



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

Update Three – March 2006

This update is also found on the National Society Website

News and developments

The National Society again wishes to thank all those diocesan officers and inspectors who are working so effectively to make a success of SIAS.

Meetings have been held with Ofsted officers and with Maurice Smith HMCI. A key issue in the discussions has been the Proportionate Inspection Programme (PIP). Mike Hoban HMI and Mike Sutton HMI will be briefing members of JSEICG on their training day on 10th May 2006 on PIP and related inspection matters.

DfES review of Grant payment to inspectors.

We have received confirmation of the new Section 48 grant arrangements for SIAS inspection. The outcome represents a substantial increase in the main grant, which applies from 1 April 2006, as follows:

VA Primary Schools - £550, VC Schools, the CTC & academies - £450, VA Secondary Schools - £1000.

This will apply to all Section 48 inspections carried out after April 1st 2006, regardless of the dates of the related Section 5 inspections. The DRE1 form is being amended accordingly. In the meantime the standing arrangements for payment to Section 48 inspectors remain in force.

Ministers have also given approval for the Department to open discussions with faith group representatives about a restructuring of the way that the grant is administered and the financial ramifications of that. Arrangements for these discussions are underway.

Inspection dates for next term

The next full list with dates of Ofsted Section 5 inspections will be delivered to the

National Society in the next few days. We shall again supply all DDEs (or their designated recipient) in England with their diocesan list in a confidential electronic format within 24 hours of receiving the information. It will be sent to the email address being used for this dispatch and marked Private. *Would DDEs please keep Veronica Elks immediately informed of any changes to the designated recipient.*

RISPs

Working arrangements with the RISPs are improving, with much goodwill expressed, but there are still instances where changes in the scheduling of inspections have not been communicated to dioceses. Ofsted have been swift to intervene in these cases and dioceses should continue to let Nick McKemey know where there are problems, as he follows these up with Ofsted and the RISPs. RISPs are being reminded by Ofsted to send Section 5 reports to dioceses.

Inspection and reporting

The major challenge we face at present is the quality of report writing and the communication of judgements. The National Society commissioned Frank Knowles to author a guide on writing SIAS inspection reports. **This is included as Annex 1 to this Update and is available at www.natsoc.org.uk**. It is expected that the standards of writing set out in this document will form the basis for all inspection and the training and development of SIAS inspectors whether in the diocesan or national context.

We trust all dioceses will ensure that their inspectors take note of this guidance in their SIAS work from now on.

SIAS reports – processes

All reports should be subject to a diocesan quality assurance process (critical reading, sampling, monitoring) **before** being submitted to the school and the National Society.

Reports submitted “independently” by inspectors will be monitored by the NS and may be discussed with the relevant diocese.

After JSEICG and NS monitoring, it has been decided that in the SIAS report each Key question should be **followed** by the corresponding judgement as a “headline” followed by an evaluative paragraph.

The NSJRF with five numerical ratings should now be attached to the report when submitted to the School and governing body. *The NSJRF now includes provision for a rating (1-4) to be made to the Summary Judgement.*

When sending electronic SIAS reports, NSJRFs, correspondence concerning reports, inspector accreditation communications or any other SIAS inspection information please always use; sias@natsoc.org.uk .

A surprising number of SIAS reports reach the NS **without the attendant NSJRF**. Inspectors must attach these. The NS will shortly be conducting some statistical evaluation of SIAS outcomes and these ratings are essential to that process. Inspectors must also insert the **full school name and address** on the report.

Appeals and complaints

The procedure for appeals by schools against SIAS findings and/or complaints about the conduct of inspections/inspectors is as follows:

Step One

The School must raise the issue directly with the SIAS inspector. This may involve re-consideration of evidence or consideration of evidence not already taken into account.

Step Two

If Step One fails to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the school the governing body may ask the diocese to review the report and/or the inspection. The diocese will seek to determine whether the report is fair and judgements are supported by secure evidence. The diocese may also review the performance or conduct of the inspector. The diocese may, with the agreement of the inspector, amend the report (not necessarily in the school's favour).

Step Three

If the school remains dissatisfied with the findings the diocese may refer the case to the National Society. The Society will review the inspection and will either support the inspector's findings and/or conduct of the inspection or, after consultation with the diocese, arrange for a re-inspection to take place, The Society's decision will be final.

