Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools
National Society for Education

The Annual Report of the National Director of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS)

2023-2024

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Introduction by Dr Margaret James | National Director of SIAMS

September 2023 saw the implementation of the new SIAMS Framework, and therefore this year's Annual Report is the first that is reporting on its impact. The new system of school inspection, emerging from academic research, encapsulates the notion of contextually-applied compassionate accountability; and it values and respects the knowledge and wellbeing of each person who brings their expertise to the experience, be they inspector or school leader.

The 2023 SIAMS Framework marked the Church of England's evidence-based decision to move away from awarding inspection grades. Firmly rooted in a commitment to 'inspection in a Christian manner', this new approach has resulted in over 99% of all inspections being carried out in a way that has lessened the stress on school leaders whilst simultaneously improving the robustness of inspection. The evidence and the data that have been produced in 2023-2024 are detailed, specific, and rich. In turn, this rich data is providing a new level of knowledge and insight for education leaders in the National Society for Education (NSE), Church of England dioceses, and Methodist Academies Schools Trust (MAST); insight that renders them well-placed to provide the most appropriate support and training for schools. Furthermore, inspection under the 2023 Framework, inspection without grades, continues to hold schools to account closely – celebrating their successes whilst also highlighting their development points. In short, it has been a 'win-win' change to school inspection, with nothing of true worth being lost with the removal of single word grades.

This Annual Report details the main points that have emerged from that evidence and shines a spotlight on the strengths within Church of England and Methodist schools, as well as on the areas that need more attention. It makes recommendations for schools, dioceses, MAST, and the NSE alike.

SIAMS inspectors have carried out 904 inspections in the last academic year, almost twice as many as in the previous year, and over three times as many as in the year before. This accounts for almost one-fifth of all Church of England and Methodist schools in England, and has been possible due to significantly increased inspection capacity – capacity that is now established in a sustainable way.

A crucial factor in ensuring that high-quality inspection remains the norm is quality assurance that, itself, is of the highest possible quality. This has been a growing focus throughout 2023-2024 and will continue to be so into 2024-2025.

Also in 2023-2024, SIAMS carried out its first nationwide survey, gathering the opinions of school leaders, diocesan boards of education, representatives of MAST, inspectors, and quality assurance inspectors. The data that emerged through these surveys has been analysed and has fed into the minor revisions that have been made to the Framework for September 2024 (available at SIAMS Inspections | The Church of England). The survey results and a summary of the analysis are included at Annex 1 of this report.

As National Director of SIAMS, I would like to thank everyone who is involved with SIAMS inspection – school, diocesan, and MAST leaders, inspectors, quality assurance inspectors, and the national SIAMS team. All are playing their part in ensuring that pupils who attend Church of England and Methodist schools are receiving an education that is rooted in the Christian principles of dignity, equity, fullness of life, and human flourishing - an education that unashamedly puts love at its heart.

Executive Summary

1. How a school's Christian vision is enabling pupils and adults to flourish

1.1. Inspection evidence supports the notion that strong, knowledgeable, and supported leadership is the single most effective element in a successful Church school. Good leaders set and hold vision, and they establish and maintain culture – during both calm and challenging times. This has important implications for the recruitment, retention, investment in and development of people who are skilled in and knowledgeable about leading Church schools, ensuring that the right people are in the right roles at the right times.

1.2. Evidence from 2023-2024 indicates that the understanding, prevalence, and positive impact of schools' Christian visions are better than at any other time over the last three years. However, the picture does remain mixed. Some schools continue to respond more to the demands of inspection than to the specific needs of their community and the purpose/foundation of their school. As a result, some schools are still missing out on the value to their work of getting to grips with a genuine Christian vision, and are settling instead for a more superficial approach, such as the retrospective addition of a Bible verse to a pre-existing vision.

1.3. Knowledge and understanding of the needs of the local community remain key factors in developing and sustaining an effective and appropriate Christian vision. Despite a small amount of evidence to the contrary, in the majority of cases evidence is indicating that schools have a good understanding of this. Consequently, more Church schools than ever before are working in vision-driven ways that meet the needs of their communities, thereby bringing holistic benefit.

1.4. Values are frequently employed by schools as a strategy for expressing the school vision in practice. Values appear to be most effective when they emerge from and are directly connected to the vision. Where schools have values that are not rooted in a coherent vision, evidence indicates that they tend to be less effective because they have a less coherent foundation underpinning what they are doing. Unsurprisingly, evidence shows that a lack of clarity at the core is resulting in lack of clarity elsewhere.

1.5. Leaders and governors are working hard across England to monitor the work of Church schools. In the most effective examples of Church school governance, evidence confirms that governors (and sometimes multi academy trust trustees) are evaluating the information gained through this monitoring activity, thereby translating it into knowledge about the school. In turn, this knowledge sometimes informs next steps and the development of policy and practice. However, the latter two steps are only being taken in a minority of schools with the majority engaging in monitoring but not in the evaluation of the information that is gathered. This is inhibiting many schools' ability to improve, despite exhaustive and, at times exhausting, work by governors.

1.6. There is growing evidence that a multi academy trust that has a coherent vision that aligns with a Church school's Christian vision is well-placed to play an important role in the school's development and improvement as a Church school. Logic would suggest that the opposite is also true, and lack of alignment and clarity of vision between schools and trusts can be detrimental for schools.

1.7. Analysis of inspection evidence since 2021 suggests that, driven by five-yearly cyclical SIAMS inspections, schools appear to often reserve their engagement with expert training (such as that provided by dioceses) either for the year before or the year of their inspection. This pattern of infrequent and sporadic inspection-driven engagement has been confirmed again in 2023-2024. Such practice is slowing down teachers' and leaders' acquisition of comprehensive understanding, and the contingent improvement of Church schools nationally.

2. How a school's curriculum reflects its Christian vision

2.1. The majority of Church schools are ensuring that the curriculum is broad, rich and engaging in such a way that it reflects the vision and enables pupils' flourishing.

2.2. However, in relation to this inspection question (IQ2), as with others, leaders' and governors' monitoring and evaluation is too often the weak link in terms of there being a broad and reliable evidence base. Schools would have a better routine understanding of their strengths and development points were such monitoring and evaluation to be carried out at times other than solely on the occasion of a SIAMS inspection, when evidence is gathered and evaluated by an inspector.

2.3. Evidence indicates that there is a positive and improving picture in the majority of schools in terms of understanding spirituality and the connected spiritual flourishing of pupils and adults. This means that the majority of pupils (almost 75%) attending Church schools are enabled and empowered to start to understand the spiritual aspect of being human, and are given regular opportunities to develop holistically, for example through the curriculum. This analysis also applies to adults in the school community.

2.4. Nevertheless, spirituality and spiritual flourishing both remain significant training needs for schools.

2.5. Over a quarter of Church schools in England do not have a good understanding of spirituality and/or do not routinely include it as part of the curriculum.

2.6. Over half of the schools receiving a J2 judgment have spirituality and/or spiritual flourishing cited as one of the reasons or, at times, the only reason for the judgement. The numbers for this are very low, reflecting only approximately 1% of all schools inspected, but are worth noting nonetheless.

3. How collective worship is enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually

3.1. Inspection evidence indicates that inspirational, inclusive, and invitational collective worship continues to be at the heart of many Church schools.

3.2. However, one caveat to this is that many schools' limited collective understanding of spirituality is a detrimental factor in both pupils' and adults' spiritual flourishing through worship. If schools do not have an understanding of what spirituality is, they cannot create the conditions for spiritual flourishing and they cannot make any informed comment on whether anyone is flourishing spiritually or not.

3.3. The vast majority of Church schools work hard to ensure that acts of worship include elements of Anglican and/or Methodist practices and traditions. There is a growing understanding, and evidence to support it, however, that adherence to these practices and traditions does not automatically equate to spiritual flourishing.

3.4. There is also a growing understanding that simply involving pupils in the planning and leadership of worship does not mean that they will automatically flourish spiritually.

4. How a school's Christian vision is creating a culture in which pupils and adults are being treated well

4.1. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils and adults are cared for and treated well in Church schools. This evidence can be taken as relating to people from the full range of diverse communities served by Church schools, and to those with a wide variety of learning and social needs. A contextually-appropriate Christian vision is reported as being a key factor in this work.

4.2. In 2023-2024, the inspection question that relates to this (IQ4) is the only inspection question that has not been cited as the reason for a school to be awarded a J2 judgement.

4.3. Words and phrases that are commonly used in relation to the culture in Church schools include dignity, respect, compassion, care, forgiveness, and living well together.

4.4. Evidence is supporting the observation that there is a logical connection between inclusion and wellbeing. An inclusive school has at its core a fundamental commitment to, and an understanding of, a wide range of needs that emerge from a similarly wide range of factors. These include socio-economic background, religious and cultural heritage, race, gender and sexuality, and the full range of disabilities and neurodiversity to name but a few.

4.5. Without an understanding of the diverse needs present within a school, and a commitment to meeting these needs thereby creating an inclusive community, diverse communities cannot all be treated well. In other words, in the absence of a truly inclusive school culture there can be no certainty that all are being treated as precious individuals made in the image of God.

4.6. Therefore, a school cannot be commended for its work on, and commitment to, wellbeing unless it has a parallel commitment to inclusion. It is not enough for some groups in a Church school to be treated well and to have their wellbeing nurtured, whilst others have a more negative experience. Evidence does not suggest that this is happening in Church schools, but more in-depth probing is required to confirm the validity of this.

4.7. Contextually-appropriate Christian vision also appears to be having a positive impact on behaviour and relationships. An obvious reason to suggest for this is that vision creates ethos, and that ethos creates culture.

5. How a school's Christian vision is creating an active culture of justice and responsibility

5.1. It is logical to expect that internal school culture created by a school's Christian vision would in turn, enable pupils to look outwards with a growing sense of justice and responsibility towards others. In other words, from a place of safety and love it is reasonable that pupils would, incrementally and in an age-appropriate manner, be equipped to develop and express an active care for others.

5.2. Evidence is indicating that there is a degree of misunderstanding around this inspection question. Too often, it is being interpreted as 'courageous advocacy' alone, with an unhelpful focus solely on pupils being 'agents of change' – at times, incorrectly interpreted as 'political activism'.

5.3. Whilst both courageous advocacy and agents of change can play a valid and important role in Church schools, the inspection question is about an active culture of justice and responsibility in a broad sense. This may be helpfully understood as enabling children,

in a small way, to see and understand something of the Kingdom of God – a community where each one is loved and cared for, and in which each one loves and cares for others.

5.4. These misunderstandings highlight the need for further high-quality training, advice, and information from those with a responsibility to provide them.

5.5. As in previous years, evidence indicates that judiciously curated partnerships are valuable for Church schools. This includes, in particular, partnerships with:

- 5.5.1. parish and other local churches
- 5.5.2. diocesan education teams and/or MAST, and
- 5.5.3. trusts of which the vision aligns with that of Church schools and that are equipped with the requisite knowledge, understanding, and commitment to support the schools.

5.6. Broader partnerships are also proving to have benefit for Church schools. These partnerships are with, amongst others, local and wider communities; similar schools locally, nationally, and globally; and dissimilar schools locally, nationally, and globally.

5.7. Great care needs to be taken in establishing all types of partnerships, however, with specific attention given to the purpose of the link and to the sustainability of it in the medium and long term.

5.8. All partnerships, if entered into thoughtfully and with clarity of beneficial intent, can bring value to and enrich the Christian vision-driven work of the school. To simply establish a partnership, for example with a school overseas, with little or no consideration given to how it fits with the rest of the work of the school, brings limited value at best.

6. Religious education

6.1. Religious education is the most commonly occurring theme to be cited both as a development point and as a strength in the same inspection.

6.2. Frequently mentioned strengths in RE include:

- 6.2.1. subject leadership
- 6.2.2. the quality of the curriculum
- 6.2.3. teaching and learning of Christianity
- 6.2.4. RE as an expression of the vision inasmuch as it relates to understanding difference and diversity.

6.3. Frequently mentioned development points include:

- 6.3.1. Christianity as a global faith
- 6.3.2. teaching and learning of faiths other than Christianity
- 6.3.3. quality of teaching in RE in general
- 6.3.4. assessment leading to improvement
- 6.3.5. professional development for teachers of RE
- 6.3.6. monitoring and evaluation of RE (the curriculum and teaching) leading to improvement.

6.4. Analysis of evidence, including of development points, strongly suggests that it is common for RE to be under-resourced and under-prioritised in schools – financially and in terms of training, expertise, and discrete time allocated. Yet, despite this, there are schools and geographical areas of the country in which RE is a significant strength.

6.5. A reasonable conclusion to draw is that the availability, extent, and quality of RE advice, training, and support to schools, from bodies such as DBEs and MAST, and possibly

also local authorities, (although they are beyond the purview of this report), is likely to be inconsistent across England. This is possibly due to the same type of constraining factors that affect schools' engagement with such training; that is, limited finances and other resources on the part of the potential providers.

6.6. Inconsistent provision can leave schools subject to something of a 'postcode lottery' in terms of the expertise to which they have access. This is having a direct and discernible impact on the quality of RE in schools, a matter for which schools themselves cannot be held solely, or even principally, responsible.

6.7. The presence of core RE at the end of KS3 and in KS4, specifically in Year 9 but also in Year 10 and Year 11, and the quality of it where it is provided, can be described as inconsistent at best. Evidence indicates that this paucity of provision is commonly due to schools' not uncommon decision to enter pupils for GCSE RE a year early whilst simultaneously ceasing to provide core RE. Where this is happening it is having the dual negative consequence of unnecessarily and prematurely narrowing the curriculum and denying significant groups of pupils their legal entitlement to RE.

6.8. A similar picture is found in KS5 (Sixth Form) where core RE is too commonly either:

- 6.8.1. not provided
- 6.8.2. merged with other subjects to the detriment of the RE curriculum, or
- 6.8.3. offered too infrequently and of an insufficiently high quality to be of real benefit to pupils.

6.9. Evidence suggests that the combination of these decisions, and a number of other factors, is having a net negative impact on RE in Church schools.

6.10. These additional factors include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- 6.10.1. insufficient teacher subject knowledge
- 6.10.2. inconsistent high quality professional development and support for teachers of RE
- 6.10.3. inadequate financial and other resourcing
- 6.10.4. low teacher confidence (unsurprising as a result of the above)
- 6.10.5. already pressurised timetables
- 6.10.6. the absence of RE from the EBacc in KS4, and
- 6.10.7. insufficient attention given to RE as part of initial teacher training.

6.11. This seems to be culminating in the creation of a downward spiral of baked-in decline in the subject that requires urgent attention if it is to be reversed. Classroom teachers of RE and subject leaders, arguably those who are playing a major role in attempting to improve the situation, cannot be held accountable for what they are powerless to change.

