

28th January 2021

To all Church of England and Methodist School Headteachers

SIAMS 2021

With yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister confirming that education attendance restrictions are to continue post-half term I wanted to write to thank you once again for all you are doing to keep our schools open and serving children, young people and their families through this most challenging time for those attending school and for those who continue to learn remotely from home. I realise what an enormous effort and challenge this is for staff, pupils and families and your hard work is hugely appreciated.

I am writing with a particular update about SIAMS in 2021. As you will be aware, Ofsted and DfE are still working on the basis that Ofsted will not be conducting graded inspections in the spring term and SIAMS has followed suit. The requirement to have a section 48 inspection every five years is disapplied and so SIAMS cannot restart until that disapplication is lifted by DfE. We will wait until Ofsted make a further announcement before we can consider what if anything can or should be done about restarting SIAMS inspection before September. We realise this will be disappointing for some who value the external recognition of all the hard work they do in providing such a rounded education for their pupils, but we will continue to be guided by the best advice and seek to ensure that the reintroduction of inspection is managed in a way that is mindful of the pressures on staff and schools.

Through this time of suspension, we have been working with dioceses to develop a more integrated national system for managing inspections to ensure greater consistency in experience and processes. I am delighted to say that this work has been agreed with every Diocesan Board of Education and we are now moving to the stage of setting up the new national systems that this will need.

The agreed model comes as the culmination of a lot of work and discussion, and there is still work to do in building the system that we need enable a smooth introduction. At its simplest the distinction between national and diocesan roles will work as follows:

www.churchofengland.org/education

The National Society (Church of England and Church in Wales) for the Promotion of Education – operating as The Church of England Education Office

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Dioceses will be responsible for:

- Advice on developing Christian character and ethos
- Training for schools
- School reviews and support for schools

The national team will be responsible for:

- Scheduling, including allocation of inspectors to school and notification of school (and diocese) when an inspection is to take place, the collation of reports and the payment of inspectors.
- Initial training of inspectors and the ongoing inspector training.
- A national 'Duty desk' to provide support for inspectors during inspections.
- A new system of quality assurance of inspections with targeted shadowing and feedback, and the quality assurance of reports which will be done with a centralised critical reading service.
- A revised Appeals and Complaints process which will be managed centrally.
- The publication of a SIAMS Annual Report - including thematic and quantitative trends.

We will be in touch with more details about how the new systems will work in due course and look forward to working with you in this new way which we are confident will bring clarity and consistency to our inspection processes.

With renewed thanks and best wishes for all that you are doing through this time



Revd Nigel Genders
Chief Education Officer