The National Society appeals process does not apply to inspectors who are not accredited to the Society or inspectors appointed by a governing body against the expressed advice of the diocese concerned.

Training and Accreditation

When applying for training to undertake SIAS inspection all applicants must have the endorsement of the diocese within which they normally live and/or work. The application to train is, in the first instance, to this diocese. The National Society will not accept for national initial training or for NS/diocesan partnership training any individual whom the relevant diocese has not endorsed.

In 2006/7 all **new and accredited** inspectors will have tasks assessed by members of the NS/diocesan training teams with reference to the standards set out in the SIAS Framework for Training. For initial trainees satisfactory completion of these tasks will enable provisional NS accreditation subject to completion of at least one shadow inspection and the production of a satisfactory first inspection. The views of the school and the diocese along with the final report will form the basis for the evaluation. The relevant diocese and the NS will monitor this. **Shadow inspections should result in a shadow report, separate from the official report, written by the probationary inspector, which is assessed by the diocese.**

To register as an accredited SIAS inspector with the NS all inspectors or must provide evidence to the NS and their dioceses of:

- National Society registration form (on www.nat.soc.org.uk).
- Completion of satisfactory NS endorsed training or retraining on the SIAS Framework for Inspection
- A current (less than 3 years old) Enhanced CRB check
- Current professional liability insurance

After diocesan or regional training sessions it is recommended that the diocese or group representative verifies this data and informs the Society with a list of approved candidates.

Inspectors must also provide the NS with a **digital passport standard** photograph and a completed registration (on NS website). This is required for the production of the SIAS inspector's identity card.

All inspectors meeting the above criteria should register with the National Society even if they are registered with a particular diocese. This will be their "passport" for work elsewhere which dioceses can rely on. The Society's monitoring of SIAS will include information sharing on the quality of inspection and reporting with dioceses.

It is also expected that NS accredited and registered inspectors will wish to take out membership of the National society. This contributes to the costs of SIAS identity cards, quality assurance and administration. Inspectors who are based in schools which have NS membership (school or diocesan block) do not need to pay this as it is assumed that the school will recover the inspector's fees. We are aware that becoming and remaining a SIAS inspector often requires a financial outlay by individual inspectors but we hope inspectors will bear in mind that these costs are tax deductible, the NS has reduced training costs by one third and the new fee levels negotiated by the Society with DfES make the recovery of the investment quicker.

Pre-inspection briefing for Headteachers

National Society recommended practice is that, wherever possible, a pre-inspection briefing is prepared by the SUAS inspector and shared with the school in advance. This should be based on the SEF and Church School self-evaluation (Toolkit findings etc.). The SIAS report format should be used with hypotheses defined under each Key Question. Avoid forming an overbearing "summary" hypothesis or writing a mock report at this stage. This document will form the basis of the inspector's preliminary discussions on arrival at the school. This process is under close scrutiny and further recommendations are expected in the light of experience.

SIAS in the era of a sharply proportionate approach to inspection will be based on the assumption that the SSE is right. Inspectors will need to apply experience and skill to verify or challenge such findings with speed and accuracy.

The National Society wishes all SIAS inspectors and diocesan schools officers a joyful Easter.

Annex I



Writing SIAS inspection reports

Guidance for inspectors

Version I – March 2006

The Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) is governed by section 48 of the Education Act 2005. This document provides guidance on writing reports following section 48 inspections conducted under the SIAS framework for the inspection of Church of England Schools. The SIAS framework and other inspection documents can be found on the National Society's website at www.natsoc.org.uk.

Produced in association with
Frank Knowles Evaluation and Training

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Church House
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3NZ

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I Audience and context

In terms of numbers of readers, each section 48 inspection report is written primarily to inform parents and carers about the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the Church of England school their children attend, and to inform those parents who might wish their child to attend in the future. This means you must write each of your reports in accessible, everyday language. But a section 48 report is also an important document for the staff and governors of the school, so you must write it so that it also helps education professionals make use of it in schools. Finally, the diocese, the National Society and the wider public also have an interest in the outcomes of a section 48 inspection and need to be informed in a way that helps their understanding of the school.

A SIAS inspection provides an external view of a school and should be a great support to a school's self-evaluation, enabling staff to consider their own views alongside an external perspective and to have their views confirmed (or otherwise) by the inspection findings. To do this well, your report must provide a fair and accurate account of the school.