7. Other observations

7.1. Chaplaincy, as in previous years, continues to be an overwhelmingly positive, yet still low incidence, provision in Church schools. It is possible that its occurrence is more common than inspection evidence indicates due to differing and unfamiliar terminology being used across different schools and possibly also during inspection.

7.2. I would encourage school leaders, during an inspection, to explore the impact of pastoral and spiritual support regardless of what it is called in school and regardless of who provides it.

7.3. Many of the matters raised in this report, matters that evidence indicates require further work, are similar, and at times identical, to those reported in the last two years. Some examples of these are:

7.3.1 monitoring and evaluation, including of the impact of Christian vision
7.3.2 understanding of spirituality and spiritual development
7.3.3 the RE curriculum
7.3.4 teaching of faiths other than Christianity, and
7.3.5 teaching of Christianity as a global faith.

7.4. A reasonable and logical conclusion is that schools are only engaging with expert training and advice (where it is available) on these and what they see as other 'SIAMS-related' matters in the year before and/or the year of their SIAMS inspection.

7.5. If this pattern continues, improvement across the approximate 4,700 Church schools in England is going to follow the five-yearly inspection cycle, with repetitive reporting on the need for improvement taking a similar course. In plain terms, it will take too long for the whole estate of Church of England and Methodist schools to improve and for pupils to be in receipt of a consistently high-quality Church school education.

7.6. Taking steps to improve, for example in providing an education that meets the spiritual needs of pupils, in response to inspection rather than in response to pupil need and human entitlement is less than ideal and will always be so.

7.7. This can be reversed, however, through:

7.7.1. a commitment from all Church schools to prioritise frequent and regular engagement with expert training and advice, regardless of the expectation of a SIAMS inspection, and

7.7.2. the provision of such expert training and advice from those with responsibility to do so locally and nationally.

7.8. Ensuring that training and advice are not only accurate and of high quality, but also accessible will be important considerations in bringing about the fundamental changes that are required in Church schools across England.

Recommendations for action: schools

1. Christian vision and spirituality

1.1. Enable leaders and, as appropriate, other members of staff to access regular expert training and advice (for example, from a diocese or from MAST) on Christian vision, spirituality, and spiritual development/flourishing. Apply this learning to the curriculum and to collective worship.

1.2. Do not leave this work until the year before or the year of a SIAMS inspection. Instead prioritise it, recognising that it is a fundamental duty of all Church schools at all times to enable holistic development for spiritual human beings, regardless of inspection cycles.

2. Leadership training

2.1. Enable governors to access expert training (for example, from a diocese or from MAST) on effective ways to monitor and, crucially, how to evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of a Church school. These include, but are not limited to, Christian vision, RE, and collective worship. Such monitoring and evaluation should include a focus on the impact of provision on all different groups in the school, leading to improvement.

2.2. Ensure that decision-making and resource-allocation enables subject leaders for RE to have access to the most up-to-date training and resources. This may include, but is not limited to, their knowledge and application of the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE, and the National Content Standard for RE as a compendium of and guide for good practice. Use of the National Content Standard is not a legal requirement but it provides leaders and teachers of RE with an expert basis for their work. Alignment with the expectations set out in the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE is strongly advised for all Church schools, and is referenced in the SIAMS Framework.

3. SIAMS questions

3.1. Ensure that all staff and leaders understand what SIAMS is asking under each inspection question, and access training accordingly, seeking clarification where required.

3.2. As part of this work, particularly understand what is being asked under SIAMS IQ5, paying attention to the legal duty for schools to uphold political impartiality.

3.3. As with other recommendations, do not leave this work until the year before or the year of a SIAMS inspection

4. Religious education

4.1. Paying no attention to the five-yearly SIAMS inspection cycle, audit RE and regularly access high-quality and relevant expert training. This should include a focus on Christianity as a global faith, faiths other than Christianity, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and ongoing professional development for all teachers of RE.

4.2. Ensure that resource decisions have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in RE. This includes ensuring that teachers are appropriately trained and equipped, and that decisions related to the RE curriculum and its resourcing are well-informed thereby giving pupils in all year groups the highest possible quality provision.

4.3. In schools and academies where governors/trustees are responsible for selecting the RE syllabus, do so having scoped the field and taken expert advice.

4.4. Ensure that all pupils in KS3, KS4 and KS5 have high-quality RE provision, covering at the very least their legal entitlement. This means that decisions to bring RE GCSE forward to Year 9 need to be carefully considered in terms of the impact on those pupils' learning. It also means respecting the place that RE should have in a Church school and not marginalising its study in the sixth form.

4.5. Take note of the information and guidance that is available in the National Content Standard for RE and of the expectations set out in the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE.

Recommendations for action: diocesan boards of education and the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust

1. Christian vision and spirituality

1.1. Ensure that schools have access to regular high-quality and accurate training and support on what is meant by Christian vision, spirituality, and spiritual flourishing.

1.2. Wherever required, possible, and beneficial, work with schools (on an individual basis if preferable) to assist them in understanding how to devise and establish a contextually-appropriate, theologically-rooted Christian vision.

2. Leadership training

2.1. Ensure that high-quality training and education on Christian educational leadership is available for schools (and multi academy trusts where appropriate). This is to establish a developing 'pipeline' of leaders who are knowledgeable about and equipped for the task of Church school leadership.

2.2. Provide, or establish access to, training on spirituality and spiritual development (leading to spiritual flourishing) for school staff and leaders. This is to enable them to understand its intrinsic role within Christian vision and the work of a Church school. This should also equip schools to provide an education through which pupils and adults are able to flourish spiritually as well as morally, socially, culturally, and academically.

2.3. Provide, or establish access to, training for school governors and multi academy trust trustees on effective ways to monitor, and crucially how to evaluate, the effectiveness of all aspects of a Church school. This training should include, but not be limited to, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of Christian vision, RE, and collective worship.

3. SIAMS questions

3.1. Provide, or establish access to, accurate and well-informed training and advice for school staff and leaders to enable them to accurately understand what SIAMS is asking under each inspection question.

3.2. Take steps to enable all schools to engage with this (and other) training and advice every year and not just in the year of or the year before a SIAMS inspection. This is because inspection-driven cyclical engagement with such training and advice is currently inhibiting schools' ability to fundamentally and comprehensively improve for the sake of the pupils rather than doing so for the sake of a periodic inspection judgement.

4. Religious education

4.1. Make effective use of membership of the local authority's SACRE to ensure that each locally agreed syllabus:

- 4.1.1 is reviewed regularly as required in law
- 4.1.2 has content and guidance that are up-to-date and of the highest quality
- 4.1.3 adopts a multi-lens approach to study
- 4.1.4 is accessible for all teachers of RE, and
- 4.1.5 has a connected programme of training.

4.2. Provide, or establish access to, accurate and well-informed training, advice, networking, and resources for school leaders and teachers of RE, specifically on the following.

- 4.2.1 Christianity as a global, multi-cultural faith.
- 4.2.2 Knowledge and understanding of religious traditions and worldviews other than Christianity.
- 4.2.3 Knowledge and understanding of non-religious traditions and worldviews.
- 4.2.4 Strategies for assessing pupils' progress in such a way that informs curriculum development and enables high-quality and effective teaching.
- 4.2.5 Strategies and knowledge to enable governors and trustees to monitor and evaluate the overall quality and effectiveness of RE.

4.3. Ensure that advice and guidance are in place for secondary schools about how to provide high-quality core RE for all pupils in KS3, KS4 and KS5.

4.4. Take note of, and enable all schools to have ready access to, the information, expectations and guidance that are available in the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE and the National Content Standard for RE.

Recommendations for action: the National Society for Education (NSE)

1. Christian vision and spirituality

1.1. Explore how national leadership training programmes, such as the NSE's suite of national professional qualifications (NPQs), might be tailored to systematically and routinely include education on, and information specifically about, Christian educational leadership, Christian vision, and spirituality.

1.2. Carry out this work in the context of existing diocesan training offers to schools, consulting as necessary in order to maximise the benefit of nationwide partnership working.

2. Leadership training

2.1. Use all existing national leadership training programmes and networks to play an appropriate part in equipping Church school leaders and governors, and trustees of multi academy trusts, to understand the specific duty of leading a Church school. This is to enable current and prospective Church school leaders to understand the various ways in which leading a Church school is different from leading schools that do not have a Church of England foundation.

2.2. Make use of the existing engagement with diocesan and multi academy trust leaders nationally to play an appropriate part in providing training and information on the specific requirements of Church schools. Carry out this work in the context of existing diocesan training offers to multi academy trusts in order that the NSE might aid diocesan boards of education to safeguard and improve Church of England schools into the future.

3. SIAMS questions

3.1. Produce guidance for diocesan boards of education (and, by extension, for schools) that has clarity both on the legal basis of collective worship in Church schools and on the status of the guidance itself.

3.2. Examine the inspection data that is currently indicating the positive wellbeing and inclusion of all groups of pupils in Church schools nationally. Engage in discussion with diocesan boards of education to probe their local intelligence on this subject, and to establish whether there is need to look into the matter further. If deemed so,

work collaboratively to create a valid and broad evidence base that can subsequently be used to improve equitable wellbeing in Church schools.

3.3. Make use of the existing network that addresses 'courageous advocacy' to ensure an accurate understanding of SIAMS IQ5. Consider broadening the network, including its title, beyond 'courageous advocacy' to address the inspection question's scope relating to justice and responsibility.

3.4. Ensure that any networks that relate to the SIAMS inspection questions consist of accurate and up-to-date information.

4. Religious education

4.1. Review the NSE's role in national RE bodies to ensure it is playing an appropriate, positive, and well-informed part in the creation and distribution of resources for diocesan boards of education, school leaders, and teachers of RE.

4.2. These resources should initially be targeted to help schools in the following.

- 4.2.1. Teaching of Christianity as a global, multi-cultural faith.
- 4.2.2. Teaching of religious traditions and worldviews other than Christianity.
- 4.2.3. Assessing pupils' progress in RE in such a way that informs curriculum development and enables high-quality and effective teaching.
- 4.2.4. How to effectively carry out monitoring and evaluation of RE.

4.3. Resources that take a multi-lens (theology, philosophy, and human science) approach to study should also be developed.

4.4. Ensure that any revisions and updates to the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE are completed in a timely fashion, and that they are well-communicated to dioceses in order to inform their training and advice to schools.

4.5. Explore how national leadership training programmes, such as the suite of NPQs, might be used to help address the current lack of teachers' knowledge about and confidence in the teaching of RE.

4.6. Make use of opportunities that are available to engage with political leaders, higher education providers, and national subject bodies to explore the place of RE in initial teacher training. This is to start to arrest the decline in subject expertise nationally that is currently leaving schools with a 'postcode lottery' in terms of the expert training and advice that they are able to access.

What inspection outcomes in 2023-2024 tell us about Church of England and Methodist schools.

Detailed findings

1. How a school's Christian vision is enabling pupils and adults to flourish

1.1. Evidence from SIAMS inspections that have taken place between September 2023 and July 2024 indicates that much work has been undertaken by school leaders in the last 12 months to understand the purpose, place, and power of vision. This is encouraging for all involved in the education provided by Church of England and Methodist schools, not because of compliance-related matters or inspection outcomes, but because of the reality of the phrase, "without vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29 vs 18).

1.2. It is not just in the Bible that the importance of vision to a flourishing life is expounded. It is vision that, quite simply, gives us direction as individual human beings, and as community coming together to create society. Vision gives us collective hope for a future.

1.3. Having a clear vision for life and work helps to answer the big question, 'why'. For a Church of England or Methodist school, the why is firmly and legally rooted in the school's foundation, the purpose for which the school was originally built. This may have been formulated over 200 years ago but, without fail, that purpose was to serve the community and to offer an education that is Christian in nature. Such an education promises to nurture and enable growth, shining a light on aspiration, fulfilment, compassion, and inclusion amongst other benefits. It does so with kindness and respect for all, bringing dignity to the human condition; and overwhelmingly it does so with love. Such is a Christian vision for education.

1.4. Inspection evidence over the last year confirms that where a Christian vision is in place, where it has a purpose and a provenance that are understood, and where it is enacted through both policy and practice, that vision is transforming lives for the better. This is something of which those who lead Church schools should be proud.

1.5. Inspection reports make it clear that such work is not always easy. It involves a depth of thought and discussion with the school's partners; courage, at times, to take a risk and to change what has gone before; understanding the real needs of the community; having an attention to detail and a strategic approach to policy-writing and staff training; and ensuring that there is consistency in implementation on a daily basis, sometimes in the face of challenge and opposition. It can be relentless hard work, but evidence indicates that Christian vision can change lives for the better.

1.6. SIAMS reports detail numerous examples of this type of work being carried out for the benefit of the community when a school's work is rooted in its Christian vision.

1.7. St Mary's VA Primary school in the Diocese of Hereford roots its vision in Proverbs 22 vs 6, and ensures that all of its work grows from the intent to set an example to pupils about how to live well. Because leaders understand the needs of the local community as well as the meaning and purpose of the vision, this work is effective.

1.8. Similarly, the work of St Mary and St John VA Primary school in the Diocese of Oxford is rooted in the biblical imperative to "do everything in love". As a result, the school meets the needs of individuals many of whom come from a range of diverse backgrounds. The school's philosophy means that doing so is the natural and obvious way to live and learn together, with leaders setting an example of "Jesus' inclusive nature to love everyone". Understanding the community and understanding the purpose of the Christian vision work harmoniously together in bringing success to this work.

1.9. However, there is a difference in the 'types' of vision encountered on inspection. Evidence makes it clear that there are those that are deeply Christian and those that are are more superficially so. There are embedded visions that clearly emerge from a deep theological understanding of the school's purpose and the needs of those whom it serves; and there are visions that appear to have been put in place for an inspection, possibly even just in response to its demands. Significantly, there is a difference between a convenient and superficial reference to a Bible verse and a real understanding of that which Christian teaching speaks into a school's context.

1.10. Always beginning with an understanding of the true needs of the school community, Christian vision sums up what Christian teaching has to say about those needs. Whether that might be to learn acceptance of those who are different from oneself, or to have the confidence to aspire to flourish in one's gifts and talents; to believe that school is a place of safety in the midst of a life of uncertainty, or to learn to love oneself and to then love others in the same way – a school's Christian vision should give voice to the why and the what of the school in the context of its community.

1.11. A Christian vision cannot be devoid of this rootedness in the Christian faith, although evidence indicates that there are still a number of schools – albeit increasingly a minority – where this is not understood. Christian vision can never be made such simply by adding a Bible verse, almost as an afterthought, once the work has already been done. Such action can be well-intentioned as an attempt to satisfy the requirements of SIAMS, but it will never serve the community in the way that the community deserves, and that the founders of the school committed to in law.

