

Subject: SIAMS 'Lessons learned from the first six inspections'

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For: Headteachers and Chairs of Governors **Reference:** SIAMS 3/18-19

SIAMS 'LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FIRST SIX INSPECTIONS'

Context

In the light of the Church of England's *Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good* (July 2016), the new *SIAMS Evaluation Schedule* (April 2018) took effect in the September of this academic year. This schedule has one inspection question: *How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?*

This is explored through seven strands:

- Vision and Leadership
- Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills
- Character Development: Hope, Aspiration and Courageous Advocacy
- Community and Living Well Together
- Dignity and Respect
- The impact of collective worship
- The effectiveness of religious education (RE)

Following a fallow period, the first inspections under the new framework took place in the Diocese of St Albans in the spring term. Of these six, all were primary schools – two Voluntary Controlled and four Voluntary Aided. Although the sample is presently small, what follows is an analysis of these first reports and identification of commonalities.

The first reports

Central to the inspection is the vision of the school – what it is, its biblical underpinning and how it is pertinent to the school's context. Indeed, what punctuates the reports is the way in which the vision has an impact on the school community and the wider communities of which the school is part. This includes staff as well as pupils. Inspectors have asked whether all are 'flourishing' in the light of this vision, with reference to the seven strands of the Evaluation Schedule.

From the first reports, four common themes have emerged: governance, curriculum, collective worship and RE. Strong practice or areas for development have been identified with regard to the following:

Governance – *how rigorous is the self-evaluation of governors in the light of this vision? • Is this leading to a positive impact in allowing all to flourish? • Can governors articulate why decisions have been made based on the vision of the school?*

Curriculum – *does the curriculum allow pupils to engage with spiritual and ethical issues, as well as difference and diversity (local, national and global)? • Are there opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to be courageous advocates, developing a concern for justice and becoming articulate advocates for change?*

Collective worship – *are pupils involved in the planning, leading and evaluating of collective worship? • How effective is this? • Is this evaluation leading to improved practice? • Are governors involved in the evaluation of collective worship in a way which has a positive impact?*

RE – *in the light of the Church of England Statement of Entitlement, is RE planned effectively through a coherent curriculum which allows pupils to develop an understanding of Christianity and other religions? • How is RE perceived by staff and learners as contributing to, and informing, the school vision? • How rigorous is RE, and is the learning reflected in books?*

This overview includes some of the common areas found in an analysis of the first reports; it is not an exhaustive list. Each school is unique and serves different communities, leading to reports which are personal to the setting. Other aspects of strong practice contributing to the flourishing of all include:

- The teamwork of school leaders;
- The partnership with the local church/es;
- Professional development opportunities, particularly with regard to church school education, Diocesan support and networking (e.g. Aspirant Leaders, RE local groups); and
- Varied and frequent opportunities for prayer – both ‘collectively’ and ‘spontaneous’ (such as prayer stations or boxes).

Summary

The new *SIAMS Evaluation Schedule* has one inspection question:

How effective is the school’s distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

The first six reports have shown how schools have been driven by their distinctive vision to ensure the flourishing of all within and through the school community. Different contexts have led to innovative practices as leaders and learners learn about, from and for ‘Life in all its fullness’ (John 10:10).

If you would like to discuss any aspect of Christian character or SIAMS in further detail, please feel free to contact me by emailing rparker@stalbans.anglican.org or call 07508 802198.

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