

Dutch Education Beyond the Borders

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In this brochure you will find information on Dutch education provided outside the Netherlands: i.e. the current state of affairs, important developments and, of course, the quality of education. The Netherlands Inspectorate of Education monitors the education provided at Dutch schools outside of the Netherlands as well as inside the Netherlands. The Inspectorate's inspection reports often serve as a guide for schools to improve the education they provide. In this way, schools, the Inspectorate and the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad (Stichting Nederlands Onderwijs in het Buitenland) ensure that Dutch children receive a good education regardless of where they live in the world.

This brochure is aimed at parents that make use of Dutch education provided in foreign countries or who are thinking of doing so. The brochure is also aimed at Dutch schools abroad and provides an overview of the quality of education, the developments in education and points of special interest.

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1 Living, Working, Travelling... and Learning?

Schools Abroad

Every year, many families with children broaden their horizon and move abroad to live and work. Some of them leave for a couple of years to work for a Dutch organisation on another continent. Others actually emigrate, choosing to live permanently in another country. And there are families that exchange life in the Netherlands temporarily for the adventure of travelling (the world) with their children. In all cases, parents are faced with the question of what to do about the children's education. Should they attend the local school in the town in which we live or should the children be enrolled in an international school? Or should we choose not to send them to school and homeschool them? Is this legal and, if so, how could we do this?

Relationship with the Netherlands

Almost all Dutch families find it important to enroll their children in Dutch education while abroad. The reasons for this vary, but do have a common element: parents and children want to maintain a link with the Dutch language and culture. The main reasons for this are the option of eventually returning to the Netherlands and contacts with friends and family in their home country. Yet even families that choose to live abroad for a long time want their children to understand and maintain their Dutch language and culture. Who knows, perhaps the children will return to the Netherlands one day to study. Currently more than ten thousand Dutch and Flemish children are enrolled in Dutch education abroad.

2 Worldwide Education Explained

Numbers:

- ◆ 10,500 pupils
- ◆ more than three hundred school sites
- ◆ ninety inspections per year

Emigrating, being posted abroad or staying in a foreign country temporarily with the entire family. What possibilities are there for the children to enrol in Dutch education? And how is this education structured?

A Shell employee who is posted to the Middle East has other options for choosing a school than a family planning to explore the waters around Australia and New Zealand for six months on a sailing vessel. The possibilities for a Dutch education abroad are very diverse, but three different types of education can be distinguished:

- ◆ Day schools
- ◆ Schools for Dutch Language and Culture (NTC schools)
- ◆ Distance learning

1. Day Schools

Worldwide, thirty schools offer full Dutch primary education or secondary education via so-called 'day schools'. These are schools with Dutch teachers (on staff) that offer a Dutch course programme. They are maintained with the help of the Dutch Ministry of Defence, Royal Dutch Shell, the Rijnlands Lyceum and a number of small school boards. These days, in addition to Dutch, some of the lessons at these schools are offered in English. The pupils are primarily the children of parents that have been temporarily posted abroad by their employer. Dutch is usually spoken at home. This type of education has declined in recent years because Dutch companies are increasingly recruiting local employees and conclude short-term contracts with Dutch employees. Also, the Ministry of Defence has shut down several bases in recent years.

2. Schools for Dutch Language and Culture (NTC schools)

The schools for Dutch Language and Culture (NTC schools) are a type of school that is rapidly gaining ground. These schools form the vast majority of Dutch schools abroad. This category comprises 174 primary schools and 90 secondary schools. The education provided consists exclusively of Dutch language and culture lessons that are given by Dutch teachers at least three hours a week. In some cases, NTC lessons are a component of an international (English language) curriculum; in other cases, they are an addition to the regular local education that children are given in the foreign country. Children often take the lessons after school or in the weekend.

A large group of parents values by this type of education greatly. They want their children to maintain a link with the Netherlands, despite the great distance. On completing secondary school, some of these pupils return to the Netherlands to study at a Dutch university. A diploma or certificate for Dutch as a foreign language serves as the admission pass to higher education in the Netherlands.

