

8 July 2021

SIAMS – Next Steps

Statement for Church Schools

1. In March 2020, the DfE suspended the requirement for section 48 inspections as part of the Government's Covid-19 legislation. In the time since then, the former diocesan arrangements for the management of SIAMS have been integrated into one national system. This has brought a number of behind-the-scenes and procedural changes for inspectors, all of which will be addressed during their four-session Autumn Induction and Refresher Programme.
2. The Covid-19 pandemic is another significant factor that requires a response. This response will be in the form of a small number of minor amendments to the Evaluation Schedule reflecting some of the changes experienced by the education sector since March 2020. They will be temporary in nature and subject to review after 12 months. These amendments will affect schools, diocesan education teams responsible for providing training and advice to schools, and inspectors.
3. I anticipate that the amended SIAMS Evaluation Schedule will be released on Friday 3 September. It will be uploaded to the Church of England website and shared with diocesan education teams for circulation.
4. The amendments to the Schedule will not incorporate significant changes to the content of inspections. Instead, they are designed to enable schools to demonstrate the impact that their Christian vision has had, particularly but not exclusively, in the current extraordinary circumstances. The amendments will take into account the absence of assessment data and will provide some updated illustrations of what innovative, inspirational, Excellent practice might look like in context.
5. There will be no further change to the Schedule until it is subject, in due course, to the next comprehensive review.
6. It is expected that the DfE will lift the suspension of section 48 inspection ahead of the Autumn Term. If this is the case, SIAMS inspections will resume from October 2021 onwards. The first inspections to be carried out will be those that were postponed in March 2020 and the immediate months after that date. 'Catch-up' will continue from then. In general terms, schools can expect to be inspected between one and two years after the academic year in which they would have been inspected had it not been for Covid.

7. There will be some exceptions to that principle, however, and consequently it will no longer be possible for schools to calculate with certainty the academic year of a SIAMS inspection.
8. Therefore, lists of expected inspections will be published on the Church of England website on an annual basis, and the information will also be shared with diocesan education teams. The 2021-2022 list will be published in September 2021. Future lists will be published during the Summer Term, before the start of the next academic year.
9. *Please note: they are to be seen as lists of 'expected' inspections that are provided as guidance only, as circumstances may lead to unexpected and unavoidable changes on the ground.*

If the expected news from the DfE does not transpire, I will issue a further update. However, as the Summer Term is now drawing to a close, all concerned deserve as much information as it is possible to share.

With best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret". The script is cursive and fluid.

Dr Margaret James

National Director of SIAMS