



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS FOLLOWING THE FINNISH EDUCATION MODEL

Audit manual (pilot version)



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS FOLLOWING THE FINNISH EDUCATION MODEL

Audit manual (pilot version)



Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

Contents

1	Premises and objectives of audit.....	5
1.1	FINEEC audit model.....	5
1.2	Validation process.....	6
2	Focus and outcome of audits.....	7
2.1	Evaluation areas for the audit	7
2.2	Passing the audit, the scale.....	8
3	Audit criteria for level <i>good</i>.....	9
3.1	Organisation of education.....	10
3.1.1	Facilities and learning environments	10
3.1.2	Teaching groups and staff qualifications	11
3.1.3	Systematic support for learning and school attendance	11
3.2	Primary principles of school culture and pedagogy.....	12
3.2.1	Well-being and equity	12
3.2.2	Conception of learning, pupil agency and interaction	12
3.2.3	Language awareness.....	13
3.3	Teaching practices and working methods	14
3.3.1	Varied working methods and pupil responsibility	14
3.3.2	Learning-driven assessment culture	15
3.3.3	A continuum of teaching	15
3.4	Development of Finnish school characteristics	17
3.4.1	Pedagogical leadership and responsibility for development of the school culture.....	17
3.4.2	School staff competence and development of expertise.....	17
3.4.3	Maintaining and developing Finnish pedagogy and school culture.....	18
3.5	Threshold for passing the audit	18
3.6	Decision-making	19
3.7	Audit certificate and quality label.....	19

4	Audit process	20
4.1	Audit agreement.....	20
4.2	Description of the audit team	20
4.2.1	Team composition and selection criteria.....	21
4.2.2	Tasks of the audit team	22
4.2.3	Auditor training.....	23
4.2.4	Auditor’s ethical guidelines and operating principles	23
4.3	Audit material	23
4.3.1	Basic material.....	24
4.3.2	Self-evaluation report.....	24
4.3.3	Submission of material	24
4.4	Web-based briefing and discussion event.....	25
4.5	Audit visit and web-based contacts	25
4.6	Report and notification of results	26
4.7	Concluding webinar and feedback to FINEEC	27
5	Re-audit process.....	28
	Appendix	29
	Self-evaluation guidelines	29
	Content and the headings of the self-evaluation report	29
	1. Organisation of education.....	29
	2. Primary principles of school culture and pedagogy	30
	3. Teaching practices and working methods.....	31
	4. Development of Finnish school characteristics.....	32

1

Premises and objectives of audit

1.1 FINEEC audit model

In this manual, we describe an audit model that applies to *International schools following the Finnish education model*. The curriculum of these international schools is largely based on the Finnish National Core Curriculum. The audit offered by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is a service provided to these schools. It is aimed at demonstrating how the principles of Finnish education are implemented in the operation of the schools and supporting the schools in developing their activities. The audit will be priced as a service subject to a fee as laid down in the Ministry of Education and Culture Decree on fees charged for the Finnish National Agency for Education's performances (1136/2018).

FINEEC's audits focus on international schools abroad whose academic plans have already been approved by the Finnish National Agency for Education (see chapter 1.2 Validation process).

The audit follows the set of criteria described in this manual. The description of the level good in the manual currently applies to basic education. At this stage, FINEEC has not included descriptions of early childhood education and care or general upper secondary education in the manual.

The purpose of FINEEC's audit is

- to assess whether the operation of the schools and the organisation of education correspond to the principles of Finnish schools and whether the schools meet the criteria set for the audit.
- to help education providers to identify the strengths, good practices and areas in need of development in their operation according to the principles of enhancement-led evaluation.
- to support education providers in the achievement of the objectives, with the aim being to direct future development activities towards creating preconditions for the continuous development of the schools' operation.

The work of FINEEC is based on the principle of enhancement-led evaluation and on producing impactful information which contributes to the enhancement of education. An important goal of enhancement-led evaluation is to involve staff, students and school leaders in the enhancement process.

An enhancement-led evaluation is based on participation and interaction. Its purpose is to help the school recognise strengths, good practices and enhancement areas in its activities, thus enabling continuous development.

1.2 Validation process

The audit model proposed in this audit manual is a part of an extensive validation process. The process is described in the report on the validation of international schools that follow the Finnish education model. The report was produced by a working group of the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) (*Suomalaistyypisten koulujen validointi*, 26 August 2020). The report proposes that the audit of the local curriculum and its implementation should be the task of a third party after the Finnish National Agency for Education has approved the academic plan of the international school that follow the Finnish education model and the school's operation is under way (see Audit in Fig. 1).

