

4 Supporting school improvement through evaluation

Bulgaria has a longstanding culture of elite schools that reinforce educational inequalities. To address this issue, the country recently introduced a new school evaluation system that includes several features commonly found in OECD education systems, such as new school quality standards and a new National Inspectorate of Education, which has an inspection cycle that targets low-performing schools. This chapter examines how Bulgaria can fully implement its new school evaluation framework to build a better understanding of what school quality means and direct stakeholders towards the common goal of increasing the equity and quality of the education system can help strengthen the school evaluation process and ensure that Bulgaria's new Inspectorate, REDs and schools themselves all work.

Introduction

Bulgaria has introduced a new school evaluation system that includes several features commonly found in OECD countries. In particular, these include the establishment of a new national school inspectorate, the National Inspectorate of Education (hereinafter the Inspectorate) and new quality standards describing aspects of the school environment that are most important to student learning and development. Bulgaria also introduced a differentiated inspection cycle whereby schools that receive poor results undergo evaluations more frequently. Together, these elements provide a strong basis for external school evaluations that aim to provide recommendations for improvement. While such policies and tools have the potential to strengthen school practices, Bulgaria will need to rapidly scale external evaluations and improve their development function if they are to have the desired impact. This will require building the capacity of regional departments of education (REDs) which, according to Bulgaria's Pre-school and School Education Act (2016), are now responsible for providing methodological support to schools. Defining REDs' support activities and clarifying their role in relation to the work of the Inspectorate will be crucial to ensuring Bulgaria's new school evaluation system effectively leads to improvements in school quality.

It will likely take time to implement these new external evaluation processes. Therefore, it is imperative that Bulgaria simultaneously proceed with plans to develop instruments for school self-evaluation so that schools can immediately start driving their own improvement. School actors will need support to pursue improvement activities. While it is positive that Bulgaria's school funding formula aims to provide more equitable financing, not all schools are able to fundraise for the additional resources needed to implement some innovative initiatives and support, which may incur costs. These considerations are essential in light of concerns about Bulgaria's low student outcomes. For example, OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results have shown a decline in recent years, with a high percentage of students not reaching basic proficiency in reading and mathematics (OECD, 2019^[1]; IEA, 2020^[2]). Moreover, despite efforts to make schools more inclusive and reduce dropout, net enrolment in primary and lower secondary schools has declined and there are persistent inequalities in learning outcomes among students from different backgrounds and in different regions of the country (OECD, 2019^[1]; UNESCO UIS, n.d.^[3]). Building a better understanding of what school quality means among the public and key education stakeholders can help strengthen the school evaluation process and ensure that Bulgaria's new Inspectorate, REDs and schools themselves all work towards the common goal of increasing the equity and quality of the education system.

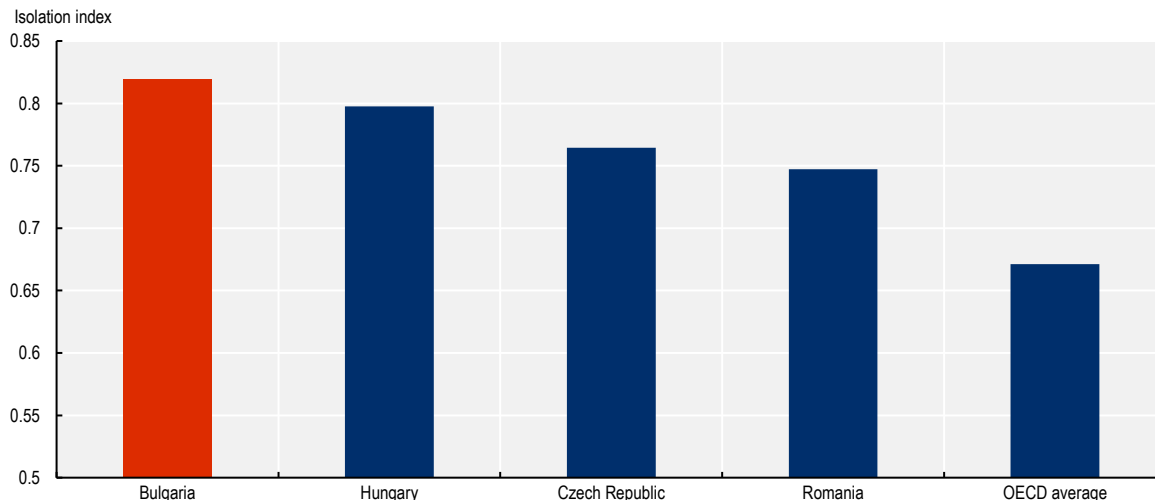
School governance in Bulgaria

As part of broader decentralisation reforms, Bulgarian schools have the autonomy to manage their own resources, make pedagogical decisions and manage relations with the national Ministry, REDs, municipalities and the school community (see Chapter 1). To improve the quality of schooling for all children, Bulgaria has introduced policies to develop school leadership and distribute school funding more equitably. The Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter the Ministry) has also engaged one-fifth of its schools in an Innovative Schools initiative, which aims to foster creative teaching, learning and school management strategies.

However, the social and academic segregation between schools in Bulgaria is among the highest of PISA participants (Figure 4.1). This reflects the country's longstanding culture of elite schools that often serve the highest achieving students, recruit the most qualified staff and have access to additional resources. Moreover, many actors still lack a clear understanding of how to improve school quality and gaps in policy design risk hindering their impact. For example, Bulgaria does not require school principals to undertake initial training in school quality management and other leadership responsibilities. Without comprehensive school evaluation processes and policies that compensate for the disparities between Bulgaria's most

advantaged and disadvantaged schools, the country will likely continue to face challenges in raising student learning outcomes.


Figure 4.1. Isolation of disadvantaged students from high-achieving students in reading



Note: Data are restricted to schools with the modal International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level for 15-year-old students. The isolation index of disadvantaged students from high-achieving students measures whether socio-economically disadvantaged students are concentrated in schools distinct from those that enrol high-achieving students. The index is related to the likelihood that a representative disadvantaged student attends a school that enrolls high-achieving students. It ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 corresponding to no segregation and 1 to full segregation (see Annex A3 of the PISA report, Volume II, for a more complete description).

A socio-economically disadvantaged student is a student in the bottom quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in his or her own country/economy.

Source: OECD (2019^[4]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/871e3509-en>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/1a0sv>

School leadership in Bulgaria

Bulgaria's school leaders are responsible for school quality management

Like principals in OECD countries, school leaders in Bulgaria are responsible for school improvement, including defining school goals, observing instruction, supporting teachers' professional development and working with teachers to improve instruction (Schleicher, 2015^[5]). On average, lower secondary principals in Bulgaria are about the same age as those across OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) participating countries (53 years old versus an OECD average of 52 years old) (OECD, 2019^[6]). The proportion of female principals at that level in Bulgaria, like the proportion of female teachers, is higher than the OECD average (73% vs. 47% of school leaders and 80% vs. 68% of teachers) (OECD, 2019^[6]). The majority of school principals are employed by the Ministry's REDs and work in municipal and non-specialised state-owned schools (i.e. schools not for sports or the arts) (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[7]).

Bulgaria has introduced measures to professionalise and develop school leaders

School principals do not need to participate in initial training on school leadership but they must meet continuous professional development requirements

School principals in Bulgaria must be qualified teachers with at least five years of teaching experience. This is a common requirement in European countries (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020^[8]). In a positive way, there are open competitions for the role. However, some evidence suggests that a candidate’s “political compatibility” with school authorities is an important factor in the selection process and that members of the selection commission, who are appointed by the principal’s future employer (commonly the RED), do not have the competencies needed to make merit-based decisions (Leadership in Education, 2011^[9]). At the same time, Bulgaria has taken steps to better prepare new principals for their job. In particular, the National Center for the Professional Development of Pedagogical Specialists recently designed optional training for newly appointed principals that is free of charge and covers areas like labour law, communications and finances. However, unlike many OECD countries, Bulgaria does not require initial training on school leadership either before or upon starting the position. This has caused some challenges. For example, new principals reportedly face difficulties evaluating teachers (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[7]).

While the initial training of school principals is not mandatory, Bulgaria introduced new continuous professional development requirements for principals in 2016. This includes 48 hours of training by approved providers every 4 years and 16 hours of internal, school-based learning every year (Government of Bulgaria, 2016^[10]). Participation rates in professional development among principals are reportedly high but there appear to be gaps in terms of content. For example, 100% of lower secondary principals reported attending at least 1 professional development activity in the year prior to the 2018 TALIS survey but 29% reported that they had never received any instructional leadership training on how to improve teaching and learning in their schools (OECD average: 17%) (OECD, 2019^[6]). This highlights the need for support to conduct school self-evaluation so that principals can better identify and address areas of weakness in school practices.

A professional profile for directors articulates school leadership standards

In 2015, Bulgaria introduced school leadership standards – the professional profile for directors – which set out what a principal should know and be able to do. A strength of Bulgaria’s professional profile for directors is that it presents a vision of the principal as both an administrator and instructional leader who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating school activities to direct change (Table 4.1). However, as with Bulgaria’s professional profile for teachers (see Chapter 3), the professional profile for directors is not differentiated according to the levels of the school leader career structure. A growing number of countries do this to help guide principals’ ongoing professional learning and provide relevant criteria for performance appraisals. In addition, some of the wording in the professional profile is vague. For instance, one of the skill areas under resource management is “has leadership skills” but there is no description of what these skills are within the context of budget management.

Table 4.1. Professional profile for school directors

| Competency | Director’s knowledge, skills and attitudes |
|-------------|--|
| Pedagogical | <p>This includes seven areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows innovative educational technologies, techniques and methods for teaching and assessment, applicable in the educational process. • Applies the competency approach in their work in the acquisition of key competencies by students according to Article 77, paragraph 1 of the Pre-school and School Education Act. |

| Competency | Director's knowledge, skills and attitudes |
|------------------|---|
| Management | Administrative and legal culture, which covers six areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows and applies innovative approaches in management practice. • Knows the state policy in the field of pre-school and school education and implements strategic and programme documents for determining priorities related to the development of the institution. |
| | Planning, organising and controlling, which covers 15 areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has knowledge and skills for strategic and operational planning, effectively implements policies for the development of the institution. • Analyses the results of the activity of the institution and outlines measures for increasing the quality and efficiency in the work. • Approves the activities, procedures, criteria, indicators and tools for self-assessment of the activity of the educational institution in accordance with the state educational standard for quality management in the institutions. • Establishes criteria for the degree of fulfilment of the team's obligations by creating an internal system for monitoring, evaluation, feedback and decision-making for change. |
| | Resource management, which covers 22 areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the directions, goals and tasks for the development of the educational institution and prepares an adequate plan for their implementation. • Creates an atmosphere of security, trust, tolerance, co-operation and mutual assistance in the team. • Stimulates pedagogical specialists to create, implement and promote innovations and good practices. |
| Social and civil | Fourteen areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates and supports good practices in a multicultural educational environment and does not allow discrimination. • Builds partnerships and interacts effectively with parents. • Assists control bodies and institutions in carrying out controls and inspections. • Identifies their own needs and sets goals aimed at continuous professional development. |

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (2016^[11]), *Ordinance No 15 Of December 8, 2016 on the Inspection of Kindergartens and Schools*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

There is a new attestation appraisal process for school leaders

While Bulgaria's Pre-school and School Education Act (2016) did not introduce major changes to the appointment process of school principals, it did introduce a new attestation appraisal that aims to increase accountability for the individuals working in this role. Similar to the attestation process for teachers, principals will undergo an attestation appraisal once every four years and results will inform career progression (see below) or, if they are poor, trigger remedial supports that include a professional development plan, mentorship and re-attestation. However, the appraisers and sources of evidence that inform judgements are slightly different for the attestation of principals and teachers.

For principals, an attestation commission representing the employer (commonly the RED) and the school's teaching staff and Public Council (i.e. school board) conducts the appraisal. The appraisal process considers direct evidence of principals' work obtained from inspections and other monitoring activities, as well as the principal's self-assessment, portfolio and results from school self-evaluations. Like the process for teachers, the attestation appraisal of principals could be more consistent and better support principals' development. For example, the principal's employer selects five criteria for the appraisal based on the professional profile, the type of school and the school development strategy. While this type of flexibility can be positive in a regular, developmental appraisal process, it does not support consistent judgements for career progression. Furthermore, the attestation card that communicates the appraisal results provides no room for written feedback and the regulated appraisal procedures do not include a discussion of results with the principal.

Principals in Bulgaria are also subject to an annual appraisal of the results of their work for additional remuneration. For this appraisal, a commission representing the principal's employer and the school

financing body evaluates the principal's performance. While indicators for the appraisal are regulated, not all relate to the professional profile for school directors, which would ensure that they are relevant to principals' performance. Nor are they all fair given schools' different contexts. For example, principals are evaluated on their ability to attract additional sources of funding for their school, which could be particularly difficult in socio-economically disadvantaged areas (Ministry of Education and Science, 2017_[12]). The employer has full discretion to determine additional criteria and make judgements about the principal's performance, which raises concerns about a lack of consistency and transparency.

