

SIAMS Information for Schools

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Methodist Schools



**THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND**
EDUCATION OFFICE

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SIAMS Information for Schools

1. SCHEDULING AND NOTIFICATION OF SIAMS INSPECTIONS

- 1.1. In 'ordinary times', schools can expect to have a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection every five years from the date of the previous inspection.
- 1.2. In March 2020, the requirement for a section 48 inspection was suspended as part of COVID-19 legislation. Since the reintroduction of inspections in the Autumn 2021, SIAMS has been made subject to a temporarily different scheduling requirement.
- 1.3. Until all schools have received their first SIAMS inspection in the 'post-Covid' suspension years, legislation requires that inspection will be carried out within eight years of the date of the previous inspection. Thereafter, scheduling will return to a five-year cycle.
- 1.4. In general, under the revised legislation, SIAMS inspections will take place between one and two years after the academic year in which they would have taken place before the Covid-related suspension.
- 1.5. There will, however, be some inspections that fall outside of this general principle.
- 1.6. This means that it will no longer be possible for schools to calculate with certainty the academic year of the next inspection.
- 1.7. Therefore, a list of the schools that are expected to be inspected in an academic year will be published on an annual basis until all schools have been through their first cycle of inspection.
- 1.8. For the duration of the first cycle of inspections, the list of schools that are expected to be inspected during the following academic year will be published before the end of the Summer Term.
- 1.9. The list will be shared with Diocesan Education Teams for circulation to schools, and will be published on the SIAMS pages of [the Church of England website](#).
- 1.10. The list will not be published in chronological order or according to the term within which an inspection will take place, and nothing should be read into the position of a specific school on the list.
- 1.11. This policy comes with the caveat that the list is an 'expected' not a 'guaranteed' list. It is possible that extraordinary circumstances will lead to unannounced changes, but these will be avoided if possible.
- 1.12. As an exception, the list for the academic year 2021-2022 was published in September 2021. However, schools can assume that the first year will initially be spent 'catching up' with the inspections that should have taken place between March 2020 and July 2021, but that were postponed.
- 1.13. Schools will be given one week's notice of the date of their SIAMS inspection. Inspections will only be adjusted or deferred in exceptional circumstances. Please refer to the Inspection Deferral Policy, which is available on the SIAMS pages of [the Church of England website](#).

2. SIAMS EVALUATION SCHEDULE SEPTEMBER 2021 AND DIOCESAN TRAINING

- 2.1. The SIAMS Evaluation Schedule (September 2021) is available on the SIAMS pages of [the Church of England website](#).
- 2.2. It incorporates a small number of revisions to the 2018 Schedule. For example, where the 2018 Schedule interrogated pupil performance data, the September 2021 Schedule explores how the curriculum has been effective in enabling pupils to progress in their learning, especially in the recent context of the pandemic.
- 2.3. Schools will be given ample opportunity to demonstrate how their Christian vision has enabled flourishing during this time. There are no new criteria relating to this, but inspection-day discussions rooted in existing criteria will allow schools to share their experiences and the impact of their vision.
- 2.4. Diocesan Education Teams are responsible for the provision of training for schools in matters related to SIAMS.

3. SIAMS SELF-EVALUATION

- 3.1. The key purpose of ongoing self-evaluation is to enable a school to reflect meaningfully on the impact of its vision, policy, and practice. It is, first and foremost, a process that is for the benefit of the school community and will be most useful when conducted in a rigorous, robust, and evidence-based manner.
- 3.2. Although not a statutory element of the SIAMS process, it also makes a significant contribution to a thorough, accurate and insightful inspection.
- 3.3. Self-evaluation can refer to provision but should have an overwhelmingly evaluative focus on impact in order to be of maximum use to the school.
- 3.4. There is one over-arching inspection question (*How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?*), and all self-evaluation should be focused on answering this question.
- 3.5. Rigorous and meaningful ongoing self-evaluation will result in lengthy, 'live', and often-changing documentation. This should not be shared with an inspector.
- 3.6. A non-statutory summary, (**one** document only, no longer than two sides of A4), is helpful for the purposes of inspection and should signpost an inspector to other sources of evidence. With an emphasis on vision, impact, and transformation it will help an inspector to use the full time available to gain an accurate picture of the school. This document should be a summary of the school's own longer self-evaluation.
- 3.7. Schools should not indicate inspection grades as part of their self-evaluation. It is recommended that self-evaluation documents are written with close reference to the inspection criteria, using the language of the Schedule as appropriate.

