



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT
OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Country Report: Denmark



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DENMARK COUNTRY REPORT

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Introductory information

Folkeskole is the Danish municipal primary and lower-secondary school, consisting of a compulsory pre-primary class, forms 1 to 9 and an optional 10th form.

As a rule, Danish children must begin their primary education in August of the year of their sixth birthday.

Folkeskole aims to prepare learners for further education. Once learners have completed primary and lower-secondary school, they may choose to enrol in youth education.

Municipal councils hold overall responsibility for the *Folkeskole*. Among other things, this means that local councils determine the content of the given municipality's school policy within the scope of the *Folkeskole* Act. It is also the responsibility of the municipal council to ensure that all children in the municipality exercise their right to receive teaching in the *Folkeskole*.

No specific legislation applies to learners with special needs. General legislation, pertaining to the individual levels of education, outlines more or less directly that teaching is accessible to all and should be organised and performed in due consideration of learners' different pre-requisites and needs. Various provisions apply to special considerations in connection with examinations and the like. As a result of this, teaching objectives are similar for all pupils in the school.

The general objectives of supplementary and special education mean that learners with special needs are taught as far as possible in mainstream schools, and that all learners are entitled to teaching adapted to their pre-requisites, capabilities and needs.

In 2012, the *Folkeskole* Act was changed. The legislation now highlights the aims of a more inclusive school, able to educate more learners in the mainstream system. Furthermore, it gives realistic and concrete directions to enable schools to meet educational challenges and to organise differentiated and individual education. The Act places the responsibility to create and use tools for inclusive education clearly on the head teacher.

Schools still have access to external specialised advice from pedagogical and psychological services, if the head teacher has a need, or if some learners are offered special needs education.

The Ministry of Education is supporting municipalities and schools to improve the level of inclusive education through use of a task force/educational consultants, development programmes (organisation, co-operation with parents, inclusive education, special education, etc.) and various research programmes.

In May 2016, the Ministry presented a report on the effort to educate more learners in the mainstream. Among other things, the report presented the following findings:



- The proportion of pupils attending a public primary school class increased from 94.2% in the 2010/11 school year to 95.2% in the 2014/15 school year.
- There are positive trends in relation to learners' well-being. For example, the vast majority of learners feel that school is a good place to be.
- It does not appear that the shift to greater inclusion has affected the learners' academic standards.
- The former overrepresentation in special education of boys, learners with different ethnic origins and learners whose parents have little or no training has been reduced.
- There are still challenges in terms of developing an inclusive learning environment, creating the necessary support and acquiring the relevant knowledge to perform inclusive education.

The overall assessment of the report was that Danish schools provide a good foundation for work on inclusive learning environments, wider communities and professional development and well-being of the learners.

The report presented nearly 100 recommendations for how inclusive efforts could be strengthened. The Ministry set up a follow-up group to work on the recommendations.

One of the recommendations was that there should be greater clarity on how the general environment supports learners' different needs.

1. What reference is made to raising achievement in national policies? How is raising achievement defined?

The *Folkeskole* Reform (2014) included three general objectives:

- *Folkeskole* must challenge all learners to reach their fullest potential.
- *Folkeskole* must lower the significance of social background for academic results.
- Trust in the *Folkeskole* and learners' well-being must be enhanced by showing respect for professional knowledge and practice in the *Folkeskole*.

2. What national policies specifically target raising achievement?

A number of initiatives and projects were launched as follow-up to the reform and as support to inclusive learning communities. For example:

- School head teachers, teachers and pedagogues must be better prepared for working in the learning environment and with pupils' general well-being, so that disruptions during lessons are reduced and pupils' social and academic development may be supported.
- A tool was developed, based on guidelines from the Danish Centre for Educational Environments. The tool enables municipalities and schools to work systematically



and with focus to increase the well-being of pupils in connection with academic development. The indicators must form the basis for new targets for well-being in the *Folkeskole*, where continued digital (nationwide) measurements (pre-primary class–9th form) will create openness about well-being, quiet and good order. They will also support the work and dialogue between schools and municipalities about improvements in the local learning environment.

