teaching. The study shows quite a varied picture with regard to knowledge results in both groups of municipalities, with better knowledge results for municipalities with a high proportion of teachers with teaching qualifications. An analysis was carried out to determine what impact background factors such as the students' gender, foreign background and parents' level of education had on the differences in the knowledge results. The conclusion is that the differences remain even after the relevant background factors have been taken into account.

An analysis of the teaching was then carried out in both groups of schools. The purpose of this part of the study was to establish whether students in schools in municipalities with a low proportion of teachers with teaching qualifications can be said to have equal access to good teaching compared with students in schools in municipalities with a high proportion of teachers with teaching qualifications.

The pattern which emerges can be interpreted such that municipalities with a low proportion of teachers with teaching qualifications have a relatively large number of schools where the students have access to "very good" teaching, and at the same time there is a relatively large number of schools where the teaching "must/should be improved". However, in schools in municipalities with a high proportion of teachers with teaching qualifications, the situation is that the vast majority of students have access to teaching which was assessed as being "good", while a small number of students attend schools which received the assessments "must/should be improved" or "very good". In other words,

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12. Cf. the mandate for the educational inspection in the appropriation directions for the financial year 2005 for the National Agency for Education, point 1.2 Other objectives and feedback requirements, plus Prop. 2004/05: Expenditure area 16, section 6.1.5 School Staff, Teachers and Head Teachers

there is a greater quality range in the teaching in municipalities with a low proportion of teachers with teaching qualifications than in municipalities with a high proportion.

This study should be seen as a first attempt, using the National Agency for Education's inspection reports, to investigate the conditions for students' work in schools with teachers with varying levels of competence. The results of the study raise a number of questions. Is the pattern discerned in this study one which would be repeated in a study of a much larger number of schools? What is the situation regarding access to special needs teachers? Do teachers work in teams? If so, what is the composition of the teams? In this particular case, the knowledge results have only been related to teaching, with a focus on how the schools tackle objectives and syllabi, support, action programmes plus assessment and grading. Other conditions at the schools also have an impact on whether students get an equal education.

The school's general climate needs to be taken into account. Work on norms and values and on steering and management needs to be studied in more detail. Access to resources should also be analysed in more depth. This study only took teachers' formal qualifications into consideration. Taking the matter a stage further, there is the question of whether teachers with formal qualifications are teaching in the subjects and at the levels for which they are qualified. It is important that broader and more in-depth studies continue to be carried out in this area.

## Variation in results between girls and boys

Last year's national report expressed concern regarding the growing gap in the knowledge results between boys and girls, with the inspectors being urged to monitor this trend in future inspections. This has been the case, although no in-depth study of the underlying causes has been carried out. It is likely that several interacting factors are involved, both at school and in society at large. As in earlier studies and National Agency for Education statistics, the inspection reports show that girls generally outperform boys at compulsory school.

In a review of current knowledge on young people in school, entitled "Changing gender patterns?"<sup>13</sup>, shifts in traditional positions are indicated by gender researchers in Sweden and in other countries. More and more studies are showing that girls as a group perform well in school and enjoy academic success later in life. Girls are no longer so uniformly the subordinate group that previous research has often described. More recent studies give a more

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13. The National Agency for Education (2002) *Changing gender patterns?* Elisabet Öhrn ISBN 91-89314-73-4 Kalmar 2002



varied picture of girls' and boys' actions and situation in school, with girls being prominent players to a greater extent than before. Changes in ways of teaching and working, with a freer approach which means that students have to take responsibility for their studies and independently seek out knowledge, are one factor suggested as an explanation of why boys achieve less than girls in school work.

It is important that the observed differences in results between boys and girls are discussed at all levels in the school system. The Government has tasked the National Agency for Education, in its educational inspection in 2006, with auditing schools' work on evening out the gender-related differences in study results.<sup>14</sup>

## Quality work

The system of management by objectives and results, which was introduced into the world of education in the early 1990s, requires systematic quality work, with planning of school activities based on national objectives, follow-up and assessment of the activities plus new planning and development based on the degree to which the objectives have been achieved. Steering, management and quality work have therefore taken on a key and vital role in schools. The deregulation, decentralisation and management by objectives introduced in the early 1990s manifested itself in a new division of responsibility between state and municipality. The National Agency for Education was set up and given responsibility for national inspection, follow-up, assessment and development. The responsible organisations were given full responsibility for carrying out school activities. The national and local levels were to work together to implement the system of management by objectives and results, which was based on quality work at both these levels.