There is a career structure for principals but promotion does not lead to more school leadership responsibilities or salary increases

Bulgaria has a career structure for principals and other pedagogical specialists in the school who are not teachers (e.g. psychologists or heads of information and communication technology [ICT]). The career structure consists of two successive degrees and legislated requirements for promotion include the completion of two types of continuous professional development: one leading to qualification credits and one leading to qualification degrees (Table 4.2). This means that the career structure for school principals largely depends on the quality and availability of learning opportunities that are relevant to school leadership. However, the Ministry's quality assurance procedures for training providers and programmes are not stringent. Furthermore, while there was training on school leadership for qualification credits in 2020-21, there was a lack of relevant training for qualification degrees.

Table 4.2. Requirements for promotion in the school principal career structure

| Second degree* | First degree |
|---|--|
| Five years of experience as a principal | The second degree in the principal career structure A master's degree and qualification as a teacher |
| The required professional development qualification credits (i.e. 3 credits in 4 years, which equates to 48 hours) | The required professional development qualification credits (i.e. 3 credits in 4 years, which equates to 48 hours) |
| At least a fifth or fourth professional qualification degree (i.e. 16 hours of training each) from a higher education institution, including an examination | At least a third professional qualification degree (i.e. 200 academic hours) from a higher education institution |
| As of the school year 2021/22, attestation appraisal results of at least "meets requirements" | As of the school year 2021/22, attestation appraisal results of "exceptional performance" |

Note: * Fast track to the second degree: obtaining a third professional qualification degree and "exceeds requirements" (the second-highest result) on the attestation appraisal, in addition to the required professional development qualification credits.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (2019_[13]), *Ordinance No 15 of 22.07.2019 on the Status and the Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

While it is not yet common practice, some countries with career structures for school leaders differentiate competencies, responsibilities and salary levels for each career level (OECD, 2013_[14]). As with teacher career structures (see Chapter 3), this can encourage principals' ongoing development, incentivise them to seek promotion and reward them for taking on new responsibilities. Bulgaria's career structure is not set up this way. There are additional responsibilities associated with the first and second degrees but they do not relate specifically to the principal role and promotion does not lead to a salary increase (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020_[8]).

Funding limitations and disparities have impacted schools' ability to deliver education but Bulgaria is making efforts to equalise the distribution of resources

Bulgarian schools have a fair amount of autonomy to make financial decisions in key areas that are important to school quality. For example, PISA 2015 found that 93% of participating students from Bulgaria were in schools where principals or teachers reported having considerable responsibility for deciding on budget allocations within the school, compared to an OECD average of 76% (OECD, 2016^[15]). The vast majority (97%) of school funding in Bulgaria comes from the state budget but funding can also come from European funds, revenue generated by the school and municipal governments, which may provide targeted, complementary finances (e.g. to deal with the decline in the school-age population).

In theory, the diversity of funding sources and the autonomy of schools to manage their own resources can help to make funding responsive to local educational needs. However, in reality, the current system does not lead to standardisation in the quality of provision, as funding is tied to the number of students in a school, not the school's performance. While the government plans to provide additional funds to schools based on their external school evaluation results, this will not be made available until all schools have been inspected, which will take some time. In addition, broader governance issues in Bulgaria also disconnect school funding from the quality of provision. For example, municipalities, which are responsible for allocating national funds to schools, have no real power when it comes to making decisions about school quality, such as hiring municipal school directors or teaching staff (OECD, 2021^[16]). A lack of sufficient finances also hinders the work of Bulgarian schools, which often lack basic equipment, science laboratories and sports facilities, and digital and information technology (IT) infrastructure (EC, 2019^[17]). This is especially the case in poorer municipalities where schools struggle to maintain basic infrastructure like heating (EC, 2019^[17]).

In recent years, Bulgaria has made efforts to address school funding disparities. In 2018, the country has introduced a new funding model which includes a "regional coefficient" that distributes funds to local governments based on school characteristics, such as the type of school, as well as demographic and geographic features (e.g. population of the municipal centre, distance from a settlement of over 100 000 inhabitants) (see Chapter 1). Bulgaria has also recently invested in building schools' digital infrastructure and repairing buildings, both of which are objectives of the country's new ten-year education strategy, *Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030* (hereinafter the Strategic Framework for Education) (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[18]). Furthermore, the government provides earmarked funding to schools to cover the costs of teachers' professional development needs, which are often a school improvement expense.

Bulgaria's Innovative Schools initiative is introducing new approaches to teaching and school organisation from the bottom up

Bulgaria introduced an Innovative Schools initiative in 2017 with the goal of improving educational outcomes and developing students' key competencies. Schools apply to the Ministry's Innovative Schools Commission to conduct projects for up to four years in one or more of the following four areas: the management and organisation of the school, teaching methods, the learning environment and curriculum content. To participate, schools must demonstrate that their project complies with national and European education priorities and commit to sharing their experiences. However, the initiative uses its own indicators to monitor innovative projects, which do not link to national school quality standards. As of the school year 2020/21, there were 504 innovative schools, representing 21.5% of schools across the country (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021^[19]). In 2019, the Ministry launched a related application-based initiative, Innovations in Action, to provide LEV 2 million (around EUR 1 million) for the dissemination of innovative school practices. In the 2020/21 school year, this initiative funded networks of 604 innovative and non-innovative schools and 20 fora on innovation (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021^[19]).

Innovative school projects appear to be having an impact on education in Bulgaria. For example, results from one project led the government to extend the school year by two weeks to increase students' learning time. In addition, staff of several innovative schools told the OECD review team that their projects have helped improve students' learning outcomes. One secondary school, for instance, reported that the grade point average (GPA) increased in key curriculum subject areas and the absence rate declined after they implemented a project to increase student teamwork, communication skills, curiosity and functional literacy. However, schools do not receive any government funding for their projects, thus requiring them to generate their own budgets from outside sources, which may reinforce inequities in the education system. The Ministry has also identified insufficient monitoring and impact assessment as a weakness of the programme (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[18]). Another concern is that schools are responsible for organising their own networks to disseminate results, so there is no guarantee that at-risk schools will benefit from the innovations developed elsewhere.

School evaluation in Bulgaria

Bulgaria has introduced important changes to its school evaluation system. There are new school quality standards that focus on management and educational processes. The recently established Inspectorate, a national body modelled after European inspection systems, uses these standards to carry out external school evaluations. Moreover, REDs, which previously had responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating schools, now have a mandate to provide methodological support. These changes intend to raise the quality of education; however, Bulgaria continues to face challenges in terms of using evaluations to drive improvements in schooling. One such challenge relates to capacity. For example, the new Inspectorate aims to conduct around 130 inspections per year, meaning it will take around 34 years to evaluate all 4 425 schools located across the country (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[7]). In a positive way, a risk assessment that considers a school's State Matriculation examination results, number of graduates and context (e.g. the socio-economic status of the region or municipality) helps prioritise low-performing schools for the first rounds of inspection. While this approach allows education officials to identify schools with the greatest needs, changing school practices will require closer co-ordination with REDs. This is another challenge for Bulgaria since REDs do not systematically use the Inspectorate's findings and recommendations to support school improvement. A final challenge relates to the lack of a self-evaluation culture within Bulgarian schools. Without support and encouragement, schools are unlikely to reflect meaningfully on their performance, set goals and develop their own improvement plans.

Table 4.3. Types of school evaluation in Bulgaria

| Type of school evaluation | Reference standards | Body responsible | Guideline document | Process | Frequency | Use |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| External school evaluation | National inspection criteria covering: 1. Educational process 2. Management of the institution | National Inspectorate of Education | Ordinance No. 15 of 8 December 2016 for the Inspection of Kindergartens and Schools National Inspectorate of Education's Inspection Manual | 1. Preparatory stage (mainly organisational) 2. Actual stage (onsite visit) 3. Final stage (information collected is processed, summarised and analysed) 4. Delivery of inspection report and recommendations | At least one inspection every five years or less depending on previous inspection results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To obtain an independent expert assessment of the quality of education at a school and identify improvement guidelines. To guide policies to improve the quality of the educational process. |

| Type of school evaluation | Reference standards | Body responsible | Guideline document | Process | Frequency | Use |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| School self-evaluation | None | School principal, with input from the Public Council and Pedagogical Council | Pre-School and School Education Act | At the discretion of the school | At the discretion of the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For school quality management, including organisational development. |

Source: Government of Bulgaria (2016^[10]), *Pre-school and School Education Act*; Ministry of Education and Science (2016^[11]), *Ordinance No 15 of 8 December 2016 on the Inspection of Kindergartens and Schools*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia; Ministry of Education and Science (2020^[7]), *Country Background Report for Bulgaria*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

External school evaluation

Bulgaria has developed school quality standards based on models in EU countries

Bulgaria's Inspectorate first introduced school quality standards in 2016. The standards contain criteria, indicators and sub-indicators that inspectors now use to conduct external school evaluations. The standards were developed with feedback from key stakeholders (National Inspectorate of Education, 2020^[20]), which ensures they capture a range of perspectives and helps build support for their use (Faubert, 2009^[21]). In terms of content, the standards cover two areas that are particularly important to school quality: the educational process (i.e. teaching and learning) and the management of the institution (Table 4.4) (OECD, 2013^[14]). They also address inclusive education practices and encourage schools to work towards certain national priorities like preventing school dropout (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[18]). Another positive feature of the standards is that they include some of the practices that experts identify as effective for improving student outcomes, such as teamwork among school staff, teacher-student interaction and cognitive activation strategies (e.g. self-assessment) (OECD, 2016^[22]). However, some of the indicators in the standards lack balance. For example, while the focus on monitoring learning outcomes is positive, there is an overemphasis on summative indicators (e.g. students' success in Olympiads and academic competitions). There is also a lack of attention on more formative pedagogies, which are essential for deep and inclusive learning. Moreover, Bulgaria's school quality standards do not yet address school self-evaluation, which can be an effective way to lead improvement from within the school.

Table 4.4. Bulgaria's school quality standards

| Criteria | Examples of indicators |
|---|--|
| Area: Educational process | |
| Effectiveness of interaction in the learning process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of appropriate and diverse teaching methods, approaches, techniques and technologies |
| Effectiveness of interaction for the personal development of students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of skills in students for self-assessment, self-criticism and self-improvement |
| Monitoring the progress of students and evaluating their learning outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from external evaluations, Olympiads, competitions, etc. Results of State Matriculation examinations Monitoring the level of acquisition of competencies in students |
| Socialisation and education in the educational process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining positive discipline |
| Coverage, inclusion and prevention of dropping out of the education system of children and students of compulsory pre-school and school-age | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of prevention measures Effectiveness of intervention measures Effectiveness of the interaction between the participants in the educational process to reduce the educational system dropout rate |
| Degree of satisfaction with the educational process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of satisfaction of students, pedagogical specialists and parents |
| Area: Management of the institution | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Sustainable development of the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic management • Teamwork in school |
| Effective resource management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate management of financial resources for the development of the school |
| Management and development of the physical environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of IT resources in the overall activity of the school |
| Development of the institutional culture in the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of the system for intervention and support in cases of harassment and violence |
| Partnership management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactivity of the director |
| Degree of satisfaction with the management of the institution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of satisfaction of students, pedagogical specialists and parents |

Source: National Inspectorate of Education (2020_[23]), *Criteria, Indicators and Subindicators*, <https://nio.government.bg/инспектиране/критерии/> (accessed on 27 November 2020).

The concept of school quality is still not well understood by all actors in the education sector or the general public

Despite efforts by the Ministry and Inspectorate to promote Bulgaria's new standards, the concept of school quality is not yet broadly understood. Instead, school quality is commonly associated with having students do well on State Matriculation examinations rather than making use of effective practices to improve the outcomes of all students. To build a more comprehensive understanding of school quality, Bulgaria articulated a national vision of a good school in its ten-year *Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning* (Box 4.1). A number of OECD countries have developed this type of national vision to guide evaluation processes and focus on the ultimate purpose of ensuring that every school is a good school (OECD, 2013_[14]). While Bulgaria's national vision reflects some of the country's new school quality standards, it is not being used to help guide external evaluations. Moreover, schools lack the self-evaluation tools to benchmark the extent to which they are achieving this vision.

Box 4.1. Bulgaria's vision of the school in 2030

Vision for education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2030

In 2030, all Bulgarian young people graduate from school as functionally literate, innovative, socially responsible and active citizens, motivated to upgrade their competencies through lifelong learning.