3. Distance Learning

The third form of Dutch education provided abroad is distance learning. The Wereldschool, Eudifax (both providing primary and secondary education) and IBID (upper years of secondary education, international baccalaureate programme) offer complete learning packages and contact with Dutch teachers for children from families that live in remote locations without any school nearby, or children from families that are travelling for an extended period. This type of education enables parents to teach their children with long-distance support from teachers. Examinations that the children take are delivered by e-mail and checked by Dutch teachers. The approximately one thousand children taking classes via the Wereldschool, Eudifax or IBID are spread throughout the world and often have contact with 'classmates' via the Internet and e-mail.

Guarantee and Diplomas

Day schools, NTC schools and distance learning, together, make up three hundred schools that provide Dutch education abroad. Their most important task is to provide an education that serves as a guarantee for a good transition into education back in the Netherlands.

Day schools abroad focus on providing the attainment targets that apply to all schools in the Netherlands. NTC schools focus only on the attainment targets for the Dutch language.

Day schools and NTC schools for secondary education are focused on the pupil earning a diploma (the International Baccalaureate, IB), on the State Examination or a Certificate for Dutch as a Foreign Language. The availability of one of these three types of education is often the deciding factor for parents in choosing a particular school.

'I chose the De Schakel school because for me it is important that my children are able to make a smooth transition to further education in the Netherlands and because I want to be sure they receive the right level of education. Fortunately a great deal of attention is focused on the Dutch language.'

Parent of primary school pupil, Aruba

In Ecuador I attended the American international school. There I was able to choose Dutch as a part of my final examination package. This means that I will now be able to study at university in the Netherlands.

Former pupil of a MTC school, Ecuador

Support and Supervision

The Dutch schools abroad are supported by the Dutch government. The government provides this support in the form of a (modest) subsidy based on the conviction that it is important for Dutch young people who reside in a foreign country for some time to have a link to education in the Netherlands. This subsidy is given on the condition that the schools provide an education of good quality. Parents should be able to rely, after all, on their children getting a good education while abroad. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) has placed the oversight for this subsidisation in the hands of the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad (Stichting NOB). The Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad not only grants the subsidy, it also gives educational and management support to schools abroad. The supervision of Dutch education provided abroad is performed on behalf of the Minister by the Netherlands Inspectorate of Education.

'The inspection conducted by the Inspectorate was important to us because the Inspector is able to determine precisely whether or not we provide education according to the Dutch quality requirements.'

Head of a primary/secondary school, Aruba

Developments in the Inspectorate's Supervision

Over the last ten years, the Inspectorate's activities have focused specifically on systematically assessing the quality of the education provided. This far-reaching change goes hand in hand with greater openness with respect to the activities of the Inspectorate of Education. How is the supervision of the Inspectorate structured and how does this affect schools and parents? The changes in supervision have, for example, led to giving new tasks and responsibilities to school boards. They must keep a sharp eye on the quality of education and be able to explain to the Inspectorate why and how they do what they do. This makes the school board an important discussion partner in the quality assessments of the Inspectorate.

These developments also apply to Dutch schools in foreign countries, although the Dutch supervision frameworks cannot be easily applied abroad.

For this reason, during the 2006-2008 period, the Inspectorate worked on the development and introduction of a modern research programme that takes the situation of the school into consideration. This research is geared to school boards and schools abroad and ties in with the local situation.

'We didn't see the Inspectorate's visit as an inspection. It led to greater awareness and that has had a very positive effect on the team and on our school. We are proud of what we do!'

Head of a NTC school, Portugal

3 Quality Reviewed

During the 2006-2008 period, the Inspectorate visited three-fourth of all schools for Dutch education abroad. For the first time, an overview of the inspections at these schools was made with the aim of reviewing the quality of the education they provide. The schools were inspected on the following points:

1. learning outcomes (what are children learning and at what level);
2. teaching-learning process (the structure of the education, methods used, teaching time);
3. quality assurance (regular testing to determine learning outcomes and being accountable for the quality of the education provided).

A quality profile was made for every school inspected. This quality profile shows the assessments of the Inspectorate concerning the quality of the education at the school and also shows the risks. The aggregate assessments provide a complete picture of the current state of Dutch education abroad.