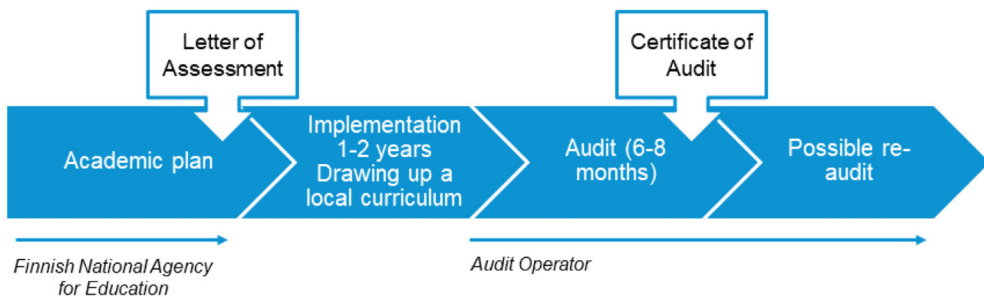


FIGURE 1. Validation process

At the first stage of the validation process, the education provider submits to the Finnish National Agency for Education an academic plan for the school's operation and other relevant documentation required. The Finnish National Agency for Education evaluates the school's academic plan (see Academic plan in Fig. 1).

At the next stage of the validation process, the education provider selects an audit operator that can conduct an external audit. Each audit operator prepares its own more detailed instructions for the preconditions and stages of the process. This manual describes the audit model of FINEEC and the steps of the audit process.

2

Focus and outcome of audits

2.1 Evaluation areas for the audit

The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education and FINEEC's expertise in quality management have been used in drawing up the audit criteria and the descriptions in this manual. The criteria are based on FINEEC's summary of the key characteristics of Finnish schools and their curriculum as well as on the factors on which the quality of Finnish schools is based. The criteria are used to evaluate those Finnish characteristics that the Finnish National Agency for Education has identified in the school's academic plan before the audit stage.

The audit focuses on four evaluation areas that have been further divided into sub-areas. The evaluation areas are related to the different levels of the school's operation: organisation level, principle level, practical level and development level.

1 Organisation of education (ORGANISATION LEVEL)

- Facilities and learning environments
- Teaching groups and staff qualifications
- Systematic support for learning and school attendance

2 Primary principles of school culture and pedagogy (PRINCIPLE LEVEL)

- Well-being and equity
- Conception of learning, pupil agency and interaction
- Language awareness

3 Teaching practices and working methods (PRACTICAL LEVEL)

- Varied working methods and pupil responsibility
- Learning-driven assessment culture
- A continuum of teaching

4 Development of Finnish school characteristics (DEVELOPMENT LEVEL)

- Pedagogical leadership and responsibility for development of the school culture
- School staff competence and development of expertise
- Maintaining and developing Finnish pedagogy and school culture

2.2 Passing the audit, the scale

Evaluation areas 1–4 are each assessed as one entity using the scale *excellent*, *good* and *insufficient*. To pass the audit, each of these areas should correspond with the descriptions of a *good level* of practices and principles provided in Chapter 3.

3

Audit criteria for level *good*

The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education is based on the cultural rights in the Constitution of Finland and on the United Nations' *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. The children's rights according to the UN declaration are therefore a basis for the teaching and school culture in schools where the Finnish education model is used. Thus, the evaluation areas and the criteria must be seen through the lens of the child's best interests.

Under the declaration, those working with and for children are bound by the general principles of the convention, which are equality and non-discrimination, children's best interests, children's right to protection, care and development, children's right to express opinions and be heard, and respect for the child's views. Every child has a right to a decent life and individual, physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

FINEEC use the Finnish conception of learning as an underlying idea in this description of the level *good*. The aim is to enable each child to take an active role in the school and in her own learning process. The child's agency is therefore a focal point of the evaluation. Another underlying idea in the Finnish pedagogy is that it should enable the best possible learning for each child.

3.1 Organisation of education

Evaluation area 1

assesses basic structural factors of quality in the schools' organisation. These factors are related to learning environments, size of teaching groups and staff qualifications. This area also concerns learning needs and especially the school's system for support. The level good is described in 3.1.1–3.1.3.

3.1.1 Facilities and learning environments

From pupils' point of view, a good learning environment means that the learning environments in the school make the implementation of the curriculum possible. The school has safe and suitable facilities for all school subjects. The learning environment is a part of the pedagogy: it supports division into different pedagogical teaching groups, interaction and communal building of knowledge. Diverse and varying learning environments are favoured in teaching.

Learning environments are facilities, locations, tools, communities and operating practices that support growth and learning. They may be physical facility solutions as well as virtual and social learning environments.

Pupils have the required tools, materials and services in all subjects. This also includes the use of ICT devices in studying. The school has the general facilities required at schools¹. The school takes advantage of the nearby natural and built environment and the virtual environment in the instruction.

Teachers have appropriate working areas and tools.² Facilities suitable for their work have been reserved for other staff³ if their work is carried out primarily on school premises.