1.12. Evidence supports the view that not all Church school leaders feel equipped to create an effective Christian vision on their own. Leaders of Church schools, however, are never alone. Almost uniquely in the English education system, they have teams behind them – either in dioceses or the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST) - whose own purpose is to help and to serve. My message to Church school leaders, after I have read hundreds of school visions and SIAMS reports, is this: ask for help. Those who do tend to do a better job of serving their communities and meeting needs.

1.13. Unsurprisingly, inspection evidence consistently indicates that strong and informed leaders have a significant and positive impact on the schools that they lead. As

suggested above, strength does not preclude asking for help. People tend to be stronger together, each playing to their strengths and abilities, supporting each other thereby making a reality of the biblical analogy of the body that we read in 1 Corinthians 12. Strong, connected, and informed leaders feature highly in inspection reports, and the impact of their expertise is seen across all areas of a SIAMS inspection.

1.14. Church schools often live out their Christian vision through a set of values. Where these values are known, understood, and reflect the vision, evidence indicates that they are effective in creating an ethos and a culture that enable positive spiritual, moral, social, cultural, and academic growth.

1.15. Evidence also indicates that schools that rely on values to the exclusion of vision are less effective in creating clarity of purpose and a sense of community. A lack of vision, and an ensuing sole reliance on values, appears to allow for the existence of greater confusion in the meaning and intent of both policy and practice. This evidence supports the notion that schools should start with Christian vision and then, should they elect to, operate a system of values that are an expression of this vision. This appears to be an effective strategic approach to leading a Church school.

1.16. The work that is carried out by Langley Mill Infant School in the Diocese of Derby provides a telling example of this. At Langley Mill, the Christian vision is strong. Based on this, and to ensure that even the very youngest pupils have a shared vocabulary with which to express and live out the vision, the school has four core values. This strategy is effective because the pupils understand the vision and know why and how the values enable them to live it out, not only for their own benefit but also for all others in the school.

1.17. A further seam of evidence, that is currently in its infancy but that is already providing valuable insights, is that of the role played by multi academy trusts in regard to vision. Examples of trusts that are able to support, and even enhance, the vision-driven work of schools are steadily growing. This is encouraging, especially when the trusts are working closely with the diocesan education teams. The crucial factor that must be recognised, however, is that this is encouraging insomuch as it relates to trusts that have their own clear vision for their work that resonates with the vision-driven work of Church schools.

1.18. This does not mean that trusts that are not 'Church' in their origin are expected to have their own *Christian* vision. Rather, it means that they should have a vision that, at the very least, supports the Christian vision of schools, and at best aligns with it. In examples where this is the case, schools benefit from additional capacity, knowledge, expertise, challenge, and crucially support. With no resonance in vision, this task is somewhat problematic and the value added by the trust (or other support structure) is limited. Of course, different vision-related expectations exist in trusts that are 'Church' or 'diocesan' in their foundation.

1.19. The Edenham Church of England School is part of the Lincoln Anglican Academies Trust (LAAT) in the Diocese of Lincoln. The school's SIAMS report describes the partnership working as follows. "Confidently living out its own vision, LAAT monitors the effectiveness of the school's activities in collaboration with school leaders.

Working together, leaders strive for continuous development. The school's vision is placed at the heart of strategic decision-making. The academy council understand and are committed to their delegated role, including to review the school's culture and ethos. Through their regular visits and discussions, the vision and values are maintained as central to actions taken."

1.20. Effective vision-driven work of a school and trust relies on a deep understanding of the school's vision, context, and needs. As part of the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust (DGAT), and with its support, Watermoor Primary School has been able to successfully emerge from times of challenge and change. "New governors, DGAT members and diocesan advisors fully understand the needs of the school. Together they support staff in creating an environment based on love and growth. With the coherently aligned vision statements, Watermoor and the Trust work effectively in partnership to enhance outcomes for pupils and staff".

1.21. A school and its leaders cannot know if its vision-driven work is being effective in the way that they intend unless they carry out impact monitoring of all aspects of the work of the school. In examples where this is being done effectively, leaders operate from a basis of knowledge and understanding of what effectiveness looks like in the context of their school and for their community. To gain this knowledge and understanding some may need to access the type of expert support referred to above.

1.22. Monitoring activity, in and of itself, does not enable a school to move forward. At its best, monitoring gathers information or evidence of what is going on in school and of its impact. To turn this information into *knowledge*, however, monitoring needs to be followed up by evaluation, asking questions such as, 'what does this information tell us about…?', or, 'what might we need to change in order to…?'.

1.23. Within the Diocese of Southwark, governors of Holy Trinity Junior School understand this principle. "Members of the governing body's 'Faith Group' monitor the provision of collective worship and RE through visits and work scrutiny. They review pupil and adult evaluations and data. Detailed evaluation against the vision and values impacts positively on the effectiveness of the faith life of the school." Without taking the extra step to evaluate the information that they have gathered through monitoring activity, governors would not be in a position to use the information to good effect.

1.24. In a similar way in the Diocese of St Albans, governors of St John the Baptist VA Primary School root their monitoring activity in the vision to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us". They use this vision as a lens through which they monitor the school's work, before evaluating the effectiveness of policy and practice in the same way. As a result, they are able to say with evidence-based confidence that the vision is "the rope that ties the whole of the school's offer together".

1.25. Governors and/or trustees should therefore ensure that they make the most of the vision-driven monitoring that they carry out by analysing and evaluating that information. This will enable them to be in possession of the knowledge that they need to take appropriate and effective strategic decisions about the school. Monitoring without evaluation will only ever, at best, be a partial step in playing a part in school improvement. At worst, it will be a waste of everyone's time.

1.26. Evidence indicates that, most commonly, governors and/or trustees are doing this work themselves; but in some schools they are electing to pass it to others. In such cases, it is important that governors and/or trustees have reliable results of this work and that they understand the implications for their decision-making. Whatever method is employed, monitoring *and* evaluation should be done. It is governors and/or trustees who are responsible for being in possession of accurate information and then turning it into knowledge that will enable their leadership to be effective.

1.27. Inspection evidence from 2023-2024 indicates that it remains common in Church schools for governors and/or trustees to be devoting considerable amounts of time to the first strand (monitoring), but not moving to the second (evaluation). This means that, too often, whilst school leaders have some information about what is happening in school, they do not have the *knowledge* that they need to make the right decisions about what happens next.

2. How a school's curriculum reflects its Christian vision

2.1. The SIAMS Framework expects that a school's curriculum reflects the Christian vision and, in doing so, that it includes spiritual development as a matter of routine. There is a logic to this.

2.2. As addressed above, each Church school should have a Christian vision that drives its work. If Christian in its roots, this vision will naturally include the assumption that human beings are spiritual human beings. Pupils spend the majority of the time in the school day engaged in learning activities that cover the school's curriculum. If that curriculum includes little or no planned reference to their spiritual development, it is reasonable to assume that the curriculum does not reflect a vision that is designed to encourage their holistic flourishing. In turn, this raises the important question of the suitability, purpose or value of the vision in the first place.

2.3. This is why SIAMS has an expectation that the curriculum will intrinsically include spiritual development, and why this expectation is part of the evidence base that will enable the inspector to answer the question inspection (IQ2).

2.4. Whilst showing an improvement from 2022-2023, in a notable number of inspections in 2023-2024 evidence confirms that some schools still do not understand spirituality, and therefore also do not have a consistent approach to spiritual development. This is cited as a factor in 53% of the J2 judgements; and 27.5% of *all* inspections cited the need for a school to understand spirituality and/or for spiritual development to be a routine aspect of the curriculum.

2.5. In other words, whilst almost three-quarters of Church schools carry out this work effectively, over a quarter are not currently suitably equipped to ensure that pupils' spiritual development is taken as seriously as their moral, social, cultural, and academic development. This means that too many pupils who attend Church schools in England are not being enabled in their holistic growth as spiritual human beings in a way that might be expected.

2.6. As with the theological thinking that is required to formulate a contextually-appropriate Christian vision, inspection evidence suggests that spirituality and spiritual development are areas of work in which school leaders would benefit from expert help, training, and support.

2.7. The majority of inspection reports indicate that Church school teams are working hard to ensure that the curriculum is rich, creative, broad, engaging, and inclusive. This is encouraging and goes some way towards ensuring that the education being offered reflects the school's foundation and purpose.

2.8. However, evidence also indicates that monitoring and evaluation of whether the curriculum is having the intended effect for pupils, is less well developed. Connected with the points made above (1.21–1.27), if this area of governors' work is not improved, school leaders' ability to ensure that the curriculum is having the intended effect for pupils will suffer. Their ability to comment accurately on spiritual development will also suffer.

2.9. Whilst it is common for inspection reports to comment favourably on the curriculum in terms of its inclusive and accessible nature, governors should not be satisfied to only have evidence of this once every five years on the occasion of an inspection. This cannot be described as an effective way of guaranteeing that the needs of those who are most vulnerable are being met.

3. How collective worship is enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually

3.1. Inspection evidence about how worship in Church schools is enabling spiritual flourishing gives those involved a number of reasons to be encouraged, as well as cause for some concerns.

3.2. One of the most frequently used phrases in inspection reports to describe collective worship is that it is 'inclusive, invitational, and inspirational', and it is also common for just one or two of these adjectives to be applied in any one report. One of the reasons for the use of this phrase must be that the terms are cited in the inspection Framework.

3.3. Another reason for this phrase to appear as frequently as it does is that evidence shows that Church schools tend to have a strong focus on worship, with it often being cited as 'the heartbeat' or 'central to the life' of the school. This is encouraging inasmuch as Christian worship is one outworking of the school's original purpose and foundation as a Church school.

3.4. Worship at the Archbishop of York's Junior School in the Diocese of York is described as "a daily oasis of calm", and has been moved to the start of each day in order to provide this oasis for the school community and to, in the words of pupils, "come together as a family and launch the day with God with us". They recognise and are proud that, whilst not all staff and pupils believe in God, acts of worship include everyone - "Everyone is invited to sing, pray or just 'sit and dream". Furthermore, there is a shared expectation that "collective worship doesn't stop when you walk out of the hall in the morning"; a fact of life in the school that inspires pupils to "be calm and think deeply about the world, themselves and others".

3.5. It is common to read evidence of a school's adherence to certain practices that might, when enacted with knowledge and intent, lead to inspirational worship that is inclusive to those of all religious faiths and of none. These practices (sometimes planned and led by pupils) include, but are not limited to, use of responsive liturgy, certain forms of words, prayers, Christian symbols, music, drama, stillness, reflection, and Bible readings and teaching.

3.6. However, in and of themselves, such practices do not guarantee spiritual flourishing. They are likely to contribute towards creating the conditions within which pupils and adults *might* flourish spiritually. However, they cannot be relied upon in the absence of an understanding of spirituality and, by extension, of what spiritual flourishing might be.

3.7. As addressed above (2.4-2.6), if leaders do not invest time and other resources into deepening their own understanding of Christian spirituality and its relevance in a Church school, then the spiritual flourishing of pupils and adults will remain inhibited.

3.8. Each year, SIAMS inspects approximately one fifth of the Church of England and Methodist schools in England (between 950 and 1,000). The evidence base in 2023-2024 in relation to spiritual flourishing as a result of collective worship is, as described, mixed for this 20% of Church schools. This raises the concerning question of the state of this area of the work of Church schools in the 80% that are not inspected each year.

3.9. SIAMS will continue to gather evidence on collective worship and spiritual flourishing, and to report on it. However, as is intimated by other findings, if schools only engage with the 'SIAMS agenda' when they are due for inspection, then opportunities for holistic flourishing in Church schools is likely to continue to be neglected in a cyclical fashion.

3.10. Those with a responsibility for providing expert support to schools might find it helpful to take note of these findings, and of the concerns expressed, and to seek ways of engaging all schools regularly and frequently and not as driven by the timings of the section 48 inspection cycle. Schools would benefit from taking the initiative themselves in this regard, ensuring that they engage with training and support regardless of when their SIAMS inspection is due to take place.

4. How a school's Christian vision is creating a culture in which pupils and adults are being treated well

4.1. It is a basic expectation that *all* pupils and adults in Church schools will be treated well. Inspection evidence to date confirms that this is the case in the vast majority of cases. In fact, IQ4 is the only inspection question that was not cited in 2023-2024 as a reason for a J2 judgement, and it is one of the most commonly cited significant school strengths (the others being Christian vision and religious education).

4.2. Going further than a simple expectation that all will be treated well, SIAMS asks how it is the *Christian vision* that creates such a culture. This is because it is vision that creates ethos, and ethos that subsequently creates culture.

4.3. Frequently mentioned in reports is evidence that pupils and adults in Church schools are afforded dignity and respect and that, as a result, they generally live well together.

4.4. Evidence is gathered from a cross-section of Church schools in England. This evidence represents schools that serve communities that can be described variably as mono or multi in terms of ethnicity, culture, and race. The evidence also represents schools that serve socio-economically diverse communities, and pupils who have a range of different learning needs, disabilities, and/or neurodiversity.

4.5. Therefore, it can be concluded that people from a widely diverse range of backgrounds and needs experience the type of 'love' that the evidence currently indicates, and are treated well.

4.6. St Mary's Primary school in the Diocese of Winchester is an example of a school in which people from diverse backgrounds are treated well and with equity, and therefore flourish. "Leaders' commitment to the Christian foundation is palpable in the vibrant atmosphere that embraces diversity…The acknowledgment that all are seen as God's children, underscores the commitment to inclusivity. Staff are dedicated to creating an environment of ambition where every child can thrive. Pupils in Key Stage 2 attend 'IntoUniversity'. This is a partnership collaboration with Southampton University, exposing them to higher education, tutoring and developing life skills. Year 6 pupils encounter inspiration for various professional careers through employer visits. There is a strong and inspiring link with Southampton football club. The impact is that pupils explore wider horizons to live life in all its fullness. The school successfully integrates those with English as an additional language or special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils and parents speak of being welcomed, valued, and supported. This reflects a commitment to journeying alongside every child, embodying the values at the core of its Christian mission."

4.7. We read of a similar commitment and standard of care in St Philip's Primary School in the Diocese of Liverpool. "In nurturing and celebrating everyone as God's creation, leaders champion a transformational school culture of equity and love. Highly supportive and trusting relationships bind this aspirational school community together. Leaders prioritise wellbeing. Staff are encouraged and supported professionally, as well as personally. Thus, they are a committed and hopeful team, infusing their pupils with confidence and self-worth. A courageously inclusive curriculum recognises and celebrates diversity in all its forms. Pupils' infectious friendliness and a rich variety of displays around the school illustrate their commitment to upholding individuality. Parents and carers appreciate how leaders and staff positively embrace all families. They give many examples of how staff support them through difficult times with humility and compassion. The school holds the national School of Sanctuary Award in recognition of its inclusive and welcoming culture. As a result, pupils love coming to school. They feel safe and look after each other in friendship and respect."

