
SIAMS

Framework

September 2023

Foreword

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Introduction

by the National Director of SIAMS, Dr Margaret James

SIAMS inspection plays an important role in the improvement of Church schools. It does this by affirming that which is effective and by highlighting key areas for improvement. By focusing on impact above all else, SIAMS explores ways in which each school's theologically rooted Christian vision drives the work, and enables the school to live up to its foundation as a Church school.

Church schools come in all different shapes and sizes, and a one size fits all approach to inspection does not allow a school to have integrity in its Christian-vision-driven work. Therefore, the 2023 SIAMS Framework does not present schools with lists of criteria to meet. Instead, it asks a number of Inspection Questions about impact, and it allows leaders to explain the school's context and the reasons for decisions and actions. In all things, the contextually-appropriate theologically rooted Christian vision is the driving force.

SIAMS inspectors will explore with school and trust leaders how they understand the specific context of the school, and whether they know how to respond to it theologically. Local, diocesan, and national expertise will help school and trust leaders to explore this, so that they can be confident in answering three key questions:

1. Who are we as a school?
2. What are we doing here?
3. How, then, shall we live and learn together?

Importantly, the 2023 SIAMS Framework highlights and seeks understanding of the theology that underpins a school's Christian vision. It also provides a structure for inspectors and school and trust leaders to, collaboratively, gather evidence of how this vision enables people to flourish. Using this evidence, inspectors then make judgements, holding school and trust leaders to account.

SIAMS, rightly, sets a high bar for each school to live up to its foundation as a Church school through its theologically rooted Christian vision, and it provides affirmation, aspiration, and areas for development for school leaders.

Dr Margaret James | National Director of SIAMS

SIAMS: An Overview

- a) SIAMS is the system of inspection employed by the National Society, on behalf of the Church of England and Methodist Church, to fulfil their legal obligations under section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.
- b) As such, it makes judgements on religious education, collective worship, and pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) education in Church of England and Methodist schools.
- c) These judgements combine to enable an evaluation of how schools, through their theologically rooted Christian vision, are living up to their foundation as Church schools, enabling people to flourish. SIAMS does this within the context of and with reference to the [Church of England's Vision for Education](#) and the [Methodist Transforming Lives Strategy](#).
- d) SIAMS recognises and celebrates the specific contextual diversity of Church schools and their communities. Therefore for academies, it also evaluates the impact that being part of a strong multi academy trust, whose vision resonates with that of the Church school, has on the individual school. This line of enquiry makes a significant contribution to the judgements that are made.
- e) SIAMS judgements are shared with the school community, the National Society, the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and/or the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST), the church, and the Department for Education. This is so that all those who have an interest in the school can understand the extent to which, through its theologically rooted Christian vision, the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school.
- f) In this way, SIAMS provides a framework within which individual schools can answer for themselves three important questions: Who are we? What are we doing here? How, then, shall we live and learn together? It also provides an accountability mechanism for external judgement to be made on the same.

The What, Why, and How of SIAMS

1. What must SIAMS do?

SIAMS must, in accordance with the law:

- i. make judgements and report on religious education
- ii. make judgements and report on collective worship
- iii. make judgements and report on pupils' SMSC education
- iv. make judgements on how, through its theologically rooted Christian vision, the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school, enabling people to flourish

a) Why must SIAMS do this?

SIAMS must do this because the Church has a:

- i. gospel-inspired obligation to seek fullness of life for pupils and adults in its schools
- ii. legal obligation to make judgements and report on religious education, collective worship, and pupils' SMSC development
- iii. moral obligation to hold leaders to account for whether, how, and to what extent a school's theologically rooted Christian vision and leadership are enabling people to flourish
- iv. duty to report on the above to those who have an interest in the school
- v. duty to make a positive contribution to the improvement of Church schools

b) How will SIAMS do this?

SIAMS will do this by engaging a team of skilled inspectors who will:

- i. explore how leaders know and ensure that the school's theologically rooted Christian vision and the ensuing policies and practice are enabling it to live up to its foundation as a Church school
- ii. hold conversations with school and trust leaders, members of staff, pupils, parents, and representatives of the DBE/MAST and local community, including, crucially, from local church/es
- iii. ask questions that are probing and open, enabling the school community to describe their context and their contextually-appropriate, Christian-vision-driven decisions and actions
- iv. scrutinise documentation, including, for example, self-evaluation, policies, plans, and pupils' religious education work, as part of the evidence-gathering process
- v. observe typical school life and relationships
- vi. evaluate evidence carefully, so that they are able to make fair and accurate judgements on the effectiveness of the school's Christian vision and leadership, holding leaders to account

