



Statutory Inspection of
Anglican & Methodist Schools
National Society for Education

SIAMS Annual Report

2025-2026

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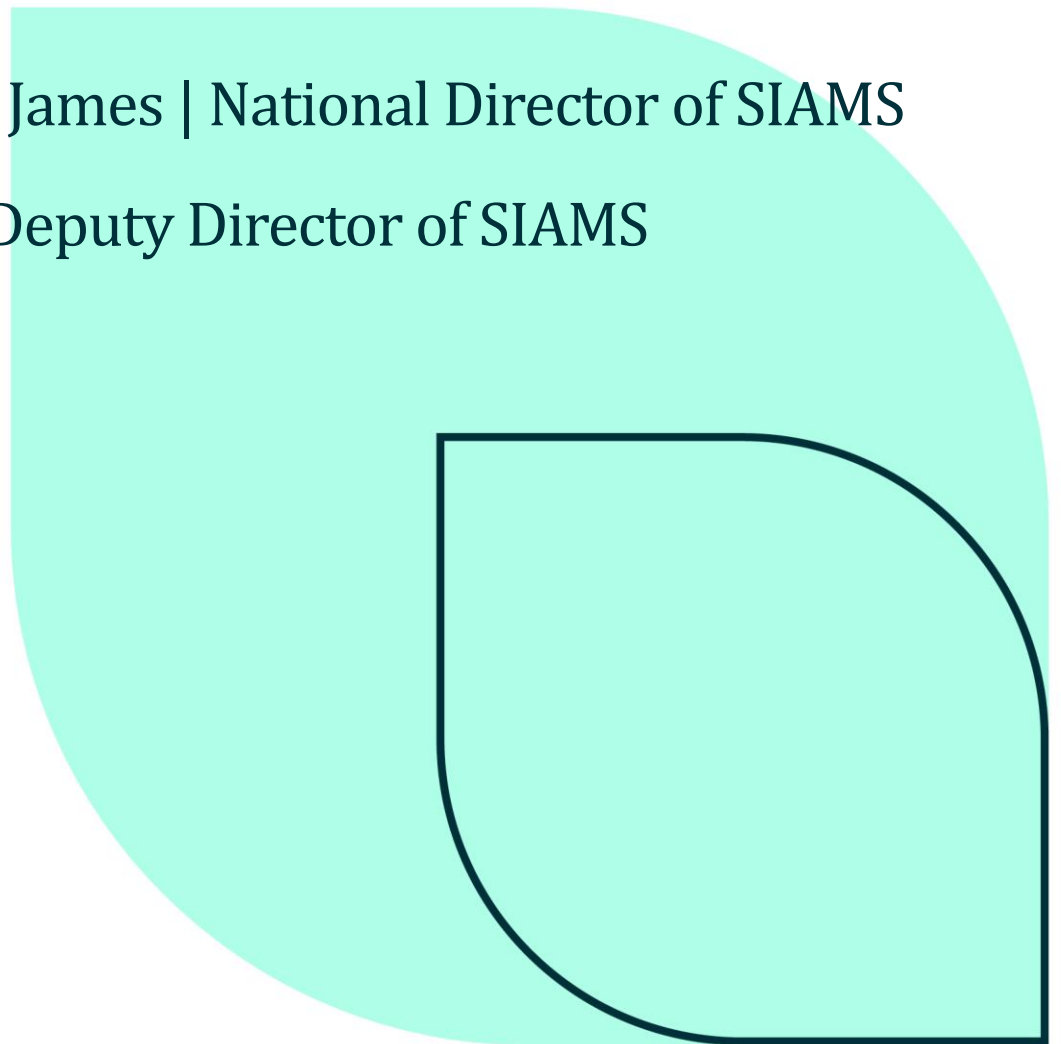




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Foreword

Church of England and Methodist schools are subject to inspection accountability under section 48 of the 2005 Education Act as well as under section 5. Whilst possible to focus on this as an increased burden, it appears that the vast majority of schools are approaching it in such a way as to benefit, and to make use of the occasion to spotlight their excellent work in enabling pupils and adults to flourish in an holistic manner.

In a demonstration of schools' alignment with the call of the Church of England's 2016 Vision for Education, we read SIAMS reports evaluating evidence of schools' Christian visions that are opening up pathways towards fullness of life for almost two million pupils and adults. What better reason do we need for the Churches to redouble their efforts in equipping and supporting these schools, and to make real in the 21st century Jesus' commitment to people of all ages and of all backgrounds, situations, beliefs, and cultures? There can be few greater callings than to bring light in a world that too often renders difference a problem to be solved.

The National Society for Education's SIAMS annual report for the academic year 2025-2026 presents us with a multiplicity of outcomes and challenges. It encourages us with an analysis of what we have already achieved together, and it provides us with a call to action to keep on and to do more. Its insightful interpretation of inspection outcomes, within the context of a theological view of childhood, enables us to extrapolate what is pertinent for each of us in our own context. There are many facets to the Churches' work in education and, in whichever category we find ourselves, there are a number of evaluative lessons to which we cannot but pay attention. If we do, the pupils and adults in our schools will be the beneficiaries and that is our duty and our privilege.

I am pleased to commend this report to you. I encourage you to read it from within the lens that is most suitable for you. If you come to it as an interested yet uninvolved reader, then I welcome you to immerse yourself in an analysis of the education that is provided freely by the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

The Rev'd Canon Peter Ballard
Acting Chair of the Council for the National Society for Education



Introduction

SIAMS and childhood in a Church school

One of the sources of inspiration for the work of the Church school is the conviction that each and every individual is known and loved by the creator God. The summit of this conviction is a community that embraces this calling and translates it into practice in order to provide a school environment that enables human flourishing.

Through Jesus, by invitation and without compulsion, children are called into life-giving and life-transforming relationships with God and with others in their school community. Flourishing, in this broad, abundant understanding is therefore more than physical health, mental wellbeing or scholarly achievement. Rather, it is the flourishing of a child as a person of unique, inimitable worth who bears the image of God. In the words of the psalmist, *'fearfully and wonderfully made.'*¹ It is about being given the necessary tools and clarity of moral purpose to live lovingly, purposefully, justly, responsibly as a trusted role model and with hope.

SIAMS is tasked with exploring how effectively a Church school achieves this calling through living up to its historical and legal foundation, including the way in which its Christian vision is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 specifies that it is *'the general duty of a person conducting an inspection under this section'* to report on the quality of denominational religious education and the content of collective worship and that they may, *'report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school.'*² It is under this clause relating to SMSC that educational legislation makes provision for and necessitates the exploration of human flourishing under a section 48 inspection. Of course, not all aspects of the life and work of the Church school fall under our purview. Therefore, we make no comment on the quality of the wider curriculum nor on any aspect of safeguarding.

Christian theology has much to say about childhood. Scripture and the teachings and traditions of the Church provide food for thought and, indeed, challenge to much conventional thinking. In this year's SIAMS Annual Report, we seek to shine a light on what inspection is telling us about how childhood is lived and experienced in our Church schools. There is much to celebrate. Similarly, we are cognisant of where there is more to do and where the challenge set before us to enable flourishing, calls upon everyone involved in Church of England and Methodist education to work as one and to redouble our efforts.

Theological reflections on childhood

Imago Dei

The Church holds fast to the theological concept of *imago Dei*; in Latin, 'the image of God.' The creation account in Genesis relates the way in which each person is lovingly crafted in God's own image: *'So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them.'*³ The Christian understanding is, therefore, that every child possesses inherent dignity, worth, and potential because they reflect God's image. A child's dignity, worth, and value are not solely contingent upon what they achieve (or don't), their abilities, behaviours, or economic utility in terms of future contribution to society. A child who bears the image of the creator is one who is flourishing when their God-given dignity is recognised, cherished, and upheld. What matters is who they are and the fulfilment of their God-given potential. They are more than simply what they do.

¹ Psalm 139:14

² [Education Act 2005](#)

³ Genesis 1:26



A gift and calling

The psalmist declares that children are a *'heritage from the Lord.'*⁴ Similarly, we read in the New Testament of how Jesus welcomed children and in doing so challenged a culture that underestimated them or placed them at the margins of public consciousness. In Mark's gospel, Jesus' indignant posture towards the disciples who tried to restrict children's access to him demonstrated righteous anger as their actions indicated that children were deemed less worthy than their adult counterparts. Mark recounts that, *'[p]eople were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."*⁵ Jesus places children at the centre of God's upside-down Kingdom and points to what traditionally might be considered as childlike qualities including trust, humility, and receptivity as a pattern for flourishing relationships.

Childhood is not simply a stage before adulthood. Children are not merely waiting to take their place in the world as adults but are image-bearers of the one who came to bring wholeness and abundance of life. The Church school is not simply a place of preparation for adulthood but rather a community where each bears the image of God's face and is to be known and loved. A theological understanding of human wholeness therefore views children not only as recipients but also as participants in God's Kingdom. Children matter simply because they are children. Therefore, childhood is of utmost importance and must be cherished.

Wholeness, relationships, place and space

Schools are complex eco-systems. They can be joyful and energising, places of nurture and repair, hope and actualisation, and at times places that are fragile and in need of grace. It is in these very real and contextually rooted places that the opportunity for human flourishing occurs. Christian theology is clear that flourishing is interconnected and is never about attending only to one particular aspect of what it is to be human. It understands and gives space to the interdependence of the physical wellbeing, emotional health, spiritual flourishing, moral growth, the acquisition of wisdom and nurturing relationships among many other facets. There is no false distinction between the sacred and the secular. The Hebrew word *shalom* captures some of this sense of wholeness. It alludes to concepts of peace, completeness, restoration, and welfare. The biblical vision of *shalom* is not simply the absence of conflict or harm but the presence of right relationships, justice, peace, wholeness, and delight in God's creation. A Church school should create the eco-system in which this rich flourishing is possible. It integrates spirituality, character formation, wellbeing, and provision for academic learning. It attends to the whole person.

At the very heart of God sits a relationship: the relationship of the Trinity - God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Human flourishing is relational because God is relational. Children flourish when they experience loving relationships with and within their community. This is reflected in Jesus' response to the pharisees. When asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself."*⁶ Here he frames flourishing around love of God, self, and neighbour. Having a place to belong and experiencing reciprocal care are not merely parts of a psychological hierarchy of needs but something rather more profound: theological realities that reflect the heart and character of God. The Church school, therefore, must be a place of generous, loving acceptance.

⁴ Psalm 127: 3

⁵ Mark 10: 13-16

⁶ Matthew 22: 37-39



A Christian theology of space and place contends that both physical locations and the places of encounter in the mind and heart shape perceptions of God. Schools are not only abstract spaces (bounded, measured, concrete, timetabled) but are co-terminously places imbued with meaning and human experience, resulting from memory, silence, things numinous, even glimpses of the divine. Children experience both these senses of place and of space in the Church school. Throughout the narrative of the Bible, God works through young people from a range of backgrounds, circumstances, and opportunities. One needs only to recall Samuel, Miriam, David, Mary, and Timothy. Children exercise faith and leadership and explore their vocation. Any Christian understanding of flourishing, therefore, foregrounds the voice of the child, notices their perspectives and values their contributions. In the school that inculcates flourishing, children discover their voice, make wise and just choices, and participate authentically in the life of a community. And they are known. Names are of seminal importance in the Bible; each child is *'called by name.'*⁷

A sign of God's Kingdom

Church schools are signs of God's Kingdom active and present in the world. This Kingdom is both 'now' in the sense that the Kingdom has been inaugurated but, also, 'not yet' as the Kingdom is yet to be consummated. It has come but at the same time it is still coming. We live in the in-between, and schools are places that hold that tension. The Church recognises that flourishing occurs in a world marked by sin, injustice, indifference, poverty, disconnection, and fragile or ruptured relationships. Flourishing cannot be restricted simply to a vague sense of comfort or material needs being met. The Church school must help children to develop resilience, hope, and trust where this is lacking and to speak out for justice. This natural, unforced altruism can be counter-cultural and must be taught as well as caught. The Christian story offers hope because God's story in Christ is one of healing and redemption. Flourishing, therefore, also includes the capacity to persevere, repair, restore, heal, forgive, and demonstrate mercy. As a sign of the Kingdom, a Church school is one characterised by love, hospitality, justice, spiritual growth, celebration, hope, and belonging.

When evaluating and reporting on Church schools, as well as immersing ourselves in an understanding of God's Kingdom, human wholeness, and the God-given value of childhood, we must also take into account something of the state of society today. A Church school is an environment in which over a million children and several hundreds of thousands of adults emerge from their home lives and spend vast proportions of their time on a daily basis; and these home lives represent all of society. It is vital that the experience that they have in our schools is a meaningful and positive one. Collectively, all those involved in the leadership of these schools have a responsibility to ensure that this is so.

This year's annual report examines what SIAMS inspection tells us about childhood through five lenses. There are specific foci for each lens, but connections are made in recognition of the interdependence of the themes.

1. Under IQ1 and IQ2, we focus on belonging and formation.
2. IQ2 and IQ3 focus on identity, purpose, and meaning found through the spiritual.
3. Our examination of IQ4 focuses on difference, dignity, community and wellbeing.
4. IQ5 leads us to focus on justice and Kingdom building.
5. Bringing together IQ6 and IQ7, we consider religious education as a separate area integrating aspects of the above into the analysis and commentary.

⁷ Isaiah 43:1



IQ1 and IQ2: vision that enables belonging and becoming

To belong and, equally if not more importantly, to *know* that you belong, is a fundamental building block in becoming fully human. It is only once a person knows that they belong that they are able to trust and be trustworthy, be nourished and, over time, to become fully human, held in God's love⁸. To belong is to know that you are part of the Kingdom of God – and vice versa. What loftier an aspiration can a Church school have but to help those in their community along this path?

Church of England and Methodist schools and academies are required to base their work in a theologically rooted Christian vision and to ensure that this vision makes a difference to the lives of pupils and adults. To ensure that, in the words of Andrew Read of UK Education Research and Innovation (UKERI) national data project, 'the vision is not a statement – it is a lived reality that transforms culture, relationships, and outcomes.'⁹ This aim simply echoes the legal foundation and original purpose of the schools and ensures a direct connection from that to the experience that pupils and adults can expect in 2026, based on the inherent dignity and worth of each person. Whilst expressing this legal foundation, the Christian vision is also a reflection of the perfect love found within and offered by the triune godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit¹⁰. A school's Christian vision should express this: God's understanding of the community; source of and hope for each individual; and commitment to their belonging and to their pathway to becoming fully human¹¹.

The Bible, along with the teachings and traditions of the Church, teaches us with overwhelming clarity and consistency the importance of being loved and enabled to belong. More importantly than any other relationship of belonging is the one with God himself because all human beings are first and foremost made in his image – *imago Dei*¹². Once we know and understand that we are essentially the image of God, life changes; and part of this changed life is enabling others to realise that they, too, are made in the image of God and are precious in his sight¹³. Church school staff and leaders do this daily by ensuring that the school's Christian vision is inclusive, inspiring, intuitive, and implemented.

It should not be a theoretically, or 'laminated', superficial Christian vision, one devised to satisfy the inquisitive eyes of an infrequently visiting inspector. Rather, it should be a 'living, shaping, transformative force'¹⁴. In the big picture of being fully human, inspection can too often take on a disproportionate role in the life of a school. Inspection must never be the driving and shaping force for a school's Christian vision. Instead, school leaders should feel empowered to imagine a world with no inspection and focus instead on doing the right thing for the pupils and adults within their school. As encouraged by Segerholm and Hult, these leaders should do the right thing rather than performatively doing things right¹⁵. A well-founded and contextually-appropriate effective Christian vision – not an inspection - is a means by which godly love can be made real for the whole school community, and it can and should not be diminished. Once it has been carefully thought through and established, with expert input as required, SIAMS, then, expects the curriculum to closely reflect this meaningful vision. And why would it not? Any vision that stands separate from the purpose of a school's full curriculum would be nothing more than performative and would ultimately be a waste of everyone's time. Educationalists have no

⁸ Psalm 1 vs 1-3; Psalm 92 vs 12-13; Jeremiah 17 vs 7-8

⁹ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project

¹⁰ Matthew 3 vs 16-17, 28 vs 18-20

¹¹ Psalm 139 vs 13-16

¹² Genesis 1 vs 27

¹³ Matthew 10 vs 31

¹⁴ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project

¹⁵ Segerholm, C. and Hult, A. (2018) Learning from and Reacting to School Inspection – Two Swedish Case Narratives. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 62:1, 125-139.



time for performative measures, and SIAMS has no interest in perpetuating a performative educational and inspection culture¹⁶. Let us, instead, focus together on Christian vision-driven measures that are true and that transform lives.

In 98% of Church schools inspected in 2025-2026, inspectors encountered compelling examples of how a theologically rooted Christian vision ensures that pupils and their families, as well as school staff, are exceptionally well-known, understood, and loved generously. This is encouraging and represents almost 212,000¹⁷ pupils who are having their lives explicitly, directly and positively impacted by their school's Christian vision. Read about such practice, for example, in [Alder Grove Primary School](#) in the Diocese of Oxford and [Ashley Primary Academy](#) in the Diocese of Guildford. These and many other schools demonstrate that they understand their legal foundation as well as their communities, and that they have thought theologically and cogently about the needs of those therein. They work on this daily in large projects and in small acts; in outward facing initiatives and in behind-the-scenes policy and decision making; when it is easy and when it is difficult so as to ensure that the love of the triune God can be known by all those whom they serve. They make bold decisions, possibly counter-culturally, to ensure that they are doing the right thing and not focusing exclusively on doing things that will be superficially judged as being right. Such work usually requires intentionality, repetition, and routine. It does not happen accidentally, and it needs to be planned holistically. Some might say that many aspects of it lack excitement and status, but such work, much of which is carried out behind the scenes builds the framework within which the love of God can be made manifest through its outward expression - learning, the curriculum, personalised support, and the daily patterns of school life. This kind of work must not be overlooked in search of that which attracts more attention. It is rooted in the wisdom of Christ.