The tone and balance of the report are important, too, to gain acceptance of the findings by the school. Grudging praise and a focus on minor weaknesses form a recipe for a challenge to the inspection findings and often hide the main points you are trying to make. Instead, highlight the most important points, positive or negative, and achieve an appropriate balance between strengths and weaknesses.

As with all other school inspections, those undertaken using the SIAS framework are expected to make a significant contribution to school improvement. Your reports must therefore be written in such a way as to support the school improvement process. The SIAS framework helps to do this by focusing on the effect the school has, as a Church of England school, on the learner and how the impact of the school's actions can be maximised.

Following a section 48 inspection, write each SIAS report to:

- inform all readers in accessible language of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Church of England school
- support the school's self-evaluation by providing a fair and accurate external view of the school
- focus on main issues and achieve a sensible balance between strengths and weaknesses
- support improvement by focusing on the learner and the deal each receives in the school.

2 Being prepared

Writing an inspection report is not an easy task. You must first of all have come to a clear set of judgements in all the areas required by the SIAS framework for inspection. In addition, you must know why those judgements have been reached and what evidence can be used to substantiate them. This calls for clear thinking. Then you must write the report so that all readers are left in no doubt about your view of the school as a Church of England school and in no doubt about its main strengths and the areas that need improvement.

Clarity does not just apply to the period after the inspection. A successful inspection is the result of careful planning and this in itself requires clear thinking from the outset. Working from the evidence available before the inspection, especially the school's self-evaluation through the Church of England's Self-evaluation Toolkit, Ofsted's self-evaluation form (the SEF) or other documentation, you first need to ensure the inspection has a clear focus. This focus leads to a set of issues to explore during the inspection. These issues help you to answer the key questions in the SIAS framework by obtaining enough evidence to secure the required judgements

Confused thinking at this stage means writing will be much more difficult, and the confusion will be reflected in a report that does not hold together well. Clear thinking before writing means that each section of the report will sit comfortably alongside the other sections and, collectively, the sections will present a consistent set of judgements. Then, and only then, the report as a whole will paint a clear and unambiguous picture of the school as a Church of England school.

Good preparation and clear thinking are the keys to writing a good SIAS report. You need to:

- have a clear focus for the inspection before going into the school to gather evidence
- obtain sufficient secure evidence to reach clear judgements in each area of the SIAS framework
- ensure these fit together to give a clear and unambiguous view of the school as a Church of England school before starting writing.

3 Evaluative writing

A section 48 inspection report must answer the four key questions set out in the SIAS framework and the report template, and give a summary judgement about the school as a whole. The questions are about effectiveness and impact and, as a result, your writing must be evaluative. Avoid descriptive and narrative styles, therefore.

Each main section of the report is a single paragraph that covers a key question. Begin each section with a headline judgement that concisely answers the key question. You need to weigh up the evidence gathered for each key question and come to a clear view so that you can write this judgement concisely. Then explain why you came to that judgement, drawing on the evidence you have gathered. Focus more on the impact of the school's actions on the outcomes for learners, rather than on the actions themselves. You may wish to use an illustration to emphasise a point, but make sure that it is a telling example that really adds to the reader's understanding.

Evaluative writing can still be interesting, however, and you must do all you can to make the writing lively and accessible. This means using short sentences, dealing with one point at a time, and avoiding long and dense arguments. In particular, make sure that your report contains a consistent set of judgements, reached using the grade descriptors, and that the summary judgement is consistent with the others. If you feel that judgements might appear inconsistent to a reader, then you need a very good explanation for the apparent discrepancy.

All this means that you must avoid all speculation about what might happen in the future and avoid telling the school how they could or should do things. Making improvements after the inspection is the school's proper role, not yours as an evaluator.

The report should contain no surprises for the school. You should never introduce new or changed judgements into the report that have not already been rehearsed with the school as part of your oral feedback.

Write your report evaluatively and:

- use clear headline judgements and then explain them, drawing on evidence to support your argument
- focus on the effect of the school's actions on the learners, rather than the actions themselves
- check that all your judgements hang together well and support your summary judgement about the school.

4 Using the SIAS framework

The main purpose of the inspection report is to communicate the answers to the key questions in the SIAS framework for inspection. These answers should naturally lead the reader to the list of established strengths and areas included in the section headed 'focus for development'. You need to communicate an overall judgement, too, reached by weighing up the contributions from the different parts of the report.

