

SIAMS Transitional Guidance for Schools 2022-2023

To assist schools and trusts in advance of the implementation of the new SIAMS Framework in September 2023

1. Introduction

- a) Published in November 2022, the new SIAMS Framework will be implemented from September 2023.
- b) Therefore, all inspections in the academic year 2022-2023 will be carried out under the existing 2018 SIAMS Schedule (revised September 2022).
- c) It is expected that all of the schools included on the [List](#) for this academic year will be inspected before the end of July, and therefore using the current Schedule.
- d) If this looks to be unlikely as the year progresses, the National SIAMS Team will update the List early in the summer term 2023. The National Team will communicate this to schools via diocesan education teams and/or the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST).
- e) As the 2023 SIAMS Framework does not reimagine what it means to be a Church school, it is expected that schools that are currently on the List will not be disadvantaged should their inspection be delayed until after its implementation.
- f) This Guidance document explains in detail the reasons for this.
- g) It also sets out how schools may wish to examine and evaluate their actions in the context of the new Framework, rather than the 2018 Schedule. It is not expected that they need to do very much, if anything, differently.

2. 2023 SIAMS Framework – Rationale

- a) From September 2023, the approach taken by SIAMS inspectors will be slightly different from at any time before then. Instead of focusing on lists of inspection criteria, inspectors will explore with school leaders whether and how, through its theologically rooted Christian vision (see 3 below), the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school, enabling pupils and adults to flourish.
- b) The Inspection Questions (IQs) will provide a structure within which this can be done.

- c) There are six IQs for voluntary controlled and former voluntary controlled schools, and seven for voluntary aided and former voluntary aided schools. The seventh addresses teaching and learning in religious education.
- d) How school leaders choose to live out their Christian foundation and vision will be reflective of the school's context. Inspectors will work with school and trust leaders in scrutinising whether actions are having the required impact. They will then make judgements and hold leaders to account.
- e) A brief self-evaluation document will help in this, as will conversations with school leaders. See section 6 (f-i) below for more detail.
- f) Most of the evidence that is gathered during a SIAMS inspection can be described as qualitative. This means that the evidence tends to be descriptive, observed subjectively, and based on/open to interpretation.
- g) Rather than giving a grade to this type of evidence, under the 2023 SIAMS Framework, inspectors will use it to award one of two judgements (see 5 below).

3. Theologically rooted Christian vision

- a) Under the 2023 SIAMS Framework, schools are expected to have a theologically rooted Christian vision that shapes and drives their work. This is not strikingly different from the expectations of the 2018 Schedule but, from September 2023, inspectors will explore the vision in depth with leaders.
- b) 'Theology' is the study of the nature of God and of religious belief; therefore, 'theological' means that which is related to the nature of God and of religious belief.
- c) Christian theology consists of the teachings of the Bible as well as the teachings and traditions of the Church. Together, these elements should feed into a school's discussions of what the Christian vision for its work might be.
- d) The [Church of England Vision for Education](#) is one example of a theologically rooted Christian vision. Diocesan boards of education and MAST may also have their own to which schools may refer for guidance.
- e) When establishing or developing a Christian vision, school leaders may benefit from asking themselves and their teams a number of questions. These could include, for example:
 - [What does the original Christian foundation of the school say that the school is for?](#) Does it give direction, for example, for the school to meet the needs of those who are most in need in the local community? Does it determine that the school should offer a

Christian, or an Anglican, or a Methodist education? If a school does not have access to its foundation, or trust, deed it can nonetheless safely assume that the purpose of the school is to provide an Anglican/Methodist/Christian education for the local community. Diocesan boards of education or MAST may be able to advise schools on locating their trust deed, but schools should not worry unduly about having it in their possession for the purpose of an inspection. The purpose of the Church school remains clear.