When, under IQ1, an inspector notes that the Christian vision is a notable strength of a school it does not simply mean that the school has a vision. It means that there is compelling evidence to support their conclusion that the vision is making a daily difference to people's lives. At times, development points indicate that there remain aspects of vision under IQ1 that require work. This commonly, even repeatedly, relates to the need for governors and trustees to carry out more, and at times more meaningful, monitoring and evaluation – work that needs to be 'rigorous, reflective, and rooted in theological understanding'¹⁸. Far from being performative, such activity ensures that a school is structurally secure and not reliant on a strong headteacher who might, at any time, move on. Governance is the element of a school's leadership that is intransient. It therefore provides stability and strength for a school over time, and this is essential.

We would therefore encourage a national response from governors and trustees to engage with as much relevant diocesan training as possible to ensure that they are equipped in this area of their work and enabled to find efficient and effective ways of finding out whether the school's Christian vision is making any difference to pupils and adults; and, when they know the answer to this, to take appropriate action that will inform and enable well-directed and strategic next steps. Like other school leaders, hard-working and hard-pressed governors and trustees do not have time to waste on activity that does not make a real difference. So, we would also encourage those providing training for governors and trustees to provide input and resources that enable a wholesale and straightforward positive response to this need – a need that has emerged every year since 2023. There are a number of schools in which governors and trustees are doing this work well, for example: [Bunny VC Primary](#) in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham; [St Paul's with St Michael's](#) in the Diocese of London; [St Andrew's Primary Academy](#) in the Diocese of Exeter; and [Stanford in the Vale VC Primary](#) in the Diocese of Oxford.

¹⁶ Ball, S. J. (2013) Foucault, Power and Education. Routledge.

¹⁷ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project

¹⁸ ibid



IQ2 of the SIAMS Framework encourages both schools and inspectors to take particular account of those who might be deemed as vulnerable and/or disadvantaged. Not all are born with equal opportunities in life, a fact that became starkly obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. According to the International Monetary Fund in 2022, “[f]ar from pushing inequality down the agenda, the COVID-19 pandemic shone a spotlight on inequalities in education, income, work, health, savings, and wealth. It also opened up new gaps along dimensions that were previously less significant...”¹⁹ In comparison, when Joshua Watson first started the Church school movement in 1811²⁰, he focused on those who were disadvantaged, making his main focus the provision of free education for those (boys only!) who would otherwise be unable to access schooling. This was an historic and counter-cultural venture that has had a long-lasting and positive impact upon education in England and Wales. It was a venture that enables the Churches today to continue that mission, inspired by still-aligned deeply theological Christian visions that insist that nobody is overlooked in the work of a Church school – that all belong. It is encouraging to note that, of those inspected in the academic year 2025-2026, the percentage of schools that serve areas categorised as ‘disadvantaged’ and with the vision-driven curriculum noted as a strength is 79%, just above the figure for all schools combined which sits at 78%²¹. Even a brief analysis of this tells us something of the dedication of those staff teams and some insight into the many ways in which they live out the school’s Christian vision.

Interestingly, 83% of large schools inspected (all above 210 NOR) have the vision-driven curriculum noted as a strength, and this drops to 75% for small schools (all 210 and below NOR)²², suggesting possibly that the reality of greater capacity and resourcing enables greater effectiveness in this area of the school’s work. Arguably, this is to be expected with limited staffing numbers and a higher degree of ‘multi-tasking’ required in small schools. It would not be surprising if limited finances reflecting this same spilt were also a factor. Nonetheless, the fact that three quarters of small Church schools systematically and intentionally ensure that the curriculum reflects the Christian vision and enables pupils to consistently grow towards being fully human is encouraging. These schools should take heart that their relentless work, with each member of staff wearing many different ‘hats’, has been noticed.

IQ1 and IQ2, examined through the lens of belonging and becoming, present us with a generally positive and improving picture of the vision-driven work of Church schools. There is, as always, room for us to collectively improve, especially in the effectiveness of governors’ monitoring and evaluation in all types of school; in schools’ routine expression of their Christian vision through the curriculum; and in the ways in which small schools are supported to use their limited resources as effectively as possible. Small schools face unique challenges and should be uniquely supported. These schools have significant strengths. They are a much-cherished and valuable part of the eco-system of both society and of Church school education - places in which being known and enabled to experience belonging and becoming are central to the work of education.

¹⁹ [Inequality-and-the-COVID-19-crisis-in-the-United-Kingdom.pdf](#)

²⁰ [Our history – National Society for Education](#)

²¹ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project

²² *ibid*



IQ1 and IQ2 recommendations

Recommendations for schools

1. Aim to fill governor vacancies with a range of people from a variety of backgrounds who are keen, open to learn, and willing to spend time helping to lead a Church school.
2. Carry out an audit of the effectiveness of governors and trustees' monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the Christian vision. As part of this audit, analyse whether, how, and to what extent monitoring and evaluation leads directly to identification of next steps for improvement.
3. Audit how and to what extent the curriculum visibly and coherently reflects the school's Christian vision. Make use of the information that emerges to make appropriate and authentic changes to the curriculum so that the area of school life in which pupils and adults spend most of their time can be accurately described as an expression of the Christian vision.
4. Explore to what extent investment in theological knowledge and understanding of Church school leadership can be carried out. Do so in the knowledge that Church school leadership makes more sense to those involved when there is a coherent and growing immersion in the theological and moral formation involved in such multi-faceted educational leadership.

Recommendations for diocesan boards of education

1. Carry out a diocesan-wide review of governor vacancies and work (regionally if helpful) in order to explore ways in which the DBE might help schools to fill them.
2. Engage with schools in whatever way capacity allows to provide support and training for teachers and leaders to ensure that each school's curriculum reflects its Christian vision. In doing so, recognise and invest in the need for training that is theologically rich and tailored to need.
3. Analyse training offers/service level agreements to ensure that, either by working alone or regionally, the DBE is helping school governors and MAT trustees to carry out effective, reflective, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the impact of a school's Christian vision. Focus training on enabling this to be theologically literate and strategically rigorous. In doing so, seek ideas from other DBEs nationally to explore novel ways of reaching schools that traditionally are less ready to engage.

Recommendations for the National Society for Education

1. Collaborate closely with DBEs in assessing governor vacancies and agree a shared way forward designed to begin to address this, both nationally and at a diocesan level.
2. Explore ways in which SIAMS can be used effectively to support DBEs in increasing effective governor and trustee monitoring and evaluation.
3. Work closely with DBEs to explore ways in which national training programmes might play an appropriate part in enabling more schools to access training that has the strategic rigour and theological depth to ensure that the curriculum flows directly from the theological identity created by the Christian vision. In turn, apply this to all other aspects of leadership training for leaders of and in Church schools.



IQ2 and IQ3: vision that enables identity, purpose, and meaning to be found through the spiritual

Spirituality and spiritual development are not desirable additional extras in a Church school. They are fundamental to what it means to be human, and they are a demonstration of the Churches' commitment to hospitality and dignity. The prophet Jeremiah reminds us that '[b]efore I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart.'²³ To be created is to be a spiritual being and is the basis of human life and experience. It is the irreducible essence of human personhood. Contemporary culture often associates spirituality with connection, purpose and awareness of something beyond self. Christian theology validates these themes. It then expands on these ideas to root Christian spirituality in a trinitarian understanding of God: a relationship with the Father, revealed through Jesus and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

Rooted in this Christian understanding of spirituality, the Church school must be an inclusive space in which each person, irrespective of personal belief or background, is able to live faithfully and with integrity and discover more of what it means to abide and to be fully alive - fully human. It is often seen in the development of character. St Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit as, 'Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'²⁴ It is these aspects of personhood to which spiritual flourishing attends. In this sense spiritual flourishing is analogous with pilgrimage and journeying: the school in the role of accompanier opening up possibilities, opportunities and horizons appropriate to age, phase, stage and background.

Some school leaders have focused on a definition of spirituality. This is rather to miss the point. Spirituality is not the acquisition of a particular form of knowledge or skill but, rather, a deeper more nuanced understanding of the person a pupil or adult is becoming in the context of the community in which that formation is taking place. If a school's Christian vision does not enable spiritual development and growth, then the vision cannot be said to be effective. Indeed, if a vision does not make space for the spiritual then it, quite simply, is not a Christian vision. This is because to flourish spiritually is intrinsic to a Christian understanding of personhood. Where schools have understood this and know clearly what they want to achieve in terms of spiritual flourishing and this emanates from their Christian vision, it can have a transformative impact. This is because the school establishes a culture in which the spiritual is attended to and is cultivated as a matter of routine priority.

Often the expertise of the local church is key in supporting leaders to understand the meaning and purpose of spiritual flourishing and to understand what they wish to achieve in their particular context – they are partnerships that 'deepen theological richness and strengthen community identity'²⁵. To flourish spiritually is a shared endeavour, worked out in community. As John Wesley remarked, 'solitary religion is not to be found [in the Gospel accounts of Jesus].'²⁶ The wisdom of the church, both local and global, needs to be brought to this contextual, vision-based thinking on spiritual flourishing. A school's work is less about an endeavour to find a singular definition or correct language of spirituality but rather opening up a lexicon - a shared and encompassing vocabulary of spirituality - in which exploration of matters pertaining to the spiritual can take place. Where schools understand their context and what they intend to achieve, the impact can be transformative.

²³ Jeremiah 1:5

²⁴ Galatians 5: 22-23

²⁵ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project

²⁶ John Wesley, preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739



IQ2 explores how the curriculum intrinsically reflects a school's theologically rooted Christian vision. An inherent part of this is the way in which a school's vision and, in turn, the curriculum that is informed and infused by the vision, makes space for the development of the spiritual. This is a core responsibility of the Church school. As Rowan Williams has suggested, 'faith is most fully itself and most fully life-giving when it opens your eyes and uncovers for you a world larger than thought'²⁷.

Of the Church schools inspected in 2025-2026, inspection evidence²⁸ demonstrated that in 78% the inspector was able to comment on the way in which the curriculum reflected the theologically rooted Christian vision as a notable strength. At [Cop Lane Church of England Primary School](#) in the Diocese of Blackburn, 'understanding of spirituality is strong.' Pupils and adults are able to, 'explore and share their spiritual experiences.' This is because the 'holistic approach taken is highly effective, creating an environment where it is safe to explore spirituality' and staff are 'finely attuned to planning and identifying opportunities for spiritual flourishing.' A number of themes emerge. Where leaders know what spiritual flourishing looks like in their context, have a clear plan of how to extrapolate this into everyday practice, and support staff to do so through skilful and apt training, an environment in which spiritual growth and flourishing can take place is the result. This intentional model is evident at [Rake Church of England Primary School](#) in the Diocese of Chichester. Here the inspector gathered evidence of how the school's approach to spirituality, 'support(ed) adults and pupils in their discussions' about what was 'wonderful but also perplexing in the world around them'. It was this knowledge of context, adeptly exploited by school staff, that helped pupils to 'move forward in their personal and spiritual journey'. By creating and then utilising opportunities for spiritual flourishing, the school was able to attend to the whole person. Expert support from the diocese is often key in equipping schools to ensure that their theologically rooted Christian vision informs their curriculum.

Further analysis of data related to inspections undertaken²⁹ allows us to make some comparisons between types of schools. As previously identified, whilst 83% of the large schools are commended as having a notable strength under IQ2, this falls to 75% for smaller schools. The converse is also true, with inspectors identifying an aspect of IQ2 as an area for development in 61% of the large schools but rising to 66% of small schools. As suggested, these differences are understandable and are likely to be a reflection of the differing capacities in schools of different sizes. It should give pause for thought to those who lead and support schools as to how they are best able to develop a curriculum that consistently and deeply reflects the theology that underpins a school's Christian vision, thereby providing the conditions for spiritual growth within learning in all schools irrespective of their size.

IQ3 explores how daily collective worship enables pupils and adults to flourish spiritually. Inspection evidence demonstrates that for effective spiritual growth there must be an integration of a school's understanding of spirituality and the approach to collective worship. Crucially, both must emerge from the school's theologically rooted Christian vision. The work of the school is not partitioned, segmented, or detached but integrated into a seamless whole where the vision informs each aspect of the school's life and work. Attention to matters spiritual in such schools informs and infuses both the taught and hidden curriculum. At [Dunnington Church of England Primary School](#) in the Diocese of York, for example, there is a well-developed understanding of spirituality. This shapes the school's approach to spirituality, enabling 'spiritual growth' and has a 'positive impact on the life of the school and individuals'. The work of the local church in supporting schools to develop this understanding is often commented on by inspectors. At [Ashley Primary academy](#) in the Diocese of Guildford, worship 'nurtures

²⁷ Rowan Williams *Discovering Christianity A guide for the curious* (London, SPCK, 2015)

²⁸ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project

²⁹ *ibid*



community as well as spirituality'. A driver of this is the 'strong partnership with local clergy'. This enriches worship because their 'involvement brings variety, depth and authenticity to pupils' experiences'.

Inspection outcome data enables us to draw some conclusions about how worship supports spiritual flourishing for pupils and adults. In 80% of the schools inspected in 2025-2026, inspectors were able to gather evidence of this being a notable strength. There was little variance between schools in terms of pupil disadvantage or school size. This demonstrates the importance that Church schools place on worship and the central place it occupies. In 57% of all schools inspected in the last academic year, inspectors identified aspects of IQ3 that require development. Again, there was little variance between types of schools. It can be extrapolated that, should these schools apply their understanding of spirituality related to IQ3 to wider aspects of the school's curriculum, then this would strengthen school's work in this regard. Not doing so calls into question the very validity, reality, and depth of the Christian vision itself.

IQ2 and IQ3 recommendations

Recommendations for schools

1. Review and evaluate the school's work related to spirituality and spiritual flourishing. Ensure that this is a natural and coherent expression of the school's theologically rooted Christian vision. Avoid attempting to 'define' spirituality and instead explore an approach that opens opportunities for the formation of pupils and adults.
2. Without exception, ensure coherence between the school's approach to collective worship, the approach to the wider curriculum and the theologically rooted Christian vision.

Recommendations for diocesan boards of education

1. Ensure that all training on Christian vision inherently addresses the need for that vision to be directly connected to the school's work on spirituality and spiritual development.
2. Ensure that all schools have access to appropriate guidance, support and advice to enable them to think theologically about spirituality and spiritual development. Support schools to apply this thinking contextually.
3. Consider how best to support and resource small schools or groups of schools to undertake work related to spirituality and spiritual development effectively, working with other DBEs if preferable.

Recommendations for the National Society for Education

1. Work closely with DBEs to explore ways in which those who provide advice, guidance and support to schools can be resourced to enable schools to effectively attend to matters of spirituality and spiritual development.
2. As part of this work, explore the value of a Church school theological framework for spirituality, spiritual development, and collective worship.



IQ4: vision that honours difference, dignity, community and living well together

By very definition, community consists of people who are different from each other. It is normal and it is a reflection of the Kingdom of God³⁰. We should, therefore, not be surprised by a depth and breadth of diversity and difference any more than we should be surprised by the fact that people are different heights from each other and have different hair or eye colour. Yet, it seems that, as a society in general, we are and that we require specific laws, policies, and safeguards to ensure that someone who is different from 'me' is treated well.

We have already mentioned in this report that a Church school is a microcosm of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it will frequently and naturally set before us the delight of difference and diversity. In this small representation of the Kingdom each person has the opportunity to serve and be served; to have their unique needs met; to learn from and to teach others; and to live well together. It is not unusual. It is, by its very essence, normal.

In 2016, the National Society published its groundbreaking Vision for Education and in it we read this.

*We are only persons with each other: our humanity is 'co humanity', inextricably involved with others, utterly relational, both in our humanity and our shared life on a finite planet. If those others are of ultimate worth, then we are each called to responsibility towards them and to contribute responsibly to our communities.*³¹

This is reminiscent of Martin Buber's assertion that I can only be fully me if I am living a life in community with you being fully you – an 'I/Thou'³² relationship that feeds both souls, enabling holistic growth, and leading to a godly fullness of life. Indeed, the Bible inspires and even instructs on multiple occasions in both New and Old Testaments to live a full life by loving others, reflecting the triune nature of God. We are encouraged to live as witnesses to him by living in harmony and providing mutual support as we make our way through life³³. It makes no exception for the existence of difference, diversity, or social inequality; in fact, it goes so far as to say that we must especially honour those of what might be perceived as different or lower standing. Such is our example, to aspire to reflect the Kingdom so that 'God's will may be done, on earth, as it is in heaven'³⁴.

In 2025-2026 IQ4, which asks how a school's Christian vision creates a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well, remains the IQ in which schools record the highest number of strengths and the lowest number of development points, representing over 170,000³⁵ pupils who are benefiting from a school culture that reflects the Christian vision. This has been consistently the case since the implementation of the SIAMS Framework in September 2023 and is a fact about which all those involved in Church school education should be encouraged. This must never equate to complacency however, and whilst there remains even one pupil or adult whose life experience is not more positive as a result of the impact of a Church of England or Methodist school's Christian vision, and who does not experience an equitable approach to all aspects of their educational journey, then we must strive together to do better. Inspection data for the year indicates that, although 98% of all schools are commended for a Christian vision that is having a positive impact on the lives of pupils and adults, it is a lower figure of 79% of all schools inspected (80% of small schools thereby highlighting one of their many strengths) in which the culture is cited as a notable strength. This is a high figure indeed, but one that suggests that there is still some way to go before we can say with confidence that the Kingdom of God finds its resonance in *all* Church

³⁰ Galatians 3 vs 28

³¹ [Vision for Education](#) – Church of England vision for education, p5

³² Buber, M. 1923 (German), translated 1937, [Smith R G](#) (London: T. & T. Clark)

³³ For example: Psalm 133 vs 1, Romans 12 vs 10, Galatians 6 vs 2, 1 Ephesians 4 vs 2, Thessalonians 5 vs 11, Hebrews 10 vs 24,

³⁴ The Lord's Prayer – Matthew 6 vs 9-13

³⁵ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project



schools for *all* pupils and adults; and before we can say that the 98% of Church schools commended in the last academic year for strengths related to their Christian vision are ensuring that that vision is building the school culture for all pupils and adults.