In writing the report, remember that overall you need to support the school in its development. This means that you need to get to the bottom of issues and write the report so that you don't just praise or criticise through judgements. Your writing should communicate why strengths are so good, so effective practice can be replicated. You need to diagnose why something is weak so that you can tell the school what needs to be done to improve things. Where it is appropriate, you need to comment on the school's self-evaluation as a Church of England school.

All these judgements must hold together and be consistent with the grades on the National Society Judgement Record (NSJR). It is important that you have the SIAS grade descriptors by you so that, once you have drafted the report, you can check each section against the relevant grade descriptor in the framework. A useful technique is to check the judgement and text against the descriptor above and below the one for the grade awarded, just to check that the pitch of the judgement and the writing is right.

You must also adhere to the various technical points in the SIAS framework, such as length and font type and size, and make use of the template supplied by the relevant diocese or available on the National Society's website www.natsoc.org.uk.

Use the SIAS framework for inspection and:

- answer the four key questions clearly, and support your judgements by explanations, illustrations and references to the school's self-evaluation
- weigh up the contributions of the four sections and give a clear overall summary, together with strengths and areas of focus for development
- ensure the report holds together and matches the framework grade descriptors, and is consistent with the NSJR
- use the standard template and adhere to the two-page maximum length and the use of 11pt Arial typeface

5 Section by section examples

Context

This section should be brief and include only the most significant information. It should be no longer than 70 words.

Include:

- the size of the school
- where it draws its pupils from
- the nature of the intake, including the ethnic background of pupils
- recent changes of headship
- recent major building work
- specialist status.

Avoid:

- numbers of classes
- numbers of staff
- attainment of pupils on entry
- previous management difficulties or ill health of staff
- the school's vision
- inspection judgements

Context

XXXXX Church of England School is a very small school of 44 pupils, all White British, taught in two classes. The school serves a wide rural area. The headteacher took up her post at the beginning of the school year.

Context

YYYYYY Church of England School and Technology College is a smaller than average school serving a wide advantaged area to the north of ZZZZZ. Nearly all students entering the school are from Christian families, including just over 12% of pupils from Black backgrounds. A small number of pupils have other faiths. Up to 10% of students annually are selected for entry for their technological aptitude.

Summary judgement

This section should answer the question “*How distinctive and effective is the school as a Church of England school?*” Although it requires a single answer, the question has two components, covering distinctiveness and effectiveness, and both these areas need covering. These are best covered through a clear judgement and a very brief piece of evaluative writing to support it. This section should encapsulate the whole report, but does not have to include something from every section or summarise every aspect of the school. This section should be as brief as possible and be no longer than 70 words.

Summary judgement

XXXXX Primary School is a good church school that reflects its Christian foundation well. A dynamic and Christ-centred ethos within the school brings positive values and attitudes to teaching and learning. These values and attitudes are embedded in its mission statement, which is rooted in love, care, and respect. The school has high expectations of all its staff and pupils and these are promoted throughout the school.

Summary judgement

YYYY has securely re-established its distinctiveness as a faith school and its effectiveness as a Church of England school is satisfactory. It has an innovative 21st century Christian vision for what it can offer to its community. Through good leadership, the current headteacher and the governing body are now implementing this vision and the school’s ethos is now distinctly positive and Christian.

Established strengths

These should be clearly and concisely expressed and number no more than four. The strengths should be in order of priority, most important first, and stem from the paragraphs which answer

some or all of the four key questions in the framework. The strengths can be expressed as complete sentences or, alternatively, as fragments of sentences with the main strength in each expressed as a noun (usually with some descriptive text). Only one style should be used in each set of established strengths.

Established strengths

- The outstanding Christian ethos of the school in which all pupils are nurtured and valued highly.
- High quality acts of worship, including all pupils and contributing greatly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The Christian principles at the heart of all policies which are lived out in practice by the whole school community.
- Excellent links with the local church and community.

Established strengths

- The school has a clear Christian vision and high expectations, and is building successfully on the strong foundations laid by senior managers and governors.
- Standards in religious education are high through good teaching by enthusiastic and well-qualified staff.
- Students play a leading role in acts of worship and charity work.

Focus for development

These areas should be clearly and concisely expressed and number no more than four. The focus areas should be in order of priority, most important first, and stem from the paragraphs which answer some or all of the four key questions in the framework. They should be expressed directly as actions the school can carry out. Avoid suggestions that a school should “*Consider what action should be taken in relation to . . .*” as this section should set out your professional judgement of what needs to be improved.