- The Ministry of Education has developed a result-based quality oversight of the schools, based on the nationally established target numbers and quality indicators (see question 3, below). The supervision is primarily focused on creating a basis for quality development in schools and must be viewed in connection with the learning consultants' work (see below).
- A new dyslexia test for learners up to the 3rd form was introduced in February 2015. Together with professional guidance and methods, the test is available to schools free of charge.
- Since 1 August 2004, all day-care facilities must prepare educational curricula: one for the children aged 0–2 years and one for the children between age 3 and the start of school education. The pedagogical curriculum should describe the local goals of the day-care facility, in respect to children's learning, within six themes. It should also describe the relevant pedagogical approaches and activities applied to reach the objectives and how to evaluate the curriculum. Work is in progress to strengthen the educational curriculum in day-care. Development work must be an especially vicious circle of deprivation, so that more children are ready for school after kindergarten.
- A national corps of learning consultants was established to offer municipalities and schools advice on quality development. In 2016/17, the learning consultants provided advice and counselling within these ten themes:
 - The long and varied school day
 - Learning objectives in subject teaching
 - Learning in special education
 - The new subject: crafts and design
 - Learning environment and quietness in class, general well-being and good classroom management
 - Local capacity building (school library function, etc. [*resourcepersoner*])
 - Quality assurance based on data and knowledge
 - Bilingual children in the *Folkeskole* (e.g. reception class)
 - Inclusion
 - Anti-marginalisation, democracy and citizenship.

Municipal councils hold overall responsibility for the *Folkeskole*. There are many local projects in the municipalities to create inclusive learning environments.



3. What information/data are collected at national level on attainment and achievement?

- Results of national tests
- Results of exams
- Annual reports on the well-being of pupils in the *Folkeskole*.

4. What information/data on attainment and achievement (including the wider areas outlined above) are collected at school level?

See questions 2 and 3.

5. What information/data are used for school evaluation and quality assurance at national/local level?

- At a municipal level: an annual quality report. The quality report can be the basis for dialogue between the municipal council and the municipal administration or between the municipal administration and the individual school head teachers about learners' academic development.
- At a school and learner level: the 'student plan.' This is a tool to support systematic, on-going evaluation, follow-up and improvement of what learners gain from their teaching.

6. Are there any specific initiatives in place to support/enable teachers and/or school leaders to raise the attainment and achievement of all learners?

- A national corps of learning consultants
- In some municipalities, there are support centres in special schools, which support the work on inclusion in mainstream schools.

7. What other policies may influence levels of attainment and achievement for all learners?

Specialised social services are co-ordinated with special education, within the National Board of Social Services. The co-ordination of specialised social services ensures the correct range of social facilities and dissemination of information for citizens who have very rare functional impairments, particularly complex social problems or other complex needs.



The co-ordination of specialised social services and special education allows monitoring and collection of knowledge in relation to changes in facilities, initiatives and target groups in social areas and the most specialised educational areas.

To continue the collection of information, the National Board of Social Services also develops instructive professional procedure descriptions for different target groups. This enables municipalities to easily access the best information on methods and initiatives. The National Board of Social Services appoints an Advisory Council of experts who ensure a high professional quality in the procedure descriptions.

A special unit (VISO) within the National Board of Social Services is responsible for providing specialist consultancy on the most specialised educational areas. The pooling of specialist consultancy on the specialised educational areas aims to ensure an overall co-ordination of specialist advice and knowledge development in the field of specialised educational support. The pooling also ensures a more transparent organisation that can provide the basis for a more knowledge-based effort in this area in the future. The pooling of the specialist consultancy supports dynamic development and adaptation of facilities and efficient operation.

8. Please provide a short commentary/critical reflection on the main policy challenges

- Combating negative social heritage
- A Ministry task force is established in day-care and in school education (between the ages of 6–7 and 16).



ANNEX 1. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE TO RAISE LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

Example submitted by: Grethe Andersen

Contact person: Grethe Andersen

1. Location of school/learning community and short description of context

Aalborg Municipality. Aalborg Municipality is Denmark's third largest, with approximately 206,000 inhabitants.

2. Summary information on school/learning community

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3. Summary of key feature/strengths of current practice

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4. Data/information available

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5. Focus of example/work to raise achievement

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6. Summary information about developments/current work in this area

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7. Key learning points from this example

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8. Supporting materials (web links, papers, presentations, etc.)

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