Nonetheless, there is much to celebrate in this regard. Like all other aspects of a successful school, a culture in which all are treated well does not come about by happenstance; rather it is the direct result of ‘culture rooted in Christian purpose³⁶’. It is created by means of a lot of behind-the-scenes planning and hard work as well as by a daily commitment to live out the school’s vision and values – to embody them. Thousands of teachers are doing this day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. They model it for example in the content of their teaching, in the manner in which they teach, how they manage behaviour, and how they welcome parents and carers. The out of school hours that they devote to their planning underpins the school culture, as does the way in which they support pupils, families, and colleagues in times of need. The Kingdom of God, the normality of difference, and the daily experience of a school’s Christian vision are all realities as a result of sacrificial intentionality that creates a culture in which all are treated well. And it must never be taken for granted.

Some examples of such vision-driven culture can be found in [Bishopswood St John’s First Academy](#) in the Diocese of Lichfield where ‘[p]upils and adults consistently show compassion, encouragement and respect for one another’; in [St James’ VC Infant and Nursery School](#) in the Diocese of Carlisle where ‘[s]taff work respectfully with families, taking time to understand their circumstances and offer support that is practical and personal’; and in [Harleston Sancroft All-Through Academy](#) in the Diocese of Norwich where ‘[s]taff root their actions in kindness and acceptance, with a relationships-first approach’. These schools exemplify the notion that a respectful and harmonious school environment does not come about without the intentional and consistent hard work and planning of leaders and teachers who understand and are committed to the school’s Christian vision. It takes time, effort, and commitment but it is worthwhile.

Also worth referring to are the vision-driven inclusive and loving cultures in [Far Forest Lea Memorial Primary School](#) in the Diocese of Worcester, [Bishop Ramsey Secondary Academy](#) in the Diocese of London, [Cawthorne Primary](#) in the Diocese of Leeds, [Bramford Primary](#) in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, and [Benington Primary](#) in the Diocese of St Albans. See the [Inspection Reports](#) section of the SIAMS website for many more examples of schools in which the Christian vision is creating a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well.

³⁶ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project



IQ4 recommendations

Recommendations for schools

1. Ensure that school culture is inextricably connected to and an expression of the Christian vision. Establish patterns of working that instil intentionality in vision-shaped culture building that supersedes routine to embrace the Kingdom of God
2. Routinely include staff and pupil wellbeing, as well as inclusion, as part of governor and trustee monitoring and evaluation. As part of this work, ensure that explicit connections with the school's Christian vision are noted and that governors are regarded, and regard themselves, as the cultural stewards of the vision-shaped work of the school.

Recommendations for diocesan boards of education

1. Ensure that schools have access to training and support on the different ways that Christian vision can and should have an impact on the life of *each* member of the school community. Enable schools to understand how this can be brought about through the patterns of everyday school life that are rooted in and shaped by the school's Christian vision.
2. Support school governors and trustees in carrying out their strategic roles in such a way as to way encourage and safeguard a Christian vision-shaped culture.
3. Depending on diocesan capacity, make theologically rooted pastoral support available to school leaders. If immediate local capacity does not allow, explore ways in which connecting with others might enable support to be offered.

Recommendations for the National Society for Education

1. Analyse SIAMS inspection data to monitor and evaluate the national picture of the culture of Church schools. Break the data down in as granular a way as possible in order to focus on meaningful specifics so as to assist diocesan and school teams to consistently build a culture in which all pupils and adults can experience a vision-shaped education.
2. Use this information to work closely with DBEs to identify helpful next steps to support and equip schools.



IQ5: vision that leads to justice and kingdom building

Each school is part of a bigger, more complete, whole. At once it is a distinct community but, at the same time, integrated into the wider life of the society that is both shaping and seeking to serve. One way in which this interconnectedness is manifest is the extent and manner to which the school looks outward from a position of confidence, extending its horizon, in order to serve others and work for justice. This justice-seeking is Kingdom building. Each school plays its distinct part in the transformative work that is establishing God's Kingdom of justice. As the hymn writer Bryn Rees wrote '[t]he Kingdom of God is justice and joy,' a place where 'hope is awakened in place of despair'.³⁷ It is something of this transformation that the Church school attempts to capture and inculcate through its work. It consciously echoes the position of Jesus who consistently restored dignity, challenged injustice, and created new possibilities for individuals and communities. Angela Tilby has written that 'when we fail to participate in each other, we die as a society'.³⁸ Schools must be places that enable that participation in the lives, hopes, challenges and joys of one other as they work for justice.

A school's work on justice must be an authentic expression of its Christian vision. This is not simply about courageous advocacy or charitable activities but, rather, helping pupils to understand something of the transformative nature of God's Kingdom. That is inspiring hope in challenging circumstances, establishing hospitality in difference, encouraging stewardship of God's creation, and resourcing meaningful reconciliation. Justice is, therefore, not a welcome or optional addition to school life but integral to any contextually relevant Christian vision. A school's work on justice declares a hearty 'Amen' to Jesus' prayer that, '*Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*'.³⁹

Schools live an ever-evolving tension in relation to the work of justice. They celebrate signs of God's Kingdom emerging whilst understanding that it has not reached summation. They live between resurrection and restoration. In some ways this living between the 'now' and 'not yet' reflects many aspects of a school's work and the experience of leaders. It can be a challenge to inhabit these tensions faithfully. Christian theology holds both together. The Kingdom is already present and, as such, Church schools must work for justice, peace, and wholeness of life within the context of their primary purpose of being a learning environment. At the same time, because the Kingdom is not complete or remains fragile, they must work with humility, patience, and hope to transform those things within their gift as they are able, in line with their Christian vision and within their purpose as a school. Church schools through their existence and ministry are a sign of the Kingdom: a sign of hope.

IQ5 asks how a school's theologically rooted Christian vision creates an active culture of justice and responsibility. In Church schools inspected during the year 2025-2026, inspection evidence demonstrates that in 37% of schools, inspectors were able to comment on this as a notable strength⁴⁰. In these schools, this work typically enables the inculcation of just attitudes which, in turn, lead to just actions. At [St Bertoline's Church of England Primary School](#) in the Diocese of Chester, for example, the vision promotes a 'highly active culture of compassion for others'. This then cascades into just relationships in which 'pupils are empowered to act when they see injustice in the wider world'. In turn, they then avail themselves of 'opportunities to make a positive difference to the lives of others.' Where justice is understood as an expression of God's Kingdom, the responsibility to act against injustice is an unforced developmental next step. This is exemplified at [Canon Slade School](#) in the Diocese of Manchester. Here an 'appreciation of justice and responsibility' is 'embedded' and serves as an enabling impetus for the school's vision-driven work to support pupils to 'act in the best interests

³⁷ Number 255 in *Singing the Faith Hymns Ancient and Modern* 2011

³⁸ Angela Tilby *Good Faith Why England Needs Its Church* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 2026)

³⁹ Matthew 6 vs 9-13

⁴⁰ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project



of others'. The encouragement that this offers is both 'personal and collective'. In a final example, at [St David's Church of England Primary School](#) in the Diocese of Exeter, the inspector notes that the school's Christian vision 'creates a culture in which pupils are encouraged to look beyond themselves and consider their responsibilities towards others'. Some broad themes emerge. Successful work on justice emerges from the school's theologically rooted Christian vision; it intentionally equips pupils with an understanding of justice and injustice; and, in turn, then empowers pupils to take appropriate and meaningful action where justice is denied. Responsibility is not forced, but rather lovingly embraced. This work is often unifying, reconciling and restorative. It anticipates that beautiful view of God's Kingdom which 'renders all distinctions void'.⁴¹ There is much to celebrate in how Church schools are equipping and enabling this rich theological thinking and resulting action related to justice.

Inspection evidence also indicates that there is some variance across schools, and inspectors have identified where this work on Kingdom building and justice is less strong. Whilst in 37% of all schools inspected last year, inspectors had sufficient evidence of impact to report justice as being a notable strength, this fell to 32% for schools where pupils were most disadvantaged. This is a significant disparity. It is likely to reflect the different challenges that present for school leaders in different contexts. It is fair to contend that, where immediate challenges are pressing, the right focus for school leaders is attention to the wellbeing of members of the school community. This appropriate response to circumstances may, in turn, inhibit the capacity to look out towards the work of justice elsewhere.

Inspectors also identify schools that need to develop their work in relation to this inspection question. This is not to say that the work is ineffective. Rather, there are aspects in which refinement, extension, or innovation are likely to lead to improved outcomes over the longer term. Overall, 36% of all of the schools that were inspected in 2025-2026 were identified as having this justice and Kingdom building work as an area to focus on following inspection. There was a notable difference here between large and small schools. In large schools, 32% had this area as a development point. In small schools this increased to 38%⁴². This is likely to be another indication of the differing capacities in schools of varying sizes. In smaller schools where leaders often hold multiple competing responsibilities, the capacity for work relating to justice and responsibility is often limited by resources of time and finance. It is likely to be one of many competing demands. This again underlines the challenges facing those who lead and support small schools. That said, there are many innovative and encouraging examples of small schools where work to enable pupils to understand justice and injustice and to respond accordingly is effective and making a difference. For example; [All Saints Primary Academy Alrewas](#) in the Diocese of Lichfield; [Stanford in the Vale Primary School](#) in the Diocese of Oxford; and [Bishopswood St John's First Academy](#) in the Diocese of Lichfield.

⁴¹ Charles Wesley from the hymn *Christ, from whom all blessing flow*, Number 676 v.5 in *Singing the Faith Hymns Ancient and Modern* 2011. The complete verse reads: 'Love, like death, hath all destroyed, Rendered all distinctions void; Names, and sects, and parties fall: Thou, O Christ, art all in all.'

⁴² Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project



IQ5 recommendations

Recommendations for schools

1. Discern the contextual needs of the school community. Ensure this informs the approach adopted to justice and Kingdom building.
2. Review and evaluate the school's work related to justice and responsibility. Ensure that this is an expression of the school's theologically rooted Christian vision.

Recommendations for diocesan boards of education

- 1 Ensure that schools are able to access appropriate guidance, support, and advice to enable them to think theologically about justice. This is to ensure that schools' work in this area is an effective expression of their theologically rooted Christian vision.
- 2 Consider how best to support and resource small schools or groups of schools to undertake work related to IQ5 effectively.

Recommendations for the National Society for Education

- 1 Work closely with DBEs to explore ways in which those who provide advice, guidance, and support to schools can be resourced to enable them to think theologically about justice in a way that is faithful to their vision and contextually relevant.
- 2 As part of the above, pay particular attention to the opportunities and challenges faced by small schools.



IQ6 and IQ7: religious education

Religious education is required to have a high priority on the curriculum in a Church school⁴³. One of the foundational reasons underpinning the establishment of Church of England schools in 1811 was the teaching of ‘denominational religious education’, and this is continued through into the legislative basis for a SIAMS inspection⁴⁴. The requirement has ensured over the years that religious education, despite being often sidelined nationally as a result of sitting in the basic curriculum rather than within the national curriculum⁴⁵, has retained a position of relative strength in the Church school sector. This does not mean that there is not more to do, nor that Church schools are exempt from the struggles to ensure quality and even the occurrence of the subject. Part of the work of SIAMS is to highlight whether religious education is taught at all key stages as the law requires, and whether the provision is of a high standard. A performative timetabling of RE benefits nobody, least of all pupils who need as much help and support as they can get to be prepared for life in 21st century Britain. The role played by religious education in this preparation is crucial.

In a society that is increasingly and richly culturally and religiously diverse, at the same time as becoming increasingly fractured, schools cannot be said to be best serving their pupils’ needs if they are not ensuring that their religious education provision is high-quality and available for all pupils. As SIAMS has reported in previous years, religious education cannot carry the weight of this broad educational responsibility alone. However, it is naïve to think that pupils will leave school with a good understanding of the society of which they are already a part, and of the individuals who make up that society, if religious education is not of the highest possible quality. And yet, as Deborah Weston, Chair of the Religious Education Policy Unit, said in response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review’s (CAAR) comments about the national picture of religious education, ‘[a]fter years of neglect, RE is adrift’.⁴⁶

The CAAR report itself emphasises the breadth of the benefits of religious education on holistic development, including on spiritual, moral, social, cultural, and personal development.⁴⁷ The words of the report express this best.

‘RE is a place where [pupils] encounter differing beliefs, sometimes for the first time, understand the tenets of major faiths, and learn how to reason and wrestle with existential questions. Understanding the tenets of Christianity also unlocks a wider understanding of British culture in terms of Christianity’s historic influence and how it has shaped modern-day Britain. We have heard [in our consultation] that RE provides a space for pupils to learn about human mutuality and reciprocity, that it develops their capacity to understand one another, and that it supports strong, secure, and confident communities with good relationships. Given the role that religion, belief and values play in local, national, and international events, it continues to be vital for children and young people to have access to high-quality RE.’⁴⁸

The report goes on to suggest that the current structures that underpin schools’ religious education provision are fraught with financial challenges and that these are worsened still further by the fragmented approach across the country to support, advice, and syllabus design.⁴⁹ The resulting financial constraints, often mirrored at

⁴³ [NSE Statement of Entitlement for RE 2026](#)

⁴⁴ [Education Act 2005](#)

⁴⁵ [Education Reform Act 1988](#)

⁴⁶ [“New era” for Religious Education as panel recommends subject added to National Curriculum for the first time – REC](#)

⁴⁷ The National Archives (2025) - [Education Act 2002](#)

⁴⁸ [Curriculum and Assessment Review final report: Building a world-class curriculum for all](#)

⁴⁹ A report from the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE (NASACRE) found that the majority of SACREs in England were not receiving a sufficient share of the central school services block (CSSB) which would reasonably be expected so that they could meet their statutory functions, including the provision of a clerk. NASACRE (2023) – NASACRE’s Second Report.



a diocesan level in terms of capacity, have led to what we have described in previous years' annual reports as a post code lottery in which no-one is to blame apart from the increasingly inadequate structures themselves. There is even evidence that producing new locally agreed syllabi is often done with a 'very tight budget' and that the process is 'increasingly reliant on voluntary support'.⁵⁰ As at least 53.6% of the schools inspected in 2025-2026 used, and continue to use, the locally agreed syllabus, this is significant for Church of England and Methodist schools. It is difficult to imagine another curriculum subject similarly structured, resourced, and equipped let alone one from which so much is expected for the creation and maintenance of a healthy society.

With the backdrop of limited finances and the contingent limited capacity, therefore, it is unsurprising that Church schools, as well as all other types of school, too often fall short in their provision of this centrally important subject.

The data gathered through SIAMS inspections in 2025-2026 throws some valuable light on the state of the subject in Church schools, providing us with information that enables us to suggest and to make the changes that are most needed to continue to improve our collective religious education offer to pupils. This insight reassures us that all is not doom and gloom and that the quality of religious education in Church schools is improving. Encouragingly, this is more evident in the last year than it has been in the previous three years.

Evidence indicates that in 60% of all of the Church schools inspected last year, at least one aspect of the subject is worthy of note as a strength. This includes a range of strengths such as in leadership, curriculum content, depth, and breadth, and the quality of teaching and/or learning. It indicates that Church school teachers' confidence in religious education is improving, potentially as a result of increasingly high-quality resourcing and diocesan training and support. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the figure related to religious education as a strength rises to 64% for large schools and falls to 57% for small schools⁵¹. The type, extent, and availability of professional development for staff in small schools, as well as their ability and capacity to access it, understandably takes its toll and, as recommended elsewhere in this report, structures must flex to meet the needs of small schools that contribute so much to our communities. Small schools cannot continue to be expected and relied upon to automatically provide the breadth, depth, and range that is more readily within the grasp of larger schools at the same time as receiving less funding, being identically accountable, and operating consistently at lower capacity. Let us dare to challenge the expectations that continue to demand more for less and that judge on that basis.

Religious education in all Church schools compares favourably in a number of ways with the national picture, including for example examination entry statistics, but our internal comparisons between school types highlight the heavy load that is being borne once again by small schools. Nonetheless, despite the resourcing challenges that are specifically experienced by these schools, they continue to perform well and in a not incomparable manner in terms of strengths and development points to larger schools.