4.8. It is interesting, but unsurprising, to read here of the intrinsic connection between inclusion and wellbeing. If sidelined or overlooked as an individual, one's wellbeing is likely to be negatively impacted.

4.9. Phrases frequently cited in reports to describe schools' internal culture relate to forgiveness, a sense of harmony, trusting relationships, and being a community that approaches challenges together. Good and respectful behaviour is frequently mentioned in reports and is a further outworking of a positive school culture.

4.10. Connected with this, relationships are also consistently reported on positively - those between pupils, those between adults, and those between pupils and adults. In relation to adults, these relationships are often described as being supportive, even extending beyond the confines of the school day.

4.11. As a consequence of such a culture of care and compassion, evidence indicates that adults' mental health and their wellbeing are taken seriously by leaders. Within a profession that is routinely characterised as being 'high stress', stress that is arguably worsened by inspection, leaders' focus on, and dedication of resources to, adults in this way is important.

4.12. In the Diocese of Salisbury, staff at Parrett and Axe Primary School appreciate the priority that is placed on their own wellbeing as well as on that of others. The culture of wellbeing is described as "pervasive" and is said to nurture everyone's mental health. As a direct consequence, "staff feel valued, live out the vision, and flourish."

4.13. This comprehensively positive reporting in 2023-2024 will be a point of additional scrutiny next year in order to ensure and confirm that the evidence is representative of the experience of those from a range of diverse communities, backgrounds and needs who attend Church schools.

4.14. The reason for the need for additional scrutiny returns again to the concern about the monitoring and evaluation that is being carried out by school and trust leaders. Whilst inspection evidence represents impact that is seen on the one day of inspection, the evidence would be more robust still if it were to be backed up by knowledge gained by leaders as a result of monitoring and evaluation on a regular basis. Currently, this is a weak link in the evidence base that otherwise presents as being overwhelmingly positive.

5. How a school's Christian vision is creating an active culture of justice and responsibility

5.1. It is not unreasonable to expect that a school's internal Christian-vision-shaped culture characterised by love, care and respect would subsequently give rise to an outward-looking culture that is similarly characterised by dignity, respect, care, and love for others.

5.2. Evidence is indicating some possible areas of confusion in relation to this inspection question (IQ5). There seems to be a frequent focus on 'courageous advocacy' and 'agents of change'. However, this focus is not uncommonly characterised by either a misunderstanding of the terms or by an inappropriate emphasis on 'social' justice and (political) activism. This is not what SIAMS is asking.

5.3. For clarity, the question is about justice and responsibility. It is not about fundraising, party political agendas, political activism, or any particular ideology. The question explores how Church schools are enabling pupils, in an age-appropriate manner, to understand something of the Kingdom of God – a culture of mutuality in terms of care and love. This is then expressed through justice, responsibility, and care for people and/or for creation.

5.4. Returning to St Mary and St John Primary School in the Diocese of Oxford, we read of a culture that is described as highly inclusive, in which pupils are empowered to tackle issues of injustice in an age-appropriate manner. "There is a strong culture of taking responsibility for self and others. Issues of injustice and inequality are sensitively addressed because policies and procedures are written to be inclusive of everyone. Consequently, pupils are aware of differences and similarities among the community and learn to appreciate one another. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum offers plentiful opportunities to explore environmental issues. For example, the junior leadership team have campaigned to support a local organisation that tackles river pollution. Collective worship is used to highlight and inspire pupils to undertake projects beyond the school. This demonstrates the outworking of the vision very well. Local issues relating to traffic and safe travel are championed by pupils through initiatives such as 'School Streets'. As enthusiastic advocates for change, pupils are living out the vision."

5.5. Similarly, yet at a level that is appropriate for older pupils, Lady Margaret Secondary School in the Diocese of London is enabling teenagers to deepen their understanding of justice and responsibility - again, as a result of the school's Christian vision. "The school's transformational Christian vision binds this community together. It is at the root of everything the school does. Leaders at all levels see their role as one of deep service to God as they serve this community. Their commitment in seeing pupils and adults develop their 'goodly heritage' is unwavering. The parable of the mustard seed, which underpins the Christian vision, embodies the school's ethos. The growth of the mustard seed (each individual) helps others (the entire community) to flourish. The school is dedicated to ensure each seed is watered and nurtured. No pupil is left behind… Pupils are passionate advocates for justice. They are taught to articulate their views and are subsequently confident in sharing their voice. This develops them now and for the future. For example, pupils as young as Year 8 readily share their experiences of being a Muslim in modern Britain and why tackling homophobia is important. Pupils are empowered by the Model United Nations initiative. This transforms their understanding of global issues and mobilises them as change agents in their school and the wider community. A deep commitment to raising awareness for causes such as cancer research and environmental preservation are independent and genuine."

5.6. The prevalence of development points, however, related to either courageous advocacy, agents of change, or work to understand justice and injustice suggests that this is an area of the work of Church schools that requires better understanding and, subsequently, more effective focus.

5.7. Concerns around a potential lack of political impartiality in this work are ill-founded as long as school leaders understand what the inspection question is asking. It is

important, therefore, that national, diocesan, school and trust leaders ensure that they understand what is being asked by SIAMS before they develop policies, training, advice, and practices related to justice and responsibility.

5.8. As part of this inspection question it is suggested that, if appropriate for them, schools may wish to explore some relevant partnerships. Evidence is indicating that the most common partnerships in 2023-2024 were with the parish church, the diocese, the trust (for academies), and the immediate local community.

5.9. Engagement with these partners appears to be broadening the horizons of both pupils and adults in the school, as well as often bringing benefits to the partners themselves. Pupils are benefitting from a more diverse range of opportunities, such as cultural and spiritual experiences, than they would if the school were not to have this outward-looking culture. Adults, principally members of staff, are benefitting from being able to work with a larger group of colleagues and experts, thereby increasing their own professional knowledge and expertise.

5.10. In Olveston Primary School in the Diocese of Bristol, work with partners is rooted in love "beyond the school… Olveston is part of the Bridge network of Church schools. This gives the opportunity for Olveston staff to share their good practice. They also benefit from learning from expert staff in other similar schools. Bridge Awards is a rewards scheme based on meeting significant personal and community challenges. It also recognises achievements outside of school. Relationships with the local church are so strong that it is fair to comment that the school is part of the church and the church is part of the school."

5.11. Partnerships with trusts are being increasingly mentioned in reports but the narrative evidence base, as well as the judgement evidence, on the benefit to schools of being part of a trust remains limited at present. This may be because the numbers themselves are small; or it may be that the benefits are inconsistent. Further scrutiny next year is expected to bring greater clarity on this question either way.

6. Religious education – general comments

6.1. SIAMS evaluates religious education (RE) under two inspection questions. IQ6 evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum, including of its leadership; and IQ7 evaluates the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All Church schools - voluntary controlled (VC) and voluntary aided (VA) – including academies, are inspected under IQ6, and only VA schools, and academies that were formerly VA schools, are inspected under IQ7.

6.2. In high level terms, RE is the most commonly mentioned area of school life. This is unsurprising given the wording of the statutory basis of SIAMS inspection. It is cited in 70.5% of reports as a strength, and as a development point in 55.4% of reports with a total of around 1,300 mentions as either a noteworthy strength or an important development point.

6.3. In a way that sets it apart from other aspects of the work of Church schools, it is not uncommon for RE to be included as both a strength and a development point for the

same school at the same time. Far from being contradictory, this highlights the broad range of elements of RE that require consideration by school leaders and the extent of variation in the quality of these.

6.4. Evidence indicates that, over the year 2023-2024, notable as strengths in RE were:

- 6.4.1. subject leadership
- 6.4.2. the breadth and effectiveness of the curriculum (note: this is different from the statutory syllabus as it refers to school-based decisions including on resources and teaching materials)
- 6.4.3. the discrete curriculum and teaching of Christianity, and
- 6.4.4. the way in which RE is an expression of the school's vision, especially in terms of knowledge and understanding about, and acceptance of, difference and diversity

6.5. In contrast, the most commonly occurring development points relating to RE include the:

- 6.5.1. teaching of Christianity as a diverse global faith
- 6.5.2. quality of the teaching of faiths and worldviews other than Christianity
- 6.5.3. general quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils
- 6.5.4. effectiveness of assessment strategies and their impact on improving teaching
- 6.5.5. provision of ongoing training and development for teachers of RE
- 6.5.6. monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of RE, and the subsequent use of such information to bring about improvements in the subject.

6.6. It is unsurprising that high-quality subject leadership appears to have a direct and positive impact on both the quality of the RE curriculum and on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This confirms what may be deemed as obvious; that is, that knowledge and expertise in leadership empowers, enables and equips others.

6.7. In an era of tight budgets in schools, it should be remembered that investing in a range of leadership roles remains valuable. This need not only mean direct financial investment, but also investment of time and support, including accessing expertise from elsewhere through training and networking opportunities.

7. The effectiveness of a school's religious education curriculum – additional comments

7.1. Evidence suggests that there may be some confusion in understanding the difference between a syllabus and a curriculum. In terms of RE in maintained VC schools, the legal requirement is that schools must use the locally agreed syllabus that is written by the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Every local authority must convene a SACRE, and each SACRE must, 'from time to time', convene an ASC to review the agreed syllabus. This tends to happen every five years.

7.2. It is a VC school's legal responsibility to take the locally agreed syllabus and to use it to craft a curriculum that is of high quality and that meets the needs of pupils. In other words, it is the responsibility of the school to resource the syllabus and then to apply it

effectively as a curriculum. Any comment made by SIAMS, therefore, on the quality of the RE curriculum is not a comment or a judgement on the locally agreed – or any other – syllabus, but on the school's curriculum.

7.3. Evidence indicates that the resource 'Understanding Christianity' continues to have a significant and positive impact on the quality of the curriculum insofar as it relates to Christianity.

7.4. However, this resource alone does not and cannot fill the gap in relation to knowledge and understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural global faith, and it adopts only a theological lens through which to study. Furthermore, there do not appear to be similar resources to enhance the curriculum in relation to faiths other than Christianity, to other religious worldviews, or to non-religious worldviews; and there appears to be a lack of resources for studying RE through the lenses of philosophy and human science.

7.5. Consequently, schools' RE curricula, in general terms, appear to be limited in their quality as a result of under-resourcing. Busy teachers and school leaders cannot be held responsible for this.

7.6. Over the last three years, SIAMS evidence indicates that there is some gradual improvement in RE in Church schools, but this is slow. It is possible that the lack of notable improvement is a result of the five-year inspection cycle, and schools' focus elsewhere due to factors such as the EBacc, until they feel compelled to prioritise what they regard as the 'SIAMS agenda'.

7.7. There is a responsibility on writers of Agreed Syllabi to ensure that the syllabi themselves are always of the highest quality, and that they are as freely and as easily resourced as possible. Any lack of this will act as an obstacle to routine improvement in the quality of a school's RE curriculum.

7.8. There is also a responsibility on the governors of VA schools and on multi academy trust trustees, all of whom have the freedom and responsibility to select a school's RE syllabus, to do so wisely, in an informed manner, and to invest in the subject appropriately.

7.9. Inspection reports often comment on the connection between the range of religious and non-religious faiths and worldviews included in the RE curriculum, and pupils' understanding of diversity and difference in community and in society at large. This is positive; however, care should be taken to not expect RE to carry the full weight of education in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Evidence indicates that, where this is happening, DEI-related knowledge and understanding lack sufficient depth and application.

7.10. A consistently positive factor in the quality of RE curricula where they are of high quality is that of knowledgeable and expert leadership. Not only does this enhance the curriculum itself, but it also has an irreplaceable impact on the knowledge and confidence of other teachers of RE. Where this is further enhanced by good quality ongoing professional development for these teachers, the RE curriculum is seen to be at its most effective.

7.11. In some schools, KS4 RE is not provided for pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 unless they have been entered for RE GCSE. This is not good or effective practice. It is worsened by the fact that, in some schools, pupils are entered for GCSE RE at the end of KS3, in Year 9, at which time the school ceases to provide core RE. This means that the curriculum is narrowed to the examination syllabus at a premature stage, and that a notable percentage of pupils receive no RE teaching after the end of Year 8.

7.12. It is a legal requirement that all pupils in secondary schools, including those in the Sixth Form (KS5), are provided with RE. This is over and above any public examinations, such as GCSE and A Level. Inspection evidence reveals that this is not the reality on the ground in a number of secondary schools, with KS5 RE either being omitted or unrecognisably merged with other subjects such as personal, social, health, and citizenship education.

8. The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education – additional comments

8.1. Evidence from VA schools and academies that were formerly VA schools provides us with insight into the quality of teaching, learning, assessment, and pupils' progress in RE. This paints a mixed but slowly improving picture.

8.2. In general terms, given the above caveat related to good-quality professional development, teachers appear to be losing confidence in teaching RE. Some of this is related to subject knowledge, which can be addressed with high-quality resources. However, I suggest that also relevant is the amount of time devoted to the teaching of RE in all forms of initial teacher training.

8.3. These negative factors are combining to create a downward spiral in the quality of RE which, if not reversed in schools, will likely continue for years to come. In other words, if pupils are not given high-quality RE teaching in all phases in school, based on a high-quality curriculum and expert teaching, fewer and fewer will go on to study religious studies or theology at a higher level, and fewer still will become well-educated teachers of RE. And so the negative cycle will continue.

8.4. This will, subsequently, bake-in a predictable cycle of decline in the overall quality of the subject as well as, I suggest, a contingent negative impact on society of generations who lack an informed understanding of those who have different beliefs from their own – both religious and non-religious. We have already seen the negative, and sometimes violent, impact on society of such lack of knowledge about and understanding of others. Whilst a complex range of factors related to deprivation and polarisation are at play in this particular scenario, high-quality RE does help even the youngest of children to begin a lifelong journey of learning about human understanding and respect.

8.5. This does not mean that there are not pockets of notable RE expertise in schools around the country – there are. However, evidence indicates that those pupils who are fortunate enough to benefit from this expertise, either as a result of in-school leadership or support from diocesan teams, are doing so in the context of an 'RE postcode lottery'.

8.6. Where teachers and school leaders lack confidence in the teaching of RE, there is also a connected lack of understanding of assessment. This means that too many teachers are not in a position to accurately ascertain pupils' needs and flexibly teach the curriculum accordingly.

8.7. In the worst cases, assessment in RE is sidelined and/or it assumes the status of a tick-box exercise that lacks purpose. Teachers do not have time to go through the motions in this meaningless manner. Having diocesan or national protocols for assessing pupil progress and need would likely enable teachers to make best use of the limited time that they have.