1 For example, a dining hall, a library and an outdoor facility for activities during recess.

2 For example, computer, telephone, material and equipment required for teaching.

3 For example, social worker, psychologist, nurse.

3.1.2 Teaching groups and staff qualifications

When teaching groups⁴ are formed, it is important to consider pupils' opportunities to active participation and learning. The school considers the needs of different pupils and subjects when forming groups so that it will be possible for the pupils to achieve the goals set in the curriculum.

The implementation of the pedagogy of international schools following the Finnish education model sets requirements for the qualifications and competence of the staff. The teaching staff in the school must hold at least a bachelor level (ISCED 6) or a similar degree and must have completed pedagogical studies. If the instruction is provided in a language that is not the teacher's mother tongue (e.g. in English), teachers are able to teach and give guidance flawlessly in the foreign language in which the subject is taught. This also applies to the staff assisting in teaching.

The school has the required number of teachers and other staff⁵ in relation to participatory pedagogy and the arrangements for support for learning. The school has persons who are specialised in special needs education. Where necessary, assisting staff participates in teaching.⁶

3.1.3 Systematic support for learning and school attendance

The school has a system for addressing pupils' learning needs and school attendance issues (both collectively and individually) and for taking care of pupils' development and well-being. Support for school attendance is pupil-centred and, as a rule, based on preventive work and early intervention. The guardians are heard in matters concerning the pupil and support measures for individual pupils are decided on through cooperative discussions between guardians and school staff. The principles for cooperation with the guardians are set in the curriculum.

The needs of all pupils and their capabilities and strengths are considered when organising pupils' schoolwork. After the need for support has been recognised, the pupils' learning-related needs are identified⁷.

The school uses different forms of pedagogical support.⁸ The school monitors and evaluates the provided support, in regard to the pupil's learning goals. Sufficient resources have been allocated for this task.

4 Attention is paid to the size and composition of the teaching group.

5 Comparison for example with the OECD average: 15 pupils per staff member in primary schools and 13 pupils in lower secondary schools.

6 For example, special education assistant, assistant

7 For example, with the help of literacy screening

8 For example, special education and differentiation of teaching with regard to learning materials, exercises, working methods and the time used for learning

3.2 Primary principles of school culture and pedagogy

Evaluation area 2

assesses important principles in the schools' operating culture and pedagogy. These principles are based on the underlying values, the conception of learning and the principles that guide the development of the school (National core curriculum for basic education, 2014). The level good is described in 3.2.1–3.2.3.

3.2.1 Well-being and equity

The school identifies pupils' physical and mental well-being as a key factor influencing their learning outcomes and enjoying school. The school pays attention to collective well-being and the staff share the responsibility for promoting this. The structure of the school day supports the pupils' well-being.

The school maintains an atmosphere in which the members of the school community are seen and treated as equals. The school enables the participation of pupils, teachers, other staff and guardians by involving them in the decision-making processes and development work.⁹ The school is a learning community that develops and enhances its activities with the help of a dialogue and open interaction.

The pupils have the opportunity to participate in pupil association activities or other means to make initiatives, express their opinions on matters related to the school and in their own way contribute to a pleasant atmosphere in the school.

3.2.2 Conception of learning, pupil agency and interaction

The school's conception of learning is based on the pupils being active agents showing initiative, not objects of teaching. The school supports pupils' individual initiative, builds a means for them to be involved in common affairs and decision-making and supports pupils in assuming responsibility for them.

According to the conception of learning, learning involves doing things independently and together, as well as thinking and planning. Dialogical work is a central part of teaching and the learning process. Learning takes place in interaction with other pupils, teachers, other adults and various communities.

⁹ For example, they are represented in the school's working groups and bodies when possible.

In their teaching, the teachers use working methods that promote pupils' cooperation and interaction skills. Interactive practices in teaching support the participation of all pupils. The encouraging guidance and support received during the learning process strengthen the pupils' confidence in their own capabilities to learn and help the pupils to assume more responsibility for their learning.

3.2.3 Language awareness

In a language-aware school, the central role of language is visible in learning, teaching and all activities. The pupil's whole language repertoire is a valuable learning resource which is recognised as a starting point for learning. Teachers have the capacity and tools for supporting pupils who need support in the language of instruction of the school.

In the school, pupils from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds meet one another. The school recognises the pupils' cultural diversity, and it can be used within everyday teaching and schoolwork. Cultural diversity may mean awareness and becoming aware of cultures, for example, through internationalisation.

3.3 Teaching practices and working methods

Evaluation area 3

is related to everyday teaching, beginning with the teachers short and long-term plans and selection of working methods. The assessment culture, including formative and summative assessment, is another sub-area. The third sub-area in focus is teaching as a continuum and also transversal competences crossing boundaries between different fields. The level good is described in 3.3.1–3.3.3.

For this evaluation area the school chooses two of the following subjects for deeper discussions about teaching: English (English as a foreign language), mathematics/science or another subject (determined at each school's own discretion).