Avoid beginning these points with “*Continue to . . .*” or “*Further develop . . .*”. The areas of focus here should reflect the most important things that need to be done, regardless of whether the school is already taking action. The school's action and its impact so far should be included in the paragraphs relating to the four key questions.

Focus for development

- Place more emphasis on children's understanding of other faiths within the context of the diocesan syllabus for religious education.
- Improve the writing of older children in religious education lessons so that the work they produce reflects the good writing standards seen in other subjects.

Focus for development

- Adopt and implement consistently the revised syllabus for religious education.
- Establish strategies for assessing pupils' work in religious education.

- Provide training, with the support of the diocese, for all who are involved in leading acts of worship.
- Improve pupils' spiritual and cultural development by providing more opportunities to learn about faiths and cultures other than their own.

Answers to the four key questions

In each of these sections, you need firstly to provide a headline judgement that answers the question. This should be emboldened. The text of the paragraph is then used to support that judgement. The way the text is written must, therefore, be consistent with the grade given in the National Society Judgement Record and with the verbal equivalent used in the headline statement.

There is no need to answer all the detailed supplementary questions in the framework. The areas they cover indicate the areas in which evaluations should be made to support the headline judgement and your views on some of these questions will come through strongly in the text. The main purpose of your writing is to convince the reader that you have a strong argument for reaching your headline judgement.

Taken together, the four sections must make sense and link well to the summary judgement. It is unlikely, for example, that leadership and management will be outstanding if religious education is judged to be only satisfactory, or if the school's distinctive character has little impact on its effectiveness. Equally, an outstanding Church of England school is unlikely to come about through good teaching of RE and satisfactory leadership and management, even if worship is outstanding.

The following examples are not perfect, and could all be improved in one way or another, but they do argue strongly for the grade awarded for each section. Note that they do not all come from the same inspection report.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

The school meets the needs of all learners outstandingly well. The Christian ethos in the school is very strong and permeates every aspect of the school's life from documentation and displays through to classroom practice. This is the result of a total commitment to the development of the whole child within a supportive school community. Christian values are evident in every part of the school, particularly in the quality of care. Pupils from all cultures feel safe and happy, secure in the knowledge that their beliefs are respected and valued. The school's inclusive approach is a natural way of life in the school and is much valued by parents of all faiths. The Foundation governors provide good support at every level, checking and evaluating the school's progress as a church school, and act as critical friends to the headteacher. The atmosphere around the school is relaxed and very orderly. The children show extraordinary courtesy and consideration to each other and to adults, together with natural good manners. Staff are excellent role models for the children.

Here, the judgement is clear at the outset and the rest of the paragraph does more than enough to convince the reader of the validity of this view of the school. The text draws well on the supplementary questions from the SIAS framework but avoids repeating phrases, so the paragraph reflects the individual school well.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community?

School worship is of consistently good quality and central to school life.

Despite the lack of space, great care is taken to ensure that acts of worship take place in a well-organised and peaceful environment. Worship has a very good impact on pupils' spiritual development. It has a strong Christian focus and major Christian festivals are celebrated, both in school and in church. Children look forward to the daily acts of worship and enjoy taking part. In one, the careful choice of a lively Christian hymn and the use of symbolism, with the candle of hope lit as the fourth Advent candle, captured the children's imagination very well.

This gives a clear message of consistency and makes use of an example to illustrate the Anglican tradition rather than repeat the words from the grade descriptors.

How effective is the Religious Education in the school?

Religious education (RE) is satisfactory. Governors and the senior managers have highlighted RE as a priority within the school development plan and the recently appointed coordinator has brought good subject knowledge and vision to the development of the subject. Their combined efforts have already improved pupils' achievement in RE and areas for further improvement have already been identified. Assessment strategies within RE are not fully in place, although some work with the diocese is currently underway to revise and enhance this area of the scheme of work. Teaching and learning have improved and are now good. Pupils' attitudes are positive and enthusiastic teaching stimulates their interest. The school uses ICT, music and drama effectively to ensure the subject "comes alive" and good links between RE and PHSE support pupils' moral development. The parish reflects a mainly mono-cultural population and visits to a local mosque and synagogue help give pupils a good understanding of other world faiths.