This chapter describes the quality of day schools, the NTC schools and the various types of distance learning. What organisational or content elements influence the quality of the education provided?

We have translated all recommendations of the Inspectorate into concrete plans we will evaluate these plans in a year's time so that all points marked for improvement become visible in results.

Head of a primary school, the United Arab Emirates

Quality of Day Schools

In 2008 there were 24 primary schools and six secondary schools providing daytime education. With the exception of one school, the quality of the primary schools inspected was up to standard, ranging from satisfactory to good. Three secondary schools demonstrated insufficient quality. This could primarily be attributed to contextual factors (such as vacancies, inadequate housing and few pupils), which hindered the development of these schools. The Inspectorate has come to clear agreements with these schools.

Shell Schools

Characteristics

Pupils as world citizens

Royal Dutch Shell provides Dutch primary education at eight schools abroad for the children of a large group of employees. Many Shell schools are located in the Middle East, but they are also found in Nigeria, Malaysia, Russia and Great Britain. Shell considers it important for the education provided to focus on pupils as world citizens. For this reason, the children of Shell employees currently receive lessons in Dutch and in English.

Link to Dutch education

Both language groups are usually accommodated in the same building, but follow their own programmes. Most of the schools currently work with the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). Pupils at Shell schools that move on to secondary education abroad after primary school usually attend international schools at which English is the language of instruction. The children that receive an education in Dutch have a smooth transition to education in the Netherlands on their return.

Quality

Above-average learning outcomes

The Inspectorate has concluded that all eight Shell schools visited provide education of satisfactory to good quality. The learning outcomes over the last five years were even above the national average in the Netherlands. Shell itself keeps a close eye on the quality of the education provided at its schools by regularly evaluating the development and outcomes of the education. The company also provides good employment conditions to teachers and maintains a good staff policy. This means that they attract sufficient numbers of qualified teachers who regularly attend further training programmes. In addition, Shell creates important conditions for good education to thrive in, e.g. by providing good housing and teaching materials.

Risks

In part because of the supervision that Shell exercises over the education provided, the risks for Shell schools are small. In all likelihood, these schools will continue to provide good quality education in the years to come and will keep up with new developments.

Little risk

Defence Schools

Characteristics

The Dutch Ministry of Defence operates three primary schools and one secondary school in Germany. At these schools, Dutch teachers teach a programme that ties in with regular education in the Netherlands. Although the schools are primarily meant for the children of defence employees, they are 'normal' schools and under certain conditions they will also accommodate children of parents who are not employed by the Ministry of Defence. The schools are not located on the army bases, but in the daily living environment of the children. The management is in the hands of a regular school board. In secondary school, the pupils can complete a four-year pre-vocational secondary education programme (theoretical or middle-management vocational programme) with a diploma.

[Link to Dutch education](#)

[VMBO diploma](#)

Quality

All primary schools inspected provide an education of satisfactory to good quality. Over the last three years, the educational performance has been satisfactory. This means that, at the end of the school term, pupils have the knowledge and skills that one would expect this group to have. The secondary education provided was also assessed as good by the Inspectorate. The examination scores show that all pupils passed their exams in the last three years.

Good quality

Good staff policy

The school board of the school supervises the quality of the education provided from a distance by staying abreast of what is going on at the schools and by regularly testing whether the policy put in place is actually being carried out. The Ministry of Defence provides a clear staff policy with good employment conditions. Defence schools, like the Shell schools, have sufficiently qualified teachers, good buildings and good teaching materials.

Risks

Because the Ministry of Defence has organised the education well and regularly tests the quality, few risks can be expected for these schools. Defence schools are also performing well.

Little risk

Backershagen Foundation

Characteristics

Tailor-made At seven locations in Europe and the Middle East, Backershagen provides tailor-made facilities for both primary education and secondary education. It does this in close co-operation with the Rijnlands Lyceum Foundation in the Netherlands and with local partners abroad.

Quality

Good examination scores During the period of the observation, five Backershagen schools in the United Kingdom and the Middle East were inspected: primary and secondary schools for Dutch Language and Culture (NTC schools) with an enhanced programme. In enhanced programmes, several subjects are offered in Dutch. For this reason, the programmes provided at the schools of the Backershagen Foundation are classified as daytime education.