The institutions of pre-school and school education in 2030 offer the safest, healthiest, most ecological and supportive environment, where educational traditions, innovative pedagogical solutions and digital development coexist. They constantly evolve as spaces for learning and development, for recreation and interaction between children, students, parents and the local community, united by shared values to achieve a common goal – the formation of knowledgeable and capable individuals able to make responsible choices and to achieve their goals in a dynamic and competitive social environment.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (2020_[18]), *Strategičeska Ramka za Razvitie na Obrazovaniето, Obučeniето i Učeneto v Republika Bǎlgarija (2021 - 2030)* [*Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030)*], Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia.

Bulgaria now has centralised inspections to improve school quality management but the Inspectorate lacks human and financial resources

Until 2018, the Ministry's 28 REDs were responsible for monitoring and evaluating schools. Bulgaria has established a national Inspectorate with the aim of standardising educational quality by shifting the process

for external evaluations away from compliance checks towards more systematic support for school improvement (National Inspectorate of Education, 2020_[20]). The new Inspectorate is a legal entity within the government's Council of Ministers and the director is a civil servant appointed by the prime minister. The Inspectorate's main responsibilities are to manage Bulgaria's school inspection framework and conduct inspections. It also ensures the quality of inspections, for example by periodically surveying the principals of inspected schools (National Inspectorate of Education, 2020_[24]). Other responsibilities that fall under the Inspectorate's remit include analysing the quality of education and publishing a summary of school inspection results and guidelines for improvement on the Inspectorate website. In OECD countries, these types of activities often generate important sources of information for policy makers and the public.

As of December 2020, Bulgaria's new Inspectorate had conducted evaluations in 160 schools, which translates to around 4% of all schools in the country. At this rate, it will take several years for the Inspectorate to evaluate all schools, let alone achieve its official mandate of inspecting all kindergartens and schools at least once every five years. The primary reason for the Inspectorate's slow progress is a lack of financial and human resources (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020_[7]). The Inspectorate's financing comes from the state budget and other minor sources of revenue (e.g. fees for training external inspectors) (Council of Ministers, 2018_[25]). However, this is not sufficient to recruit quality inspectors, especially since inspector salaries are reportedly lower than school principal salaries. Another constraint is that the Council of Ministers limits the Inspectorate to employing a maximum of 13 inspectors to keep costs low (Council of Ministers, 2018_[25]). As a result, the Inspectorate does not have enough permanent staff to achieve its mandate, even with the support of contracted external inspectors (see below).

Teams of internal and external inspectors conduct inspections

The Inspectorate contracts external inspectors to help conduct school inspections. The size of inspection teams varies between two to four inspectors depending on the size of the school; however, the head of the inspection team is always an internal inspector. Despite the importance of their role, internal inspectors in Bulgaria are not required by law to have a background in education, although this is preferred (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016_[26]). By contrast, regulations that set out prerequisites for external inspectors are strict. For example, external inspectors must have a master's degree and five years of experience in a field corresponding to the inspected activity and they must complete training provided by the Inspectorate (Council of Ministers, 2018_[25]). Positively, there are professional development opportunities for both external and internal inspectors. External inspectors can periodically update their inspection competencies through the Inspectorate's online learning activities (National Inspectorate of Education, 2020_[24]). On the other hand, internal inspectors can participate in seminars offered by the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) to which the Inspectorate belongs.

School inspections are consistent with international practice and technology has allowed them to continue despite the COVID-19 crisis

Bulgaria's inspection process consists of three stages that are common in other European countries: the *preparatory stage* involves gathering information about the school, the *actual stage* includes an onsite visit and the *final stage*, during which inspectors analyse all collected information to develop the inspection report (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016_[26]). The sources of evidence used for school inspections in Bulgaria are also common internationally (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016_[26]). These include administrative information, questionnaires and interviews with school staff, parents and students, and classroom observations. During onsite visits, inspectors observe up to 30% of the school's classes (National Inspectorate for Education, 2019_[27]). This is crucial to gather information about the quality of instruction. However, classroom observations can be as short as 20 minutes rather than the length of a whole lesson and they do not result in feedback to teachers (National Inspectorate for Education, 2019_[27]).

Inspection teams make significant use of technology to conduct the inspection process. In general, inspections are “blended”, meaning that the preparatory and final stages are conducted electronically and the school visit is usually onsite. Visiting schools in person is essential to gathering evidence of teaching and learning in the classroom. During the COVID-19 crisis, the Inspectorate has been able to adapt the inspection process to continue conducting external school evaluations. Specifically, inspectors have been conducting virtual observations of remote learning on digital platforms. This approach has allowed Bulgaria to continue monitoring teaching and learning processes despite disruptions to in-person schooling.

Bulgaria has introduced measures to support school improvement in follow-up to inspections

When conducting external school evaluations, inspectors rate a school’s performance against each indicator of the quality standards. The overall inspection result is expressed as a qualitative rating of unsatisfactory (below 30%), satisfactory (30% to 50%), good (50% to 75%) or very good (over 75%) (Ministry of Education and Science, 2016_[11]). Once the inspection is completed, school principals receive oral feedback, as well as a report with findings for each of the evaluated criteria, guidelines for improvement and recommendations for specific, concrete actions to address areas that received lower marks. For example, a sample report for a school that received “very good” overall results contained guidelines to improve the “effectiveness of the interaction for personal development of students” criterion, in part because inspectors observed student self-assessment and teamwork in only 1 out of 11 classes. The Inspectorate also sends follow-up questionnaires to each inspected school to confirm whether the measures recommended were useful and understandable. This practice helps continuously improve the inspection process.

A positive feature of Bulgaria’s inspection system is the focus on low-performing schools. Specifically, the Inspectorate conducts a risk analysis based on information like a school’s State Matriculation examination results, the number of graduates and context (e.g. the socio-economic status of the region or municipality) to identify which schools should undergo an inspection first. Moreover, Bulgaria has a differentiated inspection cycle, meaning that schools with poor inspection results are subject to more frequent follow-up inspections (Table 4.5). As of February 2021, Bulgaria’s Inspectorate has conducted four six-month follow-up inspections in response to unsatisfactory inspection results. Other countries such as Ireland, the Netherlands and New Zealand have introduced this type of differentiated inspection cycle to help reduce inequities in the education system by focusing resources and attention on schools that need the most support to improve (OECD, 2013_[14]). While such policies can help Bulgaria do the same, the need to conduct follow-up inspections at the same time as first-time inspections represents a significant workload, highlighting the need to sufficiently staff and fund the new Inspectorate.

Table 4.5. The differentiated school inspection cycle in Bulgaria

| Inspection result | Frequency of inspection |
|-------------------|---|
| Very good | Every five years |
| Good | Every three to four years |
| Satisfactory | Every one to two years |
| Unsatisfactory | Every six months to one year, as recommended by the inspection team |

Source: Council of Ministers (2018_[25]), *Rules for the Structure and Functions of the National Inspectorate of Education*, Council of Ministers of Bulgaria.

Additional positive developments are Bulgaria's plans to help low-performing schools improve by providing earmarked funds and regional support. Like many OECD countries, Bulgaria has made a middle tier of REDs responsible for providing hands-on support to schools after inspections. The Inspectorate is required to share inspection reports with REDs and notify them if a school under their jurisdiction needs methodological guidance to implement improvement guidelines or if the quality of teaching and learning is insufficient (Ministry of Education and Science, 2016_[11]). However, REDs' specific responsibilities following national inspections are not clearly established and they do not seem to use the school quality standards to support school improvement. Understaffing and the need to update experts' knowledge and skills, in addition to moving away from their previous role of monitoring and controlling school quality, further complicate efforts to transition REDs to a school support role. The confusion caused by shifting responsibilities between regional divisions and a national body has led to the duplication and overlapping of functions in other public sectors in Bulgaria, reflecting the country's ongoing struggle to successfully implement decentralisation reforms (OECD, 2021_[16]).

Some post-inspection procedures that support accountability are missing

While inspection results factor into employers' consideration of school principals' performance, Bulgaria lacks some requirements that are common in other countries to hold schools accountable for their performance and encourage them to act upon recommendations for improvement. Specifically, inspection reports are not posted publicly, in contrast to the practice in an increasing number of European countries (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016_[26]). Principals have full discretion to share inspection reports internally or externally. In addition, Bulgaria does not require all schools to develop an action plan in response to inspection findings, unlike many European countries, including other countries in South East Europe that have recently introduced school evaluation, such as North Macedonia and Serbia (OECD, 2019_[28]; Maghnouj et al., 2020_[29]).

School self-evaluation

The Ministry is developing a new ordinance requiring schools to conduct regular self-evaluations

Most OECD countries require schools to undertake self-evaluations annually or every two years (OECD, 2013_[14]). However, Bulgaria does not have any specific requirements for school self-evaluation frequency, procedures or criteria (Government of Bulgaria, 2016_[10]). Schools in Bulgaria are broadly responsible for quality management, which includes self-assessment and development planning (Government of Bulgaria, 2016_[10]). For example, principals are required to draft four-year development strategies, which the school's Public Council (i.e. the school board) approves and the Pedagogical Council (i.e. all teaching staff plus the principal) adopt. In 2017, Bulgaria repealed an ordinance mandating that schools conduct self-evaluations every two years to inform their development strategies. The ordinance was only in place for a year and as of 2021, the Ministry is developing a new ordinance on school quality management that will set out self-evaluation requirements within the context of the country's school evaluation framework. This will be an essential step to help drive school-led improvement in Bulgaria. New self-evaluation requirements can encourage schools to regularly reflect on their practices and use results to inform their school development plans (OECD, 2013_[14]). Most importantly, they can help Bulgaria's schools improve the quality of instruction and work towards national goals for student outcomes, like functional literacy and lifelong learning. For example, new self-evaluation requirements can help to ensure that Bulgaria's principals and school staff examine the extent to which teachers use adaptive instruction in their classrooms or how teachers support students to assess their own learning (both indicators in Bulgaria's school quality standards) and identify any needed changes.

School-level data and their use

School-level data support evaluation processes but there is limited data for benchmarking purposes

Internationally, data about schools' contextual features and student outcomes (e.g. standardised examination results; student retention rates, etc.) commonly inform school inspections and self-evaluations. Some of these data allow schools to benchmark their performance against schools operating in similar contexts, which can be particularly useful for self-evaluation. Bulgaria's Inspectorate has an Electronic Inspection Management System (ESMS), which houses data that inspectors use for inspections, including administrative data (e.g. student, teacher and school demographics) and learning outcome data (i.e. results from National External Assessments [NEAs] in Grades 4, 7 and 10 and the State Matriculation examination). While it is positive that Bulgarian schools can access their own data in this system (only during the inspection), they do not have an easy way to access data that allows them to compare their performance to similar schools. In a positive way, the Center for Assessment of Pre-school and School Education (hereinafter the Center for Assessment) provides data from NEAs and the State Matriculation examination that allows schools to benchmark results by gender, as well as against national and regional averages. However, there is no option for comparing schools with similar student characteristics, such as socio-economic background and minority ethnic group. These insights could help schools to understand better and address disparities in learning outcomes (see Chapter 5).

Policy issues

Bulgaria has made significant progress in developing a modern school evaluation framework that includes many features commonly found in OECD and other European countries. However, the concept of school quality it promotes is not yet well understood and the new roles and responsibilities of the Inspectorate and REDs are not yet well established. Ensuring that the public and key education actors have a better understanding of what school quality means and articulating how REDs and the new Inspectorate should work together is critical if Bulgaria's external school evaluation system is to yield improvements in teaching and learning. While having a differentiated inspection cycle can help Bulgaria target low-performing schools, this evaluation model works best when most schools already have a well-developed capacity to evaluate and improve their own practices. This is not yet the case in Bulgaria, which has a nascent culture of school self-evaluation. However, resource limitations prevent the country from rapidly scaling external inspections to cover all schools. The government, therefore, needs to both expand and refine the new external evaluation system while also proceeding with plans to require schools to conduct regular self-evaluations. For the latter to be effective, Bulgaria will also need to support schools with resources and training so that they have the capacity to improve their practices.

Policy issue 4.1. Building a common understanding of school quality

Bulgaria recently introduced the Inspectorate and centralised inspections to shift away from narrow, regional compliance checks of schools towards evaluations of school quality based on national standards (National Inspectorate of Education, 2020_[20]). Many OECD countries have introduced standards-based school evaluations to help direct schools and education systems as a whole towards a common set of goals (OECD, 2013_[14]). However, in Bulgaria, the vision of school quality as a collection of policies and practices with the potential to raise student outcomes is still not well understood by all actors in the education sector or the public. Instead, school quality is often interpreted narrowly as having students who obtain high results on State Matriculation examinations. This is a limited measure of school success and also a poor metric for evaluating the school effectiveness because it reflects factors affecting student

performance that are beyond a school's control (OECD, 2013^[14]). Without a more modern and comprehensive understanding of school quality, there is a risk that Bulgarian stakeholders will not engage with the work of the Inspectorate or understand and embrace the importance of national education reforms, like the new adaptive teaching practices that will help students develop transversal competencies for future success.