2. What must schools and trusts do?

Schools and trusts must provide convincing evidence of how:

- i. the school's work is driven by a contextually-appropriate theologically rooted Christian vision for education that reflects its foundation as a Church school, meets the needs of the school community, and enables people to flourish
- ii. the vision and practice of the trust resonate with those of the school
- iii. leadership and governance are appropriate and effective
- iv. collective worship reflects the school's Anglican/Methodist foundation and enables the spiritual flourishing of those in the school community
- v. the school offers a religious education curriculum that:
 - o meets legal requirements
 - o reflects the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education
 - o is effective

a) Why must schools and trusts do this?

Schools and trusts must do this because:

- i. they are required by law to facilitate the inspection
- ii. they have a moral duty to provide an education that is shaped by a theologically rooted Christian vision that reflects the school's foundation and that enables people to flourish
- iii. the trust has a responsibility to provide appropriate leadership and governance for the school, to enhance its Anglican/Methodist foundation, and to demonstrate, in an evidence-based way, that this is the case
- iv. their involvement in the inspection process enables accurate judgements to be made
- v. SIAMS inspection provides the school with the opportunity to tell the evidence-based story of its Christian-vision-driven work

b) How will schools and trusts do this?

Schools and trusts will do this by:

- i. ensuring that the school's everyday work is rooted in and driven by a context-specific theologically rooted Christian vision
- ii. ensuring that they have a regular and meaningful relationship with the DBE and/or MAST, accessing expertise and support for Church school leadership, religious education, collective worship, SMSC education, and other aspects of their work as appropriate
- iii. providing an inspector with brief and focused evidence of how the theologically rooted Christian vision enables the school to live up to its foundation as a Church school
- iv. working with an inspector to arrange an inspection-day timetable that addresses the inspection lines of enquiry, enabling the inspector to hear the story of the school from a wide range of diverse groups from the school community, including from the trust leadership

Context of the school 1: Who are we?

This factual information enables the inspector to understand the specific context of the school. No judgements are made on this information.

- a) Is the school a Church of England, Methodist or joint denomination school?
- b) Is the school voluntary controlled or formerly voluntary controlled; voluntary aided or former voluntary aided; or does it have another designation?
- c) If a former voluntary controlled school does it, as an academy, provide denominational religious education?
- d) What phase is the school – first/infant, junior, primary, middle, secondary, high, all-through? What is the number of pupils on roll?
- e) Is the school an academy or a maintained school? Is the school part of a federation?
- f) How is school and trust leadership structured and organised? If part of a trust, what authority is delegated locally?
- g) What characterises the school’s pupil profile, and the community within which it is situated and/or that it serves? For example, how ethnically, culturally, and socially diverse is the community? And, what are the educational needs of pupils?
- h) What church and DBE/MAST partnerships does the school have?
- i) Does the school have any other links or partnerships?

Context of the school 2: What are we doing here?

This information enables the inspector to understand the theological underpinning of the school's Christian vision, the school/trust's governance structures, its arrangements for religious education and collective worship, and its partnerships. This information informs the judgements that the inspector makes.

- a) Considering the answers under 'Who are we?', what is the vision of the school and of the trust?
- b) How is the school's vision a clearly-articulated theologically rooted Christian vision? How does the trust's vision resonate with this?
- c) How do the specific needs of the school community inform the theologically rooted Christian vision? In other words, do leaders understand the school's context, and do they know how to respond to it theologically?
- d) Why have school leaders decided that the school should be a maintained school or an academy? How does this status enhance the effectiveness of the school as a Church school?
- e) As a result of the school's Christian vision, original foundation, and current context, why are school and trust structures of governance as they are?
- f) How do governance accountability and delegated authority in the school and trust enhance the work of the school as a Church school? How do leaders know this?
- g) What are the school's arrangements for collective worship? Why are these arrangements in place?
- h) How is religious education structured and organised? Why have these decisions been made?
- i) What is the relationship between the school/trust and the DBE and/or MAST? How do these relationships enhance the school's ability to live out its Christian vision and to live up to its foundation as a Church school, enabling people to flourish?
- j) What is the relationship between the school/trust and local church/es? How do these relationships enhance the school's ability to live out its Christian vision and to live up to its foundation as a Church school, enabling people to flourish?

Inspection Questions (IQ): How then shall we live and learn together?