3.3.1 Varied working methods and pupil responsibility

The starting point for selecting working methods are the goals set for teaching and learning and the pupils' needs, capabilities and interests. The teacher enjoys pedagogical freedom in choosing working methods that promote and motivate learning.

In teachers' long-term plans and lesson plans, it is clearly visible that different working methods and tools are used. The methods vary according to the objectives for the learning event. Differentiation and individualisation of learning are part of all teaching. Multidisciplinary learning modules have been included.

The pupils are guided to manage and assess their own learning process. For example, it can be seen in the teaching that pupils assume responsibility for their learning (setting goals, planning, assessment, working in a group). Self-regulation is strengthened during learning.

3.3.2 Learning-driven assessment culture

The pupils have the right to receive diverse and encouraging feedback that supports their holistic development. The pupils receive both formative and summative feedback.¹⁰ During the learning process, pupils for example assess one another's work and how well the objectives have been achieved and give one another feedback. Pupils receive support in conducting both self and peer assessment.

Summative assessment is based on criteria and it is well documented. The pupils have the right to know in advance what performances are assessed and how they are assessed for grade formulation. The pupil must have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. The teacher takes into account individual limitations in the assessment.

Teachers cooperate in pupil assessment and develop the school's assessment culture together. Feedback is given systematically, consistently and fairly.

Formative and summative assessment

In the Finnish basic education, pupil assessment has two mutually supportive tasks. The purpose of assessment is to guide the pupil's capability for self-assessment (**formative assessment**), but also to determine to what extent the pupil has achieved the objectives set for the subjects (**summative assessment**).

3.3.3 A continuum of teaching

The grades in the basic education add up to a continuum of coherent teaching and consistent education. The continuum of teaching in different subjects is visible in the school's curriculum and the teachers' annual plans.¹¹ The school has paid attention to the continuum of generic skills¹².

The school focuses on the transition points by paying special attention to ensuring that information supporting the transition is communicated between the pupils, the school staff and the guardians.¹³

Transition points are phases during which the pupil experiences a major transition, for instance when transitioning from primary to lower secondary school.

¹⁰ The country's education system may include standardised school achievement tests or examinations for the pupils and their influence may guide their studies. However, the school must demonstrate that, parallel to the culture of standardised tests, it also uses student-centred assessment and feedback practices that promote learning diversely.

¹¹ For each subject, there is a plan for how to progress in its different sub-areas in each grade so that every year, new things are learned that are based on the syllabus of the previous year (cumulation of knowledge and skills).

¹² For example, reading skills, writing skills, problem-solving skills, group work skills, interaction skills

¹³ For example, support targeted at pupils, cooperation between teachers and preparation for receiving new pupils in the transition phase.

Transversal competences are taught and studied as part of the subjects. The school continues to develop pupils' transversal competences systematically through basic education. In the different grade levels,¹⁴ the school emphasises certain aspects of the objectives.

Transversal competence refers to an entity consisting of knowledge, skills and values. The seven competences cross that the boundaries of different fields of knowledge and skills. The competences are: thinking and learning to learn; cultural competence, interaction and self-expression; taking care of oneself and managing daily life; multiliteracy; ICT competence; working life competence and entrepreneurship; participation, involvement and building of a sustainable future.

¹⁴ For example, in grades 1–2, grades 3–6 and grades 7–9.

3.4 Development of Finnish school characteristics

Evaluation area 4

focuses on the pedagogical leadership, the school staff competence and the development of Finnish school characteristics. A particular challenge for international schools is to maintain and develop the Finnish pedagogy and school culture in an international environment. The level good is described in 3.4.1–3.4.3.

3.4.1 Pedagogical leadership and responsibility for development of the school culture

There is a clear division of responsibility in the school regarding the activities and teaching based on the Finnish model. The staff know how the responsibility for maintaining and developing the Finnish characteristics of the instruction and schoolwork is divided between different persons.

The operating practices used in managing the school ensure that the staff, guardians and pupils know and understand what the Finnish school culture in the school means in practice. New staff members, pupils and guardians are familiarised with the Finnish education model and school culture.

The leadership of the school actively and systematically develops the teaching and the school culture that relies on the Finnish education model. The development work concerns all the different levels of the organisation of education and schoolwork: management of the school and the staff, participation in the school's operation, classroom pedagogy and teachers' professional competence.

3.4.2 School staff competence and development of expertise

The teaching staff have received training and practice in the principles and pedagogy of Finnish schools. The staff has regular opportunities to participate in training days or staff training that is related to Finnish pedagogy.

Teachers share information and experiences with one another. For example, the school may have regular meetings or workshops in which teachers may build their expertise on Finnish pedagogy¹⁵.

¹⁵ For example, sharing information on teaching experiments and working methods or planning joint projects.