8.8. Furthermore, governor/trustee expertise also plays its part. Without knowing how to monitor RE, and then how to turn this monitoring information into knowledge by evaluating it, governors will devote a significant amount of time to work that ultimately provides the school with little of value to improve RE. Governors, too, do not have time for such low-value work.

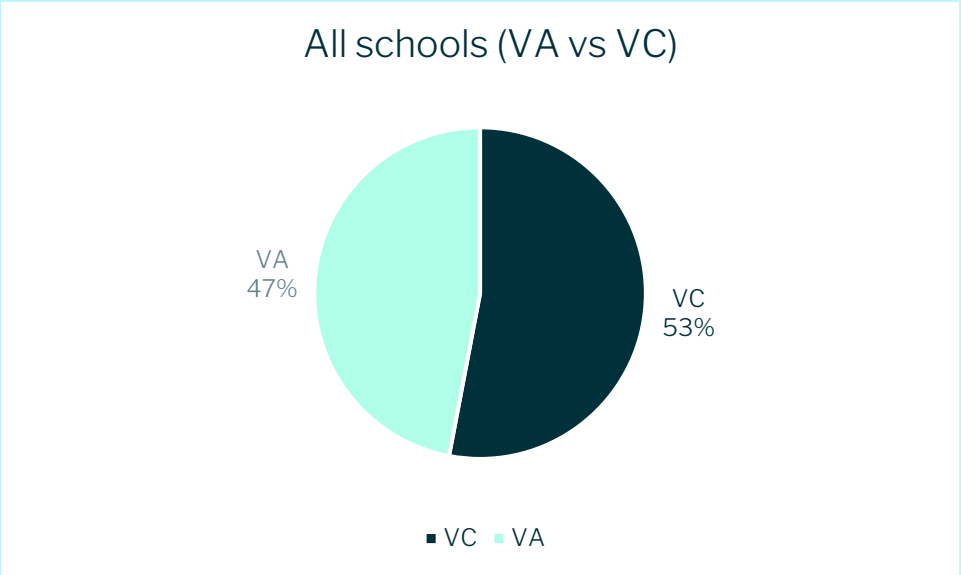
8.9. The Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for RE and the RE Council's National Content Standard for RE cannot be ignored as means of helping schools to raise the quality of the subject across the board. SIAMS directly references the Statement of Entitlement and expects schools' adherence to its principles. In terms of the National Content Standard, whilst having no legal status, its expert guidance and advice are likely to help teachers and leaders of RE, and to subsequently improve the subject across the board.

Inspection data

Notes:

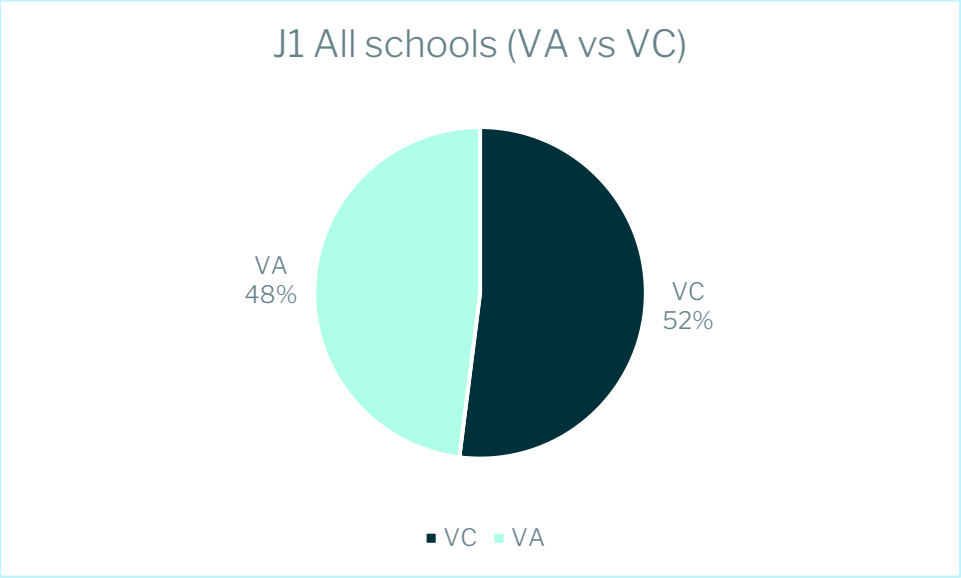
1. The following data was extracted on 19 July 2024.
2. Total 904 inspections between 1 September 2023 and 31 July 2024. These are made up of:
   2.1. 17 inspections with a J2 judgement
   2.2. 887 inspections with a J1 judgement
3. The J2 data set is too small, at 1.9% of all inspections, to generate meaningful results. Analysis has been included but should not be directly compared with results from J1 data as the data sets greatly differ in number.

All schools - VA vs VC



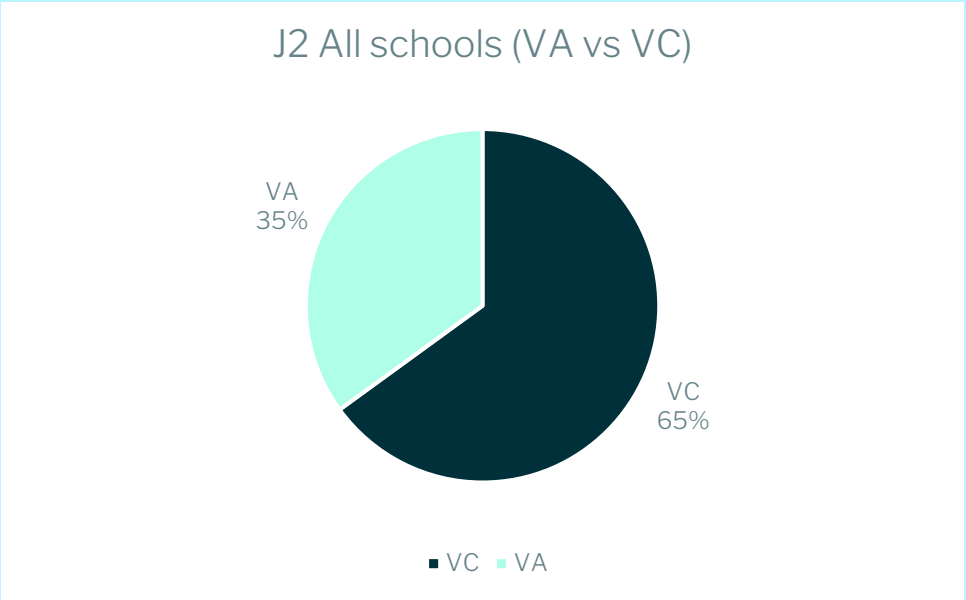
- Total 904 inspections (429 VA and 475 VC).

J1 All inspections (VA vs VC)



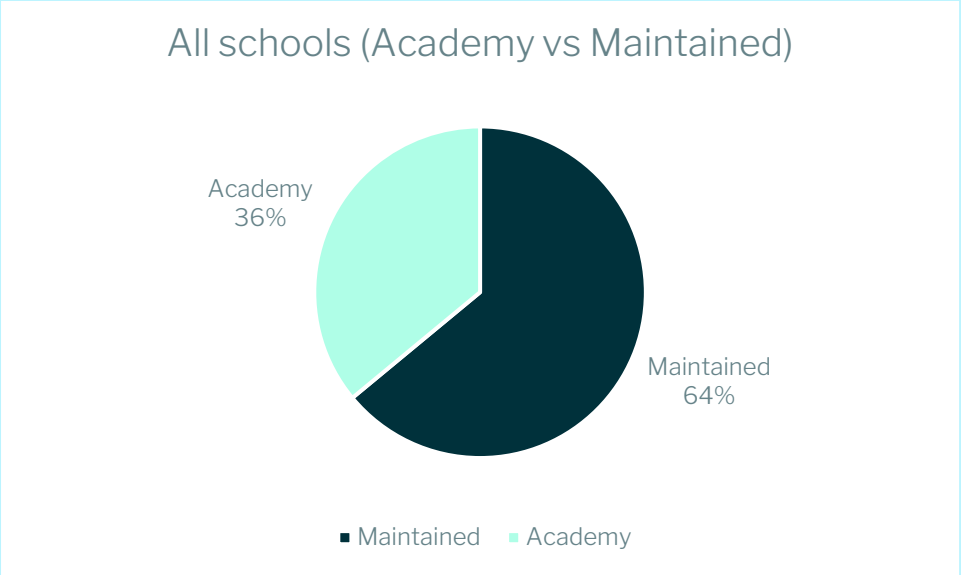
- Total J1 inspections = 887 (423 VA and 464 VC inspections).

J2 All inspections (VA vs VC)



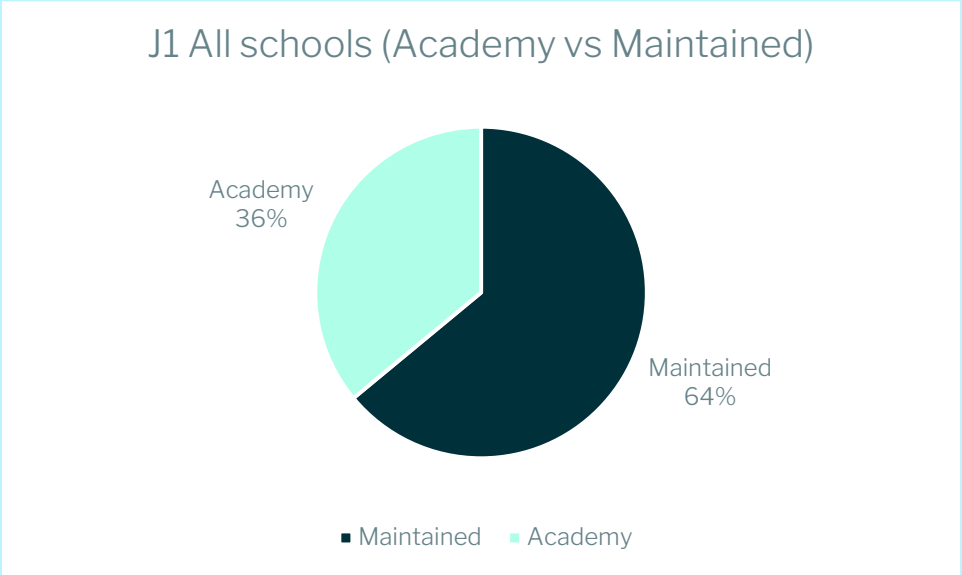
- Total J2 inspections = 17 (6 VA and 11 VC inspections)
- This accounts for 1.9% of all inspections.

All schools – Academy vs Maintained



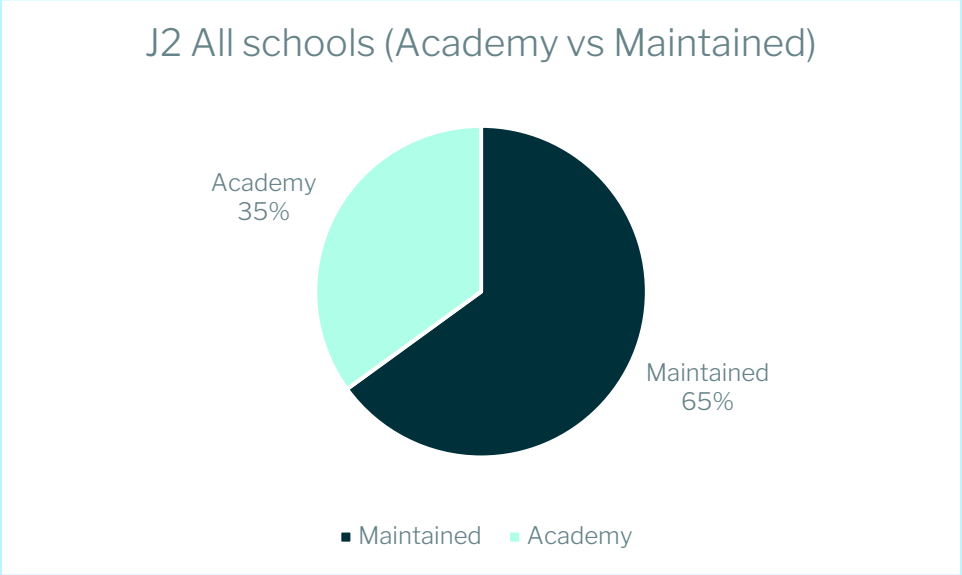
- Total 904 inspections (326 Academy and 578 Maintained).

J1 All inspections (Academy vs Maintained)



- Total J1 inspections = 887 (320 academy and 567 maintained).

J2 All inspections (Academy vs Maintained)

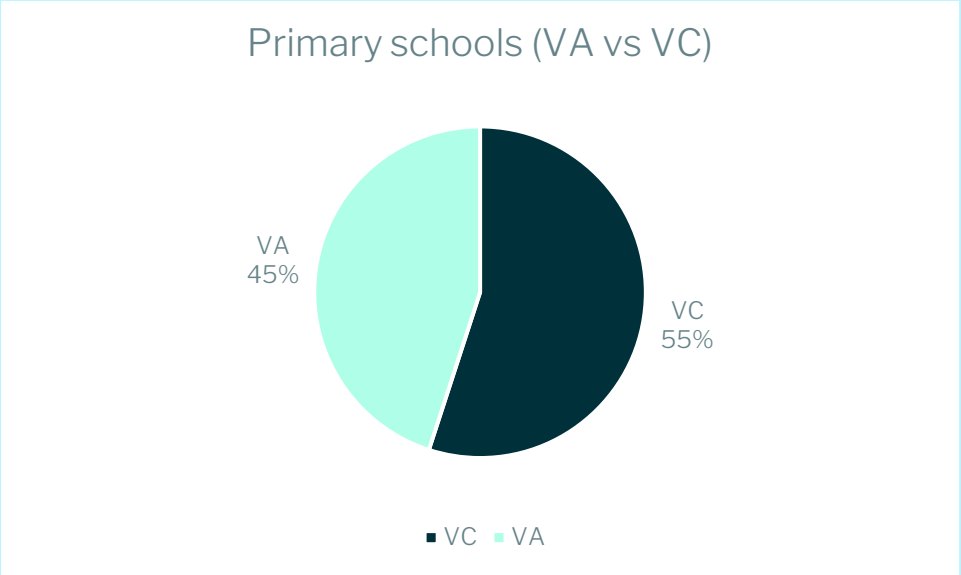


- Total J2 inspections = 17 (6 academy and 11 maintained).