Recommendation 4.1.1. Clearly communicate what school quality means

In a growing number of OECD countries, national visions of a good school and external school evaluation reports communicate to the public what school quality means. In a positive way, Bulgaria's ten-year *Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning* includes a vision of what a school should look like in 2030 that complements the new Inspectorate's standards by succinctly describing key aspects of school quality. While this vision could be a useful communication tool, it may not permeate beyond the pages of the *Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning* without a purposeful effort to inform school actors and the public. At present, the Inspectorate does not publish school inspection reports because it is not required to do so and wants to avoid the negative consequences associated with rankings and decontextualised comparisons between schools. However, in the absence of more transparent and contextualised information about a school's performance, many stakeholders in the Bulgarian education system still compare schools, relying mainly on State Matriculation examination results. With careful management, public inspection reports could help to communicate a more comprehensive understanding of school quality in Bulgaria and make schools more accountable to their community. The Ministry could also provide the public with more information about schools that exemplify good school quality to help facilitate a culture of improvement.

Create clear links between Bulgaria's national vision of a school in 2030 with the school quality standards used for evaluation

Bulgaria already plans to review and revise its school quality standards and indicators in preparation for the release of a new ordinance that will make self-evaluation mandatory for all schools. This reflective and adaptive approach to policy making can help build coherence across the different elements of Bulgaria's new school evaluation system. However, the school quality standards should also consider the national vision of a school in 2030. In particular, the indicators used to illustrate Bulgaria's school quality standards should align with the country's ambition that schools provide all children with a safe and supportive environment to develop their competencies (Box 4.1). For example, the indicators on reducing the share of low performers could be more appropriate for monitoring student learning progress than results from national external assessments, Olympiads and academic completions. The Ministry and the Inspectorate should consider working with key education stakeholders to ensure that the national vision and school quality standards convey the same clear message about what good schooling means in Bulgaria. To ensure consistency even further, the indicators used for monitoring the Innovative Schools initiative should also reinforce and complement the school quality standards.

Once aligned with school quality standards, Bulgaria should develop a plan for communicating the vision to the public. For example, the Ministry, REDs and the Inspectorate could present the vision on their various websites. The Inspectorate could also feature the vision prominently in inspection manuals and communication material pertaining to the new ordinance on school quality management (see Policy issue 4.3). Creating links between the national vision and school quality standards and making the vision a key reference across education platforms can help raise awareness and deepen understanding of Bulgaria's modern and comprehensive definition of school quality.

Revise the school evaluation framework to confirm that school quality means supporting the progress of all students

Among the most common guidelines for improvement that the Inspectorate issued over three months of inspections at the end of 2020 was that kindergartens and schools should increase students' participation and improve their results in Olympiads and other competitions (National Inspectorate of Education, 2021^[30]). This communicates a view of school quality based on the achievements of high performers and creates a risk that schools will pay less attention to the progress of low-performing students. The Inspectorate should therefore revise the school quality standards to delete the measure that relates to student participation and success in Olympiads, competitions or academic contests. Positively, other indicators in the school quality standards, like students' results on State Matriculation examinations and their acquisition of competencies, yield important information about outcomes for all learners. The standards also look at schools' inclusive practices (for example, see the indicators relating to the "coverage, inclusion and prevention of dropping out" criterion in Table 4.4).

To help communicate a more comprehensive understanding of school quality, the Inspectorate should consider adding specific indicators to the evaluation framework that relate to the progress and outcomes of vulnerable student groups. Such indicators are addressed in frameworks in other countries, like Scotland (Education Scotland, 2015^[31]). In Bulgaria, indicators might include, for example, raising the attainment and attendance rates of students who do not speak Bulgarian at home. There would need to be some flexibility to ensure the relevance of indicators for diverse school contexts. However, explicitly measuring whether inclusion policies are having a positive impact on student outcomes would encourage schools to work towards the national goal of supporting students from different backgrounds (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[18]).

Publish external school evaluation reports that are brief, holistic and qualitative

Bulgaria's new Inspectorate should develop a report specifically for the public to share key findings from school inspections. This practice would not only increase transparency in the education system but also help promote a more comprehensive understanding of school quality. The sample inspection report provided to the OECD review team contained some features that could be useful to the public, such as an explanation of the scoring system. However, while a public report should have fewer details than the reports schools receive, it should also provide a contextualised and descriptive overview of the school's practices in relation to quality standards. Publishing public reports of school inspections on line can also help communicate an authentic picture of school quality. In developing a template for public inspection reports, Bulgaria might consider one or both of the following models:

- **A one- or two-page summary of the report.** Bulgaria could develop a short document that is similar to the report prepared for parents in Scotland. It states a school's strengths, main recommendations for improvement and concludes with a table presenting a descriptive rating (e.g. "good") for each evaluated area (Education Scotland, 2021^[32]). This type of short summary report would be an easy way for Bulgaria to communicate key findings from school inspections to the public.
- **A more detailed holistic report.** Bulgaria could develop a more holistic public report, similar to the example of Ireland's Whole School Evaluation report (see Box 4.1), which is longer than a one- or two-page summary but shorter than a typical existing inspection report in Bulgaria (e.g. about half the length). Like Ireland, Bulgaria should focus this type of public report on the quality of school practices. At present, Bulgaria's inspection reports identify the overall score for the school up front, which focuses readers' attention on a number rather than what schools are actually doing. The new report could begin with information about the school's context and a summary of findings and recommendations. It could also avoid information that encourages the ranking of or competition between schools, like students' results on State Matriculation examinations. The Inspectorate

might consider changing the format of its reports for schools to match this one but still include a non-public appendix that gives more detailed inspection results to schools.

The Inspectorate should also revise the contents of public reports that summarise external school evaluation activities. At present, the reports focus on scores in different evaluated areas and name schools that received the highest and lowest results (National Inspectorate of Education, 2021^[30]). This decontextualised information does not convey the characteristics of the school or the quality of its underlying practices. The summary reports should instead provide an overview of what inspected schools are doing effectively and where they need to improve. The public external school evaluation reports recommended above will provide information about individual school results.

Box 4.2. Whole School Evaluation reports in Ireland

Ireland's Department of Education has published external school evaluation reports since 2006. The reports do not include numerical data that could be used to rank schools, although these data are used extensively to inform school evaluations. The reports consist of the following components:

- A one-page introduction that includes a brief explanation of what a Whole School Evaluation is and the main areas that the report covers (“How to read this report”).
- A small table listing the date of the inspection and inspection activities.
- One paragraph on the school context (e.g. the proportion of learners for whom English is an additional language, a description of the attendance rate).
- A one-page summary of the main findings and recommendations presented as bullet points.
- Detailed findings and recommendations for each evaluated area (e.g. the quality of school leadership and management, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement). These are half a page to one page each and qualitative. Each area or sub-area is described with a descriptor (e.g. satisfactory, good) and examples of school practices illustrate the judgement.
- An explanation of each of the five descriptors, from weak to very good, including their meaning and the different terms inspectors use for each level (e.g. “very good” can also be expressed as “of a very high quality”, “very effective practice”, “very successful”, etc.).
- An appendix containing the school's response to the report.

Source: Department of Education and Skills of Ireland (2021^[33]), *Whole School Evaluations (WSE)*, <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School-Evaluation-Reports-List/> (accessed on 26 May 2021).

Showcase schools that have made progress and are doing well to meet quality standards

The Ministry could use its website to recognise publicly the schools that are implementing effective practices. For example, on a regular basis (e.g. once a quarter), the ministry might feature a school that is doing well in meeting school quality standards and working towards national education goals, like preventing student dropout. Once a baseline level of performance has been determined through an inspection, the Ministry could also highlight schools that demonstrate improvements or perform well given their socio-economic level. Recognising these schools publicly could help foster improvement in all schools, especially those operating in disadvantaged contexts. The Ministry could select which schools to showcase from among those whose practices are shared on a new school improvement platform (see below). These efforts will further encourage education stakeholders and the public to

view school quality as a range of good practices and not just success on State Matriculation examinations.

Recommendation 4.1.2. Help schools develop a better understanding of school quality and lead their own development

In a positive way, the Inspectorate shares schools' good practices on its website, including actions that support Bulgaria's education goals (National Inspectorate of Education, 2021^[34]). Now that school self-evaluation will soon become a regular requirement, Bulgaria should develop more resources to help schools build a better understanding of school quality, including setting out the relationship between school evaluation and school development planning and how these actions can lead to improvements in teaching and learning practices (Maghnouj et al., 2020^[29]). Developing action plans in response to external school evaluations will also help to ensure that schools understand expectations for their role in determining and enacting improvements.

Develop an online platform to support school improvement

Bulgaria should create a dedicated online platform to make school self-evaluation and school improvement resources easily accessible. For example, the Ministry and the Inspectorate might consider expanding E-learn, the Ministry's e-library of teacher practices, into a platform that provides research, tools and training to help schools improve their practices. School staff could visit the platform to access the school self-evaluation guideline and tools recommended in this review (see Recommendation 4.3.2. Build schools' capacity to conduct self-evaluations and act on results). The platform could also house examples of effective school practices that the Inspectorate collects through external school evaluations. In creating this platform, Bulgaria could consider the National Improvement Hub as an example. This platform was developed in Scotland, United Kingdom (UK), to provide schools with a range of resources, including examples of classroom practices that have a positive impact on student learning, tools to develop effective self-evaluation processes and summaries of research on how to improve teaching and learning (Box 4.3).

Box 4.3. The National Improvement Hub in Scotland, UK

The Scottish government has an online platform for collaboration and sharing school-level good practices called the National Improvement Hub. The hub includes research articles on what works in schools, official documents and guidelines such as the school evaluation framework, teaching and assessment resources, exemplars of good practices selected by school practitioners. School staff are encouraged to use the hub and give feedback for improvement, as well as to participate in occasional workshops, organised both on line and at various locations across Scotland.

Effective practices on teaching and learning are compiled into the "teaching toolkit" for teachers to use as reference material in designing their classroom practice. The practices in the toolkit focus on issues most schools in Scotland face, such as extending school time, peer tutoring, school uniform, etc. For each practice, the toolkit identifies its impact as measured by impact evaluations and its cost.

Source: Education Scotland (2021^[35]), *National Improvement Hub*, <https://education.gov.scot/improvement> (accessed on 2 June 2021).

Require all schools to develop action plans based on external school evaluation results

Other European countries that have recently introduced school evaluation have determined that there is value in making the need for follow-up to school inspection results very explicit. This is something that

Bulgaria should consider, for example by introducing the requirement that all schools prepare development plans in response to the Inspectorate's findings. This can help communicate that external school evaluations are intended both as an accountability tool to confirm schools are working effectively towards the national vision for schooling and as a resource to help schools plan and prioritise how they will improve the quality of their practices. It will also help to clarify the roles that schools and REDs should play in follow-up to evaluations. For example, schools that receive poor results should develop their action plans in partnership with their RED. The Inspectorate could develop a template for the development plan to help schools reflect on the inspection report and determine improvements that they can internalise through school planning and regular self-evaluation. The education Ministry in Luxembourg, for example, created a pre-defined standard form for schools to adapt to set their own improvement goals (OECD, 2013^[14]). Austria has also had success requiring schools to develop and implement their own improvement plans (OECD, 2019^[36]). Bulgaria's Inspectorate could make this template accessible to schools on the online platform recommended above and, over time, post examples of good development plans as a resource for schools.

Policy issue 4.2. Ensuring that external school evaluations support school improvement, especially in at-risk schools

Prior to 2018, the Ministry's regional education inspectorates (now REDs) were responsible for monitoring, controlling and supporting schools. These responsibilities are now divided between the new national Inspectorate, which conducts external school evaluations, and REDs, which are expected to provide hands-on support to schools following inspections. Moving school inspections to an independent national body can help consolidate professional expertise in school evaluation and enable inspectors to make more consistent and fair judgements about school performance, as well as provide recommendations on how schools can improve their practices (OECD, 2013^[14]). This type of external school evaluation has the potential to strengthen and standardise education quality, especially in a country like Bulgaria where there are major regional disparities in the provision of education and significant gaps in student outcomes according to socio-economic status and ethnic background, especially among the Roma population (see Chapter 1). It is therefore positive that Bulgaria's new Inspectorate has a differentiated inspection cycle that targets low-performing schools.

While the Inspectorate represents an important achievement for the Bulgarian education system, REDs have not yet transitioned fully to their new supportive role. In many countries, this type of "mediating layer" between territorial authorities and the national government typically provides targeted support to schools by encouraging networking, making sure that schools understand reforms and communicating the experiences of schools back to national authorities (Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber, 2010^[37]). However, REDs in Bulgaria currently lack clear direction about what specific support activities fall under their new remit. They also do not appear to use the school quality standards to inform the type of support they provide to schools. Significant capacity issues within the new Inspectorate and REDs further hinder the successful implementation of Bulgaria's new external school evaluation system, namely staff shortages and a lack of experts with experience in school self-evaluation and development (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[7]).