Resources for the development of Finnish pedagogy have been reserved for the teaching staff.¹⁶ Teachers develop Finnish pedagogy both independently and in cooperation with the other teachers and the leadership of the school or with persons assigned by the leadership.

3.4.3 Maintaining and developing Finnish pedagogy and school culture

The schools observe the implementation of Finnish pedagogy in a systematic manner and ensure that the pedagogy complies with the school's curriculum and is based on the school's academic plan. The school will regularly ensure that its management, school culture, pedagogy and instruction comply with Finnish principles and practices.

Based on the outcomes of monitoring its activities, the school is able to name areas in need of development and strengths in its operation. The school can present examples of development work related to Finnish school culture.

3.5 Threshold for passing the audit

In order for the education provider to pass the audit, evaluation areas 1–4 should reach at least the level *good*, which is described above in sections 3.1–3.4.

The evaluation areas 1–4 are each assessed as one entity using the scale *excellent*, *good*, *insufficient*.

The level *excellent* means that the education provider shows evidence of long-term and effective enhancement work related to Finnish school culture. The operation exceeds the description of the level *good* in most of the criteria for the evaluation area. The education provider presents compelling examples of successful enhancement activities.

The level *insufficient* means that the education provider shows an absence of or major shortcomings in systematic, functioning, and participatory procedures in the areas of evaluation (1–4). The shortcomings may concern insufficient evidence of connections to the Finnish National Core Curriculum and the school's own curriculum, for example, in the daily pedagogical work.

¹⁶ For example, courses, training days, literature, time, financial resources.

3.6 Decision-making

After completing the evaluation, the audit team presents their conclusions to the *Audit Committee for International Schools following the Finnish Education Model*. The Audit Committee makes the decision on whether the education provider passes the audit or whether it should subject itself to a re-audit.

The task of the Audit Committee is to ensure that the audit decisions are fair. The Audit Committee will use the audit team's report in making the decision. In addition, the chair or vice chair of the audit team will present the main results of the audit in the meeting where the decision will be made and answer the Audit Committee's questions on the report. The decision of the Audit Committee may deviate from the assessment of the audit team or the proposal of the presenting official.

3.7 Audit certificate and quality label

After passing the audit, the education provider will receive an audit certificate and FINEEC's quality label. The education provider will also be entered into the Audit Register, which is maintained on FINEEC's website. The quality label is valid for four (4) calendar years, starting from the decision of the Audit Committee.

4

Audit process

4.1 Audit agreement

FINEEC signs an agreement of the audit with the education provider. The following issues are recorded in the agreement:

- audit criteria
- audit procedure and time frame
- number of the members of the audit team and the language to be used to carry out the audit
- duration of the audit visit: 3–5 days
- price of the audit
- commitment to a potential re-audit

4.2 Description of the audit team

The audit team is composed of experts who are well acquainted with the Finnish education system. The audit team will consist of at least three members. The role and number of the possible international auditors can vary according to the requirements of the audit.

FINEEC appoints the audit team and a chairperson for the team. The audit team selects a vice-chairperson among themselves. The team members are required to have experience of education in the international contexts. The goal is to include individuals with prior experience as auditors or evaluators on the team. The team members are expected to participate in the training arranged by FINEEC.

A project manager appointed by FINEEC in charge of the audit supports the work of the audit team by participating in the team's discussions as an expert on audits and instructs the team on the criteria used in the audit. The project manager also acts as the team secretary. The members of the audit team are on equal footing as evaluators.

4.2.1 Team composition and selection criteria

The criteria used in the selection of auditors include:

- good knowledge of especially the Finnish basic education system, but also of early childhood education and general upper secondary education
- teacher or principal experience
- experience in evaluations or audits and quality appraisals.

Moreover, the chair of the audit team is expected to have:

- prior experience in the evaluation of schools and their operations
- a comprehensive and deep understanding of the Finnish education system in both domestic and international contexts
- knowledge or experience of school management.

A person is disqualified from acting as a member of the audit team if he or she is an interested party, or if confidence in his or her impartiality in relation to the education provider subject to the audit comes under question. According to a good administrative practice, a disqualified person may not in any way participate in the processing or evaluation of a matter. Such situations may arise, for example, if the person is employed by the education provider subject to the audit or has acted in a position of trust in the education provider's decision-making body. Auditors must also take it upon themselves to inform FINEEC about any aspects that may have a bearing on their disqualification before signing the expert contract.

Prior to the appointment of the audit team, the education provider is given the opportunity to comment on the team's composition, especially from the perspective of disqualification.

FINEEC and the auditors sign an agreement that specifies the audit-related tasks, fees and any other conditions related to the assignment.

4.2.2 Tasks of the audit team

Members of the audit team:

- examine the education provider's audit material
- decide on how to carry out the audit and which groups/individuals to interview
- determine any additional material that may need to be requested from the education provider
- formulate the interview questions for the audit visit
- conduct the audit as planned
- prepare and write up the audit report
- present The Audit Committee for International Schools following the Finnish Education Model with its appraisal of whether the education provider should pass the audit or whether a re-audit needs to be recommended.