This information is central to the evidence-based judgements that the inspector makes. The subquestions ensure that the inspector and school leaders have enough evidence to answer the main IQs.

IQ1 How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision enable pupils and adults to flourish?

- a) How is the Christian vision expressed? For example, is it through values that are faithful to the Anglican/Methodist foundation of the school?
- b) What other strategies do leaders employ to ensure that the theologically rooted Christian vision is a living reality that enables pupils and adults to flourish?
- c) How do leaders know that the theologically rooted Christian vision is enabling people to flourish?
- d) How does the vision of the trust resonate with the school's theologically rooted Christian vision in a way that enhances the work of the school and its Christian foundation?

IQ2 How does the curriculum reflect the school's theologically rooted Christian vision?

- a) In what ways does the theologically rooted Christian vision shape the curriculum, including the extra-curricular offer?
- b) How is spiritual development an intrinsic part of the curriculum?
- c) How do leaders know that the curriculum is having the intended effect for pupils?
- d) How, specifically, does the Christian vision shape the learning experience for pupils who are deemed to be vulnerable and/or disadvantaged?
- e) How does being part of the trust enhance the school's curriculum?

IQ3 How is collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually?

- a) How do the theologically rooted Christian vision and the Anglican/Methodist foundation of the school shape worship and spirituality in the school?
- b) How do partnerships with the DBE and/or MAST, and partnerships with parish/local church/es enhance this?
- c) In what ways is the worship life of the school inclusive, invitational, and inspirational?
- d) In the context of the school as a Church school, what do pupils and adults understand to be the meaning of spirituality? How does this enhance and enrich collective worship and individuals' spiritual development?
- e) How does the trust contribute to and enhance the school's worship and spiritual life?

IQ4 How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision create a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well?

- a) How does the theologically rooted Christian vision enable all to live well together in an inclusive, dignifying, and equitable culture?
- b) How do school policies and practice create a culture in which people's wellbeing is enhanced?
- c) How is enabling good mental health for all central to the school's work?
- d) As a result of the theologically rooted Christian vision, what effective strategies are in place that help pupils and adults, including those deemed to be vulnerable and/or disadvantaged, at difficult times?
- e) How does the trust contribute to and enhance the inclusion and wellbeing of pupils and adults, ensuring that all are treated well?

IQ5 How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision create an active culture of justice and responsibility?

- a) How does the theologically rooted Christian vision enable positive relationships that balance individual freedom and rights, with responsibility towards others?
- b) How does this culture encourage justice and courageous advocacy, enabling pupils to make ethical choices and to be agents of change?
- c) As an outworking of the theologically rooted Christian vision, what partnerships are important to the school? How do they impact positively and reciprocally on people's lives?
- d) How does the trust make a positive impact on the culture of the school?

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](#))?

- a) How do school and trust leaders ensure that the provision, profile, and priority of religious education in all key stages reflect its place on the curriculum of a Church school?
- b) How do school and trust leaders ensure that the religious education curriculum is challenging, accurate, well-sequenced, well-balanced, relevant, and diverse?
- c) How do school and trust leaders ensure that religious education is well-resourced, and that continuing professional development for staff has an impact on the effectiveness of the curriculum?

The following Inspection Question only forms part of the inspection of voluntary aided and former voluntary aided schools, and of academies that were formerly voluntary controlled schools in which the trust board has decided that denominational religious education is taught.

Inspection of maintained voluntary controlled schools, and the vast majority of former voluntary controlled schools, will not address this Inspection Question.

IQ7 What is the quality of religious education in voluntary aided and former voluntary aided schools, and in former voluntary controlled schools in which denominational religious education is taught?

- a) What is the quality of teaching?
- b) How well do pupils make progress in their learning as a result of a balanced and well-structured religious education curriculum?¹
- c) How does assessment inform teaching and learning?

¹ In answering this question, schools and inspectors should refer to the expectations of the RE syllabus being used and/or to national standards.

Inspection Judgements

Having evaluated the evidence made available under the six/seven IQs, the inspector will award the school one of the two following judgements.

- J1 Through its vision and practice, the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling people 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)

- a) 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.
- b) School and trust leaders have not ensured that the curriculum reflects the school's Christian vision.
- c) School and trust leaders have not ensured that collective worship is enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually.
- d) School and trust leaders have not ensured that pupils and adults are treated well.
- e) School and trust leaders have not ensured that the school's Christian vision creates an active culture of justice and responsibility.
- f) School and trust leaders have not ensured that the provision, profile, and priority of religious education result in an effective curriculum.
- g) 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.