SIAMS Sign-Off Inspections

Guidance for Trainee Inspectors and Sign-Off Assessors

Restricted Document: For Inspectors only

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Methodist Schools

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

SIAMS Sign-Off Inspection Guidance

1. SIGN-OFF INSPECTIONS: PURPOSE

1.1 The sign-off inspection is the final stage in the training process.

1.2 The Quality Assurance (QA) assessor has to decide whether the trainee is fit to undertake solo inspections on behalf of the Church of England Education Office.

1.3 It is essential that a secure level of competency has been reached in all three areas of the SIAMS inspector competencies in order for the inspector to be registered.

1.4 SIAMS reflects the Church's responsibility to ensure pupils receive the best possible education and the SIAMS report is a public document providing essential information about the impact of the school's Christian vision on its effectiveness.

1.5 The QA assessor's key role is to make recommendations to the National SIAMS Team for the accreditation of the new inspector.

1.6 The QA assessor acts as both coach and assessor. Professional judgement is needed in deciding how to balance these two elements.

1.7 The course leader will brief the assessor on the trainee's progress through the training and this will help in approaching the sign-off.

1.8 The QA assessor acts as the critical reader for the report on behalf of the National SIAMS Team.

2. SIGN-OFF INSPECTIONS: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

2.1 Prior to the inspection day

2.1.1 The course leader confirms by email the name of the QA assessor with both the trainee and the National SIAMS Team.

2.1.2 The QA assessor makes contact with the trainee when the inspection is triggered by the National SIAMS Team, to discuss the timescale for when the first draft of the Pre-Inspection Plan (PIP) and the timetable should arrive with the assessor. A time should also be agreed for initial verbal feedback to the trainee.

2.1.3 The presence of the QA assessor inevitably adds extra elements to the inspection. These should be added to the initial draft of the timetable so that the headteacher is aware of them. As a general guide, these are the additional elements:

- A brief update mid-morning to encourage, remind, or advise the inspector
- 15 minutes at lunchtime to check how well the inspector is interpreting new evidence and thinking about emerging judgements

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- 15 minutes (or longer if necessary) to hear and approve the inspector's final judgements.

2.1.4 The QA assessor contacts the headteacher by telephone to introduce themselves and outline their role.

2.2 The inspection day

2.2.1 If possible, the QA assessor will arrive after the start of the inspection to enable the inspector to establish themselves with the school.

2.2.2 The QA assessor selects a sample of activities to observe that must include a meeting with pupils and a meeting with senior leaders. The QA assessor should always be present for the mid-point update, areas for development meeting with the headteacher, and final feedback.

2.2.3 The QA assessor must maintain a written evidence base using the sign-off log and additional evidence forms if needed.

2.2.4 As the day progresses, the QA assessor may decide to attend more or fewer activities depending on their confidence in the inspector's practice and the security of emerging judgements.

2.2.5 During the second part of the day, it is important to gain the headteacher's view of how the inspection is going and to check the security of the inspector's evidence base.

2.2.6 The QA assessor must:

- Hold a brief update mid-morning to encourage, remind, or advise the inspector

- Allow 15 minutes at lunchtime to check how well the inspector is interpreting new evidence and thinking about emerging judgements. This will form the basis of the update to the headteacher, and any requests made for changes to the afternoon timetable. The QA assessor will be looking to see how well the inspector is pursuing the issues to explore from the PIP and makes use of the grade descriptors.

- Hear and approve the inspector's final judgements. This should involve a level of challenge to ensure the inspector is secure in their thinking. The QA assessor will also want to know the inspector's draft areas to improve. This discussion should take place once evidence-gathering is complete, and the inspector has reflected on the final judgements. These provisional grades must only be shared confidentially with the headteacher after the QA assessor has approved them.

2.2.7 The QA assessor maintains the role of observer and is unlikely to contribute to any meetings or feedback unless the inspector has missed a vital point or where the school

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raises a question of procedure. Any interventions must be recorded in the QA log. As per section 3.2.2 of this document, the decision to intervene must also be shared with the headteacher immediately. Where possible, it is better to remain at the side/back of the room so that members of the school focus on the inspector.

2.2.8 When the inspection is progressing smoothly, it is important to offer some words of encouragement outside of activities as well as a few prompts to help the inspector refine their practice. Time is under pressure so the prompts must be selected for their potential impact and succinctly expressed. They should be recorded in the QA log.

2.2.9 If necessary, the QA Assessor acts in place of the Duty Desk during the inspection. If, however, in the view of the QA Assessor, the trainee would benefit from the opportunity to practise a conversation with the Duty Desk and time permits, contact with the Duty Desk may be made.

2.3 After the inspection day

2.3.1 The QA assessor uses the process of critical reading the report to ensure it is fit for purpose.

2.3.2 The QA assessor completes the final sign-off assessment. The QA assessor must take into account the context of the inspection and use their professional judgement in making a final assessment. The assessor's decision will be made against the three inspector competencies.