In addition to these tasks, *the chair of the audit team* has a special role, which involves:

- chairing the audit team's meetings and the audit visit, unless otherwise agreed
- participating in the web-based briefing and discussion event prior to the audit visit with the project manager
- taking responsibility for the audit task as a whole and editing the audit report in collaboration with the project manager
- presenting the audit results at a meeting held by The Audit Committee for International Schools following the Finnish Education Model and at the concluding web-seminar with the education provider
- participating in the communication of the audit results.

The *project manager's tasks* include:

- organising the training event for auditors
- acting as an instructor and a facilitator for the audit team
- supporting the audit team's activities by taking part in the team's discussions as an expert in audits, and instructing the team as concerns the audit criteria and FINEEC's uniform decision policy
- preparing the audit team's meetings and acting as secretary at the meetings
- being the point of contact between the education provider and the audit team
- organising the audit visit in cooperation with the education provider
- editing the audit report
- taking charge of finishing the written report
- communication.

4.2.3 Auditor training

Auditors are required to participate in the training arranged by FINEEC. Among other things, auditors learn about the operations of FINEEC, the objectives and procedure of the audit, as well as the tasks and operating principles of the audit team. In addition to this, possible international auditors are familiarised with the Finnish education system, to provide them with better understanding of the context and criteria set for the international schools following the Finnish education model. The training lasts for one working day. If required, the project manager arranges personal training for the audit team's chair focusing on his or her special tasks.

4.2.4 Auditor's ethical guidelines and operating principles

The audit team must comply with the following ethical guidelines and operating principles in its work:

- *Enhancement:* The enhancement-led audit is a source of support to the school, the personnel and other parties involved in carrying out the audit.
- *Interaction:* The audit is carried out with a spirit of cooperation and interaction with the education provider. The interaction strengthens mutual trust.
- *Impartiality and objectivity:* Auditors must take an impartial and objective approach towards the education provider subject to the audit, as well as recognise their position of power and the requisite responsibility.
- *Transparent and evidence-based evaluation:* The audit must be based on transparent and systematically applied criteria, as well as on material collected in connection with the audit.
- *Confidentiality:* All of the information acquired during the process, except for that which is published in the final report, is confidential. The audit must not harm the position, reputation or operation of the audited school or its staff in the future.

4.3 Audit material

The education provider involved in an audit compiles material for the audit, the goal being to provide the audit team with a sufficient knowledge base and evidence for the evaluation of areas 1–4. The material consists of a) basic material and b) a self-evaluation report drawn up by the education provider. The material is prepared in the language of the audit, as agreed in the audit agreement.

4.3.1 Basic material¹⁷

The education provider sends the following material to FINEEC before the audit:

- An organisation chart and a short description of the education provider, including the number of pupils and staff working according to the Finnish school principles
- The academic plan which describes how the school is organised, staff, etc.; an updated version of the academic plan that was sent for validation to the Finnish National Agency for Education will suffice.
- The school curriculum which covers the transition points, subjects, working methods/ approaches, the conception of learning and the operating culture in the school
- The annual plan which specifies how the curriculum is implemented during the school year and describes the events organised during the school year
- A development plan which describes how the Finnish elements will be developed and how the Finnish approach will be supported and maintained in the coming years
- The self-evaluation report (4.3.2 and Appendix)

4.3.2 Self-evaluation report

The education provider prepares a self-evaluation report on the functioning of evaluation areas 1–4 in line with the guidelines provided in the Appendix. The education provider is free to choose how to carry out its self-evaluation and how to prepare the written self-evaluation report. The self-evaluation report should be max. 25 pages (A4) in length.

In the report, the education provider is expected to self-reflect on its operations. They are expected to give a concrete description of each area of evaluation and identify their strengths and development needs in the areas. The report must focus on evaluation rather than description.

During the audit visit, the education provider should be prepared to present evidence of the issues brought up in the self-evaluation report.

4.3.3 Submission of material

The education provider must supply all the audit material (the basic material and self-evaluation report) to FINEEC as electronic documents (preferably in .pdf format) no later than 12 weeks before the audit visit.

¹⁷ If the audit concerns a certain programme, only curriculum information about the programme in question will be required.

In addition to this, the audit team may request that the education provider supply additional materials deemed necessary, before or during the audit.

4.4 Web-based briefing and discussion event

Around four weeks prior to the audit visit, we will organise a web-based briefing and discussion seminar with the education provider. The chair of the audit team and the FINEEC project manager will participate in this webinar. The aim of the event is to provide information to the school's management, teachers and other staff groups, external stakeholders, pupils and their parents, as well as offer them an opportunity to discuss the objectives, evaluation areas, criteria and implementation of the audit.

