**To           :              Headteachers; Chairs of Governors; Foundation Governors; Ex-officio clergy; Deputy Headteachers;**

**From     :               Jeff Williams**

**Date      :               8th July 2021**

**Re           :              SIAMS update**

Dear colleagues

Welcome back! I hope you had a refreshing and positive break and are able to enjoy the sunshine we are now experiencing.

We remain working from home, and not undertaking routine 1:1 visits to schools, but are delivering some in-person training at staff / governor meetings, and Headteacher recruitment meetings in person/online as required. You’ll have read that there is a debate over a potential half-term firebreak, and Number 10 hasn’t ruled out a two week firebreak if the NHS is overwhelmed, given the rise in covid cases. Our own responsibility to you and your staff means we are waiting to see if the situation in England mirrors that of Scotland when schools returned in August and cases rose exponentially. We are desperate to support you in person, but trust you understand the fluidity of the situation.

Our fortnightly email resumes next week, but we have now received some important details from the National Office regarding the re-commencement of SIAMS inspections, so I wanted to share these with you at the earliest opportunity.

If you have received our training on SIAMS during the past week, our apologies that this information wasn’t available to us then, and we were therefore unable to discuss with you.

After eighteen months suspension, SIAMS inspections will resume in October 2021, starting with the schools that missed their inspections in Spring 2020 and then those that were due in Summer 2020. Normally schools are inspected every five years, but to deal with the backlog this has been changed,  so schools  can expect an inspection within eight years of their last SIAMS. This will revert to five years for subsequent inspections. The Diocesan education team will be given an indication of the term when your inspection will take place, and will of course work closely with you to help you prepare.

In light of the pandemic, some changes have been made to the **SIAMS evaluation schedule** and all the amended documents can be found [here](https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies/siams-inspections) on the Church of England Education Office website. This includes two versions of **the inspection framework**, **an annotated copy, which highlights all the changes, and a ‘clean’ copy**. There are also some new documents such as  a **COVID protocol** and an **appeals and complaints** **policy.** There is also a useful **information document for schools**, which sets out the main developments and is attached. The changes are intended to help inspectors focus on mental health, well-being and spiritual development, in light of the pandemic. There are changes in three main areas: **Data,  COVID and Excellence.**

For the moment, inspectors will not look at published, national data in strand 2,  but will focus instead on how the school’s vision has impacted the curriculum and how children are enabled to make progress and flourish. Similarly, in strand 7 (RE) they will not look at GCSE results, but how students  learn and progress.

The COVID policy makes provision for inspections to be postponed if case numbers rise, and for meetings and interviews to take place remotely if appropriate.

The section on Excellence has been removed from the main body of the framework and is now in an appendix. This is to make clear that the purpose of a SIAMS inspection is to determine whether a school is good. The examples in the excellence section are illustrations, not grade descriptors, and while a school may have several examples of excellent practice, this may not lead to an excellent grade.  Schools will no longer be asked to make a case for excellence, but an excellent grade may be awarded if the school’s vision is innovative and life-changing, and ‘Good’ does not do it justice.

The **self-evaluation form** is intended to be an evolving, working document that helps the school judge the impact of their vision and provision. Inspectors will not necessarily want to see a lengthy document detailing every aspect of a school’s provision, and schools are encouraged to prepare a **two-page summary of key aspects**, focusing on the impact of their provision. This is not a requirement, but is a useful starting point for further discussions.

We have asked for some specific responses to our own understanding of the SEF, acknowledging the considerable work that schools have already undertaken, especially over the Summer. **I will share these with you when we have clarity, but didn’t want to delay sending all of the above while we wait for a response**.

Richard and Sue are tentatively booking in-person SIAMS training for Governing Bodies and Senior Leaders, so please contact them direct if you would like this offer.

Thank you again for all that you do to ensure that the children and young people in our schools receive a high quality, transformative education. We hope that SIAMS will be an opportunity for you to celebrate all the good work that is taking place in schools across our Dioceses. We  look forward to working together with you to help you showcase all you are doing to enable pupils and the wider school community to flourish.

Best wishes

**Jeff**

Jeff Williams

Director of Education

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