Primary schools

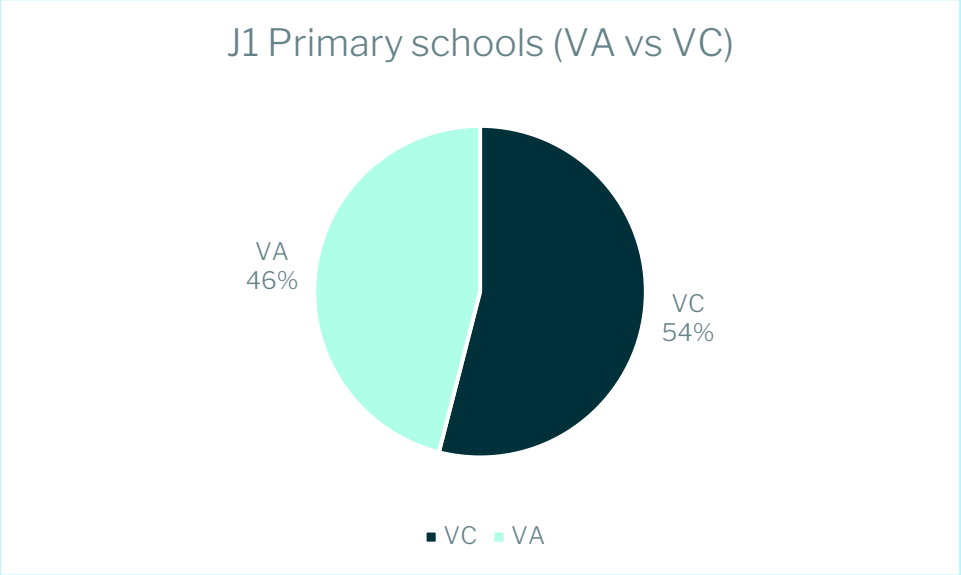
1. Includes First, Middle Deemed Primary and Primary school inspections.
2. Total primary inspections = 854.
3. Out of all the primary school inspections 842 were J1s, and 12 were J2s.
4. For J1s when split VA vs VC and Academy vs Maintained the graphs and split were identical to the graphs with all primary schools.
5. This is likely to be because numbers do not differ greatly between the two (854 total primary schools and 842 J1 primary schools). It is interesting that the data isn't affected when removing the J2 schools.

Primary - VA vs VC



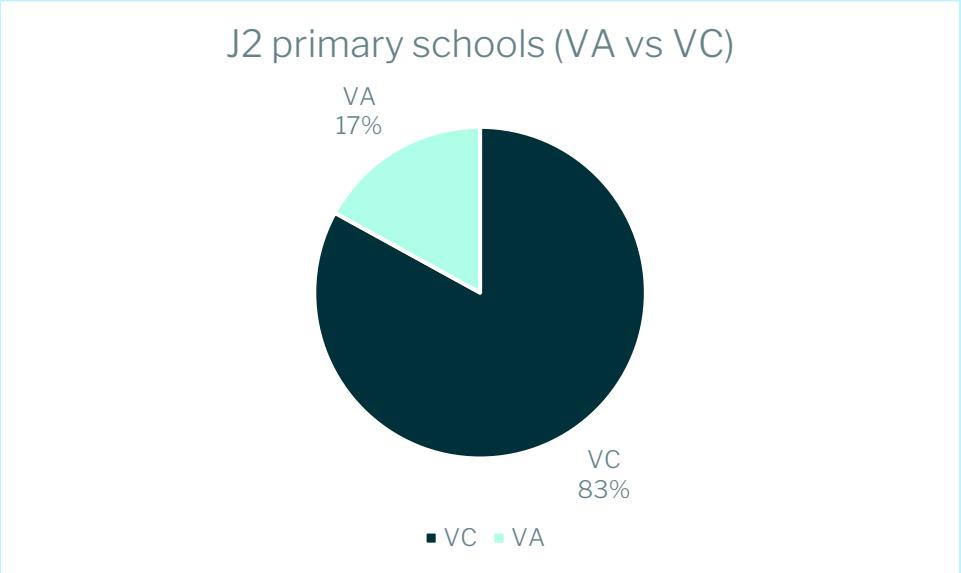
- Total 854 primary inspections (386 VA and 468 VC schools).

J1 Primary inspections (VA vs VC)



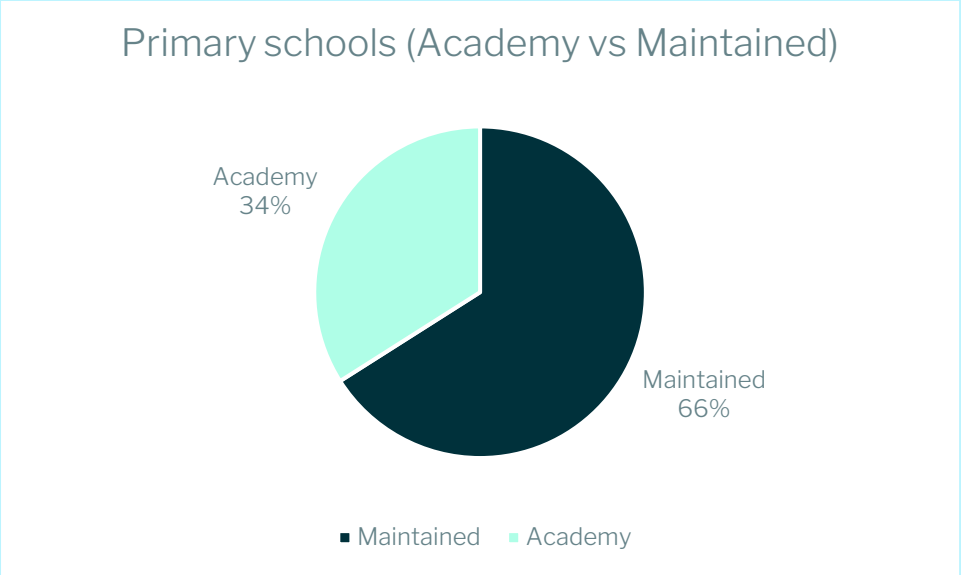
- Total J1 primary inspections = 842 (384 VA and 458 VC inspections).

J2 Primary inspections (VA vs VC)



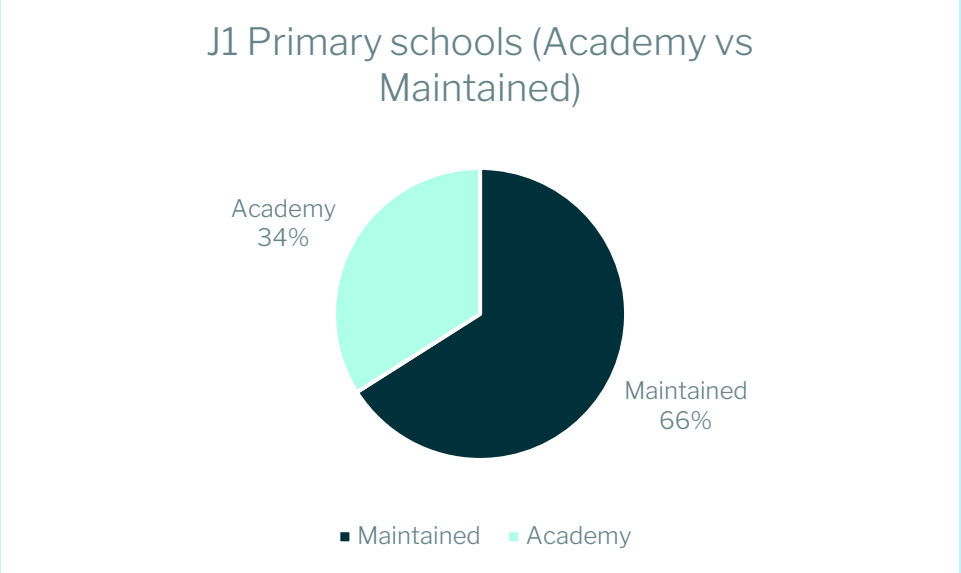
- Total J2 primary inspections = 12 (2 VA and 10 VC inspections).

Primary – Academy vs Maintained



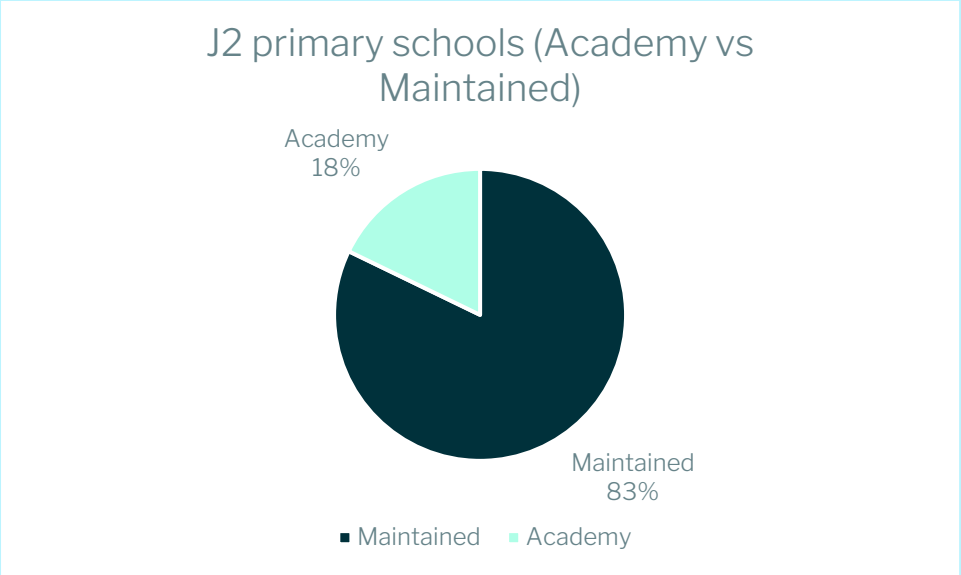
- Total 854 primary inspections (287 Academy and 567 Maintained schools).

Primary - Academy vs Maintained – J1s



- Total J1 primary inspections = 843 (285 academy and 557 maintained).

Primary - Academy vs Maintained – J2s

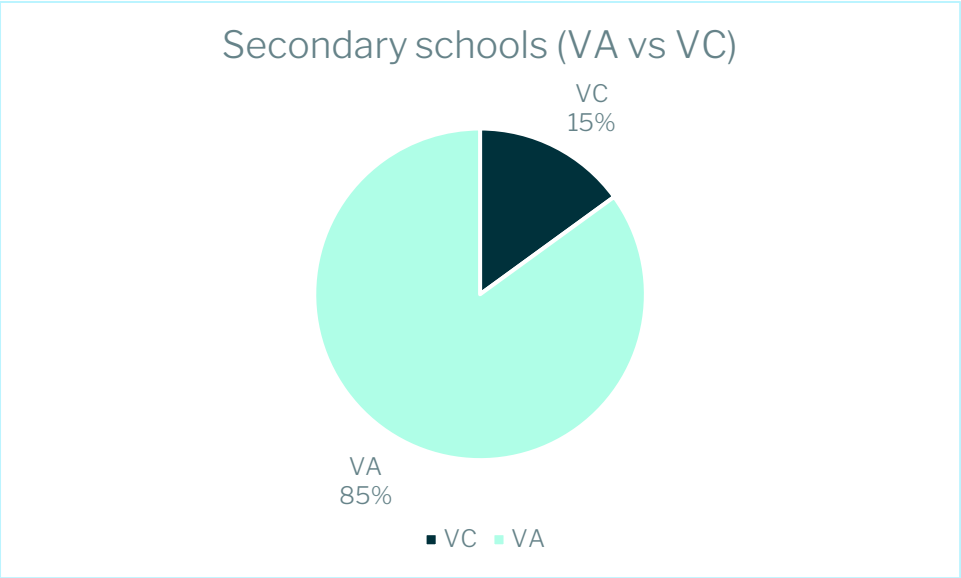


- Total J2 primary inspections = 12 (2 academy and 10 maintained).

Secondary schools

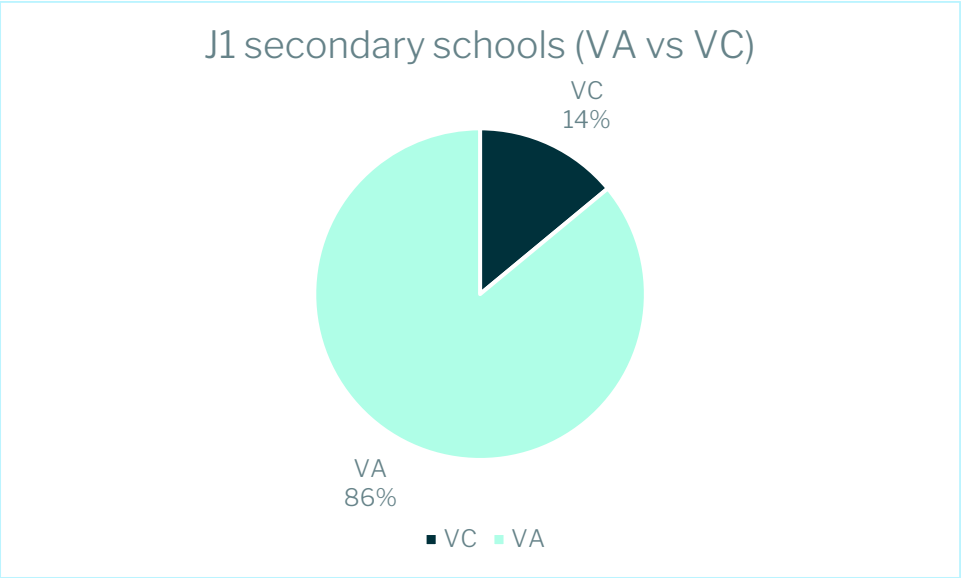
- Includes Middle Deemed Secondary and Secondary school inspections.
- Total secondary inspections = 46.
- Out of all the secondary school inspections 42 (91.3%) were J1s, and 4 (8.7%) were J2s.
- Note – the graphs for the J2 were exactly the same for VA vs VC and Academy vs Maintained. All of the VAs were academies, and the one VC was a maintained school.
- The results were too small to generate meaningful pattern but might be worth monitoring in case there is one.

