



port continuous improvement in Church schools.

The Church of England (National Society for Education) has published its [latest annual inspection report](#) for Church schools, revealing a smooth transition away from single-word inspection grades to a new framework that emphasises a more compassionate, contextual approach to accountability.

Under the new framework, over 99 per cent of inspections conducted by SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) in the academic year 2023-24 were described by schools as less stressful for leaders, yet more robust in their evaluations. This demonstrates that compassionate accountability can coexist with rigorous standards.

SIAMS is the framework used to evaluate the effectiveness of Church schools in England, focusing on how well they promote Christian vision, Religious Education (RE), collective worship, and holistic education.

The report also reveals significant advantages for children and adults in schools that embrace a robust Christian vision and well-developed spirituality.

In her report, Dr Margaret James, Director of SIAMS, highlights that when Christian vision is deeply embedded into daily school life, both pupils and staff thrive, contributing to a nurturing environment where individuals can flourish. These schools not only meet the academic needs of their students but also support their spiritual, moral, and emotional development, leading to well-rounded, resilient individuals.

The majority of Church schools have successfully integrated inspirational, inclusive, and invitational collective worship into their daily routines. This practice has been a cornerstone in fostering a sense of community and spiritual growth among both pupils and staff.

The report praises the efforts of Church schools to provide a broad, rich, and engaging curriculum that aligns with their Christian vision. By ensuring that their curriculum reflects this vision, these schools are enhancing pupil engagement and holistic development.

Many Church schools have excelled in providing opportunities for students to explore and develop their spirituality. The report acknowledges that in schools where spiritual development is deeply embedded in their ethos, students have shown a greater understanding of their own spirituality and the broader human experience.

The report highlights the positive impact of a Christian vision in creating inclusive and supportive school environments. Schools that have embraced a contextually-appropriate Christian vision are reported to be particularly effective in promoting dignity, respect, and care for all members of their communities, regardless of background or needs.

The report recommends that school leaders and staff engage in continuous expert training on Christian vision, spirituality, and Religious Education (RE). It warns of a 'postcode lottery' regarding the availability of resources to improve the current delivery of RE. This training should

not be limited to the period immediately before inspections but should be an ongoing priority to ensure that the vision is consistently embedded in school practices.

The report also highlights the importance of a well-rounded RE curriculum that reflects Christianity as a global faith while exploring other religious traditions. It urges schools to regularly audit and update their RE curriculum to provide high-quality education that is inclusive and engaging. Additionally, the report emphasises the need for better resource allocation and training to enhance the quality of RE teaching across all key stages.

While the report celebrates many successes, it also identifies areas where improvement is needed. Notably, over a quarter of Church schools in England struggle with effectively incorporating spirituality into their curriculum, which can hinder the holistic development of pupils. The report calls for targeted support and training to address these gaps and ensure that spiritual development is given the same priority as other areas of education.

The report outlines the Church of England's commitment to ensuring that its schools are environments where students not only achieve academically but also grow spiritually and morally. It calls on all Church schools to move beyond inspection-driven practices and embrace a continuous, vision-led approach to education.

The Church of England's Chief Education Officer, Nigel Genders, said: "Our schools nurture over a million young people daily, supporting their academic, spiritual, and moral growth.

"This report demonstrates how we have moved to a more compassionate yet rigorous framework for inspection, underpinned by our Christian vision which shapes everything we do.

"Our vision for education is deeply Christian, with Jesus' promise of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart. This vision isn't just about academic excellence - it's about educating for wisdom, knowledge, and skills, fostering hope and aspiration, building strong, inclusive communities, and ensuring dignity and respect for every individual.

"We are committed to supporting its recommendations and commend the report to dioceses and school leaders so that they can ensure that Church schools consistently deliver high-quality education rooted in Christian principles – an approach deeply valued by students, parents, and carers alike – every day, not just during inspections."

More information

- [Read the 2023-24 SIAMS report.](#)
- In the academic year 2023-2024, a total of 904 inspections were conducted by SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools).
- These inspections account for approximately one-fifth of all Church of England and Methodist schools in England.
- The total number of inspections is almost double that of the previous year and more than three times the number conducted two years ago, reflecting a significant increase in inspection capacity.

Church schools in numbers

- There are 4,630 Church of England schools
- There are 66 Methodist and Joint Methodist Schools in England.
- Approximately 1 million children attend Church of England schools.
- About 15 million people alive today went to a Church of England school.
- A quarter of all primary schools and 228 secondary schools are Church of England.
- There are 1,540 Church of England academies with 280 Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) holding Church of England Articles. This makes the Church of England the biggest provider of academies in England.

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