Recommendation 4.2.1. Clarify and formalise REDs' new mandate for monitoring and supporting schools

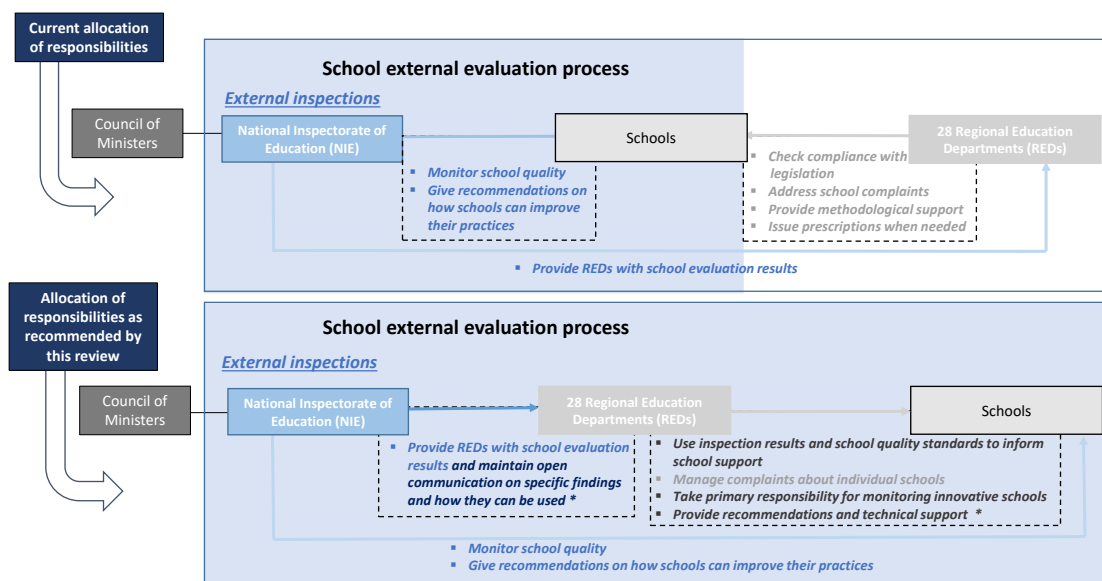
Bulgaria's Pre-school and School Education Act (2016) states that REDs are management and control administrations responsible for providing methodological support to schools and helping them implement improvements recommended by the Inspectorate (Government of Bulgaria, 2016^[10]). However, due to gaps in regulation, their specific responsibilities in relation to those of the new Inspectorate remain unclear.

For example, REDs do not have clear guidance on what specific support activities fall under their new remit. Bulgaria will need to bring clarity to the role of the REDs so that they can build on the work of the Inspectorate and effectively support school quality.

Amend regulations to set out the new responsibilities of REDs

The Ministry should amend relevant ordinances to set out the actions REDs should take in relation to external school evaluations. At present, there is an ordinance that details the Inspectorate’s responsibilities but there are no provisions addressing the responsibilities of REDs with respect to school evaluations. Without such provisions, it is unclear what exactly REDs should be doing. For example, representatives of the Inspectorate told the OECD review team that they do not know how or whether REDs are making use of school inspection results. New regulatory language should describe explicitly how REDs should follow up on inspection results, monitor schools and work with the Inspectorate (see below and Recommendation 4.3.3). This will clarify their new responsibilities and give them legal weight. It will also communicate to REDs and actors in the education sector exactly how the role of these regional bodies has shifted from control towards support. This may require training and changes to staffing within REDs in order to ensure that experts have adequate experience and a clear understanding of their role in supporting school development (see Recommendation 4.2.2).

Figure 4.2. Current and suggested responsibilities for the Inspectorate and REDs in their role of monitoring and supporting schools



Adjust the activities of REDs to complement the Inspectorate

At present, REDs conduct three main types of activities: monitoring to support schools, checking schools’ compliance with education legislation and dealing with complaints. Typical school support activities provided by REDs include working meetings, open lessons as well as training and fora for teachers of

different curriculum subjects. Methodological experts in each RED have full discretion to establish annual school monitoring activities and many develop their work plan prior to the beginning of the school year. As a result, the type of support provided by REDs is therefore largely dependent on individual methodological experts and may not take into account a school's performance in relation to the Inspectorate's quality standards. Moreover, the planning period makes it impossible for REDs to consider findings and recommendations from the increasing number of inspection reports when planning their work.

Another challenge associated with the responsibilities of REDs is that, if a RED determines a school has not met its duties, it may issue prescriptions that compel schools to act. This practice not only distracts from the new Inspectorate's recommendations, it also undermines Bulgaria's school quality standards, which do not inform what prescriptions REDs give to schools. Despite this, prescriptions seem to be a common activity: one RED informed the OECD review team that they had issued prescriptions to about half the schools in their region in the past year. Of the types of prescriptions cited by RED representatives, not all would actually help a school improve its practices. For example, one RED prescribed training for teachers to help them better prepare students for external assessments and exams. This would likely put additional pressure on schools to "teach to the test", a detrimental practice that narrowly focuses on subjects covered in examinations rather than on developing the competencies students need for lifelong learning. In order for Bulgaria's new school evaluation system to yield the desired results, it is imperative that REDs are an integrated part of the school evaluation process and complement the work of the national Inspectorate. To facilitate this, the Ministry should adjust the activities of REDs as follows:

- **Use inspection results to inform school support.** REDs should systematically review the Inspectorate's findings and use information from the risk analysis and inspection reports to inform how often they visit a school, what areas to monitor and what type of support they provide. For example, if the Inspectorate finds that a school has weak strategic management and teamwork, the RED might provide the school principal with coaching or training on how to improve the school's development. In defining supports, Bulgaria could look to Wales, UK, where regional consortia and local authorities help school staff improve teaching and learning practices, as well as support whole school improvement (Box 4.4). In general, REDs should focus their efforts on schools that receive lower inspection results (i.e. "unsatisfactory" or "satisfactory").
- **Stop issuing prescriptions to schools.** The Ministry should instruct REDs to discontinue the practice of issuing prescriptions to schools, as this role now falls under the responsibility of the new Inspectorate. Ending the use of prescriptions would help clarify that the primary role of REDs is to support school improvement. This change would also allow methodological experts to focus on helping schools – particularly low-performing ones – to develop action plans that address the Inspectorate's recommendations and provide technical support to ensure that schools can enact their plans.
- **Review the regional role in compliance checks.** With respect to monitoring schools' compliance with rules and regulations, Bulgaria will want to make sure that REDs are not duplicating the Inspectorate's work. Specifically, the Inspectorate will need to review its inspection framework against guidelines for compliance and auditing to remove overlap and ensure all relevant criteria are covered. One option is for the Ministry to make the Inspectorate solely responsible for monitoring compliance as part of regular external school evaluations. To keep schools accountable, Bulgaria could transition to this approach once external school evaluations and school self-evaluations are more established (e.g. after the Inspectorate has conducted a full cycle of evaluations). A national body may also consider carrying out financial or administrative audits, to help promote transparency and reduce opportunities for corruption, especially as Bulgaria continues broader decentralisation efforts (OECD, 2021^[16]).
- **Manage complaints about individual schools but involve the Inspectorate if needed.** REDs could maintain their role in dealing with school complaints. In Bulgaria and many other countries, schools are usually the first point of contact for complaints, followed by regional or local authorities

(Van Bruggen, 2010^[38]). These actors are generally considered the most appropriate bodies to respond to complaints because they employ and manage the performance of school staff. However, if a RED is unable to resolve a complaint, the issue could be channelled to the Inspectorate for a possible special inspection.

- **Take primary responsibility for monitoring innovative schools.** At present, REDs and members from the Innovative Schools Commission inspect schools that participate in Bulgaria's Innovative Schools initiative. To make the monitoring of innovative schools more efficient, Bulgaria might involve REDs as the main actors responsible for directly monitoring innovative schools, while the commission could analyse the results of monitoring activities and work with the Ministry's Innovative Schools Directorate to develop plans to address any implementation challenges. The criteria used to monitor the work of Innovative Schools should clearly build on Bulgaria's school quality standards.

These proposed changes will require major adjustments in the way that REDs currently organise their work, as well as changes to relevant legislation. This transition will take time, especially since many of the changes require input from the Inspectorate, which is only currently able to conduct around 130 inspections per year. Bulgaria will need to ensure that both the Inspectorate and REDs have sufficient human and financial resources to fulfil their mandates (see Recommendation 4.2.2. Build REDs' capacity to support school quality and Recommendation 4.2.3. Ensure the Inspectorate can fulfil its mandate).

Box 4.4. Supports provided by Challenge Advisors in Wales, UK

In Wales, UK, local authorities and regional education consortia employ several different types of staff, including specialists in different teaching and learning areas, and a large number of Challenge Advisors. The Challenge Advisor positions were created specifically to support principals to build in-school capacity to meet school quality standards. There are four main aspects to their role, set out as National Standards for Challenge Advisors:

1. Supporting school evaluation and improvement (e.g. supporting school leaders to conduct classroom observations and improve the quality of teaching, supporting effective target setting as part of strategic planning).
2. Arranging effective support and intervention (e.g. identify resources to address school needs, facilitate school-to-school networking).
3. Developing school leadership (e.g. mentoring, coaching and using evidence to review performance and impact).
4. Building school-to-school capacity (e.g. determining ways in which good schools can support others).

Source: Welsh Government (2014^[39]), *National Standards for Challenge Advisors*, <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/national-standards-for-challenge-advisers.pdf> (accessed on 8 June 2021); EC/EACEA/Eurydice (2016^[26]), *Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe*, <http://doi.org/10.2797/678>.

Provide formal opportunities for the Inspectorate and REDs to work together

In addition to formally adjusting responsibilities, Bulgaria should put in place measures to establish a strong working relationship between the Inspectorate and REDs to help support school improvement. At present, they do not communicate regularly with each other. Some RED staff with whom the review team spoke were not well aware of the Inspectorate's work. For example, they expressed a misconception that the Inspectorate's external school evaluations were still in the pilot phase. In developing new measures,

Bulgaria could look at practices in other countries that have a national inspectorate and supportive subnational education bodies. Scotland's inspectorate, Education Scotland, uses partnership agreements to describe how the inspection body will work with local authorities to build their capacity to help schools improve and attain national education goals. The staff of Education Scotland and each local authority also meet as needed to discuss school improvement matters (Education Scotland, 2016_[40]).

Recommendation 4.2.2. Build REDs' capacity to support school quality

At present, most experts who work in REDs provide schools with methodological support and control in different curriculum subject areas. There is often one RED expert with a specific mandate to support principals; however, the responsibilities associated with this position do not include helping principals with school improvement following an external school evaluation. Staffing shortages and workload challenges also hinder the support function of REDs. For example, representatives of three different REDs told the OECD review team that they had issues attracting candidates for expert positions. One reported that they had received no applications in competitions for IT and mathematics experts. Stakeholders also told the OECD review team that experts may not have enough recent experience working in schools to be well versed in school procedures, like the competency-based curriculum. Despite this, experts are not currently required to participate in training. Bulgaria will need to address these capacity issues to ensure that RED experts can better support schools.

Develop specific positions for school improvement experts in REDs

The Ministry should create positions in each RED for dedicated school improvement experts who will provide support to principals in response to external school evaluation results and in conducting new school self-evaluations for development. In the short term, the Ministry should consider filling these roles by re-orienting the mandates of experts who already work with principals and possibly those with a broad portfolio to support curriculum and educational quality at different school levels. The Ministry should ensure that school improvement experts are not the direct employers of principals since this could conflict with their support function. In establishing these roles, the Ministry could look at similar positions in subnational education bodies in other countries, like the Challenge Advisors in Wales (Box 4.4).

In the medium to long term, REDs should recruit new school improvement experts with knowledge and experience in school self-evaluation and improvement to supplement existing staff or replace those who leave. At present, senior experts in REDs are only required to have a bachelor's degree and two years of professional experience (Eurydice, 2018_[41]). The Ministry might consider making prerequisites for the position of school improvement expert more stringent and targeted. In Wales, for example, Challenge Advisors are expected to have at least five years of experience in a school leadership role (e.g. as a school principal or senior leader) (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016_[26]). Bulgaria could recruit school improvement experts from among the higher levels of the teacher career path and principals who have experience with school self-evaluation and development. Experience as an external inspector with the Inspectorate might also be an asset.

To implement this type of restructuring, the Ministry will need to develop job descriptions that align with the new roles and competencies expected of RED methodological experts. Candidates should then participate in merit-based job competitions involving transparent selection criteria that relate to the competencies needed for each role. To avoid a shortage of experts, Bulgaria will need to ensure that the positions are sufficiently attractive before making recruitment procedures more selective (see below).