Secondary - VA vs VC



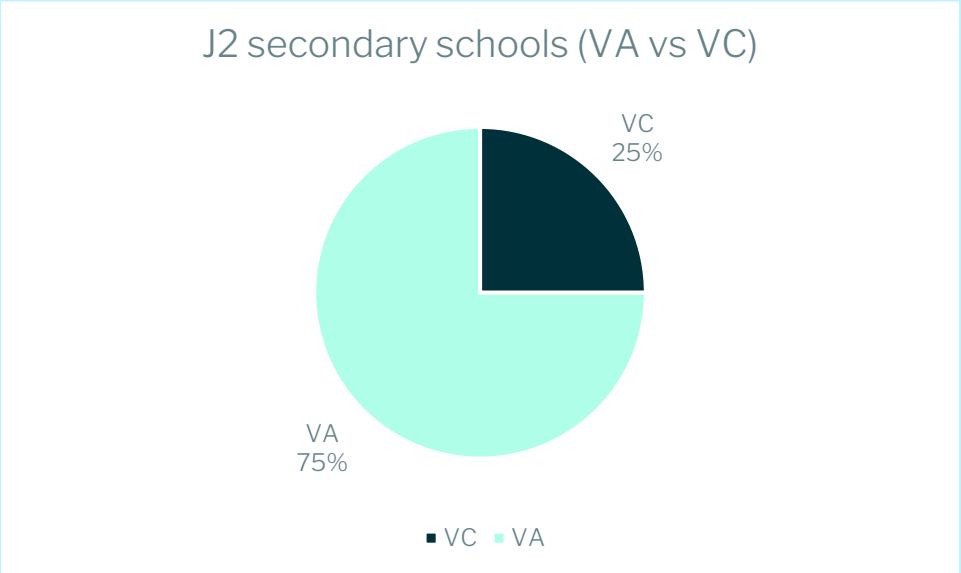
- Total secondary inspections = 46 (39 VA and 7 VC).

Secondary inspections - VA vs VC – J1



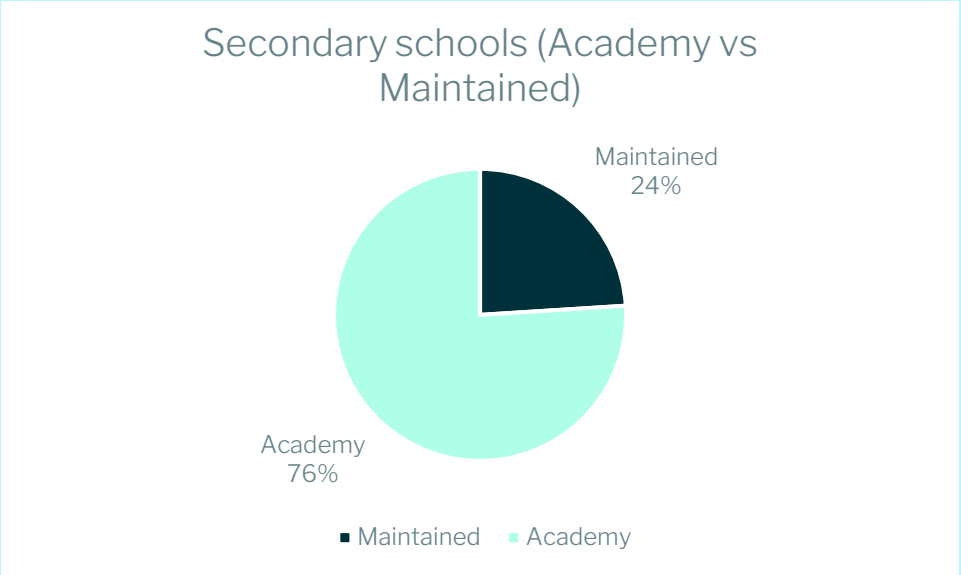
- Total J1 secondary inspections = 42 (36 VA and 6 VC inspections).

Secondary inspections - VA vs VC – J2



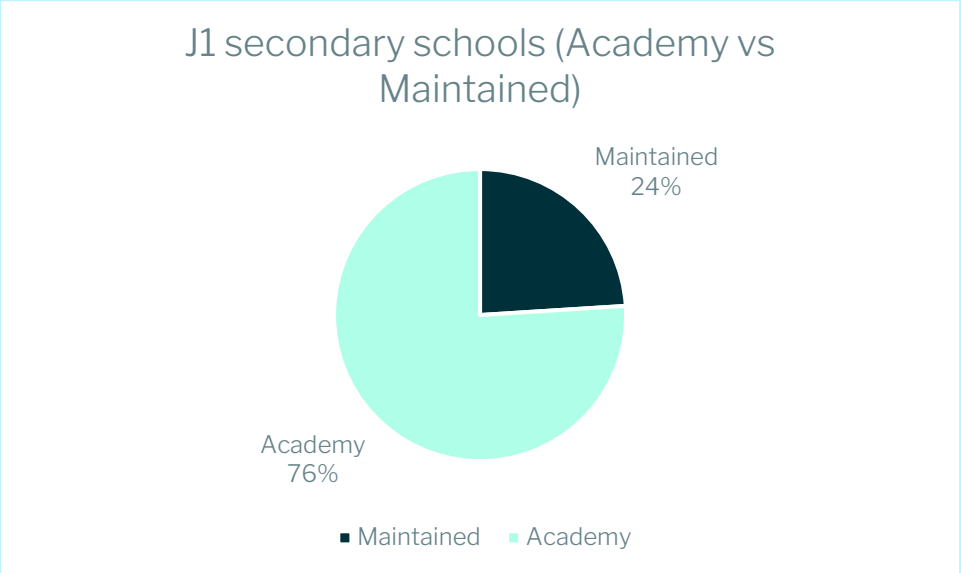
- Total J2 secondary inspections = 4 (3 VA and 1 VC inspections).

Secondary - Academy vs Maintained



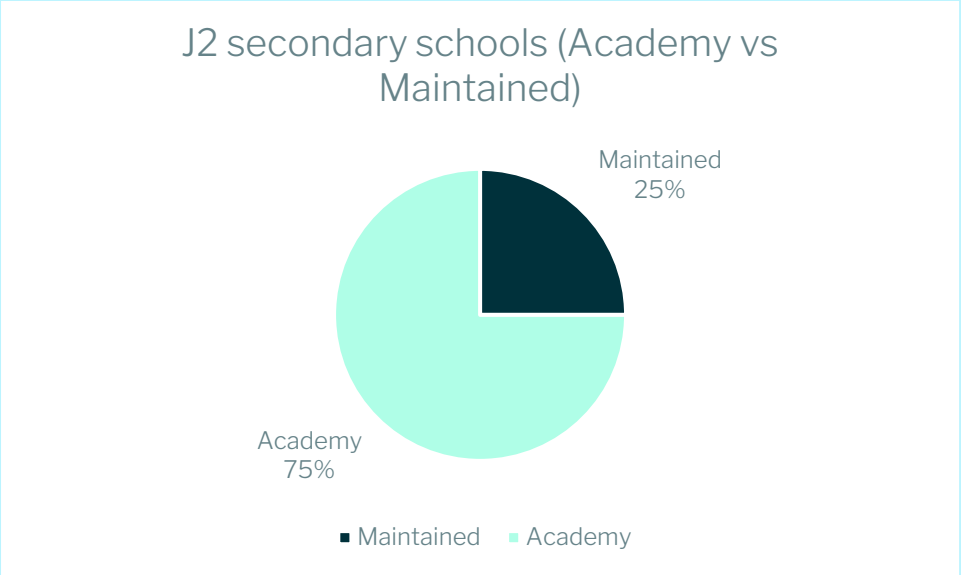
- Total secondary inspections = 46 (35 Academy and 11 Maintained).

Secondary inspections - Academy vs Maintained – J1



- Total J1 secondary inspections = 42 (32 Academy and 10 Maintained).

Secondary inspections - Academy vs Maintained – J2



- Total J2 secondary inspections = 4 (3 Academy and 1 Maintained).

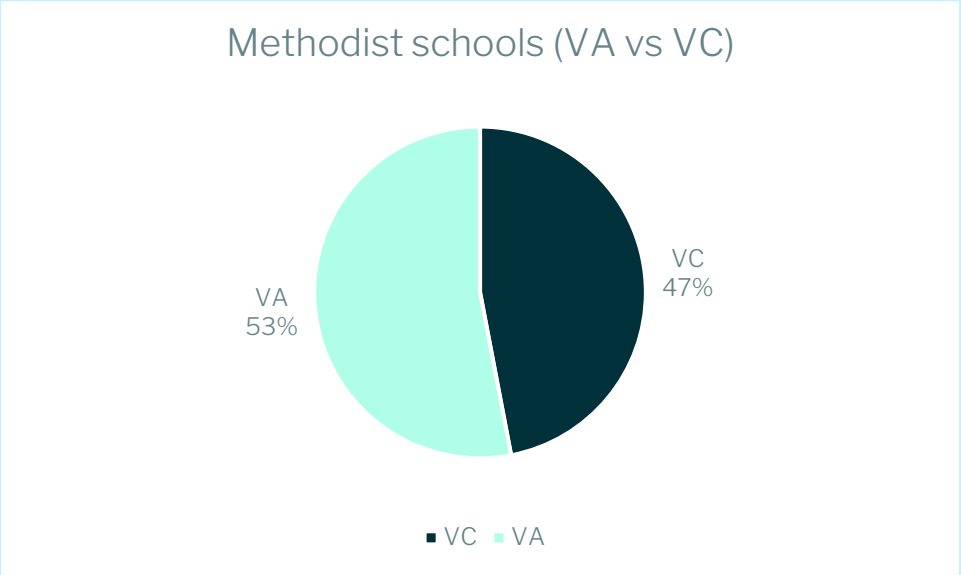
All through schools

- Four inspections.
- All VA and Academies.
- 3 J1 inspections.
- 1 J2 inspection.
- Graph not drawn as numbers too small to generate meaningful results.

Methodist schools

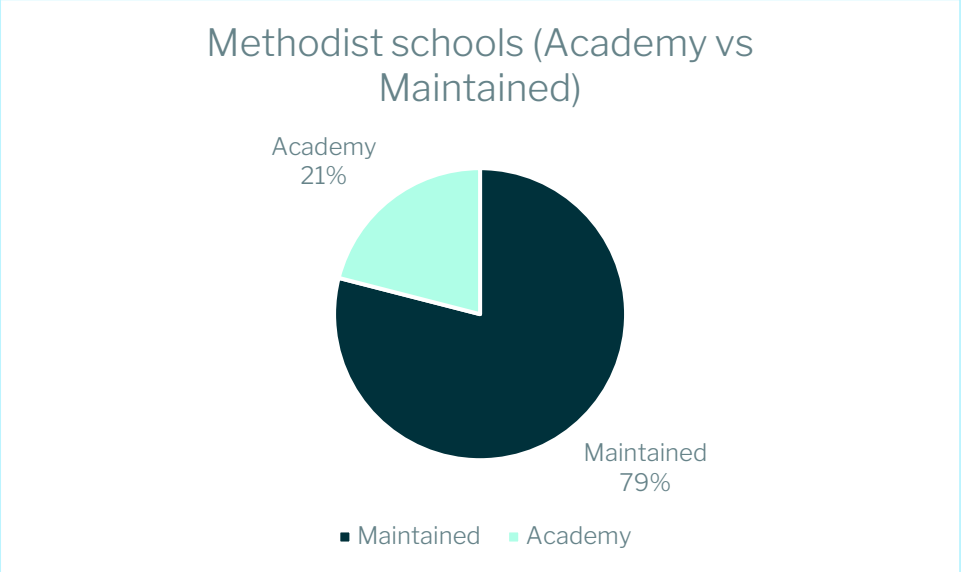
- Results taken from schools that are categorised as Joint Church of England/Methodist, Methodist Primary and Joint Church of England/Methodist Primary.
- 19 inspected in total (4 = methodist primary and 15 = joint).
- All primary schools and J1s.

Methodist - VA vs VC



- Total Methodist inspections = 19 (10 VA and 9 VC).

Methodist - Academy vs Maintained



Total Methodist inspections = 19 (4 Academy and 15 Maintained).

Church of England/Catholic schools

- Results taken from schools that are categorised as Joint Church of England/Catholic Primary and Joint Church of England/Catholic Secondary.
- 7 inspected in total (3 primary and 4 secondary).
- All J1s.
- All VA schools.
- 4 were Academy and 3 Maintained.

J2 inspections – IQ data

- Total number of J2s = 17.
- Unable to see pattern in the results which is likely due to the small data set. May be able to find patterns in future years.
- Most schools were rated J2 because they couldn't answer one of the IQs (total 7). Full breakdown below:
    - 7 schools couldn't answer 1 of the IQs.
    - 4 schools couldn't answer 2 of the IQs.
    - 3 couldn't answer 3 IQs.
    - 2 couldn't answer 5 IQs.
    - 0 schools couldn't answer 6 or 7 IQs.

- IQ6 most commonly couldn't be answered as it came up for 11 of the J2 inspections. The frequency of the other IQs being unable to be answered are below:
    - IQ1 = 7.
    - IQ2 = 4.
    - IQ3 = 9.
    - IQ4 = 0.
    - IQ5 = 4.
    - IQ6 = 11.
    - IQ7 = 3.

Diocesan data

1. Diocese of Bath & Wells

- Total number of inspections = 31
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	7	23	17	13
Number of Secondary inspections	0	1	1	0
Total	7	24	18	13

2. Diocese of Birmingham

- Total number of inspections = 13
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	8	5	8	5
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	8	5	8	5

3. Diocese of Blackburn

- Total number of inspections = 37
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	30	4	3	31
Number of Secondary inspections	3	0	3	0
Total	33	4	6	31

4. Diocese of Bristol

- Total number of inspections = 10
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	1	9	0	10
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	1	9	0	10

5. Diocese of Canterbury

- Total number of inspections = 18
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	3	14	4	13
Number of Secondary inspections	0	1	0	1
Total	3	15	4	14

6. Diocese of Carlisle

- Total number of inspections = 16
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	10	5	1	14
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	11	5	2	14

7. Diocese of Chelmsford

- Total number of inspections = 21
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	8	11	8	11
Number of Secondary inspections	1	1	1	1
Total	9	12	9	12

8. Diocese of Chester

- Total number of inspections = 20
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	10	7	4	13
Number of Secondary inspections	3	0	3	0
Total	13	7	7	13

9. Diocese of Chichester

- Total number of inspections = 32
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	10	18	5	23
Number of Secondary inspections	2	2	3	1
Total	12	20	8	24

10. Diocese of Coventry

- Total number of inspections = 13
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	5	7	4	8
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	6	7	5	8

11. Diocese of Derby

- Total number of inspections = 23
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	6	17	3	20
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	6	17	3	20

12. Diocese of Durham & Newcastle

- Total number of inspections = 13
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	4	7	3	8
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	2	0
Total	6	7	5	8

13. Diocese of Ely

- Total number of inspections = 13
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	4	8	4	8
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	5	8	5	8

14. Diocese of Exeter

- Total number of inspections = 26
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	13	13	14	12
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	13	13	14	12

15. Diocese of Gloucester

- Total number of inspections = 15
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	4	11	6	9
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	4	11	6	9

16. Diocese of Guildford

- Total number of inspections = 18.
- 0 J2 inspections.