4.5 Audit visit and web-based contacts

The purpose of the audit visit is to verify and supplement the observations made of the education provider's academic plan, curriculum, annual plan and development plan as well as its quality operations based on the audit material. We wish to make the visit an interactive event that supports the development of the school's operations. In addition to conducting interviews, the audit team will examine any other material it may have requested from the education provider.

Certain parts of the audit will always be conducted as web-based meetings and interviews. If the audit contains a visit to the school location, it will last from three to five days. In areas where a physical visit could be considered risky, for instance due to a pandemic outbreak, FINEEC will only arrange online meetings and webinars during the audit.

In the beginning, the audit team will interview representatives of the school's management, teaching and other staff groups and external stakeholders. At this stage, the focus is on the school organisation and the school's educational principles. Later, the audit focuses on everyday life at the school. The team will observe classroom activities and interview pupils, teachers, and parents.

The selection of the target areas for the audit by the team will primarily be based on the audit material. The audit team may also arrange joint discussions with various representatives of the education provider concerning the key topics in terms of implementing the curriculum and the key features of quality management.

The visit will conclude with a meeting with the management, where the audit team may present more specific questions about the school's operating educational principles. At the end of the meeting, the audit team will give the education provider preliminary feedback based on the observations made during the visit. Both parties also provide feedback on the audit process.

4.6 Report and notification of results

The audit team writes a report based on the material accumulated during the evaluation and on the analysis of the material. In accordance with the principle of enhancement-led evaluation, the report points out the strengths and good practices of the audit targets, in addition to giving the institution recommendations for further development. The report will follow a standardised structure:

1. Description of the audit process
2. Concise description of the education provider subject to the audit
3. Results by audit targets
4. Strengths, good practices, and recommendations for further development
5. The audit team's appraisal of whether the education provider should pass the audit or whether a re-audit is needed; in the latter case, the team lists in its report what it considers to be the essential shortcomings of the audit targets.

During the process, the evaluation results and recommendations will be submitted to the Audit Committee for International Schools following the Finnish Education Model in FINEEC. Prior to the Audit Committee's decision-making, the education provider is given the opportunity to check the precision of the information in the report.

The Committee's decision on whether the education provider passes the audit or must be subject to a re-audit is recorded at the end of the final report. If the education provider is required to undergo a re-audit, the targets that are in essential need of development and will be subject to the re-audit are recorded in the report.

The report will be published in electronic format in English as an official FINEEC publication. The length of the report is 30–50 pages.

The audit result will be communicated to the education provider immediately after The Audit Committee makes its decision. The school's audit label will be valid for four years. The report and an information bulletin will be published on FINEEC's website within three working days of the decision.

4.7 Concluding webinar and feedback to FINEEC

FINEEC and the education provider that was subject to the audit arrange a joint webinar, usually one month after the audit decision. The webinar gives the education provider the opportunity to openly discuss the audit results and conclusions with representatives of FINEEC and the audit team.

FINEEC will collect feedback from all of the audited schools and the auditors in order to develop its activities.

5

Re-audit process

If The Audit Committee for International schools following the Finnish Education Model determines that the school's activities based on Finnish education principles in certain or all evaluation areas don't reach the level *good*, the committee will recommend a re-audit after a period of improvement work (not longer than two years). In this case, the audit report will state the areas of evaluation where improvements are necessary, and which will be assessed in the re-audit. In the re-audit, the education provider must have evidence that it has developed its activities in the evaluation areas of the re-audit at least to the level *good*. The same criteria are used in the re-audits as in the initial audit. The principles governing the appointment, work and decision-making of the audit team that are applied in the initial audit also apply to the re-audit.

APPENDIX

Self-evaluation guidelines

- The education provider chooses how to carry out its self-evaluation and write the self-evaluation report.
- The report must be structured according to the headings (= evaluation areas) listed below. The education provider may freely decide on the use of any sub-headings.
- In its report, the education provider is expected to carry out as reflective a self-evaluation as possible, identify the strengths and areas in need of development connected to the audit targets. The report must focus on evaluation rather than description.
- The education provider should be prepared to present evidence of the issues described in the report during the audit visit.
- The self-evaluation report is a maximum of 25 pages long in total.
- The report may include links to internet pages and for instance to lessons (not more than two).
- Before the self-evaluation, the school should familiarise itself with the description of the level *good* (Chapter 3). The description of this level will later be used in the audit. The self-evaluation describes the extent to which the school reaches the described level.

Self-evaluation refers to the school's activities and their enhancement. Self-evaluation is a tool used in enhancement-led evaluation for enhancing the activities. The ability to recognise the institution's own strengths and especially enhancement areas is a sign of a mature quality culture.

Content and the headings of the self-evaluation report

1. Organisation of education

1.1 Facilities and learning environments

- How are arrangements concerning facilities and learning environments realised in the school?
- Please give examples, providing evidence of operating models and a detailed description to support the evaluation.