All the schools inspected are providing education at a level that ranges from satisfactory to good quality. That is to say that, with a few exceptions, all indicators were assessed as satisfactory or good by the Inspectorate. At the three primary schools inspected, the educational achievements in the last three years have been satisfactory. At the end of the school term, the pupils had the knowledge and skills that one would expect this group to have.

The two secondary schools inspected were assessed as good by the Inspectorate. The examination scores show that all pupils have passed their exams up to now.

Risks

Few risks The school board, the school management team and the teaching staff are stable and the management team is very focused on quality. Thus, the risks are limited.

Quality of NTC Schools

Characteristics

Large variation in schools and pupils The greatest – and also the most varied – group of Dutch schools abroad are the schools for education in Dutch Language and Culture: the NTC schools.

Our first language was Swahili. Our parents always spoke Dutch to us, but we spoke Swahili to them. It wasn't until I started learning the language at school that I really began to enjoy it and to understand how Dutch worked!

Former pupil of an NTC school, Tanzania

Between 2006 and 2008, the Inspectorate visited 127 of the 174 NTC schools for primary education and 62 of the 90 NTC schools for secondary education. Most of these schools give lessons in Dutch language and culture for three hours a week. This usually happens after regular school hours. On occasion, the NTC education is integrated into the daytime education.

NTC schools vary widely in size and in the type of pupils they teach. There are schools with ten pupils and schools with 350 pupils. There are children of Dutch parents who speak Dutch at home, but also children from mixed families, with only one parent that speaks Dutch. Finally, there are also children for whom Dutch is a new language. NTC education must therefore be universal in order to reach pupils from each of these backgrounds. The objectives of the programmes range from achieving the attainment targets for the Dutch language or a secondary education diploma to the mastery of Dutch at a basic level. Several aspects of Dutch culture are also taught.

Quality

The quality of NTC schools ranges from poor to good. Almost 70 per cent of the NTC schools for primary education and over 75 per cent of the NTC schools for secondary education are of satisfactory to good quality. This applies especially to the education given to the children that speak Dutch at home. To guarantee a good education, it is important for a school not only to demonstrate good learning outcomes, but also to monitor the quality of its programmes and to be able to account for this quality (quality assurance). When a school is unable to show any learning outcomes – for instance, because it does not conduct any testing or conducts insufficient testing – and the quality assurance is not up to standard either, chances are that the overall quality of the school will be assessed as unsatisfactory. This combination of factors occurs at the majority of the weak NTC schools. Following the inspection, many of these schools started systematically monitoring the learning outcomes using the pupil monitoring system. This enables schools to adapt the education they provide to the differences between pupils, which benefits the learning outcomes. Quality improvement therefore is often within their grasp.

Quality varies

Attention needed for quality assurance

Risks

One of the risks that could lead to an unsatisfactory education quality is a premature launch, without a proper vision and policy for the school. In combination with large turnovers in staff or a shortage of staff, this produces poor conditions for good education. Another risk to quality is connected with the size of a school. Small schools find it more difficult to maintain financially healthy. Some of them can barely pay a teacher.

Premature school launch

Size of the school

Isolated location

It is also more difficult for small schools to find board members and teachers for the long term. Particularly if a school is in a remote location, assuring the quality of the education it provides for the long term can present a huge challenge. Because it has few, if any, contacts with other schools or organisations, there is no frame of reference and therefore no impetus to improve the quality of the education provided. By working with criteria for good education from the very first, when a school is established, many quality problems can be prevented at a later stage.

Quality of Distance Learning

There are three institutions that provide distance learning: Edufax, the Wereldschool and the Stichting IBID. In all, there are some one thousand children that are enrolled in this type of primary education or secondary education, on the road or from remote locations abroad.

Characteristics

Three-phase supervision

Edufax provides educational supervision for pupils that reside abroad for the short or long term. In the past, emphasis was placed on providing an education while the child was abroad. Currently, Edufax offers the so-called three-phase supervision: from departure up to and including foreign residence and then return to the Netherlands.