Notable strengths in religious education for all schools that were inspected in 2025-2026 are encouraging and demonstrate broad improvement when compared with previous years. The effectiveness of the curriculum in terms of gaining a general understanding of Christianity, including diversity within the religion, stands at 82.4%. Intrinsically connected to this is the 93.6% of schools' curricula that are sufficiently deep as to enable pupils' development of accurate and progressively deep knowledge and understanding of the religion. These figures suggest improved resourcing, greater teacher confidence, and an increase of schools' engagement with high-quality training and support, all of which is bearing fruit. The relatively recent emphasis within training for leaders and teachers of RE on the lenses of, for example, substantive, disciplinary, and personal knowledge appears to

⁵⁰ Smalley, P. (2019) - [A critical policy analysis of local religious education in England](#)

⁵¹ Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project



also be having a positive impact with 95.3%, 85.5%, and 91.8% respectively of 2025-2026 inspections reporting on their impact favourably. Although this could be interpreted as doing no more than measuring criteria internally imposed and therefore assumed as being effective methodology, resonance with the RE Council's [National content standard for Religious education](#) gives additional weight and credence to these measurements, and to Church schools' positive performance against them. Furthermore, expert diocesan advice, training, and support in religious education appears to be having a significant and positive impact. In short, evidence indicates that in Church schools there are almost 140,000 pupils for whom religious education provision is notably strong and which goes beyond that which can be described as a minimum entitlement.⁵²

Last year's inspection evidence shows that areas requiring more development remain similar to those evident in previous years although, even taking these development points into consideration, there is much about which to be positive. These development points can mainly be categorised in the following ways.

- Against the 90%+ of schools performing positively against measures relating to the curriculum enabling progressive general understanding, once the specific requirement for an understanding of diversity is introduced the figures fall to the low 80% mark (general understanding of Christianity) and mid 60% mark (Christianity as a global faith). This differential has been evident in Church school religious education for the last three years and the gap needs to continue to close.
- This trend is also reflected in the quality and impact of teaching in maintained voluntary aided schools and academies that teach denominational religious education. It is to be expected that the lower percentages representing pupils' understanding of religions other than Christianity (81.6%) as well as of diversity within Christianity (82.4%) would be connected to similar figures for the quality of teaching in these areas. It is. However, the percentage of schools in which inspection reports more favourably on these aspects is higher than in previous years, and we should take heart that there is an improving picture. This is potentially as a result of better resourcing, and more training and support for schools.
- The negative difference between the occurrence of core religious education at KS5 (higher) and its quality (lower) remains a slight concern suggesting some prevalence of a performative response to the legal requirement to provide religious education for all pupils at all key stages over and above a focus on its quality. Also noteworthy is that not all schools are teaching core religious education – a legal requirement – for all pupils in key stages three, four, and five regardless of exam entry. This must change.
- Valuable monitoring and evaluation work continues to be a concern. As discussed, this relates to inspection areas beyond solely religious education, but its presence for IQ6 and IQ7 specifically indicates that this is one of the aspects of Church school life that would benefit from greater examination of impact rather than a satisfaction with knowledge of provision.
- IQ6 is, again this year, the most common reason for inspectors awarding a J2 with seven out of 12 J2 judgements being attributed at least in part to the quality of the RE curriculum.
- Of the two secondary schools and one all-through school awarded a J2 in 2025-2026, all three had IQ6 and/or IQ7 as at least one of the reasons. Despite the numbers themselves being low, which is encouraging, it nonetheless highlights an area that requires attention and eradication.

⁵² Andrew Read/UKERI Research: national data project



Church of England schools and RE GCSE entry

Data from the [RE Policy Unit](#) gives a unique insight into Church schools' entry of students for GCSE religious education/studies. Whilst insightful simply as data, it also gives us call to reflect (and act) on the potential reasons underlying it as well as on the wider context that is likely both giving rise to this data and explaining some of the consequences of it.

Percentage of students entered for GCSE RE	Number of CofE secondary schools	Percentage of all CofE secondary schools
>99	17	8.5
>75	142	70.6
>66.6	148	73
>50	150	74.6
<50	51	25.4
<25	40	20
<10	14	7
0	4	2

The pipeline of well-qualified teachers and leaders of religious education begins in primary school. In a Church school, it is reasonable to expect that the subject will be both important and of high-quality, despite the reality that not all teachers of religious education are either specialists or have the necessary specialist and accurate subject knowledge. Nonetheless, here, passionate, creative, well-resourced by diocesan provision, supported and committed teachers inspire even the youngest of pupils. Such teachers subsequently enable engaged pupils to begin their secondary school journey hungry for more knowledge and understanding in religious education, and keen to take the subject further. Continued high-quality teaching will spark a desire within pupils to take the subject to GCSE, and policies that automatically enter the vast majority of pupils are having an evidence-based positive impact on pupils' learning and on outcomes in and the continuation of the subject. The promise of equally high-quality provision in the sixth form encourages pupils to enter for a religious education/studies A Level. Tertiary education lies ahead with the possibility of a religious studies or theology degree that continues to ignite a passion which, for some, will lead to those students deciding to teach the subject. This takes those originally inspired 5-year-olds back into primary education where they continue this virtuous cycle of inspiration, possibly also by, themselves, creating published resources, advising and supporting the next generation of teachers, engaging in demanding and stimulating academic debate, and ensuring that curricula and teaching remain at a high standard. If we – the system – fail at any point in this cycle, we guarantee a detrimental effect on religious education. We break the chain. As long as over one quarter of Church of England secondary schools enter fewer than half of their students for GCSE religious education then we as a Church school system work against one of our founding principles and legal bases for both existence and inspection. We must work together as the Church in education to enable pupils and students to be captivated by religious education, to perpetuate that interest and quality, and to emulate the 8.5% detailed above that are entering over 99% of their pupils for religious education/studies GCSE. In short, at all levels in Church school education, we must do better. We are doing reasonably well, we have reason to be encouraged, we are improving, and in many respects, we are leading the way. But we must do better.

Many Church schools are already setting an example in religious education and are already inspiring their pupils and enabling them to grow in learning and in the depth of their knowledge. Taking a look again at [Ashley Primary Academy](#) in the Diocese of Guildford, we note that '[t]eaching helps pupils think deeply because adults expect



them to explain and justify their ideas clearly. Skilled questioning encourages pupils to support their opinions using evidence from their learning. Therefore, pupils discuss Christianity, world religions and diverse worldviews with confidence and maturity'. And when this focus on high-quality teaching continues, for example at [Stepney All Saints Secondary](#) in the Diocese of London, we note the following. 'Effective teaching and learning strategies foster a high level of pupil engagement. Teachers' careful use of assessment practices means that pupils perform well in RE. Pupils are effectively guided to become independent in their learning through quality support. At Key Stage 4, all pupils undertake the full course RE GCSE qualification. Core RE at Key Stage 5 includes timetabled RE lessons.'

But, as discussed, high-quality teaching and its contingent learning, do not occur in a vacuum. On the contrary, they occur as a result of skilled and knowledgeable leadership and of the implementation of an engaging, accurate, captivating, and well-structured and well-planned curriculum. So, at Stepney All Saints we note that '[t]he curriculum is engaging because leaders have worked to ensure that it is relevant'; and in [St Mary Magdalene All Through School](#) in the Diocese of Southwark, '[p]upils critically engage with RE from a young age. The curriculum for older pupils prioritises deep knowledge acquisition, mastering key concepts and debating complex ideas. Opportunities for personal reflection are a valued part of learning'. This takes effort, persistence, consistency, teamwork, and intentionality and, interestingly, all of the KS3 and KS4 examples come from schools in which over 99% of pupils are entered for GCSE religious education – the 8.5%. Sometimes such intentionality is sacrificial, and it is always as a result of saying that religious education is important and then following up the words with action – action such as investing in training for staff, careful recruitment, resource decision-making that prioritises the subject, and an insistence on high-quality teaching. And it always starts at the beginning of pupils' education, such as at [St Francis Primary Academy](#) in the Diocese of Truro, where '[l]eaders have prioritised the development of RE...' from the Reception class onwards.

This prioritisation includes reaching out to others for support and advice. Church of England schools are fortunate in this regard. Whilst much national provision has been whittled away in recent years, each diocesan education team and DBE continue to hold religious education as a core priority as a result of the [DBE Measure 2021](#). Therefore, Church of England schools are ideally placed to access this expert support, and inspection data indicates the positive impact of it on schools' religious education provision and outcomes. Academies within trusts that have invested in expertise are also fortunate in this regard, as are many schools through their connections with the parish and/or local church. Returning to Ashley Primary, we read that '[s]trong support from the diocese and the trust enhances staff expertise [in religious education] and enriches pupils' learning. As a result, pupils build secure knowledge as they move through the school'. And in Bramford Primary, '[w]orking with the diocese, leaders build their own expertise [in religious education], enabling them to assist staff and keep skills current'. In [Bransgore Primary Academy](#) in the Diocese of Winchester, '[e]xpert support is harnessed from the local church community to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge about Christianity. Coupled with expert training from the diocese, this enhances RE provision and supports the development of the curriculum over time'.

These, and many other, examples of collaborative working and intentional reaching out for specific expertise from partners beyond the school gate demonstrate some of the value of partnership. No one of the schools that were inspected in 2025-2026 have all of the answers themselves, nor all of the capacity to meet needs. But they are all part of a bigger picture that is Church school education.



IQ6 and IQ7 recommendations

Recommendations for schools

- 1 Ensure that religious education, regardless of and separate from, all examination classes, is being taught to a high standard in all key stages and for all pupils and that it has the profile on the school timetable that the [Statement of Entitlement](#) indicates that it should.
- 2 Make maximum use of the available expert religious education advice and support in order to continue to improve provision and impact, especially in relation to Christianity as a global faith, faiths other than Christianity, and non-religious traditions.
- 3 Specifically, access high-quality training available to support and equip non-specialist teachers of religious education.
- 4 Make use of monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that it is known what is working well in religious education and what needs to change.
- 5 Examine school policies relating to GCSE entry for religious studies and systematically increase the numbers of pupils who take the subject further.

Recommendations for diocesan boards of education

- 1 Make use of SIAMS inspection development points and other diocesan monitoring activity to target training and support to best assist schools in their improvement journeys.
- 2 Specifically, enable primary and secondary schools to access high-quality training to support and equip non-specialist teachers of religious education.
- 3 Fine tune training and advisory services to, especially, help small schools to meet the specific demands that lower levels of capacity create and to help secondary schools to maximise benefit for pupils by complying with all aspects of the law as it relates to religious education.
- 4 Work with schools to ensure familiarisation with the [2026 Statement of Entitlement](#) so as to help them to meet its requirements.

Recommendations for the National Society for Education

- 1 Work closely and appropriately with DBEs to explore ways of making as much training as possible available for all teachers who teach religious education.
- 2 Explore, in collaboration with DBEs, what the NSE might be able to contribute to ongoing improvement in the aspects of religious education that continue to emerge as development points.



All recommendations for schools

1. Aim to fill governor vacancies with a range of people from a variety of backgrounds who are keen, open to learn, and willing to spend time helping to lead a Church school.
2. Carry out an audit of the effectiveness of governors and trustees' monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the Christian vision. As part of this audit, analyse whether, how, and to what extent monitoring and evaluation leads directly to identification of next steps for improvement.
3. Audit how and to what extent the curriculum visibly and coherently reflects the school's Christian vision. Make use of the information that emerges to make appropriate and authentic changes to the curriculum so that the area of school life in which pupils and adults spend most of their time can be accurately described as an expression of the Christian vision.
4. Explore to what extent investment in theological knowledge and understanding of Church school leadership can be carried out. Do so in the knowledge that Church school leadership makes more sense to those involved when there is a coherent and growing immersion in the theological and moral formation involved in such multi-faceted educational leadership.
5. Review and evaluate the school's work related to spirituality and spiritual flourishing. Ensure that this is a natural and coherent expression of the school's theologically rooted Christian vision. Avoid attempting to 'define' spirituality and instead explore an approach that opens opportunities for the formation of pupils and adults.
6. Without exception, ensure coherence between the school's approach to collective worship, the approach to the wider curriculum, and the theologically rooted Christian vision.
7. Ensure that school culture is inextricably connected to and an expression of the Christian vision. Establish patterns of working that instil intentionality in vision-shaped culture building that supersedes routine to embrace the Kingdom of God.
8. Routinely include staff and pupil wellbeing, as well as inclusion, as part of governor and trustee monitoring and evaluation. As part of this work, ensure that explicit connections with the school's Christian vision are noted and that governors are regarded, and regard themselves, as the cultural stewards of the vision-shaped work of the school.
9. Discern the contextual needs of the school community. Ensure this informs the approach adopted to justice and Kingdom building.
10. Review and evaluate the school's work related to justice and responsibility. Ensure that this is an expression of the school's theologically rooted Christian vision.
11. Ensure that religious education, regardless of and separate from, all examination classes, is being taught to a high standard in all key stages and for all pupils and that it has the profile on the school timetable that the [Statement of Entitlement](#) indicates that it should.
12. Make maximum use of the available expert religious education advice and support in order to continue to improve provision and impact, especially in relation to Christianity as a global faith, faiths other than Christianity, and non-religious traditions.
13. Specifically, access high-quality training available to support and equip non-specialist teachers of religious education.
14. Make use of monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that it is known what is working well in religious education and what needs to change.
15. Examine school policies relating to GCSE entry for religious studies and systematically increase the numbers of pupils who take the subject further.



All recommendations for diocesan boards of education

1. Carry out a diocesan-wide review of governor vacancies and work (regionally if helpful) to explore ways in which the DBE might help schools to fill them.
2. Engage with schools in whatever way capacity allows to provide support and training for teachers and leaders to ensure that each school's curriculum reflects its Christian vision. In doing so, recognise and invest in the need for training that is theologically rich and tailored to need.
3. Analyse training offers/service level agreements to ensure that, either by working alone or regionally, the DBE is helping school governors and MAT trustees to carry out effective, reflective, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the impact of a school's Christian vision. Focus training on enabling this to be theologically literate and strategically rigorous. In doing so, seek ideas from other DBEs nationally to explore novel ways of reaching schools that traditionally are less ready to engage.
4. Ensure that all training on Christian vision inherently addresses the need for that vision to be directly connected to the school's work on spirituality and spiritual development.
5. Ensure that all schools have access to appropriate guidance, support, and advice to enable them to think theologically about spirituality and spiritual development. Support schools to apply this thinking contextually.
6. Consider how best to support and resource small schools or groups of schools to undertake work related to spirituality and spiritual development effectively, working with other DBEs if preferable.
7. Ensure that schools have access to training and support on the different ways that Christian vision can and should have an impact on the life of *each* member of the school community. Enable schools to understand how this can be brought about through the patterns of everyday school life that are rooted in and shaped by the school's Christian vision.
8. Support school governors and trustees in carrying out their strategic roles in such a way as to way encourage and safeguard a Christian vision-shaped culture.
9. Depending on diocesan capacity, make theologically rooted pastoral support available to school leaders. If immediate local capacity does not allow, explore ways in which connecting with others might enable support to be offered.
10. Ensure that schools are able to access appropriate guidance, support, and advice to enable them to think theologically about justice. This is to ensure that schools' work in this area is an effective expression of their theologically rooted Christian vision.
11. Consider how best to support and resource small schools or groups of schools to undertake work related to IQ5 effectively.
12. Make use of SIAMS inspection development points and other diocesan monitoring activity to target training and support to best assist schools in their improvement journeys.
13. Specifically, enable primary and secondary schools to access high-quality training to support and equip non-specialist teachers of religious education.
14. Fine tune training and advisory services to, especially, help small schools to meet the specific demands that lower levels of capacity create and to help secondary schools to maximise benefit for pupils by complying with all aspects of the law as it relates to religious education.
15. Work with schools to ensure familiarisation with the [2026 Statement of Entitlement](#) so as to help them to meet its requirements.



All recommendations for the National Society for Education

1. Collaborate closely with DBEs in assessing governor vacancies and agree a shared way forward designed to begin to address this, both nationally and at a diocesan level.
2. Explore ways in which SIAMS can be used effectively to support DBEs in increasing effective governor and trustee monitoring and evaluation.
3. Work closely with DBEs to explore ways in which national training programmes might play an appropriate part in enabling more schools to access training that has the strategic rigour and theological depth to ensure that the curriculum flows directly from the theological identity created by the Christian vision. In turn, apply this to all other aspects of leadership training for leaders of and in Church schools.
4. Work closely with DBEs to explore ways in which those who provide advice, guidance, and support to schools can be resourced to enable schools to effectively attend to matters of spirituality and spiritual development.
5. As part of this work, explore the value of a Church school theological framework for spirituality, spiritual development, and collective worship.
6. Analyse SIAMS inspection data to monitor and evaluate the national picture of the culture of Church schools. Break the data down in as granular a way as possible in order to focus on meaningful specifics so as to assist diocesan and school teams to consistently build a culture in which all pupils and adults can experience a vision-shaped education.
7. Use this information to work closely with DBEs to identify helpful next steps to support and equip schools.
8. Work closely with DBEs to explore ways in which those who provide advice, guidance and support to schools can be resourced to enable them to think theologically about justice in a way that is faithful to their vision and contextually relevant.
9. As part of the above, pay particular attention to the opportunities and challenges faced by small schools.
10. Work closely and appropriately with DBEs to explore ways of making as much training as possible available for all teachers who teach religious education.
11. Explore, in collaboration with DBEs, what the NSE might be able to contribute to ongoing improvement in the aspects of religious education that continue to emerge as development points.



Final reflections

This annual report began with a reminder that all those in Church of England and Methodist schools (and indeed those within *all* schools) - and therefore all referred to in this report - are *imago Dei*: made in the image of God - pupils and adults alike. Not all experience the impact for example, of a school's Christian vision in the same way nor to the same extent. Not all have the same responsibilities, nor the same desire to grow as a spiritual human being. Not all are part of religious education lessons and not all design policy or make decisions on financial resourcing. However, all are members of the school community and are worthy in their own right; all are loved by God, and all come together in each school to create that unique community. The value and reality of this being our school system should never be overlooked, nor should it be taken for granted.

Playing its part in the eco-system of Church school education, SIAMS gathers evidence and makes judgements with the aim of contributing to each school's development and, by extension, to the holistic development of each of those individuals. Understanding that SIAMS inspection is not an outworking of imbalanced power nor a performative box-ticking exercise undertaken to control is crucial for its positive benefits to be experienced by school communities.