Build experts' capacity to support school staff

The Ministry will need to make sure that RED experts participate in training that will help them acquire new knowledge and skills to support teachers and principals. This should include training on student-centred,

competency-based teaching practices in the National Programme for Qualifications (see Chapter 3). New school improvement experts should also take part in training on school self-evaluation and development so they can support schools in these areas (see Recommendation 4.3.2. Build schools' capacity to conduct self-evaluations and act on results). Once Bulgaria has developed a cadre of well-trained RED experts, the Ministry could work with REDs to create a mentorship system so that new experts can benefit from the knowledge of their more experienced colleagues.

Address factors that contribute to the understaffing of REDs

There appear to be several issues that are contributing to a shortage of methodological experts and a lack of interest in the role, namely that experts have heavy administrative workloads and salaries – in comparison to recently increased teachers' wages – are low. Bulgaria will need to address these issues to ensure that REDs can fulfil their mandate. Specifically, the Ministry should:

- **Review and consider redistributing experts' workload.** The Ministry should conduct a review of experts' workload to determine where changes are necessary to reduce any burdens and enable REDs to focus more on support. For example, the Ministry might consider delegating some responsibilities, like serving on different commissions, to teachers at higher levels of the career path. RED representatives cited these as particularly time-consuming. In the long term, shifting responsibility for the attestation appraisal process to external evaluators, as recommended in Chapter 3, will also help reduce experts' workload and enable them to devote more time to school support.
- **Consider a further increase in experts' salaries to align with their new role.** Bulgaria has significantly increased teachers' salaries over the past five years (see Chapter 3) (EC, 2019^[17]). While the salary for experts also increased by around 15% in August 2020, this raise may not have kept up with the increase in teachers' salaries (BNT, 2020^[42]). As RED experts should take on different responsibilities that require higher levels of experience and competencies, the Ministry should consider whether these changes warrant a further increase in experts' salaries. Importantly, this increase should be part of broader efforts to restructure the workforce in Bulgaria's education sector, namely that being a RED expert is part of an esteemed pathway for educators who can move between teaching, school leadership and other system roles.
- **Determine other factors that might be contributing to staffing challenges.** The Ministry could also survey REDs to identify other factors that might be making expert positions less attractive. The findings from this exercise could inform other policy initiatives to recruit and retain qualified staff.

Recommendation 4.2.3. Ensure the Inspectorate can fulfil its mandate

Bulgaria's new Inspectorate will have an important role in helping to improve the quality of education. However, the Inspectorate currently lacks the human and financial resources needed to conduct external evaluations of all schools (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[7]). Bulgaria will need to address this capacity issue to ensure the effective implementation of its school evaluation framework. As this new body develops, Bulgaria will also need to ensure that Inspectorate staff have a strong understanding of quality teaching and learning to inform their judgements, which will help to enhance their credibility. At present, internal inspectors are not required to have a background in education and there are no processes to reduce political interference in the appointment of the Inspectorate's director. While the Inspectorate can establish its own minimum selection criteria for staff, these are currently less stringent than those in many European countries (e.g. two or three years of experience in a school versus five years or more) (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016^[26]; National Inspectorate of Education, 2020^[43]). Taking steps to ensure the Inspectorate can operate as intended and build its role as a technical agency will be crucial if it is to fulfil its mandate and have a positive impact on school quality.

Provide the Inspectorate with sufficient human and financial resources

The Ministry should work with the Inspectorate to review their allotment of internal inspectors and their budget with a view to making adjustments. The Inspectorate needs a sufficient number of internal inspectors to lead the evaluation of all kindergartens and schools in the country once every five years (or more), with support from external inspectors. At present, the Council of Ministers has rules limiting the Inspectorate to employing only 13 inspectors (Council of Ministers, 2018^[25]). Although not directly comparable, Albania's national inspectorate employed 30 inspectors for a much smaller education system (Maghnouj et al., 2020^[44]). The Ministry should also ensure that the Inspectorate receives sufficient state funding to employ more internal inspectors at a competitive salary and to cover the costs of work resulting from recommendations in this review. This may require adjustments to rules at higher levels of government.

Require internal inspectors to have relevant experience and a background in education

In Bulgaria, the only regulated requirements for internal inspectors relate to their role as civil servants. This makes the prerequisites less stringent than those for external inspectors, despite the expectation that internal staff will lead inspection teams. Bulgaria should revise the Council of Ministers rules to make a teaching qualification and at least five years of experience in the education part of the regulated requirements to become an internal inspector. Bulgaria could also make the attainment of a higher level on the teacher career path a prerequisite for inspector positions (see Chapter 3). Additional selection criteria could include expertise in school evaluation and school improvement, analytical skills and knowledge of relevant legislation, which are common requirements internationally (Faubert, 2009^[21]). As mentioned above, Bulgaria will also need to increase internal inspectors' salaries if they are not high enough to attract experienced educators or principals.

Bolster the Inspectorate's role as an independent technical body

While securing a civil service position in Bulgaria requires participating in an open merit-based competition, in reality, there is evidence to suggest that loopholes still exist (Zankina, 2018^[45]). To bolster the Inspectorate's role as an independent technical agency, Bulgaria should take steps to ensure that appointments are free from political interference and staff have the relevant competencies and experience to evaluate schools. Strengthening the selection criteria for inspectors, as outlined above, can help achieve this goal. However, the prime minister appoints the director of the Inspectorate and there are no guidelines about what qualifications this person should have or approval process for the General Assembly to review and confirm the appointment. While it is common for government administrations to appoint heads of ministries and technical agencies, Bulgaria should consider ways to ensure the appointment process for selecting the Inspectorate's leadership does not undermine the trust and technical quality of this body.

Recommendation 4.2.4. Use external school evaluations and the Innovative Schools initiative to support equity and inclusion

Over the next 10 years, Bulgaria aims to create a more equitable, inclusive education system (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020^[18]). However, there are currently significant gaps in participation and learning outcomes among students in different districts and from different ethnic groups. For example, the performance gap on PISA 2018 between students whose mother tongue was Bulgarian and those who reported speaking another language at home was equivalent to over two years of schooling (OECD, 2019^[46]). Bulgaria should make changes to the school evaluation system to better support national goals related to helping all students develop the competencies needed for success. In particular, support provided in a follow-up to external school evaluations, such as networking opportunities and funding, should target low-performing schools to help them improve. These efforts will help to ensure that attention and resources stay focused on students and schools at risk of falling behind. Bulgaria should also consider

how the large-scale Innovative Schools initiative could further support equitable improvements across the education system by including schools that would not otherwise have the funds to implement innovative projects.

Introduce a formal school networking programme for schools that need extra support

Through the Innovations in Action initiative, the Bulgarian government provides funding to support the dissemination of innovative school practices. This includes funding for school networking between innovative and non-innovative schools. Schools establish these networking relationships themselves using an online platform. While this initiative is positive, there is no guarantee that these relationships will include schools that are struggling to meet quality standards. Bulgaria should, instead, make sure that at-risk schools benefit from peer learning, which is a powerful support for school improvement (OECD, 2013^[14]). The Ministry should work with the Inspectorate to establish a formal school networking programme that pairs schools that received the two lowest ratings on their external school evaluations (“unsatisfactory” and “satisfactory”) with schools that received a rating of “very good”. School improvement experts in REDs could help to facilitate these networks. For example, REDs could arrange meetings between school principals and school visits to observe teaching and learning practices. The Inspectorate could monitor the impact of the networking activities when conducting follow-up inspections with the schools that received lower ratings. In developing this type of initiative, Bulgaria could look at international examples of networking programmes that have paired schools based on inspection results. Serbia’s SHARE programme, for example, combined 10 to 15 hours of classroom observations in “model schools” with constructive peer feedback sessions (Maghnouj et al., 2020^[29]).

Target proposed school improvement funds at schools that receive poor results on their external school evaluations

Once all state and municipal institutions have undergone an initial inspection, Bulgaria plans to provide state funds to improve the quality of instruction in schools that receive either high or low results on their external school evaluations (Government of Bulgaria, 2016^[10]). High-performing schools will have the discretion to spend the funds on their improvement activities and to incentivise staff, while low-performing schools will need to spend funds according to a distribution scheme approved by the local government. Internationally, external school evaluation results are not strongly linked to financial rewards (OECD, 2013^[14]). Since rewarding high-performing schools with financial resources has the potential to reinforce inequities in the education system, Bulgaria should consider providing them with non-financial rewards instead. This will free up more resources to raise standards in lower-performing schools, which is essential to creating a more equitable education system. The Ministry’s website, for example, could showcase high-performing schools (see Recommendation 4.1.1. Clearly communicate what school quality means) and will already be rewarded with greater autonomy and space to innovate by being subject to fewer external school evaluations.

Bulgaria should also consider how to direct resources for school improvement to low-performing schools as soon as possible. As of December 2020, only 160 institutions had been evaluated out of 4 225 schools in the country. It will therefore take some time for the Inspectorate to evaluate all institutions and thus give all schools access to state funds to improve instructional quality. In the meantime, the government should begin providing indirect financial support to low-performing schools by funding the kinds of regional technical supports recommended above, including a school networking programme.

Review the Innovative Schools initiative to determine whether there are schools that are under-represented

The Ministry reportedly does not provide funding for projects developed as part of the Innovative Schools initiative in order to give schools greater freedom from the normative framework. This means that schools

need to find funding from other sources to support their innovative projects. Some schools rely on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other donations to fund activities like training for school staff and changes in infrastructure. For example, one school that spoke with the OECD review team stated that an NGO donated LEV 200 000 (just over EUR 100 000) to their project. Many schools in Bulgaria are unlikely to have access to donor funding at this level. Therefore, the Ministry should conduct a review to determine the extent to which this policy prevents schools from applying to the Innovative Schools initiative because they lack access to external funding. This analysis would also reveal whether existing innovative schools have difficulty funding their projects.

Bulgaria should use the results of this review to inform changes to expand access to the initiative. For example, the Ministry might consider providing funding to schools that pass the application process and are under-represented among innovative schools. These might be schools that have certain contextual features, like their school type (e.g. vocational), location (e.g. in poorer municipalities) or student population (e.g. schools that already receive extra state funds for having a concentration of students from vulnerable groups above 20%). The funding could be used for specific aspects of the projects, similar to the Netherlands' Schools Have the Initiative (*School aan Zet*) programme, which ran from 2012 to 2016. This programme was designed to be temporary and encourage Dutch schools to become familiar with new reforms by allowing them to access funding for, among other things, visits from independent experts to support the implementation and evaluation of their projects (OECD, 2014^[47]). The Ministry should place conditions on this type of funding for accountability purposes, such as requiring schools to report on how they are working with non-innovative schools to disseminate the results of their projects.

Policy issue 4.3. Making regular school self-evaluation mandatory and building schools' capacity for development

Bulgaria's efforts to strengthen external school evaluation are important and have the potential to raise the quality and equity of the school system. However, it will likely take time to inspect all schools and build the capacity of REDs to support school improvement. It is therefore imperative that Bulgaria simultaneously proceed with plans to develop instruments for school self-evaluation so that schools can start driving their own improvement immediately. The current lack of requirements for regular school self-evaluation is a significant gap. While it is positive that the Ministry is developing a new ordinance on school quality management that will make regular self-evaluation mandatory, a similar ordinance was briefly in place and repealed in 2017, highlighting the need to learn from previous experience and make self-evaluation a meaningful exercise for schools. For example, the repealed ordinance did not give schools flexibility to adapt self-evaluation to fit their needs or reference the Inspectorate's school evaluation framework, which was still under development. To be effective, school self-evaluation and external evaluation processes should be complementary and mutually reinforcing so that all schools are consistently encouraged to focus on areas that are most important to quality provision (OECD, 2013^[14]).

Several factors could prevent Bulgarian schools from conducting effective self-evaluations and making improvements to their practices. In particular, schools will need support to build their capacity for self-evaluation and access to data to help easily benchmark their outcomes against comparable schools. These elements do not yet exist in Bulgaria. Another risk factor is a lack of capacity among school leaders to plan and implement school improvements. Unlike a majority of European countries, Bulgaria does not require principals to complete any initial training for their role (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013^[48]; Sağlam, Geçer and Bağ, 2017^[49]). This can leave principals unprepared for their responsibilities, especially considering they have a significant amount of autonomy. Addressing these risk factors can help establish self-evaluation as an important exercise, which is crucial since it will take several years before the new Inspectorate can conduct inspections of all schools.

