

Dr Margaret James  
National Director of SIAMS

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Dear Headteacher

### **Tweaks to the new SIAMS Framework – judgement wording and self-evaluation**

I am writing to let you know of two small, but significant, changes that we have made to the new process of SIAMS, to take effect from this September.

#### 1. Judgement wording

- I have been reflecting on the precise wording of the two inspection judgements under the new Framework (and their effect on schools) and, as a result, I have made some changes. The judgements will now read as follows.
- Either
  - The inspection findings indicate that the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish.
- Or
  - The inspection findings indicate that the school has strengths, but that there are also issues that leaders need to address as a matter of priority. These are listed in the areas for development.
- These changes reflect the reality that what we abbreviate to being called ‘J2’ is not negative but simply highlights areas on which a school needs to focus as a matter of priority. I hope it will help you to understand the fact that the new judgements do not equate to a pass/fail inspection.
- In addition, I would like to emphasise that the terms ‘J1’ and ‘J2’ will not appear anywhere on the new report format. Instead, one or other of the new forms of wording will be written underneath the main inspection findings, either on the second or third page of the report.
- I emphasise that this change makes no difference whatsoever to the content of the inspection itself, to the Inspection Questions, or to the way in which the inspection will be carried out.

#### 2. Self-evaluation

- Self-evaluation is not statutory for schools. It is first and foremost for the benefit of the school that writes and engages with it, and any benefit to inspection is secondary.
- However, I have recently come to realise that the *requirement* for schools to write a summary SEF in addition to the full SEF may be unreasonable, potentially detrimental to headteacher wellbeing, and

therefore not in the spirit of inspecting in a Christian manner, the standard by which we judge all of our activity.

- I must stress, though, that a reasonable approach is necessary if inspectors are to truly understand a school and gather as much relevant evidence as possible. Sending an inspector a lengthy SEF, one that contains information that is out-of-date, will not enable them to gain an appropriate and helpful insight into your school in the week before the inspection.
- Therefore, I offer the following guidance that is designed to be a reasonable balance between headteacher wellbeing, inspector wellbeing, and achieving a fair and thorough inspection.
- Rather than the requirement to write a separate summary SEF, if headteachers would prefer not to, they may find it helpful to do one of the following to send to the inspector prior to the inspection day.
  - Highlight the relevant/recent parts of their full SEF
  - Delete the parts of the full SEF that are historic/not current/no longer relevant
  - Direct an inspector to which pages of a full SEF to read; or if they prefer
  - Summarise the full SEF into a shorter summary document, as is common practice now.
- I emphasise that some may still prefer to summarise their full SEF into a shorter document to clarify their own thinking and that, of course, remains helpful and acceptable to an inspector.

Your diocesan education team will be able to offer you further help on any issue related to SIAMS inspection and I would encourage you to engage regularly with them.

I wish you well as you complete the final month of the school year.

Yours sincerely



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