In 2025-2026, the overwhelming majority – albeit not all – of feedback from schools indicated that this balanced and respectful relationship of accountability is largely working well. Inspectors are retaining a position of authority and expertise in a way that is made public for those one or two days every five years for which they join a school community. And staff and leaders are engaging in a fruitful, challenging, and rigorous accountability process with the result that their schools are left in a better place to keep moving forward. Inspectors, meanwhile, are carrying out the role that they have with humility, empathy, wisdom, and integrity. And they are doing so collaboratively, contextually, and rigorously. If this was not your experience, then you have already passed that on, and we are grateful to you for your honesty. Our commitment is to act on this feedback and to make changes where required. The call in all sections of this report for action and improvement as a response to evidence is replicated by and within SIAMS itself.

However, as we reflect on each of our discrete roles within the eco-system of Church school education, we must not become so embroiled in our actions that we forget our purpose. The book of Hebrews instructs us to run the race set before us and to run it with endurance⁵³. In order to do that and to do it to good effect, we need to simultaneously be aware of all the pressures and demands of the context within which we are running our race; *and* throw off all hindrances that doing so might bring. A mutually exclusive two-sided task this might seem. How do we know, understand, and meet the needs of those in our particular context whilst not being brought down by the very pressures that doing so entails?

We do so by 'keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus'⁵⁴ and remembering the 'why' of what we are doing. This means that, whatever our role in Church of England and Methodist education, we should always remember that we must do the right thing for the pupils and adults in our Church schools rather than being sidetracked into a performative focus on being seen to do things right.

This takes us back to our Christian vision, our *raison d'être* in Church school education. And that is why SIAMS will, unapologetically and without fail, take everything back to a school's theologically rooted Christian vision.

⁵³ Hebrews 12 vs 1-2

⁵⁴ *ibid*

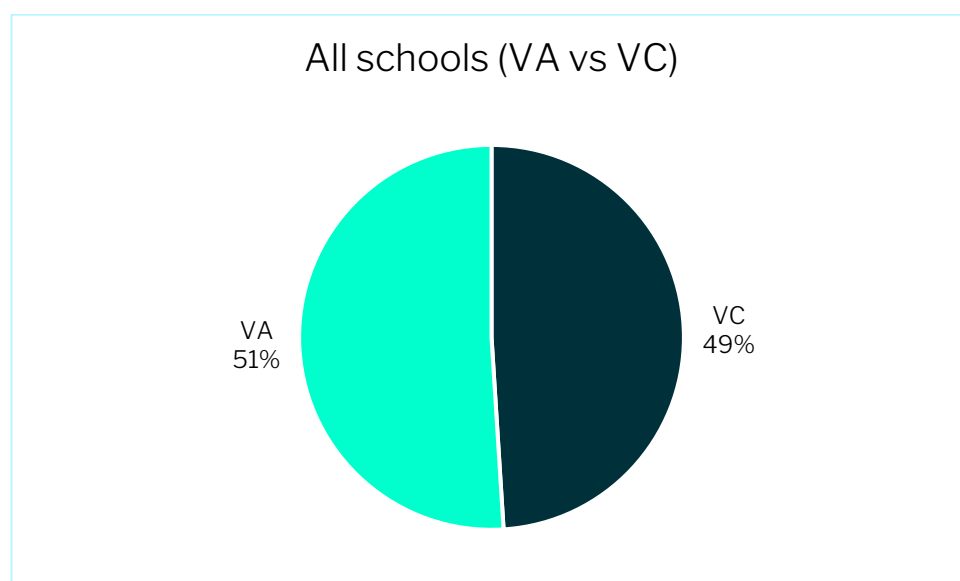


Annex 1 - Inspection data 2025-2026

Notes:

- Data extracted 29/07/2026.
- Total 887 inspections between 1st September 2025 and 31 July 2026.
- Where reference in the following charts is to 'VA' and 'VC', unless specified otherwise, e.g. with reference particularly to maintained and academy, this is being used as shorthand for the type of inspection that was carried out. For VA, IQs1-7 were applied; and for VC IQs 1-6.
- 4 inspections were Catholic led with SIAMS observing, and 6 inspections were in Hindu schools. These 10 inspections have been excluded from the data set leaving a **total of 877 inspections**.
- 865 inspections with a J1 outcome.
- 12 inspections with a J2 outcome.

All schools – inspected as VA vs inspected as VC



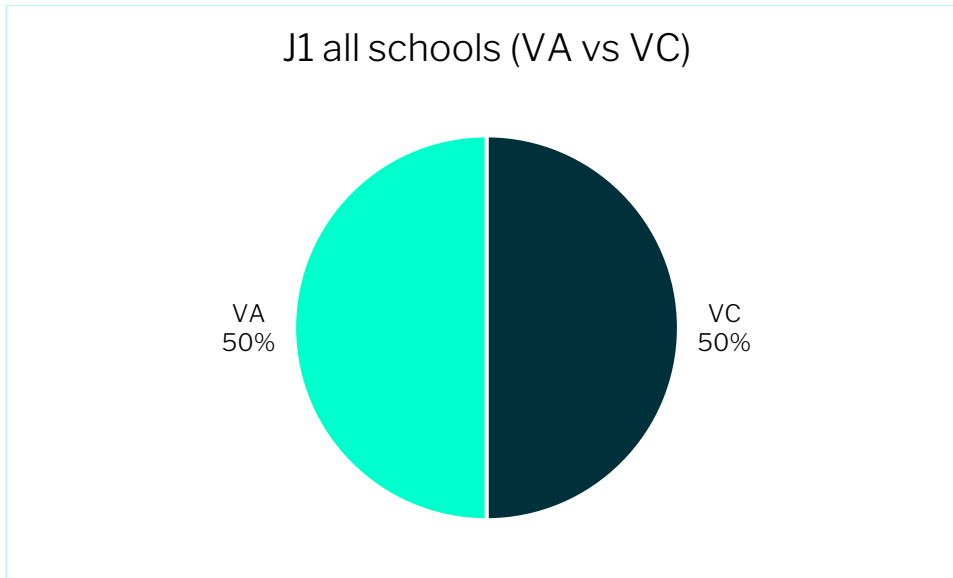
Total 877 inspections (445 VA and 432 VC)

The almost equal percentage of both VA and VC schools in the 2025-2026 inspections renders the analysis here and in the main body of the report similarly applicable to both main categories of school.

The data closely, but not exactly, reflects that for all schools that would be inspected as either VA or VC, with those figures standing at 47% VA and 53% VC.



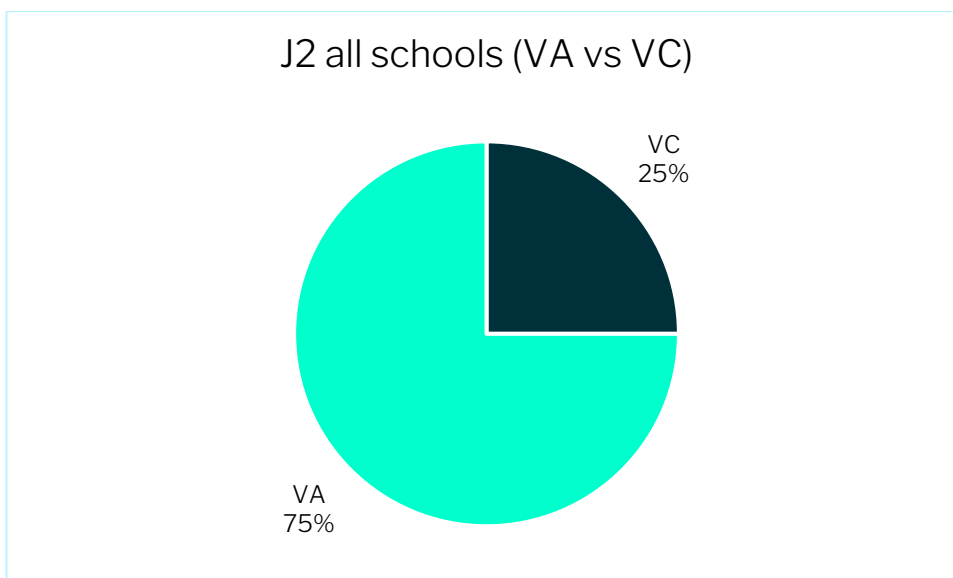
J1 All inspections (inspected as VA vs inspected as VC)



Total J1 inspections: 865 (436 VA and 429 VC inspections)

Given the high percentage of J1 outcomes, 50/50 is an unsurprising statistic

J2 All inspections (inspected as VA vs inspected as VC)

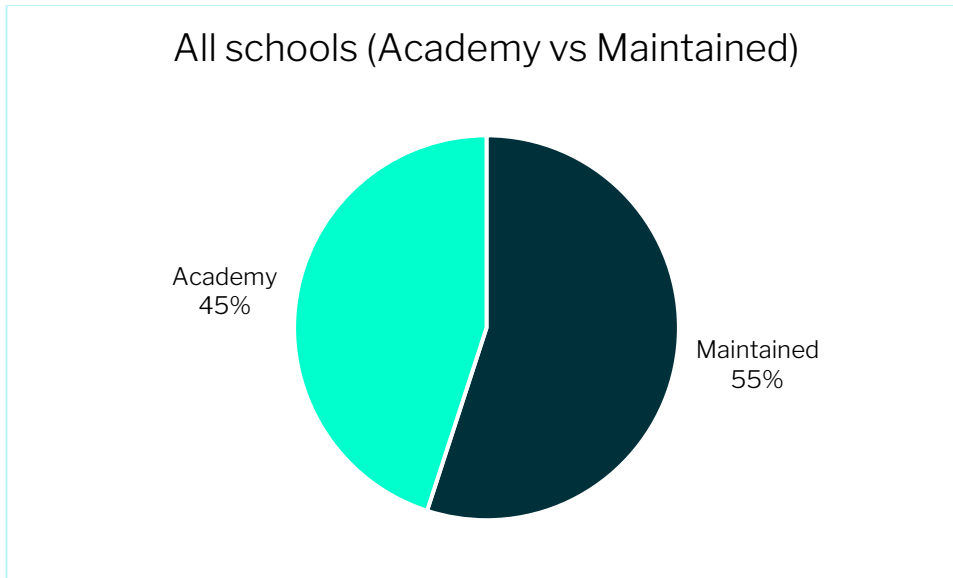


Total J2 inspections: 12 (9 VA and 3 VC inspections)

The prevalence of VA inspections in the J2 data, despite being low in number, reflects the occurrence of IQ7 as a reason for a J2. IQ6 is also a frequently occurring reason, discussed in the main body of the report in relation to religious education.



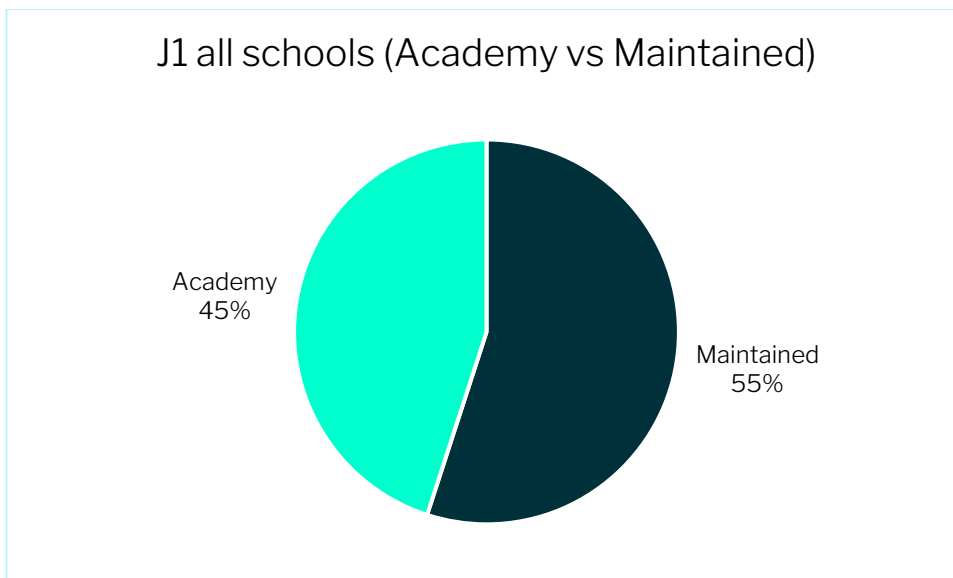
All inspection in all schools – academy vs maintained



Total 877 inspections (395 academy and 482 maintained)

This does not reflect the difference in type of inspection (VA/VC)

J1 All inspections (academy vs maintained)

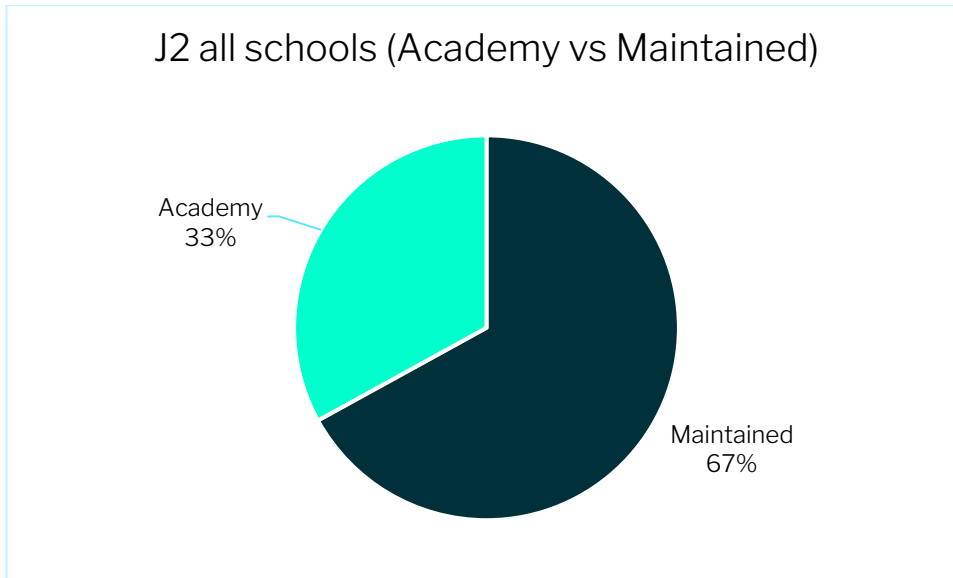


Total J1 inspections = 865 (391 academy and 474 maintained)

Over the last two years, maintained schools performed better than academies (2023-24: 36%/64%); 2024-25: 42%/58%), but with the trend in favour of academies. The trend continues emphatically this year, possibly explained by the potential increased opportunity for collaboration, sharing of expertise, and resourcing within the academy sector. It could also be impacted by the gradual increase in academy numbers.



J2 All inspections (academy vs maintained)



Total J2 inspections = 12 (4 academy and 8 maintained)

Numbers are very small and so percentages are statistically insignificant when taken out of context.

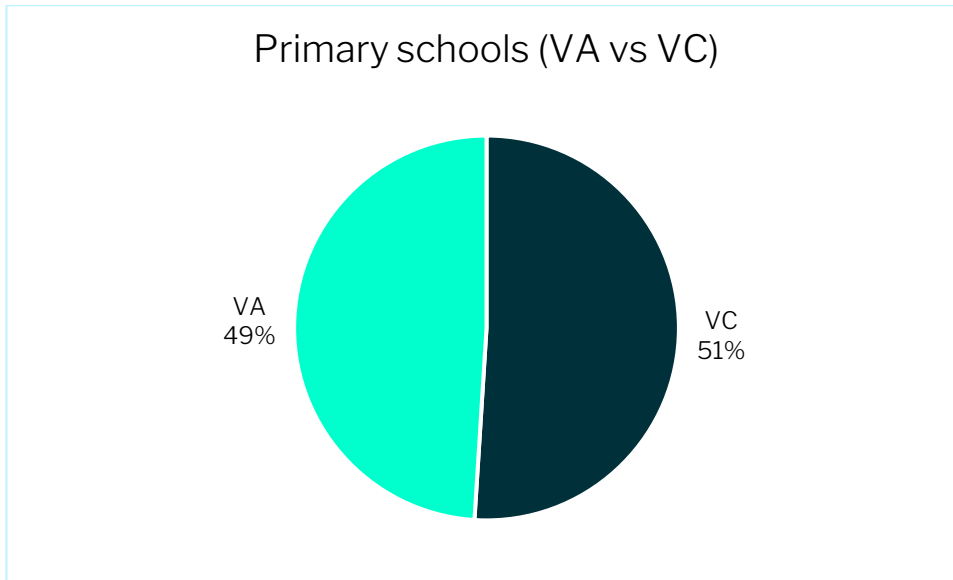
This is a natural extension of the J1 academy/maintained data.