1.2 Teaching groups and staff qualifications

- How are arrangements concerning teaching groups and staff realised in the school?
- Please give examples, providing evidence of operating models and a detailed description to support the evaluation.

1.3. Systematic support for learning and school attendance

- How are arrangements for learning and support for school attendance realised in the school?
- Please give examples, providing evidence of operating models and a detailed description to support the evaluation.

Strengths:

Areas in need of development:

2. Primary principles of school culture and pedagogy

2.1 Well-being and equity

- How does the school promote the wellbeing of pupils and adults?
- How does the school enable the participation of different stakeholders (teachers, other staff, pupils, guardians), and ensure that they are consulted adequately in decision-making processes and development work?
- Please give examples, providing evidence of operating models and a detailed description to support the evaluation.

2.2 Conception of learning, pupil agency and interaction

- How does the school support the pupil's active role when interacting with other pupils, teachers and other adults in the learning community as a whole?
- What working methods based on the conception of learning do the school's teachers use to promote the pupils' initiative and interaction during the lessons?
- Please give examples of operating models that support learners' agency at the school level as well as examples of the teachers' working methods.

2.3 Language awareness

- In what ways does the school pay attention to the pupils' linguistic and cultural resources and how are these resources considered in schoolwork?
- How do the school and teachers support the pupils' schoolwork when the school's language of instruction is not the pupils' mother tongue?
- Please give examples, providing evidence of operating models and a detailed description to support the evaluation.

Strengths:

Areas in need of development:

3. Teaching practices and working methods

3.1 Varied working methods and pupil responsibility

- To what extent are the working methods and tools used during the lessons varied according to the objectives of the work and the pupils' needs? This includes flexible use of working methods, differentiation of instruction and individualisation.
- How are the pupils guided to take responsibility for their own learning during the lessons?
- Please give examples, providing evidence of the operating models used in the instruction, including a detailed description. One of the examples should be relevant to thematic or phenomenon-based learning (multidisciplinary learning modules).

3.2 Learning-driven assessment culture

- How does the school ensure that it uses versatile assessment practices and feedback methods that support learning, including formative and summative feedback as well as self and peer assessments?
- How does the school ensure that its pupils and teachers have the required knowledge of pupil assessment?
- How does the school develop an assessment culture?
- Please give examples of assessment practices and feedback methods as well as cooperation between teachers in pupil assessment.

3.3 A continuum of teaching

- How does the school ensure that the teachers of each subject have a clear understanding of how to proceed in the different areas of their subject with pupils in each grade level? (continuum of teaching)
- How does the school support pupils at the transition points of their education?
- Please give a short description of how the school takes into account the seven transversal competences.
- Please give examples of the continuum of teaching, the staff's work at the transition points and the teacher's work with transversal competence.

Strengths:

Areas in need of development:

4. Development of Finnish school characteristics

4.1 Pedagogical leadership and responsibility for development of the school culture

- How and in what direction do the persons responsible for the school's Finnish profile develop the school's Finnish characteristics and operating culture?
- Please give examples of how the management develops Finnish characteristics connected to the school's activities and organisation.

4.2 School staff competence and development of expertise

- How do you ensure that staff members have sufficient knowledge of Finnish pedagogy?
- How do you ensure that the staff have the opportunity to develop their work both independently and together with others?
- Please give examples of how the staff's professional competence is developed (in relation to the school's Finnish profile).

4.3 Maintaining and developing the Finnish pedagogy and school culture

- How do you ensure (monitor) that the school operates and provides instruction following its operating plan and curriculum?
- In light of the monitoring carried out at the school, how well has the school succeeded in realising its Finnish pedagogy and school culture in comparison to the descriptions in the academic plan, the curriculum and the Finnish operating principles?

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) conducts audits of international schools that follow the Finnish education model. The curriculum of these international schools is largely based on the Finnish National Core Curriculum.

The purpose of FINEEC's audits is to assess whether the operation of the schools correspond to the principles of Finnish schools and whether the schools meet the criteria set for the audit. This audit model helps education providers to identify the strengths, good practices and areas in need of development in their operation.

This publication introduces FINEEC's audit model for basic education. The audit model will be piloted according to the process described in the audit manual. After the piloting of the audit criteria and the process, the final audit model will be introduced. The audits will be priced as a service subject to a fee.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent agency responsible for the evaluation of education. It operates as a separate unit within the Finnish National Agency for Education. It implements system and thematic evaluations, learning outcome evaluations and field-specific evaluations. Moreover, FINEEC supports providers of education and training and higher education institutions in matters related to evaluation and quality assurance, as well as advances the evaluation of education.

Finnish Education Evaluation
Centre P.O. Box 380
(Hakaniemenranta 6)
FI-00531 HELSINKI
Telephone: +358 29 533 5500
Fax: +358 29 533 5501
karvi.fi