Recommendation 4.3.1. Ensure that new school self-evaluation requirements support school development

Bulgaria will need to make sure that the new ordinance on school quality management encourages schools to internalise quality standards and use self-evaluation to support their own development (OECD, 2013^[14]). In a positive way, the Inspectorate already plans to revise the school quality standards to address school self-evaluation once the new ordinance is released. Many OECD countries include this area in their standards to encourage schools to use self-evaluation for improvement and to ensure that inspections provide feedback on the quality of their processes (OECD, 2015^[50]).

Ensure that the new ordinance on school quality management addresses key aspects of self-evaluation that will help schools drive their own development

The Ministry and the Inspectorate should jointly develop the new ordinance on school quality management with input from key stakeholders. The OECD review team's discussions with stakeholders in Bulgaria suggested that different Ministry directorates were more involved in the development process than the Inspectorate. Engaging the Inspectorate will help to ensure that new requirements for school self-evaluation are consistent with the overall school evaluation framework. The Ministry and the Inspectorate should ensure this ordinance clearly connects self-evaluation to school development by referencing:

- **The development purpose and frequency of school self-evaluation.** Like roughly a dozen European education systems, including Estonia, Ireland, Scotland and Spain, Bulgaria should identify self-evaluation as a tool to inform school development plans (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016^[26]). Bulgaria should also require schools to conduct self-evaluations at least every two years, as was the requirement in the previous ordinance. This will fit well within Bulgaria's four-year school development planning cycle.
- **Core quality indicators.** In most OECD countries, schools are given the flexibility to adapt self-evaluation to their needs, which helps them better integrate this process into their regular development activities (Chapman and Sammons, 2013^[51]; OECD, 2015^[50]). Bulgaria's new ordinance should require schools to focus their self-evaluations on a small number of core indicators that are drawn from the Inspectorate's school quality standards but give schools the flexibility to choose from other indicators depending on their context and goals. The specific core indicators should be set out in a manual that the Inspectorate can easily revise as needed (see below). They should relate to national education goals for student outcomes, which will encourage schools to work towards overall system improvement.
- **Key roles and responsibilities.** In a positive way, the previous ordinance identified the key individuals that should be involved in the school self-evaluation process, including the principal, the Pedagogical Council, a staff team, and parents and students. This makes school self-evaluation a shared responsibility. In the new ordinance, Bulgaria should identify chief teachers as the school staff who are responsible for helping to co-ordinate self-evaluations (see Chapter 3). The new ordinance should also clarify what role other actors in the education system should play in supporting school self-evaluation and development, especially REDs and the Inspectorate.

Use external school evaluations to assess whether schools are conducting self-evaluations and provide feedback on their quality

The Inspectorate should proceed with revising the school quality standards so that external school evaluations address the quality of school self-evaluations. This could mean reinstating the indicators and sub-indicators on school quality management that were in the 2016 iteration of the standards (see Table 4.6). These addressed whether schools were using self-evaluation for development. Once Bulgaria

develops guidelines, tools and training for school self-evaluation (see below), the Inspectorate might consider revising the indicators to capture the extent to which school staff make use of these materials.

Table 4.6. The Inspectorate’s previous indicators on management of school quality

| Criterion | Indicators | Sub-indicators |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Management of school quality | Efficiency of self-evaluation | The pre-school/school has defined activities, procedures and criteria for preparing an internal evaluation of the quality of education. |
| | | Built capacity for collection, processing, interpretation and use of data. |
| | | Measures are taken to improve quality as a result of the self-evaluation. |
| | Interconnection between self-evaluation and improvement | Measures to improve quality are proposed at meetings of the Pedagogical Council. |
| | | The Public Council offers quality improvement policies and measures. |
| | | Feedback from teachers, students and parents is taken into account when taking measures to improve quality. |
| | | The . Strategy and Action Plan are updated according to proposed measures for quality improvement. |

Source: National Inspectorate of Education (2016^[52]), *School Evaluation Criteria*, National Inspectorate of Education, Sofia.

Recommendation 4.3.2. Build schools’ capacity to conduct self-evaluations and act on results

Introducing meaningful self-evaluation takes time and support. Schools may find it challenging to gather and analyse evidence, engage the school community in the self-evaluation process and devise recommendations for improvement. As a result, most OECD countries provide schools with guidelines, online resources and training on self-evaluation. This is particularly important in contexts like Bulgaria, where a culture of open discussion and trust, which is important for effective self-evaluation, is not well established. To enable Bulgarian schools to conduct self-evaluation and compare their performance constructively to schools operating in similar contexts (e.g. based on location or characteristics of students), the Ministry will need to provide adequate resources and data. In OECD countries, this type of data is often made accessible to schools through Education Management Information Systems (EMIS). Bulgaria is in the early stages of developing a new EMIS (see Chapter 5) and should make sure that schools can use the information collected there to inform their self-evaluation and development efforts.

Develop a school self-evaluation manual, resources and practical tools

The Inspectorate should develop a school self-evaluation manual that provides an overview of the steps in the self-evaluation process. The manual should contain a small number of core quality indicators, as recommended above, that align with the Inspectorate’s school evaluation framework. The manual should also include a simple list of prompting questions to help schools determine how they are doing in relation to the indicators (e.g. “how good is our school?”; “how can we make it better?”; “are teachers’ skills being put to good use?”; and “how good is learning and teaching in our school?”) (Riley and Macbeath, 2000^[53]). Providing descriptors and benchmarks of what “poor” to “very good” quality looks like for each indicator can also help schools make judgements about their practices.

Bulgaria should make self-evaluation resources, such as evidence-gathering tools and descriptions of schools’ effective practices, available to schools on an online platform (see Recommendation 4.1.2). For example, Ireland’s Department of Education and Skills has a school self-evaluation website that provides sample interviews and questionnaires, detailed “stories from schools”, including videos showing how school staff conducted self-evaluations, and examples of self-evaluation reports and school improvement

plans (Department of Education and Skills of Ireland, 2021^[54]). The Bulgarian Inspectorate could solicit these tools from schools and collect more through external school evaluations.

Provide training and guidance to school staff responsible for school self-evaluation

The Inspectorate should have a mandate to develop training to build the capacity of schools to conduct effective self-evaluations. The extent to which schools received training on school self-evaluation when the previous ordinance on school quality management was in place in 2017 is unclear. Most OECD countries treat this as a necessary investment, particularly when school self-evaluation is first introduced as a requirement (OECD, 2013^[14]). In Bulgaria, training seminars should be available to principals and other school staff who will be responsible for self-evaluation, like chief teachers, through the National Programme for Qualifications (see Chapter 3). The seminars should cover key areas like how to gather evidence, analyse data and develop school improvement plans. Over time, the Inspectorate should use information gathered through external school evaluations to refine the training to address areas of need.

School improvement experts in REDs should also provide ongoing coaching to schools on how to conduct self-evaluations (see Recommendation 4.2.2. Build REDs' capacity to support school quality). In many European countries, including Belgium (German-speaking community), Estonia and Poland, schools can request that external specialists give them self-evaluation advice and support on topics like which data collection tools to use and how to act on findings (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016^[26]). In the future, Bulgaria should make this type of coaching mandatory if an external school evaluation determines that a school is struggling with self-evaluation and development planning.

Provide schools with data that they can use to benchmark their performance against schools with similar demographic features

The Inspectorate should work with the Ministry's directorate responsible for building a new EMIS to provide schools with data that allow them to compare their performance with schools that share their contextual features, as well as regional or national averages. For example, Bulgaria could build a user-friendly portal in the new EMIS to provide schools with benchmarking data (see Chapter 5). This should cover key school quality indicators, particularly those that relate to national education goals for student outcomes, such as national external assessments results and completion and enrolment rates by different student categories (e.g. socio-economic background, ethnic group, gender). Importantly, this portal should not facilitate the ranking of schools but rather support schools in conducting self-evaluations by revealing whether comparable institutions are obtaining different outcomes. School staff can also use this information to improve their teaching, learning and school management practices.

Recommendation 4.3.3. Strengthen principals' instructional leadership

Having established a merit-based process for appointing school principals, Bulgaria's Pre-school and School Education Act recently put in place measures to develop school leadership further. While the process for selecting school principals has remained largely unchanged, a new attestation appraisal (similar to attestation appraisal for teachers) was developed to hold principals accountable for their performance. The attestation appraisal will be implemented for the first time in the school year of 2021-22 and will be used to inform a principals' progression along a career path that consists of two degrees (see Table 4.2). Principals are also required to meet new requirements for continuous professional development and have access to training that is relevant to their role. For example, Bulgaria's 2020-21 National Programme for Qualifications included seven or eight training opportunities for principals (e.g. practical training for principals of educational institutions, practical module for positive communication with teachers). However, preparation specifically covering instructional leadership practices, which are associated with real school improvement, may be lacking (Orphanos and Orr, 2014^[55]). Bulgaria should require principals to participate in mandatory initial training and continuous professional learning on

practices relevant to all of their major responsibilities. To encourage school principals to continuously develop their leadership competencies, Bulgaria should explore ways to align incentives with the principal career path.

Provide principals with initial training on instructional leadership and collaborative professional learning opportunities

The Ministry should make school leadership training free and mandatory for newly appointed principals. Bulgaria's National Center for the Professional Development of Pedagogical Specialists, which is a Ministry body, recently designed training for new principals that covers areas like labour law, communications and finances. In a positive way, this training is already free of charge and reportedly engages school leaders in examining practical case studies. However, it is not mandatory and does not seem to cover instructional leadership explicitly. The centre should expand the contents of the training to provide practical preparation in all areas of school leadership, including instructional leadership duties like heading school self-evaluation, planning and implementing school improvement, as well as advising teachers on how to improve the quality of instruction (see Chapter 3). To cover the main areas of importance, training will likely need to be longer than its present length of 16 hours. By comparison, training for new principals in the Czech Republic is 100 hours and in France one year (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013^[48]).

The Ministry could also expand Bulgaria's recently introduced requirements for teacher mentorship (see Chapter 3) to include a new mentorship programme for principals. Working with REDs, the Ministry could pair new principals with experienced principals and make sure that the latter are well prepared to provide mentorship support. For example, the Ministry could develop a practical training seminar for principal mentors that covers topics like coaching and providing feedback, as well as issue a guideline setting out expectations for the role of principal mentor. Examples of principal mentorship programmes can be found in OECD education systems like England ([UK](#)), Estonia, New Zealand and Slovenia (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008^[56]). This type of collaborative, job-embedded learning is particularly beneficial to school leaders. Another type of professional learning for principals could also entail joining school inspection teams as external inspectors. Working with experienced inspectors to conduct external evaluations of other schools can help principals better understand the Inspectorate's school quality standards, benchmark school practices against these and learn how to develop appropriate interventions to improve performance.

Further develop the school principal career structure to reward the development of motivated school leaders

The Ministry should review the purpose of the new principal career structure and, if it is intended to encourage principals' development as school leaders, consider how it can better motivate principals to grow professionally. As recommended for teachers in Chapter 3, one way the Ministry could do this is by identifying additional responsibilities for each of the first and second degrees of the principal career path and higher competencies in the professional profile for school directors. There may also be scope to include elements linked to improving performance in disadvantaged schools. The Ministry should also connect salary increases to each degree. Without additional remuneration, there may be little incentive for school leaders to develop their leadership capacity and move up the career ladder.

Career progression should be the primary means for Bulgaria to reward principals financially for their performance. This means that Bulgaria should discontinue the salary bonus for principals based on an annual analysis of their work, similar to the recommendation for teachers in Chapter 3. An attestation appraisal for career progression, once revised as recommended below, will provide a more consistent, transparent and objective process to reward principals for their performance. For example, it will be based on common standards and transparent sources of evidence, unlike the annual analysis of work.

Align the professional qualification degree programmes with the school principal career structure

The Ministry should also play a role in overseeing professional qualification degree programmes for principals to ensure that they develop school leadership competencies for career progression. A scan of two universities' offerings in 2021 revealed no programmes on school management or leadership for the fifth or fourth professional qualification degrees, which are required for moving up the school principal career ladder. To address this, the Ministry should encourage providers to develop programmes based on competencies set out in the professional profile for school directors. Other changes recommended in Chapter 3 to enhance the relevance and quality of professional development programmes also apply to school leaders' professional learning. For example, the Ministry should collect information about principals' learning needs systematically to inform priority areas in the National Programme for Qualifications and conduct more stringent quality assurance procedures.

Make the attestation appraisal of school leaders more objective, consistent and transparent

While the attestation appraisal of school principals intends to improve accountability, principals are currently measured against criteria set by individual attestation commissions, rather than the professional profile for school principals. Furthermore, the principal's employer (often REDs) leads the attestation process and selects members to the appraisal commission, which creates opportunities for political interference. The Ministry should therefore make similar changes to the attestation appraisal process for school leaders as those recommended in Chapter 3 for teachers. In particular, the Ministry should revise the appraisal process so that principals are assessed against consistent standards – specifically, the competencies for a particular career level in a revised professional profile for school directors – rather than criteria that vary with each appraisal. This will promote greater transparency in the process and encourage more consistent judgements of principals' performance against important areas of knowledge and skill. Furthermore, the Ministry should replace the attestation commission with independent appraisers. Having independent appraisers would help ensure the integrity of the attestation appraisal. Bulgaria could do this by making experts from neighbouring REDs or contracted external appraisers with school leadership experience responsible for conducting attestation appraisals. The Ministry should develop a guideline and training so that appraisers are well prepared to assess principals' practices and provide feedback.