All Primary school inspections

- Includes First and Primary school inspections
- Total Primary inspections: 829
- 820 J1s (98.9%); 9 J2s (1.1%)

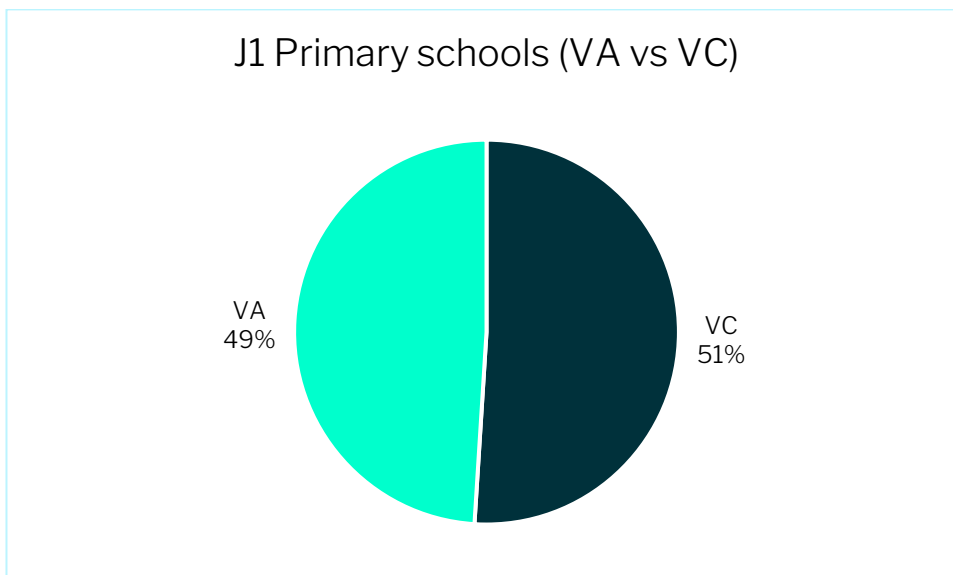
Primary – inspected as VA vs inspected as VC



Total 829 Primary inspections (406 VA and 423 VC schools)

As the vast majority (94.5%) of all inspections in 2025-2026 were carried out in schools categorised as primary, it is unsurprising that this data closely matches that for all inspections.

J1 Primary inspections (inspected as VA vs inspected as VC)

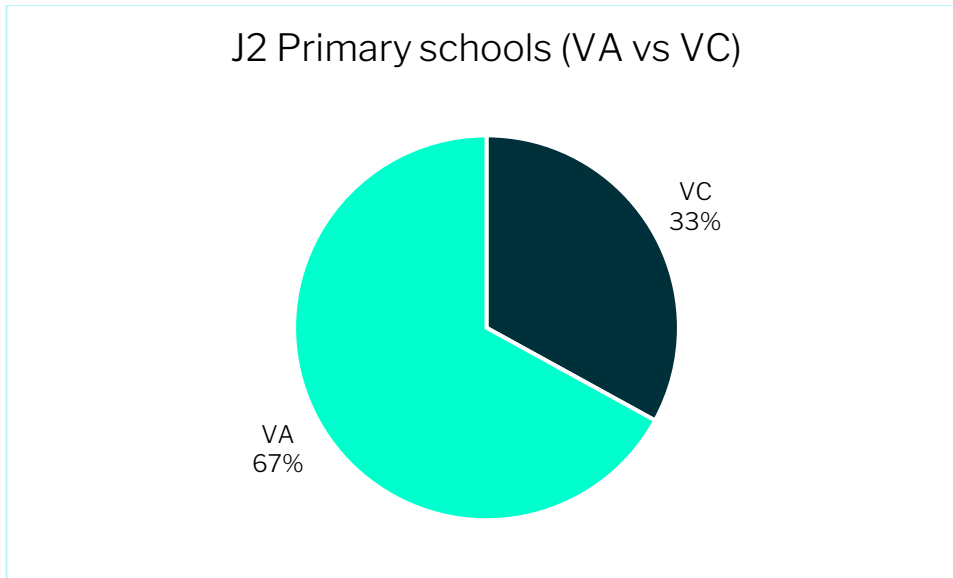


Total J1 Primary inspections = 820 (400 VA and 420 VC inspections)

It is interesting but not significant that this data closely reflects that for all primary inspections.



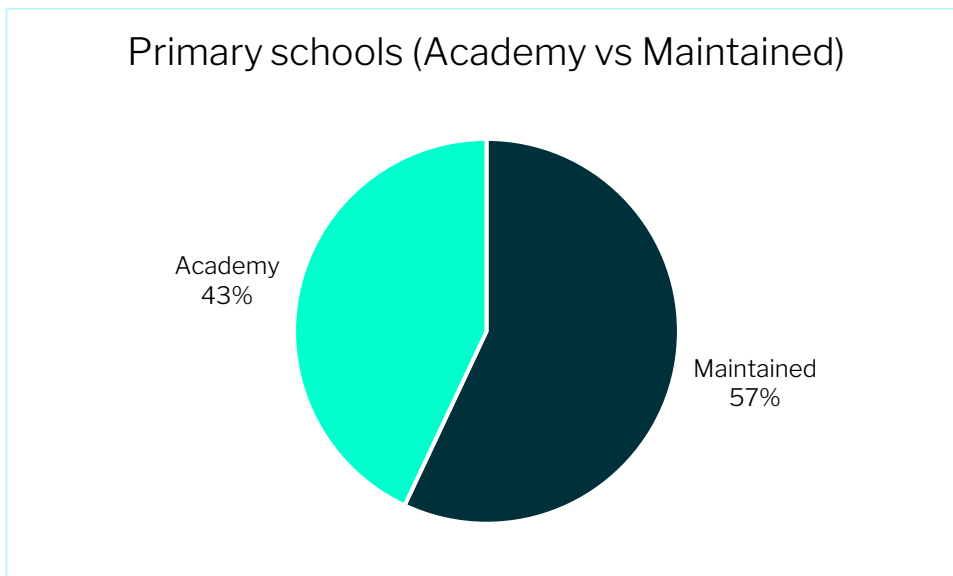
J2 Primary inspections (inspected as VA vs inspected as VC)



Total J2 Primary inspections: 9 (6 VA and 3 VC inspections)

As the numbers are so low, the statistic is generally insignificant. However, the prevalence of IQ6 and IQ7 (RE) in the J2 data is contextually significant however small, and worthy of note as discussed in the main body of the report.

All inspections: Primary – academy vs maintained

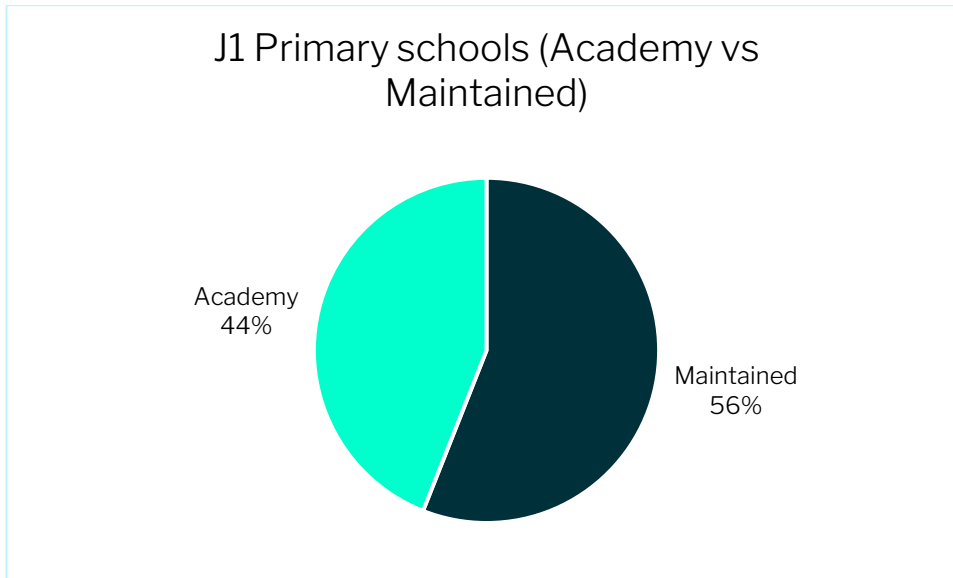


Total 829 Primary inspections (358 academy and 471 maintained schools)

This indicates that there are generally more secondary Church of England academies than primary.



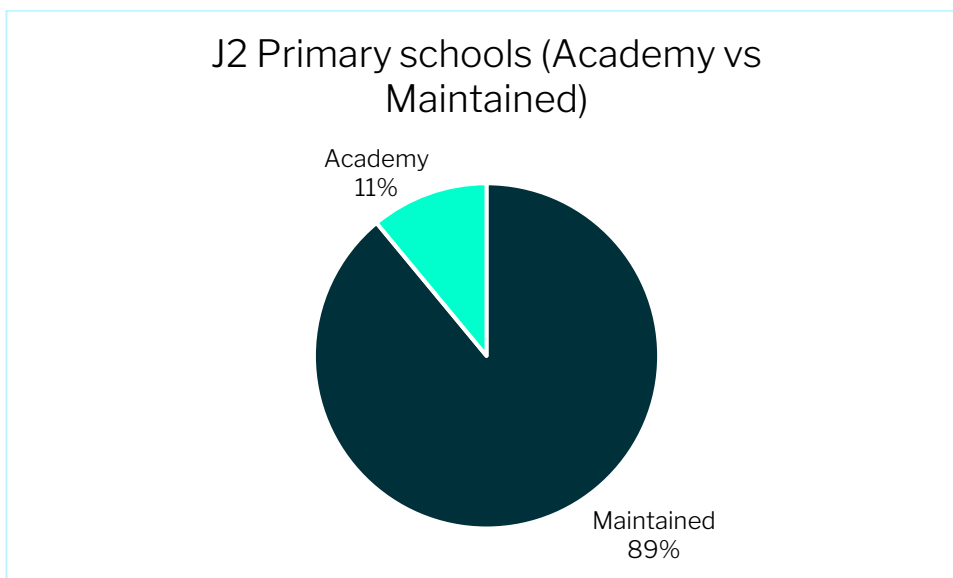
J1 Primary inspections (academy vs maintained)



Total J1 Primary inspections = 820 (357 academy and 463 maintained)

This obviously closely reflects the statistics for all primary inspections.

J2 Primary inspections (academy vs maintained)



Total J2 Primary inspections = 9 (1 Academy and 8 Maintained).

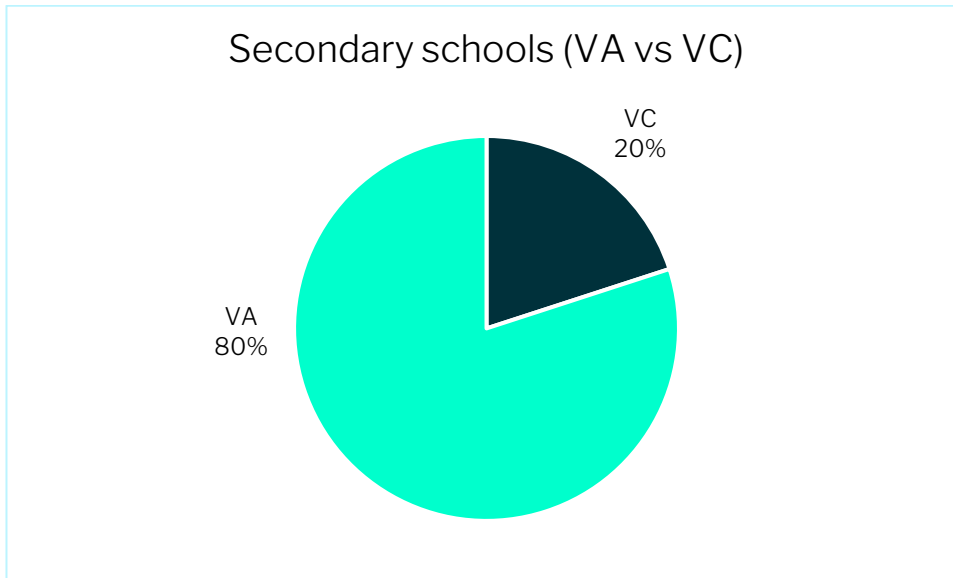
Although low in number, this statistic is contextually significant as it suggests a greater strength in primary academies than in primary maintained schools. Given the prevalence of IQs 6 and 7 in the reasons for a J2, it also suggests that RE might be becoming a greater strength in primary academies than in their maintained counterparts. It will be worth both DBEs and the NSE monitoring this next year.



Secondary schools

- Includes Middle deemed Secondary and Secondary school inspections
- Total Secondary inspections: 41
- 39 J1s, 2 J2s

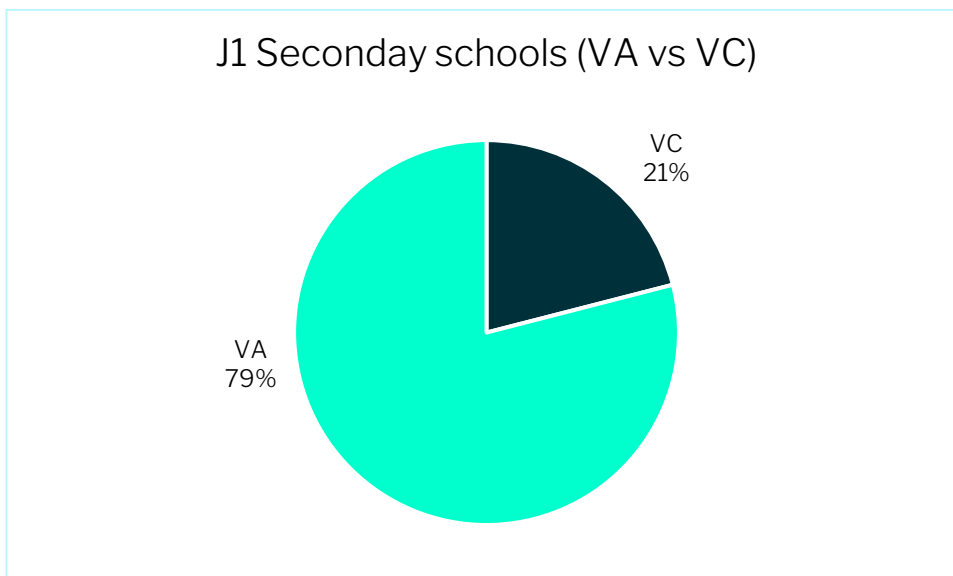
Secondary – inspected as VA vs inspected as VC



Total Secondary inspections = 41 (33 VA and 8 VC)

Numbers are reasonably low and so statistically should only be taken within the context of what they tell us about overall strengths and development points.

J1 Secondary inspections (inspected as VA vs inspected VC)



Total J1 Secondary inspections = 39 (31 VA and 8 VC inspections)

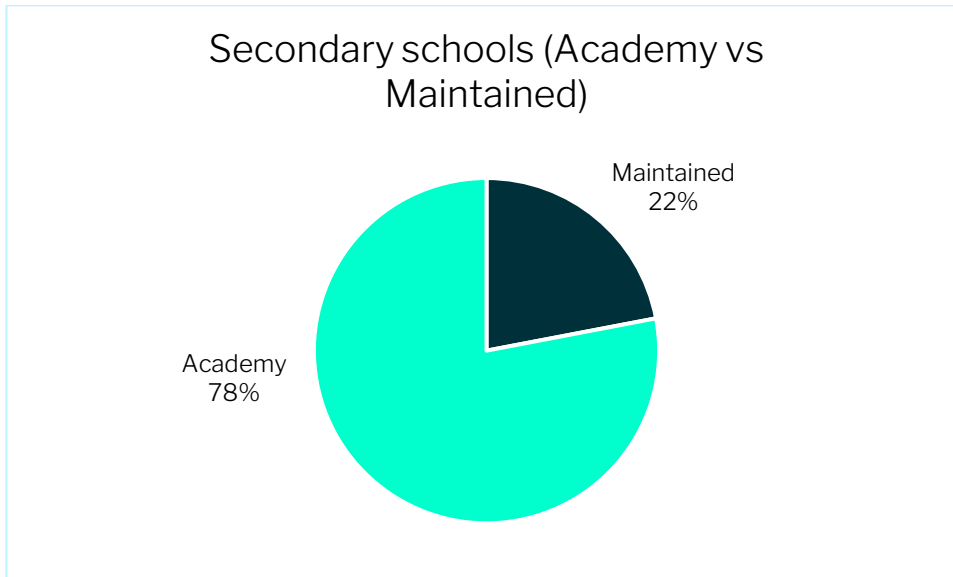
Interesting, but insignificant, that this closely reflects the data for all secondaries.



J2 Secondary inspections (inspected as VA vs inspected as VC)

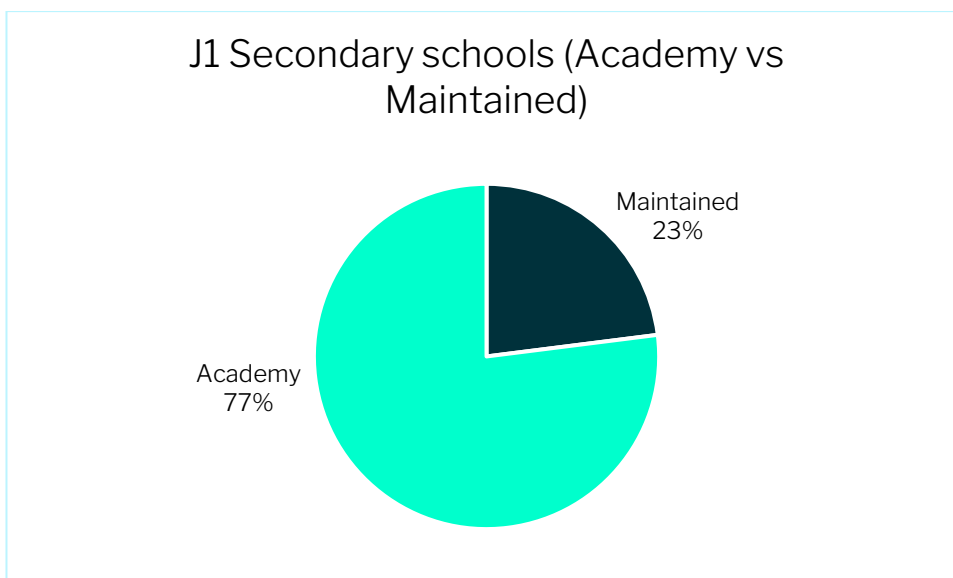
- 2 J2 Secondary inspections (2 VA and 0 VC)
- Both secondary J2 inspections had IQ 6 and/or IQ7 as reasons for the outcome.