- **What are the most pressing needs of the community?** There might be a particular need for aspiration; or to learn a generous, accepting, and inclusive attitude towards others; or to create a loving and safe family environment. It is likely that schools will want to do all of this and more, but what are the most pressing community needs? Do leaders understand the context of their school, and do they know how to respond to it theologically?
 - **What does the Bible teach about this/these needs, and about what education in its broadest sense is for? Do the teachings and traditions of the Church provide any additional wisdom?** An exploration of this, making use of the expertise within the local church and/or from the diocesan education team/MAST, should help the school to gain an idea of what the focus of its vision could be.
- f) If approached in this or a similarly focused/structured way, the school's vision will be a theologically rooted one. The vision may include reference to a Bible verse or story, and it may not. There is no one definitively correct approach, as long as the vision has theological roots in accordance with the original purpose of the school; shapes and drives the school's work; is relevant for the school community; and is effective.
- g) As part of the initial call before the day of the inspection, inspectors will explore with school leaders how the Christian vision was developed, and how it can be described as a 'theologically rooted Christian vision'. They will do this to ensure that they have an accurate understanding of the school's work and context.
- h) The process of inspection itself, by gathering information on the context of the school (SIAMS Framework, Context of the School 2: What are we doing here?) and by following the structure of the six/seven Inspection Questions (IQs), will explore whether and how the vision is achieving its intended effect.

4. SIAMS Inspection Questions

- a) Together, the six/seven IQs frame school leaders' and inspectors' thinking about how a school may be living up to its foundation as a Church school, enabling people to flourish.
- b) The IQs are as follows.

- IQ1 How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision enable pupils and adults to flourish?
- IQ2 How does the curriculum reflect the school's theologically rooted Christian vision?
- IQ3 How is collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually?
- IQ4 How does the theologically rooted Christian vision create a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well?
- IQ5 How does the theologically rooted Christian vision create an active culture of justice and responsibility?
- IQ6 Is the religious education curriculum effective (with reference to the expectations set out in the [Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education](#))?
- IQ7 What is the quality of religious education in voluntary aided and former voluntary aided schools, or in former voluntary controlled schools in which denominational religious education is taught?
- c) As previously indicated, the IQs do not introduce new concepts for Church schools to address, compared with the 2018 SIAMS Schedule. The focus on the school's theologically rooted Christian vision is sharper in the 2023 Framework, and schools have a new freedom from specific criteria which allows their context to play an essential role in the inspection .
- d) If a school is an academy, the responsibility and accountability of the trust board is brought more obviously to the fore in the 2023 Framework.
- e) As the legally accountable body, the trust board will be expected to explain how the vision and work of the trust enhance:
- ways in which the school's Christian vision enables it to live up to its foundation as a Church school, enabling pupils and adults to flourish (IQ1)
 - how the school's curriculum reflects its Christian vision, with a specific focus on the learning experience for those deemed to be vulnerable and/or disadvantaged (IQ2)
 - ways in which worship is enabling children and adults to flourish spiritually (IQ3)
 - how well pupils and adults are treated (IQ4)
 - ways in which the culture of the school is characterised by justice and responsibility towards others (IQ5)

- the school's religious education curriculum and provision (IQ6)
 - the quality of religious education (IQ7)
- f) If there is not sufficient evidence that being part of the trust is enhancing the Christian vision-driven work of the school, this will be reflected in the inspection judgements and in the areas for development.

5. SIAMS inspection judgements

a) SIAMS inspectors will reach one of two judgements.

- J1 Through its vision and practice, the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish.
- J2 The school's vision and practice are not enabling it to fully live up to its foundation as a Church school. This is for the following reason/s. (The inspector will select all those that apply)
 - School and trust leaders have not ensured that there is a theologically rooted Christian vision for the school that is enabling pupils and adults to flourish.
 - School and trust leaders have not ensured that the curriculum reflects the school's Christian vision.
 - School and trust leaders have not ensured that collective worship is enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually.
 - School and trust leaders have not ensured that pupils and adults are treated well.
 - School and trust leaders have not ensured that the school's Christian vision creates an active culture of justice and responsibility.
 - School and trust leaders have not ensured that the provision, profile, and priority of religious education result in an effective curriculum.
 - In a voluntary aided or former voluntary aided school, or in a former voluntary controlled school in which denominational religious education is taught, school and trust leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching is good, and that pupils make at least expected progress.

b) J1 will be awarded if there is sufficient evidence, gathered under the six/seven IQs, to indicate that the school is fully living up to its foundation as a Church school, enabling pupils and adults to flourish.