In order to strengthen the quality work of the responsible organisations, an ordinance (SFS 1997:702) was drawn up regarding quality reporting in the school system. The ordinance came into force on 1 November 1997, followed by general guidelines from the National Agency for Education<sup>15</sup>. This did not mean that schools and responsible organisations were given new tasks. It was simply the case that the reporting of follow-up work and assessments, which was already an obligation set out in, for example, the Education Act and the curricula, was given a clearer framework. This was a further emphasis of the

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14. Cf. appropriation directions for the financial year 2005 for the National Agency for Education, point 1.1. School management

15. General Guidelines 1999:1. The National Agency for Education's general guidelines on quality reporting in the school system

partnership between state and municipality which was required by the system of management by objectives and results.

Another step was taken to strengthen the partnership between the national level and local level when the National Agency for Education was commissioned by the Government to carry out the educational inspection from autumn 2003.

In the inspection, the National Agency for Education audited the way municipalities and schools work at different levels to improve the quality of schooling. The audit looks at the way teachers work to inform students about the objectives of their education and the way evaluation and feedback is organised for individual students. Assessment and grading is another important area for the audit. The National Agency for Education also looks at the way schools handle their quality work in quality reports, etc., whether the responsible organisations have a coherent strategy for their quality work and how this works.

The National Agency for Education's report on the educational inspection 2003 from a national perspective highlighted a major need to improve the quality work of responsible organisations and schools in all the audited areas. This conclusion is further supported by this summary of the National Agency for Education's inspection reports for 2004. This is a serious signal that not all the opportunities to improve the achievement of objectives in Swedish schools are being taken.

The need to improve quality work in schools was further emphasised in the new ordinance (SFS 2005:609) amending the ordinance (1997:702) on quality reporting in the school system, which came into force on 15 August 2005. Under the new ordinance, every municipality, every school which is part of the state school system, every municipality-run pre-school and every municipality-run leisure-time centre is covered by the provisions on annual quality reports. The quality reports must be drawn up with the participation of teachers, other staff and students. Parents are also to be given the opportunity to take part in the work.

In the various contexts, the Government has stated that the proportion of students who achieve the objectives for their education must rise.<sup>16</sup> Far too many students are leaving school with unacceptably poor results. Development work is needed on several levels. Better quality work is an absolute must, constituting a vital part of any improvement work.

Municipalities and schools could develop their quality work by improving the way they prepare for future inspections by compiling better self-assess-

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16. Cf. e.g. the appropriation directions for the financial year 2005 for the National Agency for Education

ments and by taking advantage of the audit work and the dialogues carried out during the inspection. One purpose of the educational inspection is to make a professional contribution to the quality improvement work of the local activity – without in any way taking over responsibility for its implementation. This professional contribution may involve the local activity making use of the inspection's individual assessments and conclusions, as well as the local level benefiting from the systematic and methodological knowledge of the educational inspectorate.

## **Need for skills development**

The summary of the results of the 2004 educational inspection shows a real need for skills development for administrative staff, head teachers and teachers when it comes to knowledge of how effective quality work can be achieved. Increased knowledge is needed about how to employ management by objectives and results in order to improve the achievement of objectives.

Knowledge of national regulations also needs to be improved. For example, the inspection has shown that head teachers and teachers are not satisfactorily familiar with the main provisions concerning the educational situation of students with special needs. Better knowledge is also required regarding the provisions on first language tuition and tuition in Swedish as a second language, as well as action programmes for students with special needs.

## Appendix 1. Inspection reports from the National Agency for Education regarding inspections carried out in 2004

<i>Number</i>	<i>Responsible organisation</i>
2004:30	Tomelilla Municipality
2004:31	Bollerup agricultural upper secondary school in Tomelilla
2004:32	Norratorp independent compulsory school in Tomelilla
2004:33	Brunnby independent compulsory school in Höganäs
2004:34	Vindrosen compulsory school for students with learning disabilities and Polstjärnan upper secondary school for students with learning disabilities in Sjöbo
2004:35	Vikens Montessori independent compulsory school in Höganäs
2004:36	Ystad Municipality
2004:37	Töreboda Municipality
2004:38	Southern Skåne upper secondary association
2004:39	Trosa Municipality
2004:40	Degerfors Municipality
2004:41	Tidaholm Municipality
2004:42	Norrbottn County Council
2004:43	Piteå Municipality
2004:44	Ljusnarsberg Municipality
2004:45	Hällefors Municipality
2004:46	Nordmaling Municipality
2004:47	Ekgården independent upper secondary school for students with learning disabilities in Trosa
2004:48	Katrineholm Municipality
2004:49	Borlänge Municipality
2004:50	Mark Municipality
2004:51	Norrtälje Municipality
2004:52	Enköpings Municipality
2004:53	Helsingborg decision and municipal report
2004:54	Helsingborg East
2004:55	Helsingborg South
2004:56	Helsingborg North
2004:57	Helsingborg Centre
2004:58	Helsingborg West
2004:59	Helsingborg Adult Education
2004:60	Al-Maarif independent compulsory school in Helsingborg
2004:61	Centrumskolan independent school in Helsingborg
2004:62	Helsingborgs Montessori independent compulsory school in Helsingborg
2004:63	Johannes Hedbergsgymnasiet independent upper secondary school in Helsingborg
2004:64	Kärnhuset Montessori independent school Helsingborg
2004:65	Långvinklens Montessori independent compulsory school in Helsingborg
2004:66	ProCivitas Privata Gymnasium independent upper secondary school in Helsingborg

