

## PRESS RELEASE

12 April 2019

### Report to the Flemish Parliament

#### *M-decree and care in mainstream education*

*The Court of Audit questioned 60 schools in mainstream education about their care policy and the measures they took for pupils with specific educational needs. The Court of Audit considers the general care policy to be positive, with a few points of attention. The schools made a lot of adjustments for pupils with reports giving access to special education and they generally consider these adjustments to be reasonable. However, they considered them unreasonable regarding pupils needing a lot of individual attention, which is especially the case with intellectually disabled pupils and pupils showing behavioral problems. The centers for learning guidance (CLBs) and support networks interviewed are of the opinion that not all schools reach the same care policy level. Teachers can only agree to a limited extent with the principles of the M-decree.*

#### **Introduction**

With the M-decree, the Flemish government aimed for more inclusion of pupils with specific educational needs in mainstream education. To this end, it introduced the obligation for every regular school to implement an elaborate care policy and to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with specific educational needs. If necessary, the CLB has to draw up a report, either motivated or not, which in principle provides access to special education. On the basis of this report the school can get support.

#### **School care policy**

The Court of Audit considers the general care policy of the schools as positive. Many schools have taken measures regarding pupil follow-up, broad basic care, differentiated working and dealing with learning difficulties. Schools have a care team to implement the care policy and consciously deal with pupils who have to repeat grades. Teachers and parents also in general experience care policy as positive. However, the audit also revealed points of attention: insufficient support for the opinion on care can lead to teacher-related broad basic care, the continuity of care can sometimes be improved and the employability and expertise of care teams are not always optimal. Schools also reported that they sometimes experience difficulties with pupils showing behavioural problems.

#### **M-decree and the care for pupils having specific educational needs**

The schools have made a lot of adjustments for pupils with a access reports and generally found these adjustments reasonable. They found them unreasonable for pupils needing a lot of individual attention, which is especially the case with intellectually disabled pupils and pupils showing behavioural problems.

The schools appeared to be fairly satisfied with the support provided by CLBs and the special education support networks government has introduced. Regarding the CLBs, they

appreciate the added value offered and the broad view on support needs. According to some of the schools CLBs are very critical about school care measures and constrain their offers of support. Regarding the support networks, the schools were satisfied with the added value for pupils and teachers, as well as with flexibility of support. However, they sometimes experience networks are still searching for the best ways in which to act, expertise is still only developing and hours of support are still insufficient.

The Court of Audit also questioned CLBs and support networks. Their opinion is that not all schools have reached the same care policy level, partly because it is not clear to schools what exactly is expected of them. Moreover, the support networks took the view that some CLBs are not strict enough for schools that do not sufficiently develop their care.

### **Pupils with a motivated report**

Although management and care teachers believe that pupils with a motivated access report can generally follow the common curriculum, teachers are not positive about the consequences of the M-decree for their education level. They are not convinced that those pupils achieve sufficient learning gain and state that sometimes they cannot devote sufficient time and attention to the other pupils. Therefore they can only agree with the principles of the M-decree to a limited extent.

### **Response of the minister**

In her response, the Flemish Minister for Education states that the new support model has only been in force since 1 September 2017 and that this new way of working takes time. She believes that a lot of initiatives have already been taken that are in line with the Court's recommendations. She does particularly worry about teachers doubting the possibilities of pupils with a motivated report to achieve learning gains.

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### **Information for the press**

The Court of Audit exerts an external control on the financial operations of the Federal State, the Communities, the Regions and the provinces. It contributes to improving public governance by transmitting to the parliamentary assemblies, to the managers and to the audited services any useful and reliable information resulting from a contradictory examination. As a collateral body of the Parliament, the Court performs its missions independently of the authorities it controls.

The audit report on *M-decree and care in mainstream education* has been sent to the Flemish Parliament. The full version and this press release can be found on the Court's website: [www.courtofaudit.be](http://www.courtofaudit.be).