- c) If there are any IQs in which there is insufficient evidence to support this judgement, then the inspector will award J2, indicating to which areas/IQs this relates.
- d) There may well be much for which to still commend the school, and this will be captured within the judgement and in the inspection report.
- e) It is possible that, if the inspection findings indicate that a school does not have a theologically rooted Christian vision, the diocesan education team/MAST will work with the school to help them to establish one.
- f) There are no new concepts introduced in the 2023 SIAMS Framework under the six/seven IQs, compared to the 2018 Schedule Strands, and it does not reimagine what it means to be a Church school.
- g) The six/seven IQs that an inspector has to be able to answer, written in teal in the Framework (pp8-11), are unpicked in more detail underneath them in the subquestions lettered 'a), b), c)', etc. These subquestions help to focus school leaders' thinking on how the IQs might be addressed.
- h) As indicated in point 2 (above), the ways in which school leaders address the IQs is their decision and depends on the school's specific context. The subquestions do not need to be answered systematically but they should be looked at because they help to frame thinking, and potentially, actions in addressing the main IQs. Inspectors will use the subquestions, along with the school's own context, to structure the inspection lines of enquiry and conversations.
- i) For each academy, the subquestions related to the role played by the trust will be explored.

6. What should schools and trusts do next?

- a) The everyday work of Church schools should be enabling them to live up to their foundation, regardless of any inspection by SIAMS. However, it is understandable that schools will want to prepare for the occasion of an inspection.
- b) Schools that are inspected in the academic year 2023-2024 will be the first to be awarded a judgement rather than a grade. Leaders should be ready, and prepare others, for this change.
- c) If school and trust leaders are unsure about the development of the school's theologically rooted Christian vision, they should consider the advice in this paper and engage with their diocesan education team/MAST.
- d) As part of this, leaders should be clear about the difference between a Christian vision that shapes and drives their work, and Christian values by which the Christian vision is outworked. A set of Christian values is not the same as a Christian vision, and if they are presented as such

to an inspector the judgement is likely to indicate that the school does not have a theologically rooted Christian vision.

- e) Trust leaders should ensure that the vision of the trust resonates with the Christian vision of the Church school, and that its policy and practice enhances the school's work. Trust leaders should also ensure that their vision and governance reflect the requirements set out by the diocesan board of education/MAST.
- f) School self-evaluation should always be carried out primarily for the benefit of the school community, as a routine element of normal practice. It enables them to know whether and in what ways their work is effective and/or needs to be shaped differently.
- g) Sharing this information with an inspector as a brief two page summary document helps the inspector to understand the school. However, self-evaluation is not carried out principally for inspection purposes.
- h) As schools look forward to being inspected under the new Framework, they may find it helpful to structure their self-evaluation around the six/seven IQs. The national SIAMS Team has made templates available for this purpose, should schools wish to make use of them, but their use is not mandatory.
- i) For the first year of implementation, if the content of a school's self-evaluation is not structured around the IQs, then the inspector will still use the brief summary document as part of their inspection preparation. This procedural matter will have no negative impact on the inspection judgements. After this time, it is unlikely that self-evaluation that relates to the 2018 SAMS Schedule will be helpful for an inspector.
- j) School and trust leaders may also find it helpful to familiarise themselves with the findings of the [2021-2022 SIAMS Annual Report](#), and reflect on whether any are relevant for their own work and context.

7. What should schools and trusts *not* do?

- a) School leaders should not be concerned about being inspected under the new Framework. As explained in this paper, there are no new concepts, and what it means to be an effective Church school has not been reimagined.
- b) School and trust leaders should not expect that the SIAMS inspection of one school will be identical to that of another. Whilst all inspections will be focused on the six/seven IQs to gain evidence of how the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school, the part played by individual school context means that the inspection conversations and the evidence that is gathered may differ noticeably from school to school. This is a strength of the 2023 SIAMS Framework.

- c) Trusts that include both community and Church schools and that have minority/VC articles are not *expected* to have a specifically theologically rooted Christian vision. However, as indicated above, their vision should have resonance with the Christian vision of any Church school in the trust, enhance the work and Christian foundation of these schools, and reflect the requirements set out by the diocesan board of education/MAST.

8. Where can schools find more help and support?

- a) Direct and active engagement with the diocesan education team and/or MAST is the best way for Church schools to access further training and advice.
- b) Many dioceses offer a service level agreement and/or standalone training events to schools. Where available, these will provide opportunities for leaders to explore in depth all aspects of the new SIAMS Framework and to raise individual questions.
- c) MAST offers separate and additional training for schools that have a Methodist foundation.
- d) Diocesan directors of education and members of diocesan education teams/MAST can contact the National SIAMS Team direct if they have individual questions on behalf of schools and trusts.

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