2004:67	Pålsjö independent compulsory school in Helsingborg
2004:68	Ramlösa Friskola independent compulsory school in Helsingborg
2004:69	Sally Bauerskolan F-6 independent compulsory school in Helsingborg
2004:70	Sofiero Montessori independent compulsory school in Helsingborg
2004:71	Sofiero Experimentum independent compulsory school in Helsingborg
2004:72	Wallåkra independent school in Helsingborg
2004:73	Ekebyholm independent school in Norrtälje
2004:74	Rimbo Technical High School independent upper secondary school in Norrtälje
2004:75	Roslagens Högskola independent upper secondary school in Norrtälje
2004:76	Viby Friskola independent school in Norrtälje
2004:77	Freinetskolan Mimer independent school in Norrtälje
2004:78	Skene independent Montessori school in Mark
2004:79	Kunskapsskolan independent school in Enköping
2004:80	Friskolan Tellus Nova independent school in Höganäs
2004:81	Independent Montessori school in Norrtälje
2004:82	I Ur och Skur Robinson independent school in Enköping
2004:83	I Ur och Skur Lågan independent school in Heby
2004:84	Heby Municipality
2005:1	Kiruna Municipality
2005:2	Pilen Montessori independent compulsory school in Trelleborg
2005:3	Gislaved Municipality
2005:4	Trelleborg Municipality
2005:5	Tofthagaskolan independent school in Vaggeryd
2005:6	Vaggeryd Municipality
2005:7	Hylte Municipality
2005:8	Rättvik Municipality
2005:9	Svalöv Municipality
2005:10	Lomma Municipality
2005:11	Alvesta Municipality
2005:12	Strömsund Municipality
2005:13	Montessori Bjerred independent compulsory school in Lomma
2005:14	Oasen Christian independent compulsory school in Sundsvall
2005:15	Oxelösund Municipality
2005:16	Örebro decision and municipal report
2005:17	Örebro Northwest, Östernärke and Tysslinge
2005:18	Örebro Southeast
2005:19	Örebro Southwest, Northeast and Glanshammar
2005:20	Örebro upper secondary schools and adult education
2005:22	Göteborg - Backa CD only
2005:23	Göteborg - Biskopsgården CD only
2005:24	Göteborg - Kärra-Rödbo CD only
2005:25	Göteborg - Lundby CD only
2005:26	Göteborg - Torslanda CD only
2005:27	Göteborg - Tuve-Säve CD only

2005:28	Fordonsutbildningar i Örebro AB independent upper secondary school
2005:29	Backatorpsskolan independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:30	Biskopsgården Christian independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:31	Grenkvist Steiner independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:32	Nylöse Christian independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:33	Swedish-Finnish independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:34	Värmdö Municipality
2005:36	Sundsvall Municipality
2005:37	Sundsvall, districts of Alnö, Johannedal, Haga and Skönsberg
2005:38	Sundsvall, districts of Njurunda, Matfors and Stöde
2005:39	Sundsvall, districts of Höglunda, Nacksta and Selånger
2005:40	Dalarna County Council
2005:41	Huddinge Municipality
2005:42	The English School independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:43	Ebba Pettersson independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:44	Skåret Montessori independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:45	Drakbergsskolan independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:46	Framtidsgymnasiet independent upper secondary school in Gothenburg
2005:47	IT-gymnasiet independent upper secondary school in Gothenburg
2005:48	Gubbekulla independent compulsory school in Gothenburg
2005:53	Täby Municipality
2005:56	Upper secondary schools in Gothenburg (CD only)
2005:62	Polstjärnan Montessori independent compulsory school in Gothenburg

## Appendix 2. Sources (in addition to inspection reports from the National Agency for Education regarding inspections carried out in 2004)

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