All Secondary inspections - academy vs maintained



Total Secondary inspections = 41 (only 18% of all CofE secondary schools) of which 32 Academy [78%] and 9 Maintained [22%]

J1 Secondary inspections (academy vs maintained)



Total J1 Secondary inspections = 39 (30 Academy and 9 Maintained)

This closely reflects the total for all secondary inspections which is encouraging.



J2 Secondary inspections (academy vs maintained)

2 J2 Secondary inspections (2 academy and 0 maintained).

Both of the secondary school J2 inspections had IQ6 as a reason for the outcome.

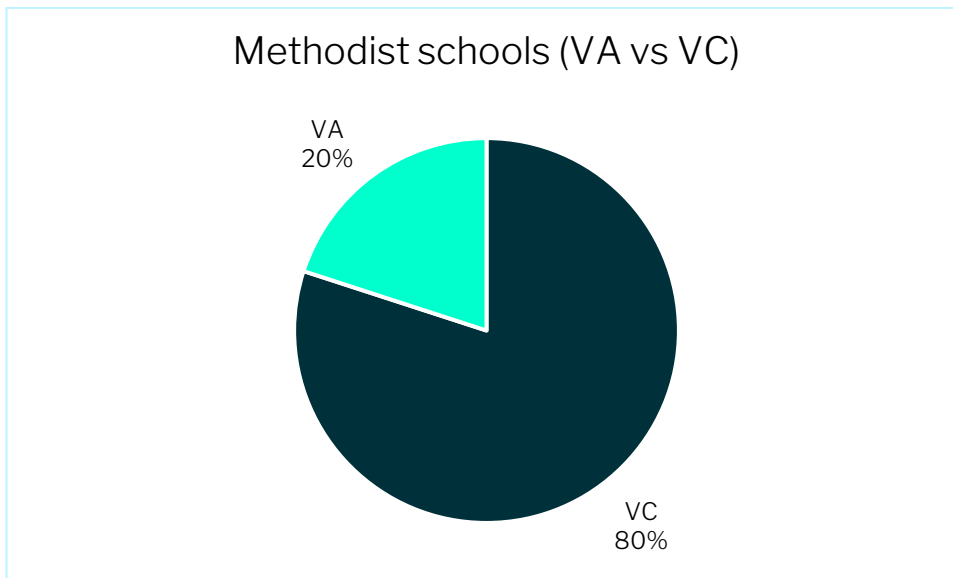
All through schools

- 7 inspections
- 6 VA and 1 VC school
- 5 academy and 2 maintained schools
- 6 J1s and 1 J2 (VA academy).

Methodist schools

- Inspection outcomes taken from schools that are categorised as Methodist Primary and Joint Church of England/Methodist Primary
- 5 inspected in total (2 Methodist Primary and 3 Joint)
- All are Primary schools and were awarded J1
- 1 VA and 4 VC schools
- 1 academy and 4 maintained schools

Methodist - VA vs VC

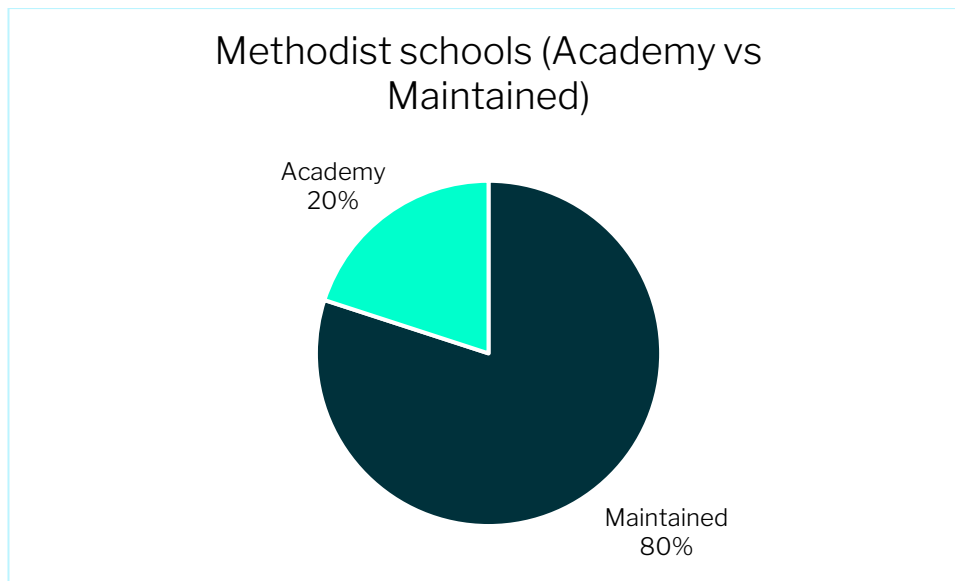


Total Methodist inspections = 5 (1 VA and 4 VC)

Numbers are very small and so statistically insignificant.



Methodist - academy vs maintained



Total Methodist inspections = 5 (1 academy and 4 maintained)

Numbers are very small and so statistically insignificant.

Joint Church of England/Catholic schools

- 7 inspected in total (1 Primary and 6 Secondary).
- 3 J1s (4 inspections had SIAMS as observers and so no judgement given).
- All VA schools.
- 3 were academy and 4 maintained.

Other schools

- Two schools that were inspected had different categorisations not covered so far (1 school was a Joint Church of England/United Reformed Church Primary and 1 school was a Christian All-Through).
- Both these schools received J1s
- 1 academy and 1 maintained
- 1 VA and 1 VC.



J2 inspections – IQ data

Total number of J2s: 12

12 schools were awarded a J2, because the inspector could not answer in full one of the seven IQs. Full breakdown below:

- 6 schools couldn't answer 1 of the IQs.
- 3 schools couldn't answer 2 of the IQs.
- 1 couldn't answer either 3 IQs.
- 2 couldn't answer either 4 IQs.
- 0 couldn't answer either 5 IQs.
- 0 couldn't answer either 6 IQs.
- 0 schools couldn't answer all 7 IQs.

IQ6 most commonly could not be answered as it occurred for 7 of the J2 inspections. This was a similar result to both 2024-2025 and 2023-2024, where IQ6 was also the most common reason for an inspection to have resulted in a J2 outcome. This highlights the need for a focus on improvements nationally in RE.

The frequency of being unable to answer the other IQs is as follows:

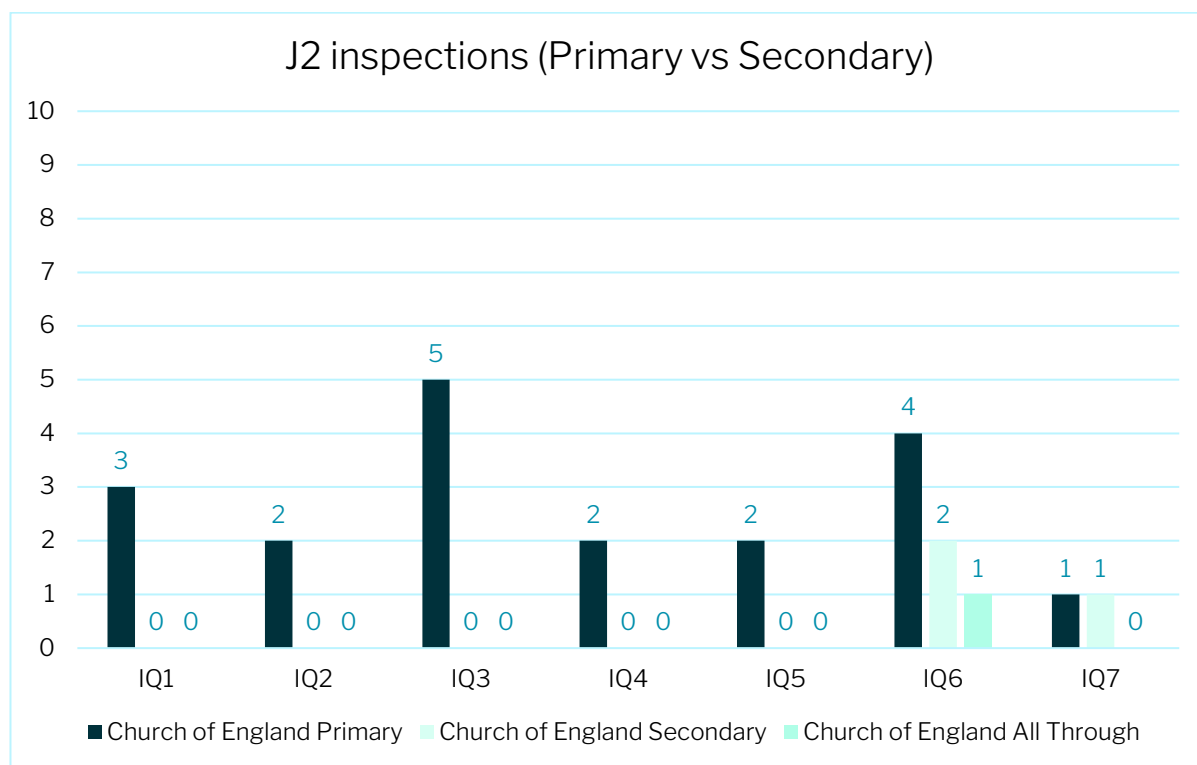
- IQ1 in 3 inspections
- IQ2 in 2 inspections
- IQ3 in 5 inspections
- IQ4 in 2 inspections
- IQ5 in 2 inspections
- IQ6 in 7 inspections
- IQ7 in 2 inspections



J2 outcomes - school status

9 Primary schools, 2 Secondary schools, and 1 All through school were awarded J2 in their inspections.
The full breakdown is as follows:

- IQ1 in 3 (all Primary Schools)
- IQ2 in 2 (all Primary Schools)
- IQ3 in 5 (all Primary Schools)
- IQ4 in 2 (all Primary Schools)
- IQ5 in 2 (all Primary Schools)
- IQ6 in 7 (4 Primary Schools, 2 Secondary Schools, 1 All through school)
- IQ7 in 2 (1 Primary School, 1 Secondary School, 0 All through schools).

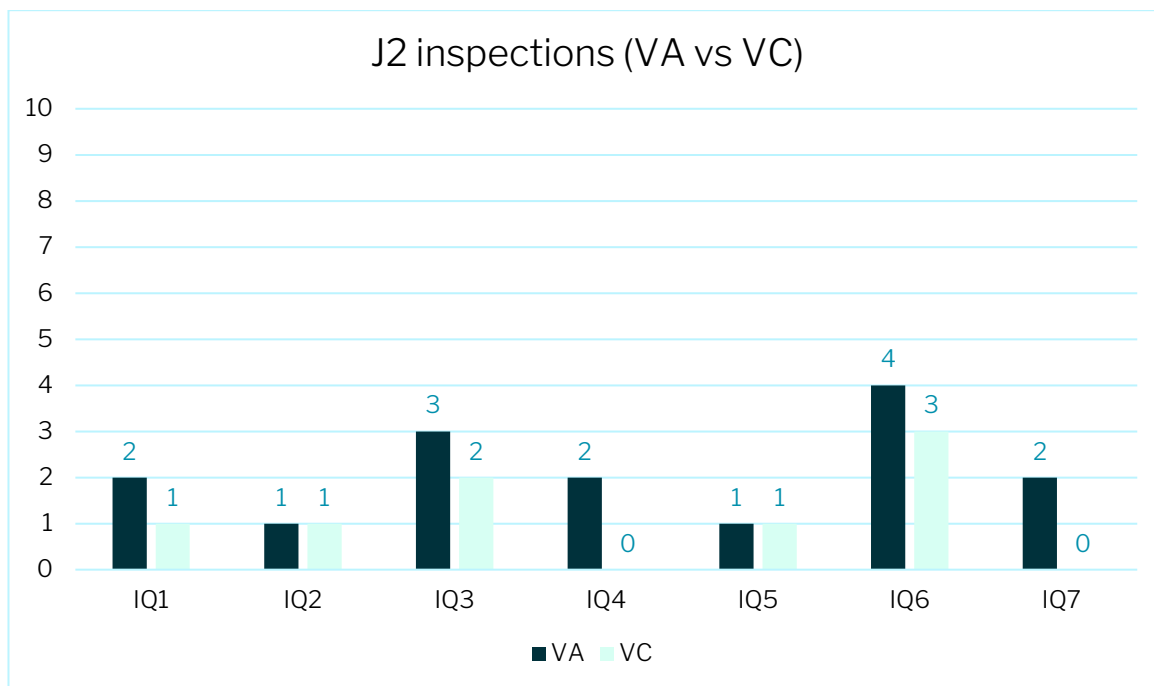




J2 outcomes – schools inspected as VA vs schools inspected as VC

9 schools inspected as VA and 3 schools inspected as VC were awarded a J2.
The full breakdown is below:

- IQ1 in 3 (2 VA, 1 VC)
- IQ2 in 2 (1 VA, 1 VC)
- IQ3 in 5 (3 VA, 2 VC)
- IQ4 in 2 (2 VA, 0 VC)
- IQ5 in 2 (1 VA, 1 VC)
- IQ6 in 7 (4 VA, 3 VC)
- IQ7 in 2 (2 VA, 0 VC)

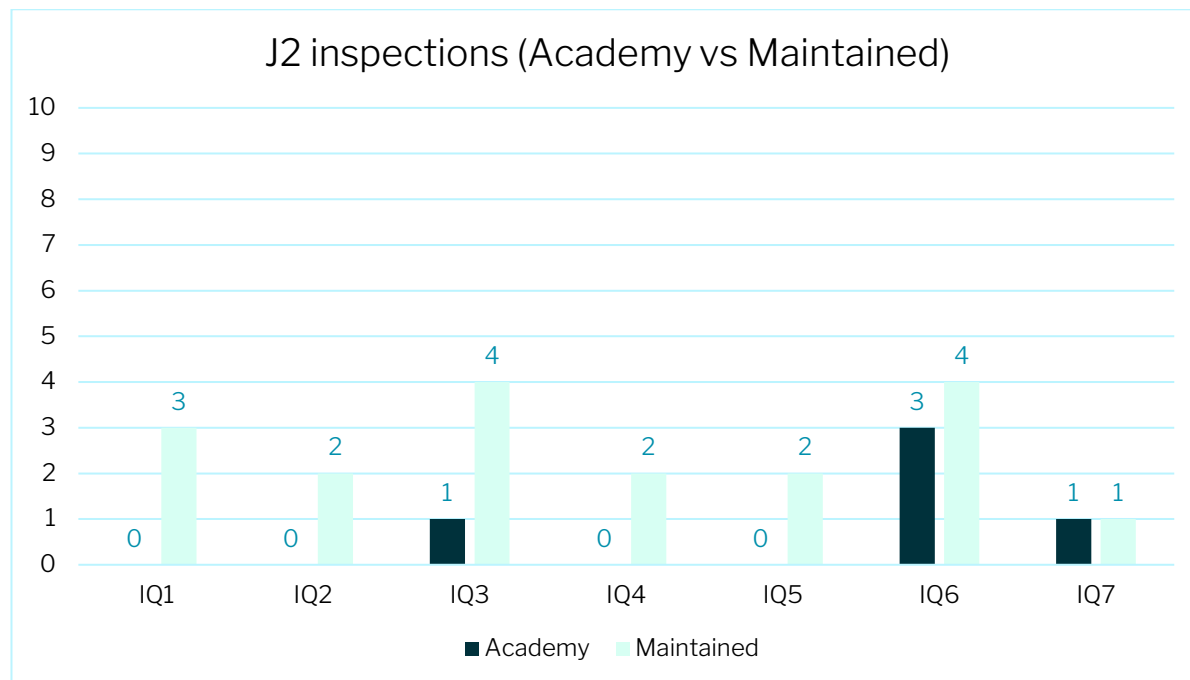




J2s – Academy vs Maintained

4 Academies and 8 Maintained schools were awarded a J2. The full breakdown is below:

- IQ1 in 3 (0 Academy, 3 Maintained).
- IQ2 in 2 (0 Academy, 2 Maintained).
- IQ3 in 5 (1 Academy, 4 Maintained).
- IQ4 in 2 (0 Academy, 2 Maintained).
- IQ5 in 2 (0 Academy, 2 Maintained).
- IQ6 in 7 (3 Academy, 4 Maintained).
- IQ7 in 2 (1 Academy, 1 Maintained).