- 3.8. SIAMS inspection operates initially from the presumption that the school is a Good Church school. An inspector will only deviate from this grade when or if the evidence suggests that to do so is appropriate. Self-evaluation is one part of this evidence-base.

4. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO THE INSPECTION PROCESS

4.1. One week before the inspection

- 4.1.1. One week before the date of the inspection, the school will be contacted by a member of the National SIAMS Team to inform them of the date of their inspection and the name of the inspector. This communication will take the form of a telephone call in the morning.
- 4.1.2. If the SIAMS Team is unable to make contact by telephone, they will send an email with details of the inspection, requesting confirmation of receipt.
- 4.1.3. Later the same day, the inspector will contact the school to speak with the headteacher or, in their absence, to the most senior member of staff available.
- 4.1.4. The inspector will ask the school to forward any summary self-evaluation and other initial sources of evidence, on the day of notification. This will enable the inspector to write the pre-inspection plan (PIP).
- 4.1.5. The inspector will also discuss the draft timetable and will ask the headteacher to begin to draw together some elements of the inspection day. The inspection day will consist of a number of meetings that will largely provide opportunities for discussions about the lines of enquiry (LOE). It is likely therefore that the draft timetable will need to change before finalised later in the week, in light of the inspector's initial scrutiny of evidence.
- 4.1.6. The inspector will send the school the SIAMS Inspection Contract, which should be signed electronically by the Chair of Governors and returned to the inspector.

4.2. During the week before the inspection

- 4.2.1. Once the inspector has received the school's evidence, they will write the PIP which will include the inspection LOE. They will use the evidence provided by the school, as well as the school website and other publicly available information.
- 4.2.2. The inspector will email the PIP to the school 48 hours before the start of the inspection.
- 4.2.3. The day before the inspection, the inspector will telephone the headteacher to clarify their understanding of the LOE and to finalise the timetable.

4.3. The day of the inspection

- 4.3.1. The inspector will plan to be in the school by 8am and to leave by 6pm.
- 4.3.2. The school should ensure that the inspector has a private place to work.

- 4.3.3. At the end of the inspection day, the inspector will provide the school with the provisional grades, which are subject to quality assurance. Please note: provisional grades may change during the quality assurance process.
- 4.3.4. Colleagues from the Diocesan Education Team will be spoken to as part of the evidence-gathering process and they may be invited by the school to attend the final feedback meeting, either in person or via a video link.
- 4.3.5. The outcome of the inspection remains confidential until the final report has been received.
- 4.3.6. The inspector will outline the timescale and protocol for the school's receipt of the draft report for factual accuracy checks.
- 4.3.7. Should the school wish to raise a concern, that it has not been possible to resolve on the day of the inspection or which they have not felt comfortable raising during the final feedback, they should follow the SIAMS Appeals and Complaints Policy, which is available on the SIAMS pages of [the Church of England website](#).

4.4. After the inspection

- 4.4.1. The inspector will send the school the draft report for factual accuracy checks within 10 working days of the inspection. If it is anticipated that there will be a delay to this timeline, the inspector will contact the headteacher to alert them to this.
- 4.4.2. The school should respond within 24 hours of receipt of the draft report. At this stage, only factually inaccurate amendments will be made, unless the inspection is subject to an appeal or a complaint.
- 4.4.3. If the inspection is subject to a complaint or an appeal when the draft report is received, or if the school decides at that point that they intend to raise an appeal or a complaint, they should follow the appropriate policy and not accept the draft report.
- 4.4.4. Once the report has been finalised, it will be published on the SIAMS pages of [the Church of England website](#). It should be shared by the school with its community.

4.5. Quality Assurance and Inspector Training

- 4.5.1. There is a national SIAMS Quality Assurance (QA) Team. Members of this team quality assure all reports prior to their publication.
- 4.5.2. All registered inspectors receive annual essential training in inspection practice, knowledge, and skills. In addition, new inspectors are trained every year in order to increase the inspector workforce.