Variable learning packages

The Wereldschool provides education to pupils aged three to eighteen. Pupils can enrol in all subjects or work with modular packages, such as Dutch as a supplement to the education received at an international school.

Addition to IB diploma

The support of the Stichting IBID is meant for Dutch-language pupils living abroad who are enrolled in an IB diploma programme and would like to include Dutch in their course programme as their native language. An IB diploma with Dutch added, in principle, provides a guarantee of admission to a Dutch university. After taking their final exams, a number of pupils choose to study at a Dutch university of applied sciences or research university.

Quality

Good quality

The educational outcomes, the classroom practice and the quality assurance produce a positive picture of the quality of the distance learning. Edufax scores well on all the indicators, bar one. The Wereldschool scores well on all indicators. The education provided by the IBID is also of sufficient quality.

Internal evaluations

The managers of Edufax and the Wereldschool themselves supervise the level and development of their education via their quality assurance.

Internal evaluations are carried out regularly. In IBID programmes, a school head keeps the board up to date about the education provided. In recent years, the quality assessments have been conducted more often at the recommendation of the Inspectorate.

Risks

The risks for distance learning are small. Board, managers and staff form a stable and well-organised group and feel very strongly about the quality of the education they provide.

Few risks

Quality of the Baccalauréat à Option Internationale (BOI)

Finally, there is yet another specific way to enrol in Dutch education abroad: the Baccalauréat à Option Internationale (BOI).

Characteristics

At two regular schools in France (the Lycée International Saint Germain-en-Laye and the Lycée International Ferney-Voltaire), Dutch and Flemish pupils have the possibility of enrolling in classes given in their own language in addition to the regular courses. These classes comprise four hours a week of Dutch language and literature and two to three hours a week of history and geography taught by Dutch teachers. Through the BOI, the pupils can take final examinations in these subjects, which are then included on their French diploma. The Netherlands Inspectorate of Education works with the French and Flemish inspectorates of education in compiling, administering and assessing these examination components.

Final examinations in Dutch subjects

Quality and Risks

Up to now, all pupils that have participated in this examination over the years have passed and no risks are expected for this type of education.

Few risks

4 Maintaining and Improving Quality

The inspections conducted by the Inspectorate show that the quality of most of the institutions for Dutch education abroad is up to standard. This is a result to be proud of. The results of the inspections can also serve as guidelines for maintaining and improving the quality of the education provided.

we were all parents, well-intentioned but no education professionals. I still remember that we looked forward to the inspection with fear and dread. And yes, afterwards we were given a report with a substantial number of points for improvement, which we started working on right away. Since then we have had a second inspection and we have progressed from a very unsatisfactory assessment to a very good assessment!

Board member of an NTC school, Vietnam

Modern Supervision

Over the coming years, the Netherlands Inspectorate of Education will continue to monitor education in the Netherlands and abroad based on four basic principles:

- ◆ the school board bears final responsibility for the quality of the education provided and is accountable to parents, teachers and the Netherlands Inspectorate of Education;
- ◆ The Inspectorate annually asks to see the learning outcomes of the pupils;
- ◆ Once every four years, the Inspectorate inspects the school. Schools whose education is of unsatisfactory quality are inspected again two years later;
- ◆ The Inspectorate's supervision is organised so that school boards can easily provide them with data in digital form.

If the quality of the education remains below standard, the Education Inspectorate holds the school board accountable. The Inspectorate then closely monitors the improvements that the school board makes in order to ensure that every school provides education of a satisfactory level in the end. The introduction of a pupil monitoring system and working on quality assurance are both important factors in this. When increasing numbers of schools start to work with the pupil monitoring

system, the quality of the education they provide will improve further. In this way, school boards, teams, parents and pupils gain greater insight into the education provided and into the elements that need to be improved.