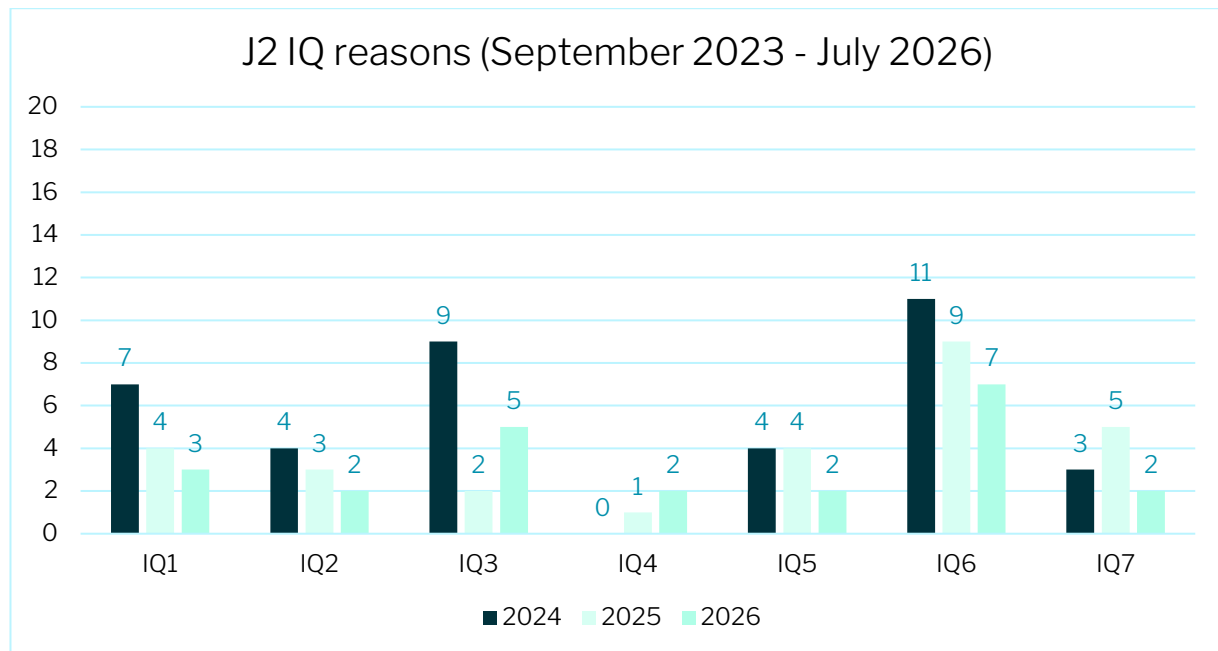


J2 Outcomes (2023 – 2026)

There has been a total of 40 inspections resulting in a J2 between 01 September 2023 – 31 July 2026:

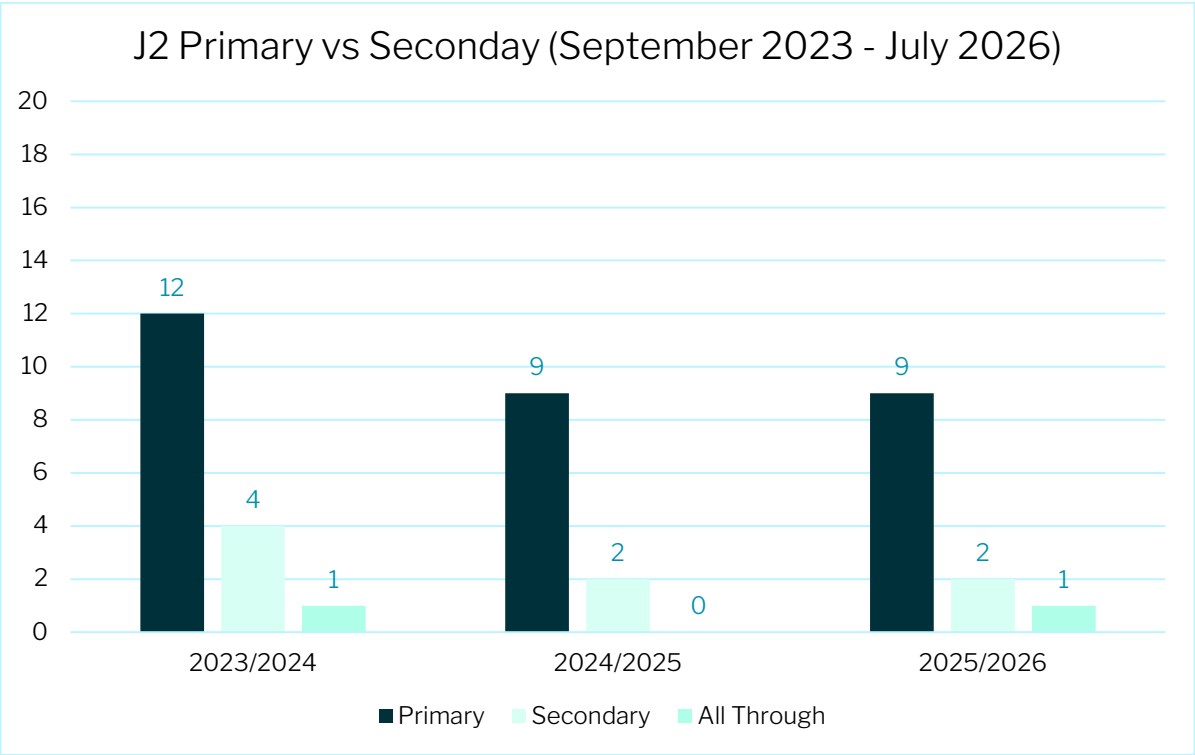
- 01/09/2023 – 31/07/2024 = 17 J2 outcomes.
- 01/09/2024 – 31/07/2025 = 11 J2 outcomes.
- 01/09/2025 – 31/07/2026 = 12 J2 outcomes

In all three years, IQ6 has been the most frequently cited reason for a J2 outcome:

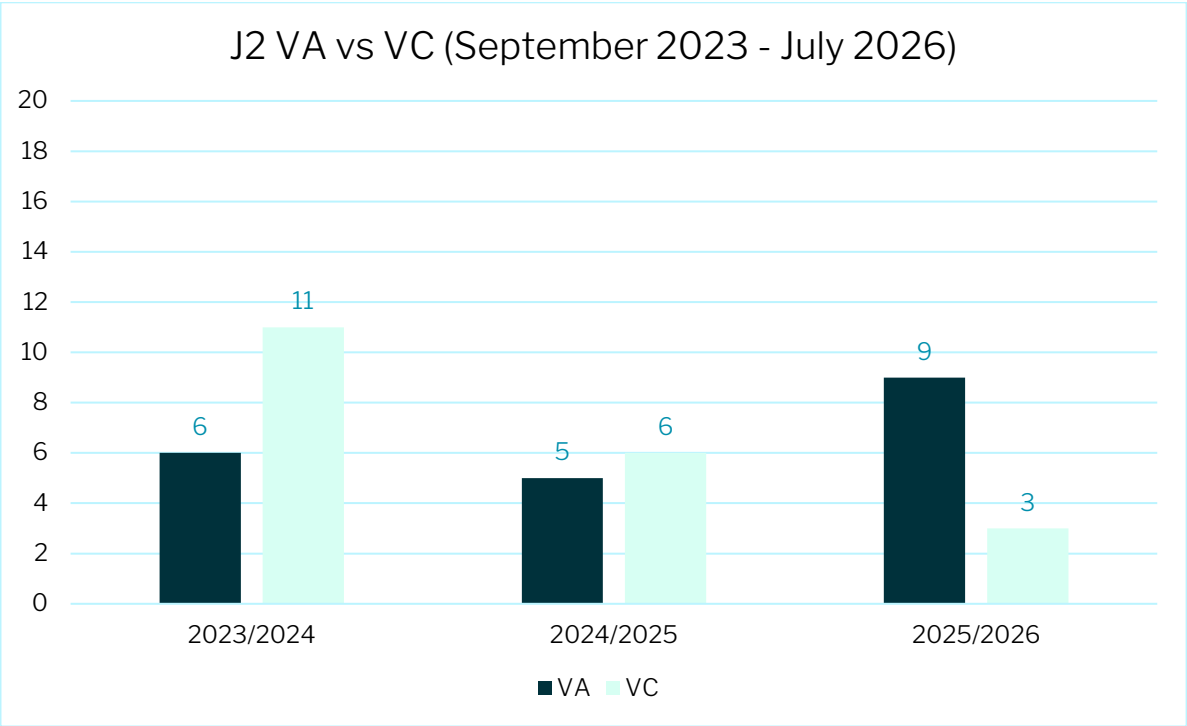




Between 01 September 2023 and 31 July 2026, there were 30 Primary, 8 Secondary, and 2 All through schools that were awarded a J2.

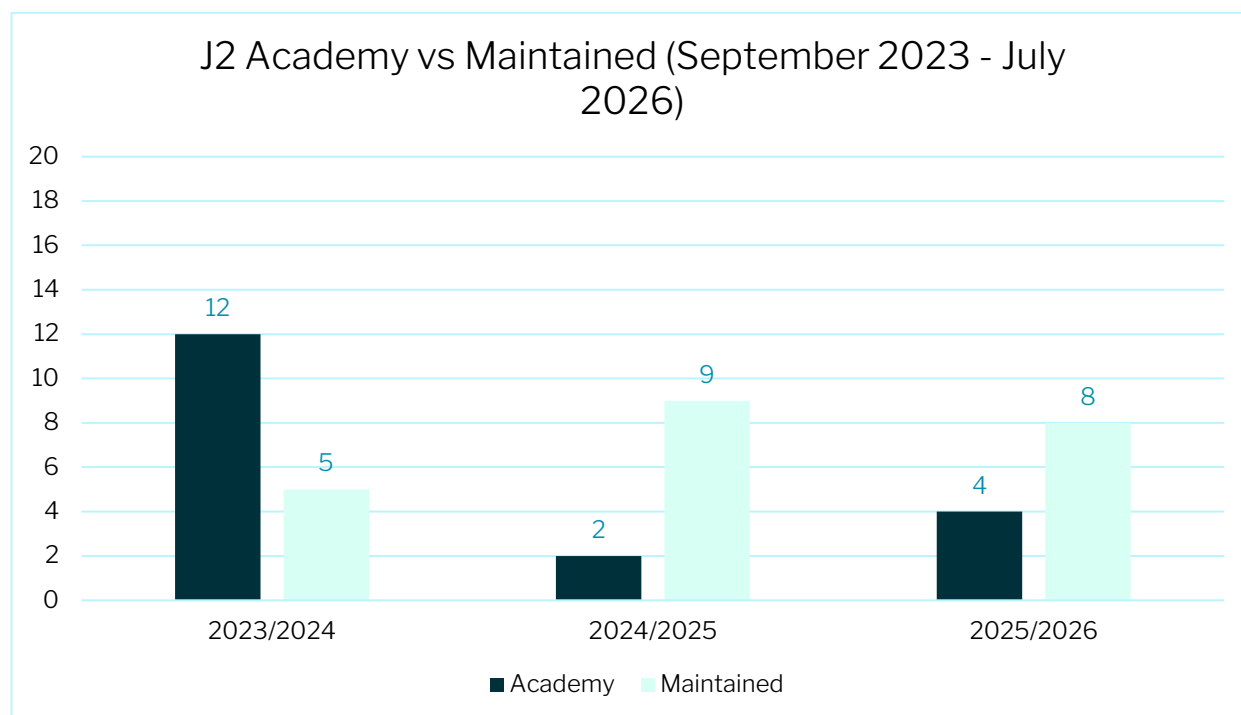


Between 01 September 2023 and 31 July 2026, there were 20 schools inspected as VA and 20 schools inspected as VC that were awarded a J2.





Between 01 September 2023 and 31 July 2026, there were 18 academy schools and 22 maintained schools that were awarded a J2.



This data indicates that, over time, both schools inspected as VC and schools inspected as VA; and academy and maintained schools performed reasonably equally. However, as seen in this year's academy/maintained data, the trend is towards stronger performance by academies.



Annex 2 - SIAMS inspection data per diocese 2025-2026

1. Diocese of Bath & Wells

- Total number of inspections = 25 (25 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	7	18	18	7
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	7	18	18	7

2. Diocese of Birmingham

- Total number of inspections = 11 (10 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	4	6	9	1
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	5	6	10	1

3. Diocese of Blackburn

- Total number of inspections = 36 (34 Primary, 2 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	30	4	7	27
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	1	1
Total	32	4	8	28

4. Diocese of Bristol

- Total number of inspections = 16 (16 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	2	14	10	6
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	2	14	10	6



5. Diocese of Canterbury

- Total number of inspections = 28 (27 Primary, 0 Secondary, 1 All through).
- 1 school inspected as a VC awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	7	20	9	18
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Number of All through inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	8	20	10	18

6. Diocese of Carlisle

- Total number of inspections = 20 (20 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	7	13	2	18
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	7	13	2	18

7. Diocese of Chelmsford

- Total number of inspections = 35 (34 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	16	18	18	16
Number of Secondary inspections	0	1	1	0
Total	16	19	19	16

8. Diocese of Chester

- Total number of inspections = 29 (29 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 1 school inspected as a VC awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	15	14	9	20
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	15	14	9	20



9. Diocese of Chichester

- Total number of inspections = 39 (39 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 1 school inspected as a VC awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	17	22	8	31
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	17	22	8	31

10. Diocese of Coventry

- Total number of inspections = 18 (18 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	6	12	7	11
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	6	12	7	11

11. Diocese of Derby

- Total number of inspections = 16 (15 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	3	12	6	9
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	4	12	7	9

12. Diocese of Durham

- Total number of inspections = 21 (20 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	15	5	12	8
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	16	5	13	8



13. Diocese of Ely

- Total number of inspections = 8 (8 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 1 school inspected as a VA awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	5	3	4	4
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	5	3	4	4

14. Diocese of Exeter

- Total number of inspections = 31 (31 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	13	18	20	11
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	13	18	20	11

15. Diocese of Gloucester

- Total number of inspections = 19 (19 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	5	14	3	16
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	5	14	3	16

16. Diocese of Guildford

- Total number of inspections = 14 (14 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	10	4	6	8
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	10	4	6	8



17. Diocese of Hereford

- Total number of inspections = 27 (26 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	14	12	9	17
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	0	1
Total	15	12	9	18

18. Diocese of Leeds

- Total number of inspections = 39 (36 Primary, 3 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.
- 1 Catholic led inspection (left out of analysis).

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	16	20	18	18
Number of Secondary inspections	3	0	3	0
Total	19	20	21	18

19. Diocese of Leicester

- Total number of inspections = 16 (14 Primary, 1 Secondary, 1 All through).
- 1 school inspected as a VA awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	7	7	10	4
Number of Secondary inspections	0	1	1	0
Number of All through inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	8	8	12	4

20. Diocese of Lichfield

- Total number of inspections = 35 (33 Primary, 2 Secondary).
- 1 school inspected as a VA awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	9	24	24	9
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	1	1
Total	11	24	25	10



21. Diocese of Lincoln

- Total number of inspections = 17 (17 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	2	15	5	12
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	2	15	5	12

22. Diocese of Liverpool

- Total number of inspections = 16 (16 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.
- 3 Catholic led inspections (left out of analysis).

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	11	5	8	8
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	11	5	8	8

23. Diocese of London

- Total number of inspections = 35 (30 Primary, 5 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	29	1	6	24
Number of Secondary inspections	5	0	4	1
Total	34	1	10	25

24. Diocese of Manchester

- Total number of inspections = 20 (17 Primary, 2 Secondary, 1 All through).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	8	9	5	12
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	2	0
Number of All through inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	11	9	8	12



25. Diocese of Newcastle

- Total number of inspections = 10 (9 Primary, 1 Secondary)
- 1 school inspected as VA awarded a J2

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	7	2	6	3
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	8	2	7	3

26. Diocese of Norwich

- Total number of inspections = 17 (16 Primary, 0 Secondary, 1 All through).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	7	9	8	8
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Number of All through inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	8	9	9	8

27. Diocese of Oxford

- Total number of inspections = 53 (50 Primary, 3 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	21	29	25	25
Number of Secondary inspections	2	1	3	0
Total	23	30	28	25

28. Diocese of Peterborough

- Total number of inspections = 12 (9 Primary, 3 Secondary).
- 1 school inspected as a VA awarded a J2.

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



29. Diocese of Portsmouth & Winchester

- Total number of inspections = 27 (25 Primary, 1 Secondary, 1 All through).
- 1 school inspected as a VA awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	8	17	2	23
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	0	1
Number of All through inspections	0	1	0	1
Total	9	18	2	25

30. Diocese of Rochester

- Total number of inspections = 17 (16 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 1 school inspected as a VA awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	8	8	4	12
Number of Secondary inspections	1	0	1	0
Total	9	8	5	12

31. Diocese of Salisbury

- Total number of inspections = 28 (26 Primary, 2 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	20	6	19	7
Number of Secondary inspections	1	1	2	0
Total	21	7	21	7

32. Diocese of Sheffield

- Total number of inspections = 7 (7 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	6	1	5	2
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	6	1	5	2



33. Diocese of Southwark

- Total number of inspections = 29 (26 Primary, 2 Secondary, 1 All through).
- 1 school inspected as a VA awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	25	1	3	23
Number of Secondary inspections	2	0	0	2
Number of All through inspections	1	0	0	1
Total	28	1	3	26

34. Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

- Total number of inspections = 12 (11 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	6	5	6	5
Number of Secondary inspections	0	1	1	0
Total	6	6	7	5

35. Diocese of St Albans

- Total number of inspections = 28 (27 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 1 school inspected as a VA awarded a J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	14	13	8	19
Number of Secondary inspections	0	1	0	1
Total	14	14	8	20

36. Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

- Total number of inspections = 17 (16 Primary, 1 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	3	13	13	3
Number of Secondary inspections	0	1	1	0
Total	3	14	14	3



37. Diocese of Truro

- Total number of inspections = 12 (12 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	12	0	9	3
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	12	0	9	3

38. Diocese of Worcester

- Total number of inspections = 15 (13 Primary, 2 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	5	8	7	6
Number of Secondary inspections	1	1	1	1
Total	6	9	8	7

39. Diocese of York

- Total number of inspections = 19 (16 Primary, 3 Secondary).
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	2	14	5	11
Number of Secondary inspections	3	0	3	0
Total	5	14	8	11

40. Methodist schools

- Total number of inspections = 5 (5 Primary, 0 Secondary).
- Includes 3 Joint Church of England / Methodist and 2 Methodist Primary inspections.
- 0 schools awarded J2.

	Inspected as VA	Inspected as VC	Academy	Maintained
Number of Primary inspections	1	4	1	4
Number of Secondary inspections	0	0	0	0
Total	1	4	1	4