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	11	7	4	14
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	11	7	4	14

17. Diocese of Hereford

- Total number of inspections = 13
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	6	7	2	11
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	6	7	2	11

18. Diocese of Leeds

- Total number of inspections = 51.
- 1 J2 inspection.

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	16	32	15	33
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	2	0
Number of All through inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	19	32	18	33

19. Diocese of Leicester

- Total number of inspections = 15.
- 0 J2 inspections.

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	5	10	9	6
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	5	10	9	6

20. Diocese of Lichfield

- Total number of inspections = 48
- 2 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	7	41	27	21
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	7	41	27	21

21. Diocese of Lincoln

- Total number of inspections = 34
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	5	28	9	24
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	6	28	10	24

22. Diocese of Liverpool

- Total number of inspections = 34
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	20	12	11	21
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	2	0
Total	22	12	13	21

23. Diocese of London

- Total number of inspections = 27
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	20	1	2	19
Number of Secondary inspections	4	0	2	2
Number of All through inspections	2	0	2	0
Total	26	1	6	21

24. Diocese of Manchester

- Total number of inspections = 57
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	33	21	9	45
Number of Secondary inspections	3	0	2	1
Total	36	21	11	46

25. Diocese of Norwich

- Total number of inspections = 26
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	16	10	13	13
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	16	10	13	13

26. Diocese of Oxford

- Total number of inspections = 47
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	24	19	16	27
Number of Secondary inspections	2	1	2	1
Number of All through inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	26	1	6	21

27. Diocese of Peterborough

- Total number of inspections = 21
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	9	12	9	12
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	9	12	9	12

28. Diocese of Portsmouth & Winchester

- Total number of inspections = 32
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	15	17	1	31
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	15	17	1	31

29. Diocese of Rochester

- Total number of inspections = 17
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	8	8	10	6
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	9	8	11	6

30. Diocese of Salisbury

- Total number of inspections = 41
- 3 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	20	20	20	20
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	21	20	21	20

31. Diocese of Sheffield

- Total number of inspections = 5
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	3	2	2	3
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	3	2	2	3

32. Diocese of Southwark

- Total number of inspections = 16
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	12	0	3	9
Number of Secondary inspections	4	0	3	1
Total	16	0	6	10

33. Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

- Total number of inspections = 11
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	6	3	5	4
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	2	0
Total	8	3	7	4

34. Diocese of St Albans

- Total number of inspections = 19
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	10	7	2	15
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	1	1
Total	12	7	3	16

35. Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

- Total number of inspections = 16
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	3	13	7	9
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	3	13	7	9

36. Diocese of Truro

- Total number of inspections = 6
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	6	0	5	1
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	6	0	5	1

37. Diocese of Worcester

- Total number of inspections = 21
- VC primary data includes one middle deemed primary
- VC secondary data includes one middle deemed secondary
- 1 J2 inspection

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	4	15	10	9
Number of Secondary inspections	0	2	1	1
Total	4	17	11	10

38. Diocese of York

- Total number of inspections = 24
- 0 J2 inspections

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	4	20	12	12
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	4	20	12	12

Methodist schools

- Number of Methodist school inspections = 4
- Number of Joint Church of England / Methodist school inspections = 15
- Total number of Methodist school inspections =19
- 0 J2 inspections.

	VA	VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	10	9	4	15
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	0	9	4	15

Annex 1: 2024 SIAMS Survey Data Analysis

Surveys carried out between March & May 2024

1. The SIAMS Framework influences our diocesan training and advice to schools.

Schools (530)		Dioceses (72)	
	%		%
Strongly agree	55.8	Strongly agree	69.4
Agree	28.1	Agree	29.2
Neither	9.6	Neither	0
Disagree	5.3	Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0.8	Strongly disagree	0

Observations

1.1. The high percentage of positive responses indicates that the direction given by SIAMS, even inadvertently, is playing a significant part in shaping the agenda for Church schools. This is subsequently manifested in the content of the training provided by DBEs and in the extent to which schools buy in to it, albeit seemingly often on a cyclical basis.

1.2. 84% of schools say that SIAMS shapes the direction that they take; and 98.6% of diocesan responses indicate that their engagement with schools and MATs through training is largely rooted in the requirements of SIAMS. Those involved in any leadership of SIAMS and/or SIAMS-related training must take this seriously and act with an awareness of the influence that inspection has on the national family of Church schools.

1.3. A small percentage of schools (6%) appear to refute this and buck the trend, although it is not possible to ascertain how this translates into practice. School leaders may simply be saying that they do not follow SIAMS in a 'tick box' type of adherence; or they may be saying that they would be taking steps such as establishing a Christian vision, regardless of the direction taken and provided to others by SIAMS.

1.4. Percentages of disagreement are the lowest across all survey statements, further reinforcing the above.

1.5. The ‘freedom’ inherent within the 2023 SIAMS Framework for schools to operate effectively according to both the needs of their context and the legal parameters of their foundation, in a way releases them from slavish adherence to lists of criteria imposed from a distance. This may mean that, in practice, the disagreement and dissent (the 6%) may represent a protest against a form of inspection that no longer exists within SIAMS.

2. If SIAMS were to remove judgements, the importance of the inspection would decrease.

Schools (530)		Dioceses (72)		Inspectors (104)	
	%		%		%
Strongly agree	4.5	Strongly agree	13.9	Strongly agree	15.6
Agree	17.4	Agree	50	Agree	30.8
Neither	13.6	Neither	16.7	Neither	17.3
Disagree	37.4	Disagree	15.3	Disagree	29.8
Strongly disagree	26.6	Strongly disagree	4.2	Strongly disagree	6.7

Observations

2.1. 64% of schools either disagree or strongly disagree that removing judgements would decrease the importance of SIAMS; whereas 64% of diocesan responses either agree or strongly agree. In other words, the views are diametrically opposed, with diocesan team members/diocesan boards of education having greater support for judgements. This is interesting.

2.2. It could suggest that diocesan team members have greater understanding of the usefulness of the insights provided by judgement data because of their focus on providing appropriate training and advice for schools; or it could suggest that it is school leaders that have greater understanding as they are on the ‘front line’ in the work to improve schools.

2.3. Academic research findings on the impact of school inspection on school leaders indicate that leaders experience greater anxiety and distress as a result of inspection outcomes (findings are usually related to grades) in a way that might be disproportionate to the benefit provided. If this is the case in SIAMS, then it could be said that the judgements are arguably having little or no positive impact on the work to improve Church schools, as any potential benefits are being negated by the corresponding negative side effects of the judgements on school leaders. However, this phenomenon may already have been mitigated by the transition away from grades to judgements.

2.4. It could be that schools prefer not to be under such focused and judgemental reporting, and/or prefer not to be subject to the authority traditionally afforded to inspectors. Schools may simply prefer not to be judged by inspectors, believing that they know better than any external body what is needed in a school.

2.5. On the other hand, diocesan team members may have a different perspective on what is needed due to their role as advisers. They may simply appreciate the external mandate that is provided by inspection.
2.6. In short, the data provided by schools and dioceses on the value of inspection judgements can only be seen as inconclusive, with further consultation required to achieve understanding of the range of views.
2.7. The data provided by inspectors' responses is less definitive than either schools' or dioceses' discretely.
2.8. The data for those who did express an opinion is almost identical between agreement and disagreement, with 46% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, and 47% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The combined picture presented by this data is one of highly mixed opinions within the inspectorate, and no clear 'steer'.
2.9. It should be noted that the vast majority of inspectors are either school/trust senior leaders or diocesan team members/leaders. The disparity in responses may be directly affected by belonging to one of these two groups that, as discussed above, have opposing views.

3. I find it helpful to read SIAMS reports about other schools.

Schools (530)		Dioceses (72)	
	%		%
Strongly agree	2.8	Strongly agree	66.7
Agree	49.8	Agree	27.8
Neither	21.5	Neither	4.2
Disagree	7.6	Disagree	1.4
Strongly disagree	2.8	Strongly disagree	0

Observations

3.1. An unsurprisingly high percentage of diocesan team members read the SIAMS reports about the schools in their dioceses – 94.5%.
3.2. The majority of schools (53%) indicate that they also read other schools' reports and that they find them helpful. However, this is only a narrow majority, with a relatively high percentage (21.5%) being ambivalent with a 'neither agree nor disagree' response. It is not clear from this whether schools simply do not read other reports or whether they read them and do not find them helpful.
3.3. Over 10% of schools do not read SIAMS reports about other schools - a statistic that does not surprise me. If the work of a school is guided and shaped by its own Christian vision and a keen understanding of the needs of its own community, and if the school has taken seriously the SIAMS message that inspection will be contextually-specific, then the drive to read about another school's inspection would be correspondingly less. They simply may not have the time to read about the work of other schools.

3.4. This suggests that there is some weight of evidence that *some* schools are led by SIAMS to the extent that they scrutinise reports for ideas, initiatives that have been well-received on inspection, and trends that may be emerging. However, this is not the overwhelming case.

4. The format of the report makes the content accessible.

Schools (530)		Dioceses (72)	
	%		%
Strongly agree	19.4	Strongly agree	43.1
Agree	61.1	Agree	47.2
Neither	14.3	Neither	5.6
Disagree	4	Disagree	4.2
Strongly disagree	0.4	Strongly disagree	0

Observations

4.1. A significant majority of both schools (80.5%) and dioceses (90.4%) find that the report content is accessible. This resonates with previous data gathered through consultation in 2022 that indicated overwhelming support for SIAMS reports when compared with other inspection reports. At the time, this was explained as being due to the rich detail and style of writing that result in school communities being able to recognise their school in their SIAMS report.

4.2. As a result of the positive responses, no material changes to the report content and style of writing are planned for the time-being.

4.3. However, some minor changes to the report format are in place for September 2024. These are designed to improve the accessibility of reports still further, without compromising that which is currently valued highly in terms of content and style.

5. I read the Annual Report written by the National Director of SIAMS.

Schools (530)		Dioceses (72)		Inspectors (104)	
	%		%		%
Strongly agree	10.6	Strongly agree	56.9	Strongly agree	67.3
Agree	38.7	Agree	20.8	Agree	25
Neither	15.1	Neither	4.2	Neither	2.9
Disagree	29.1	Disagree	15.3	Disagree	1.9
Strongly disagree	6.6	Strongly disagree	2.8	Strongly disagree	1

Observations

5.1. I am surprised in general terms by the high percentage of responses (50%, 78%, and 92%) indicating that people read the annual report. (Maybe they thought it was the correct response to a survey sent out by the author of the report.)
5.2. What is unsurprising is the incremental escalation of positive responses from schools to dioceses, to inspectors.
5.3. The diocesan positive response rate, at almost 78%, is a little lower than I would have expected. The SIAMS annual report directly addresses what has been learned from inspection data – both qualitative and quantitative – over the previous academic year. It provides a national overview, as well as diocesan-specific data. The trends and observations that are included are likely to be directly relevant to the content of dioceses' offers and advice to schools and would helpfully inform training and advice packages. By not reading the annual report, members of diocesan teams are missing information that is provided with the explicit intention of helping them to target their work effectively.
5.4. The 'neither agree nor disagree' responses (15%, 4%, and 3%) whilst low, are nonetheless surprising given that it is a simple yes/no statement, with little room for nuance. Either people read the annual report, or they do not.
5.5. Nonetheless, the general level of engagement with the annual report that is suggested by these combined responses reinforces the importance of using it to report in a meaningful, engaging, and insightful way that contributes to improvement in Church schools.

6. SIAMS inspection judgements help schools to improve.

Schools (530)		Dioceses (72)		Inspectors (104)	
	%		%		%
Strongly agree	10.8	Strongly agree	18.1	Strongly agree	21.2
Agree	39.6	Agree	47.2	Agree	45.2
Neither	19.8	Neither	22.2	Neither	17.3
Disagree	19.2	Disagree	11.1	Disagree	13.5
Strongly disagree	10.2	Strongly disagree	1.4	Strongly disagree	2.9

Observations

6.1. This statement was included as a check to Statement 2 (the value/importance of judgements). The expectation was that responses would correspond. However, they do not.
6.2. Whilst 64% of school and diocesan responses to Statement 2 directly differed from each other, this statement indicates agreement that is contradictory to that. Schools (50%), dioceses (65%), and inspectors (66%) are all in general agreement that inspection judgements help schools to improve, thereby indicating that they add value and importance to inspection.
6.3. Surprisingly, but in line with other statements, the 'neither agree nor disagree' response percentages are reasonably high at 20% (schools), 22% (dioceses), and 17% (inspectors).

6.4. Although 50% of schools indicate agreement that inspection judgements help schools to improve, a reasonably high percentage (29%) indicate disagreement. This suggests vastly differing views on the ground in schools.
6.5. The inspectors' response profile is similarly contradictory, with a notable majority (66%) agreeing that judgements help schools to improve, yet 16.5% disagreeing and 17% being undecided. The latter two percentages are high enough to be noteworthy and, taken alongside the mixed and possibly confused responses to Statement 2, they suggest a need for further discussion with inspectors.
6.6. The range of responses to this statement and to Statement 2 convey a national picture of a Church school sector that is far from being in agreement about the value of judgements in SIAMS inspection. Whilst, anecdotally and singling out Statement 2, responses indicate a desire from schools to move away from judgements, this is not supported by the 'check' provided through Statement 6.
6.7. Therefore further research, consultation, data collection and analysis, and communication are needed with and for all groups.

7. SIAMS inspection development points help schools to improve.

Schools (530)		Dioceses (72)		Inspectors (104)	
	%		%		%
Strongly agree	29.2	Strongly agree	51.4	Strongly agree	59.6
Agree	53.6	Agree	38.9	Agree	37.5
Neither	9.4	Neither	5.6	Neither	1.9
Disagree	5.3	Disagree	4.2	Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	2.3	Strongly disagree	0	Strongly disagree	0

Observations

7.1. There is general agreement across all three groups of respondents (schools 83%; dioceses 90%; inspectors 97%) on the value that inspection development points bring to school improvement. Again, note the gradual increase in agreement from schools to inspectors – from those carrying out the work in schools on a daily basis (83%), to those who provide an occasional and external advice (90%) and accountability (97%) function.
7.2. Percentages of those that neither agree nor disagree are amongst the lowest at 9%, 6%, and 2% respectively.
7.3. Any form of disagreement (disagree or strongly disagree) is the third lowest.
7.4. The high rates of agreement with the value of development points highlight the importance of inspectors correctly identifying and carefully communicating these points so as to best enable schools to make use of them in their improvement planning.
7.5. Quality assurance has a role to play in this by ensuring relevance, specificity, and rootedness of development points in evidence. Training for both schools and inspectors must include a focus on this, and any changes to reporting must not diminish the status and accessibility of the development points.

Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools

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