- 4.5.3. As part of the New Inspector Training programme, inspectors are required to ‘shadow’ experienced registered inspectors so that they have the opportunity to observe SIAMS inspection in practice.
- 4.5.4. Inspectors who are still undergoing training and who join an inspection as a ‘shadow’ will play no part in the inspection itself. Their focus is entirely on observing and on learning. Therefore, if there is a ‘shadow’ present at your inspection, you are not being inspected by two inspectors.
- 4.5.5. Before being registered to inspect alone, all inspectors must also carry out a ‘sign-off’ inspection. Inspectors are joined by a QA sign-off assessor on their sign-off.
- 4.5.6. The role of the sign-off assessor is to monitor and assess the performance of the inspector and not to act as a second inspector of the school. Therefore, as for a shadow inspection, if your inspection is a sign-off, your school is not being inspected by two inspectors.
- 4.5.7. Sign-off assessors will maintain communication with headteachers during a sign-off inspection in order to check that the headteacher is satisfied with the process and conduct of the inspection.
- 4.5.8. All registered SIAMS inspectors are also subject to routine quality assurance of their inspection practice (QAI) and will therefore, on occasion, be accompanied by a member of the Quality Assurance Team. As with shadow and sign-off inspections, QAI does not mean that a school is being inspected by two inspectors and the focus of the QA activity is entirely on the practice of the inspector.
- 4.5.9. When a member of the National SIAMS Team telephones the school to notify them of the date of their inspection, they will let the headteacher know whether their inspection is a shadow, sign-off, or QAI inspection. They will check that the headteacher is content with this arrangement and will answer any questions that the headteacher may have.

5. SAFEGUARDING AND INSPECTION PRACTICE

- 5.1. SIAMS inspectors carry, and must display at all times, an identification badge issued by the Church of England Education Office. At times, this will be in the form of a digital badge.
- 5.2. This badge presupposes valid (within three years) DBS clearance and inspectors should not be asked to produce additional proof of a current DBS.
- 5.3. Inspectors should adhere to school safeguarding protocols, including those for raising a concern, so these should be shared by the school at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 5.4. Inspectors should not remove any documentation from the school, especially those containing pupils’ names.

6. PROFESSIONAL COURTESY

- 6.1. Schools can expect to be treated professionally, and with dignity and respect, at all stages of a SIAMS inspection.

- 6.2. Inspectors are tasked with inspecting in a Christian manner, without fear or favour, and they will:
- 6.2.1. demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of SIAMS documentation
 - 6.2.2. manage the inspection as a sequential process
 - 6.2.3. communicate clearly and fluently, both orally and in writing
 - 6.2.4. demonstrate professional courtesy
 - 6.2.5. maintain confidentiality
 - 6.2.6. uphold safeguarding
 - 6.2.7. manage conflicts of interest.
- 6.3. It is expected that school teams will reciprocate in the way in which they treat the inspector, acting courteously and professionally, and maintaining purposeful and productive communication throughout the process.
- 6.4. Schools are particularly asked to do the following:
- 6.4.1. Work with the inspector to enable them to carry out their visit in an open, honest, and impartial way.
 - 6.4.2. Recognise that, on occasions, the inspector will need to observe practice and talk to staff and others without the presence of a manager.
 - 6.4.3. Work with the inspector to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy providing evidence – or access to evidence – in a manageable way.
 - 6.4.4. Ensure the health and safety of the SIAMS inspector while they are on the premises.
 - 6.4.5. Keep the outcome of the inspection restricted and confidential to only relevant personnel until after the report has been quality assured.
 - 6.4.6. Bring any concerns about the inspection to the attention of the inspector in a timely and suitable manner.

7. COVID-19

- 7.1. It is possible that the number of cases of COVID-19 in a school may render an inspection unwise on health and safety grounds at any time in the week before the date of the inspection.
- 7.2. Headteachers are asked to keep the inspector apprised of any increase in school COVID-19 cases during the week before the inspection and to make decisions about external visitors in line with their risk assessment.

- 7.3. If numbers of COVID-19 cases increase unexpectedly on the day of the inspection, the headteacher and inspector must together agree on the wisdom of continuing the inspection.
- 7.4. If an inspection is more than halfway through, and the inspector believes that they have sufficient evidence to make a judgement, they should discuss this with the headteacher. If both parties agree, the inspector should write the report as planned, using the evidence that has been collected.
- 7.5. If either party believes that insufficient evidence has been gathered to enable the inspector to make a valid judgement, the inspection should either continue via an online platform or completion should be delayed.
- 7.6. The headteacher and inspector may agree, either on the day of the inspection or during the week before, that some meetings are better conducted using an online platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.
- 7.7. Inspectors will take lateral flow tests both before and after an inspection and will inform the school, should they have a positive result.
- 7.8. In such an event, the National SIAMS team will either reschedule the inspection or allocate a different inspector.

8. USEFUL DOCUMENTS

Schools may find the following links useful.

- [SIAMS Inspections | The Church of England](#)
- [Religious Education | The Church of England](#)
- [Collective Worship | The Church of England](#)
- [Church of England Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good](#)
- [Valuing All God's Children](#)

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