Incentivise school leaders to work in struggling schools

Bulgaria should consider incentivising talented principals to work in schools in rural or socio-economically disadvantaged areas. These schools are often most in need of a strong school leader capable of improving teaching and learning practices but among the hardest to staff. At present, Bulgaria does not provide any allowances or incentives for principals working in disadvantaged or remote schools (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020^[8]). Furthermore, school leadership in rural areas may be less attractive because principals' base salaries are differentiated according to the size of the school and rural schools tend to be smaller. Incentives could include a salary stipend or a career fast track, as recommended for teachers in Chapter 3. For example, Kazakhstan provides an allowance and housing support to principals in rural schools (OECD, 2019^[51]). Non-financial incentives might include recognition for outstanding school leadership in different regions. This type of reward would also help to communicate to the public what school quality means in Bulgaria.

Table 4.7. Table of recommendations

| Policy Issues | Recommendations | Action Points |
|--|---|--|
| Building a common understanding of school quality | Clearly communicate what school quality means | Create clear links between Bulgaria's national vision of a school in 2030 with the school quality standards used for evaluation |
| | | Revise the school evaluation framework to confirm that school quality means supporting the progress of all students |
| | | Publish external school evaluation reports that are brief, holistic and qualitative |
| | | Showcase schools that have made progress and are doing well to meet quality standards |
| | Help schools develop a better understanding of school quality and lead their own development | Develop an online platform to support school improvement |
| | | Require all schools to develop action plans based on external school evaluation results |
| Making sure that external school evaluations support school improvement, especially in at-risk schools | Clarify and formalise REDs' new mandate for monitoring and supporting schools | Amend regulations to set out the new responsibilities of REDs |
| | | Adjust the activities of REDs to complement the inspectorate |
| | | Provide formal opportunities for the inspectorate and REDs to work together |
| | Build REDs' capacity to support school quality | Develop specific positions for school improvement experts in REDs |
| | | Build experts' capacity to support school staff |
| | | Address factors that contribute to the understaffing of REDs |
| | Ensure the inspectorate can fulfil its mandate | Provide the inspectorate with sufficient human and financial resources |
| | | Require internal inspectors to have relevant experience and a background in education |
| | | Bolster the inspectorate's role as an independent technical body |
| | | Introduce a formal school networking programme for schools that need extra support |
| | Use external school evaluations and the Innovative Schools initiative to support equity and inclusion | Target proposed school improvement funds to schools that receive poor results on their external school evaluations |
| | | Review the Innovative Schools initiative to determine whether there are schools that are under-represented |
| | | |
| Making regular school self-evaluation mandatory and building schools' capacity for development | Ensure that new school self-evaluation requirements support school development | Ensure that the new ordinance on school quality management addresses key aspects of self-evaluation that will help schools drive their own development |
| | | Use external school evaluations to assess whether schools are conducting self-evaluations and provide feedback on their quality |
| | Build schools' capacity to conduct self-evaluations and act on results | Develop a school self-evaluation manual, resources and practical tools |
| | | Provide training and guidance to school staff responsible for school self-evaluation |
| | | Provide schools with data that they can use to benchmark their performance against schools with similar demographic features |
| | Strengthen principals' instructional leadership | Provide principals with initial training on instructional leadership and collaborative professional learning opportunities |
| | | Further develop the school principal career structure to reward the development of motivated school leaders |
| | | Align the professional qualification degree programmes with the school principal career structure |
| | | Make the attestation appraisal of school leaders more objective, consistent and transparent |
| | | Incentivise school leaders to work in struggling schools |

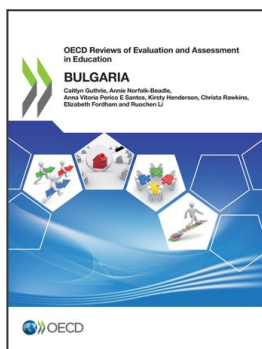
References

- BNT (2020), “Вдигат с 15% заплатите служителите от Регионалните управления на образованието [Employees from the Regional Departments of Education raise salaries by 15%]”, <https://bntnews.bg/news/vdigat-s-15-zaplatite-sluzhiteli-ot-regionalnite-upravleniya-na-obrazovaniето-1072009news.html> (accessed on 8 June 2021). [42]
- Chapman, C. and P. Sammons (2013), “School self-evaluation for school improvement: What works and why?”, CfBT Education Trust, Reading. [51]
- Council of Ministers (2018), *Rules for the Structure and Functions of the National Inspectorate of Education*, Council of Ministers of Bulgaria. [25]
- Department of Education and Skills of Ireland (2021), *Welcome to the New School Self-evaluation Website*, <http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/> (accessed on 11 June 2021). [54]
- Department of Education and Skills of Ireland (2021), *Whole School Evaluations (WSE)*, <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School-Evaluation-Reports-List/> (accessed on 26 May 2021). [33]
- EC (2019), *Education and Training Monitor 2019: Bulgaria*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/document-library/education-and-training-monitor-2019-bulgaria-report_en (accessed on 23 October 2020). [17]
- EC/EACEA/Eurydice (2020), *Teachers’ and School Heads’ Salaries and Allowances in Europe – 2018/19*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. [8]
- EC/EACEA/Eurydice (2016), *Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Brussels, <http://doi.org/10.2797/678>. [26]
- EC/EACEA/Eurydice (2013), *Key Data on Teachers and School Leaders in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2797/91785>. [48]
- Education Scotland (2021), *Inspection Reports*, <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/inspection-reports/?orderBy=dateDescending> (accessed on 28 May 2021). [32]
- Education Scotland (2021), *National Improvement Hub*, <https://education.gov.scot/improvement> (accessed on 2 June 2021). [35]
- Education Scotland (2016), *Submission to the Education and Skills Committee*, https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Inquiries/EducationScotlandOutcomes2016_10.pdf (accessed on 1 June 2021). [40]
- Education Scotland (2015), *How Good is Our School?*, <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/hgios4/> (accessed on 11 June 2021). [31]

- Eurydice (2018), *Bulgaria: Staff Involved in Monitoring Educational Quality for Early Childhood and School Education*, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/staff-involved-monitoring-educational-quality-early-childhood-and-school-education-9_en (accessed on 8 June 2021). [41]
- Faubert, V. (2009), "School Evaluation: Current Practices in OECD Countries and a Literature Review", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 42, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/218816547156>. [21]
- Government of Bulgaria (2016), *Pre-school and School Education Act*. [10]
- IEA (2020), *TIMSS 2019 International Results in Mathematics and Science*, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Lynch School of Education and Human Development, Boston College and International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. [2]
- Leadership in Education (2011), *Country Background Report Bulgaria*, http://www.leadership-in-education.eu/fileadmin/reports/CR_BG.pdf. [9]
- Maghnouj, S. et al. (2020), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Albania*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d267dc93-en>. [44]
- Maghnouj, S. et al. (2020), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Serbia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/225350d9-en>. [29]
- Ministry of Education and Science (2021), *Innovative Schools Brief*, Directorate Responsible for Innovative Schools, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia. [19]
- Ministry of Education and Science (2020), *Country Background Report for Bulgaria*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia. [7]
- Ministry of Education and Science (2020), *Strategičeska Ramka za Razvitie na Obrazovaniето, Obučeniето i Učeniето v Republika Bălgarija (2021 - 2030) [Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030)]*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia. [18]
- Ministry of Education and Science (2019), *Ordinance No 15 of 22.07.2019 on the Status and the Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia. [13]
- Ministry of Education and Science (2017), *Ordinance No 4 of April 20, 2017 on Regulation and Payment of Labor*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia. [12]
- Ministry of Education and Science (2016), *Ordinance No 15 Of December 8, 2016 on the Inspection of Kindergartens and Schools*, Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Sofia. [11]
- Mourshed, M., C. Chijioke and M. Barber (2010), *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better*, McKinsey & Company, London. [37]
- National Inspectorate for Education (2019), *School Inspection Framework*, <https://nio.government.bg/инспектиране/ръководство-за-инспектиране/> (accessed on 27 November 2020). [27]

- National Inspectorate of Education (2021), *Good Practices*, <https://nio.government.bg/знак-за-качество/> (accessed on 4 May 2021). [34]
- National Inspectorate of Education (2021), *Обобщена информация за оценките и насоките по области за инспектиране от извършените инспекции в периода м. октомври - м. декември [Summary information for assessments and guidelines by inspection area from the performed inspections]*, National Inspectorate of Education, Sofia. [30]
- National Inspectorate of Education (2020), *Annual Action Plan for the Activity of the National Inspectorate of Education – Measures, Activities and Performance Indicators for the 2020/2021 School Year (September 2020 - August 2021)*, <https://nio.government.bg/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Приложение-№1-годишен-ПЛАН-20-21.pdf>. [24]
- National Inspectorate of Education (2020), *Competition for the Position of Senior Inspector in the Inspection Directorate*, <https://nio.government.bg/конкурс-за-длъжността-старши-инспек-3/> (accessed on 11 June 2021). [43]
- National Inspectorate of Education (2020), *Criteria, Indicators and Subindicators*, <https://nio.government.bg/инспектиране/критерии/> (accessed on 27 November 2020). [23]
- National Inspectorate of Education (2020), *Manual for Inspection*, National Inspectorate for Education of Bulgaria, Sofia. [20]
- National Inspectorate of Education (2016), *School Evaluation Criteria*, National Inspectorate of Education, Sofia. [52]
- OECD (2021), *Decentralisation and Regionalisation in Bulgaria: Towards Balanced Regional Development*, OECD Multi-level Governance Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b5ab8109-en>. [16]
- OECD (2019), *Education Policy Outlook 2019: Working Together to Help Students Achieve their Potential*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2b8ad56e-en>. [36]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: North Macedonia*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/079fe34c-en>. [28]
- OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Database*, OECD, Paris, <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/> (accessed on 26 August 2020). [46]
- OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>. [1]
- OECD (2019), “Isolation of disadvantaged students from high-achieving students in reading”, in *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en>. [4]
- OECD (2019), *TALIS 2018 Bulgaria Country Note*, OECD, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/education/talis/TALIS2018_CN_BGR.pdf (accessed on 7 December 2020). [6]
- OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>. [15]

- OECD (2016), *What Makes a School a Learning Organisation? A Guide for Policy Makers, School Leaders and Teachers*, OECD, Paris, <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/school-learning-organisation.pdf> (accessed on 27 November 2020). [22]
- OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2015-en>. [50]
- OECD (2014), *Education Policy Outlook: Netherlands*, OECD, Paris, https://www.oecd.org/education/EDUCATION%20POLICY%20OUTLOOK_NETHERLANDS_EN%20.pdf. [47]
- OECD (2013), *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-en>. [14]
- Orphanos, S. and M. Orr (2014), "Learning leadership matters", *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, Vol. 42/5, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1741143213502187>. [55]
- Pont, B., D. Nusche and H. Moorman (2008), *Improving School Leadership, Volume 1: Policy and Practice*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264044715-en>. [56]
- Riley, K. and J. Macbeath (2000), *Evaluating School Performance Tools and Approaches: Putting Self-evaluation in Place*, World Bank, Washington, DC. [53]
- Sağlam, A., A. Geçer and D. Bağ (2017), "Training and appointing processes of school leaders in developed and developing countries: How is the situation in Turkey?", *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 5/9, pp. 1479-1489. [49]
- Schleicher, A. (2015), *Schools for 21st-Century Learners: Strong Leaders, Confident Teachers, Innovative Approaches*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264231191-en>. [5]
- UNESCO UIS (n.d.), *UIS.Stat*, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed on 1 February 2021). [3]
- Van Bruggen, J. (2010), "Inspectorates of education in Europe: Some comparative remarks about their tasks and work", Standing International Conference of Inspectorates. [38]
- Welsh Government (2014), *National Standards for Challenge Advisors*, <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/national-standards-for-challenge-advisers.pdf> (accessed on 8 June 2021). [39]
- Zankina, E. (2018), "Public administration characteristics and performance EU 28: Bulgaria", in Thijs, N. and G. Hammerschmid (eds.), *The Public Administration in the EU 28*, European Commission, Brussels, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2767/969353>. [45]



From:
OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Bulgaria

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/57f2fb43-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

Guthrie, Caitlyn, *et al.* (2022), "Supporting school improvement through evaluation", in Caitlyn Guthrie, *et al.*, *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Bulgaria*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/20f9663c-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.