3. WHAT IF…?

3.1 In what circumstances might a trainee not be signed off?

3.1.1 The following statements highlight aspects of practice that suggest the trainee inspector is not yet competent to carry out inspections independently. They should be viewed in the light of the impact they have on the inspector's ability to make secure judgements. The QA assessor may decide that a sign-off has not been successful where any one of the following has made a significant impact on the inspection.

- Professional misconduct – see SIAMS Code of Conduct.
- Consistently poor time management, for example, late arrival of the PIP; insufficient time allowed for reflection; 30 minutes or more delay in feeding back; missing deadlines for report writing.
- Inadequate preparation, for example, SIAMS templates are not used correctly; interview questions have not been prepared; poor organisation of paperwork indicates a lack of understanding of the inspection process.

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- Approach to inspection lacks sufficient evaluation and/or flexibility so the inspector's evidence base does not support judgements.

- Poor inter-personal skills have a detrimental effect on the way in which the inspection is conducted and lead to a lack of confidence in the work of the trainee inspector.

- The inspector has a limited knowledge and understanding of the Evaluation Schedule and/or church school distinctiveness which leads to inaccurate judgements based on the evidence.

- Any feedback provided is inaccurate, misleading and/or delivered in an unprofessional manner.

- The standard of report writing does not meet the expectations of the Checklist for report-writing and the inspector makes limited response to any guidance from the QA assessor.

3.2 What happens if there are concerns about how the inspection is progressing?

3.2.1 Each sign-off inspection must be considered individually, and the QA assessor must use their professional judgement in adopting the role of leader for any part of the inspection. This will be informed by the need to ensure that the school receives a fair and accurate inspection.

3.2.2 The following are the principles that should inform any decision or action taken:

- The QA assessor should make the trainee inspector aware of any concerns and offer guidance and advice at every stage.

- The trainee inspector must be given all possible chances to amend practice within the time restraints of the inspection timetable.

- The QA assessor's decision must be explained to the trainee inspector but there is unlikely to be lengthy discussion as delays to the timetable must be kept to a minimum.

- The headteacher should be informed immediately if the QA assessor takes over the leadership of the inspection or adopts an actively supportive role. It is important that the school is reassured that the inspection will continue as normal and that the decision has been made to ensure the outcomes for the school are fair and accurate.

- The QA assessor must record any alteration to the role of inspector and the reasons for the decision.

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- The Deputy Head of SIAMS should be informed as soon as possible. A brief message may be sent in the first instance to alert them to the change. A detailed email or telephone call should follow this within 24 hours/one working day.

- The final assessment should reflect discussions with the trainee inspector and the Deputy Head of SIAMS. Where possible, the QA assessor should meet with the trainee inspector to discuss the inspector's practice. There are two possible outcomes: the trainee is offered a second assessed sign-off inspection or the trainee is informed that the required skills to carry out SIAMS inspections have not been demonstrated, and so they will not be recommended for registration as a SIAMS Inspector.

- Where the QA assessor considers the trainee inspector to have the capacity to develop the required skills, a second sign-off may be offered. A support plan should be agreed to make sure the trainee inspector is fully prepared for this.

- The QA assessor should provide the trainee with information about how to appeal the decision.

3.3 What happens if the trainee inspector wishes to appeal the QA assessor's final decision?

3.3.1 Communication:

- It is expected that communication of all appeals and decisions will be by email, with documents attached. If any party prefers to receive documents hard copy, this should be requested at the start of the process.

- If the adjudicator requires the hand-written evidence of the trainee inspector and the QA assessor, these should either be sent by registered post or scanned electronically and emailed securely.

- Where a telephone conversation takes place, the main points and agreed outcomes of this should be recorded electronically and stored as part of the evidence base.

3.3.2 The trainee inspector puts the basis of their appeal in writing and sends it electronically to the Deputy Head of SIAMS. This should be received at the Church of England Education Office within 10 working days of the trainee inspector being informed by email of the QA assessor's final decision.

3.3.3 The Deputy Head of SIAMS will immediately acknowledge receipt of the appeal. As he will already be aware of the outcomes of the sign-off an adjudicator will be appointed to investigate the appeal. The Deputy Head of SIAMS will ask a member of the national QA team, who has no knowledge of the particular sign-off, to act as adjudicator and carry out a review. This will address the precise issues raised in the trainee inspector's written appeal.

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3.3.4 The adjudicator may request the evidence bases of both the trainee inspector and the QA assessor. All records held by the course leader regarding the trainee's progress and assessment through the training will also be requested.

3.3.5 These requests must be made with five working days of the adjudicator being appointed.

3.3.6 The evidence should be sent to the adjudicator within five working days of the request.

3.3.7 If the adjudicator has particular questions not answered by the evidence bases, these may be raised by email or by telephone if appropriate.

3.3.8 The adjudicator makes a written recommendation to the Deputy Head of SIAMS within 10 working days of receiving all the evidence requested.

3.3.9 A final and binding decision is made by the Deputy Head of SIAMS. This is conveyed in writing to all parties concerned within five working days of receiving the adjudicator's recommendation.

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