Valuable Support

For a school to qualify for a subsidy, the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad has established subsidy conditions – such as having a sufficient number of pupils, having at least one qualified teacher, realising sufficient teaching time and working with modern teaching methods. Schools that do not meet the basic quality requirements after two inspections, run the risk of losing their subsidy. In recent years, the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad has played an important role in bolstering the professional development of schools and school boards by providing them with support and advice. Schools are increasingly knocking on the door of the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad and see the support it provides as very valuable. This can be seen, for instance, in the considerable interest shown by school managers and teams in the further training conference, which is held each year by the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad. The conference provides excellent opportunities to share experiences and things learnt with colleagues, to gain new insights and make new contacts. There is a treasure trove of information on the website of the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad.

Strong School Boards

Well-run, effective school boards are important for realising good education. School boards should be able to give account to the Inspectorate and to parents concerning the quality of the education provided and the way in which they determine this quality. The latter task is new for many school boards in foreign countries. What is good education? More than in the past, school boards should indicate the requirements that the education they are responsible for should meet. If the essential features are clear, the school head can see to it that they are put into practice.

In the context of good quality assurance, it is also important for the management team to inform the school board regularly about any bottlenecks and improvements. Strong school boards report to all interested parties concerning the strong points

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Thanks to the inspection, we know that we have to keep an eye on our final results. After the inspection, we re-evaluated our reading instruction carefully and introduced changes.

Head of an MTE school, China

ments. In this way, they make a significant contribution to realising good education. Thus good quality assurance also prevents problems arising. And it gives interested parties the opportunity to help come up with ideas for quality improvements.

Smart Teams

An effective network, promoting professionalism and working with other schools (both in the Netherlands and in the local region) all create the conditions for good education. The inspection reports show that a number of schools abroad work in isolation; this pertains to both the school boards and the school management teams.

In contrast, good schools have an extensive network and make regular use of the support opportunities provided by the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad. Collaboration, partnerships and professional support provide important boosts to the quality of education provided and should be goals for each school.

Involved Parents and Pupils

How do pupils remain involved in their education? The involvement of pupils largely depends on the skills of the teacher. The teacher does this by appealing to their interests and by motivating them through exciting lessons and good learning aids. But how to get parents involved? Parents' expectations of a school and the support they give to their children appear to differ widely. The involvement of parents in the schools their children attend varies most between parents that live abroad for the short term and parents that live abroad permanently.

This highlights a specific difficulty for NTC schools: these schools are attended both by children that want to keep up with the level of education provided in the Netherlands and by children that take Dutch 'as an elective' or even learn it as a foreign language. This combination sets complex requirements for classroom instruction. Good schools overcome this problem by offering specific course programmes, by setting clear goals and by testing regularly. Parents can contribute to achieving a good education by becoming involved in the school and in what their children learn, something that is made easier when the school tells them each year what children must learn and what level they must achieve.

Assistance for Schools in Summary

- ◆ Create a broad network
- ◆ Ensure the professional development of teams and school boards
- ◆ Make educational objectives and points to improve in the education clear for all those involved
- ◆ Collaborate on ensuring good education is provided by involving parents in the school

5 A Glance Towards the Future

The results of the inspections enable us, for the first time, to gain insight into Dutch education worldwide. Risks confronted in the education system can now be identified in a systematic manner. Explanations can also be found for those situations in which the quality of the education falls below standards. School boards, schools and supporting organisations can draw valuable lessons from this for the future.

It continues to be important for schools to provide not only a good course programme, but also quality assurance. Regularly scheduled tests are essential to assess the level of the pupils and to reflect on the results achieved so that policy choices made can be justified and the policy revised when necessary.

Technological development will make it easier for schools to compare educational achievements and make them clear and accessible to parents and the Education Inspectorate. E-mail and the Internet make it possible to maintain contacts with other schools. Digital developments are also being embraced by the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad. It can now provide important support to school boards by publishing a digital management manual and a digital library with examples of good projects and scenarios. Not every school needs to reinvent the wheel; considerable knowledge is already on hand. By making this knowledge and experience accessible and by continuing to move forward with development, a large step towards the future can be taken.

6 Useful Websites

- ◆ Stichting NOB (Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad)
www.stichtingnob.nl
- ◆ Netherlands Inspectorate of Education
www.onderwijsinspectie.nl
- ◆ Inspection report for a school
www.onderwijsinspectie.nl > Schoolwijzer

Colophon

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