In this paragraph the inspector has balanced the good quality of classroom teaching and learning with the weaknesses in assessment to reach a judgement of satisfactory effectiveness. The text uses the supplementary questions from the SIAS framework well and again avoids repeating phrases or extracts from the grade descriptors, so that the paragraph is very specific to the school.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

The leadership and management of the school as a church school are inadequate. The leadership of the new headteacher is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour but RE and collective worship remain weak and very little has been done to improve these areas. Staff have become involved in the development of a shared Christian vision for the future of the school through consultation with the senior management team but this has taken too long and has not yet been finalised. Governors are not sufficiently involved in the school, although the governing body has now set up a committee structure and made plans for the professional development of governors, including training in developing the Christian ethos of the school. The vicar has a pastoral role with learners and adults in the school and has supported many in times of need. Some members of the community have been identified to fill the long-term vacancies on the governing body but they have not yet been approached. While the school runs smoothly from day to day, weak leadership means it has not yet achieved a distinctive place as a Church of England school.

In what must have been a very difficult decision for the inspector, the grade descriptors have been used correctly here to judge the leadership and management of the school as a church school to be inadequate, although in other respects it is secure. The critical points here are the lack of Christian vision to drive the school's development and the absence, as yet, of any impact of recent actions.

Complete inspection reports are available on the National Society's website www.natsoc.org.uk. For your own professional development, it is an instructive exercise to download one and undertake a critique of it, using this guidance.

6 Writing style

Writing concisely is a skill and it often takes longer than writing at length as it requires more thought. This section of the guidance lists a range of features of effective and ineffective inspection writing

The most important requirement is to **focus on impact and effect**, avoiding sentences like “*Good teaching is carried out using a well planned scheme of work based on the diocesan syllabus*”. This is a “*So what?*” sentence which tell the reader little about the school you have inspected. Such outcomes are also unremarkable, as they should occur in nearly all schools. Your report needs to focus on the distinctive features of teaching, and their impact, in that school. State clearly and simply the effect on learners’ achievement and personal development, in the terms set out in the SIAS framework.

Secondly, **keep to the SIAS framework**. Interesting though it might be to do so, you should not provide an audit or critique of features of the school which are not directly linked to their impact or effect on learners in relation to a key question in the framework.

The inspection report must **help the school and support improvement**. Thus you need to highlight the main strengths and state clearly the main areas for improvement. Focus clearly on the main issues for the school, and leave much of the detail to dialogue with the school.

In writing, **be specific and communicate clear judgements**. Tell the reader clearly what is happening at the school. Avoid sentences like “*There are good opportunities for learners to reflect*”. The real issues are whether learners reflect or not, given the opportunities, and on what they reflect. Evaluate how effective the reflection is, diagnose why this is and use the context for the reflection to bring the report to life.

There is no need to repeatedly refer to the fact that you have evidence for your judgements. So **avoid woolly phrases** like “*There is evidence that . . .*”. In conducting the inspection you should gather sufficient secure evidence to substantiate your judgements and report them clearly. State what is going on and diagnose why this is, using your evidence in explanation and illustration.

On the next few pages, annotated examples of writing help to set out an outline of a preferred style of writing. All the examples used, with amendments in some cases, come from published section 48 reports from inspections of Church of England schools. Alongside each example, the symbol ✓ is used to indicate effective writing, and the symbol ✗ to indicate a style, or way of expressing something, that is to be avoided.

- **Write in the present tense**, as this brings a sense of immediacy to the report, even if it is read some time after the inspection. When you need to refer to a specific event that happened during the inspection, then the past tense is needed, of course.

- ✓ Teaching is characterised by academic rigour. In one lesson, sixth form students identified the contribution of a number of scholars to the Design argument for the existence of God.

The use of the present tense suggests a broader longer-term view of teaching than the lessons observed. Evidence from pupils’ work, teachers’ planning and discussions supports evidence from the few lesson observations, and one of these is used to give a telling example to support the judgement.

- **Focus on the school you are inspecting** and don't rehearse the key questions or supplementary questions in the SIAS framework.
- ✘ All pupils feel valued and special in the school and the school's Christian values enable them to flourish as individuals.
- Although this is written clearly, the text is drawn entirely from the questions in the SIAS framework and does not reflect the school being inspected or the pitch of the judgement.*
- ✔ Pupils are happy and secure in school. They are valued as individuals and benefit from the warm family atmosphere, showing care and concern for one another.
- Here the framework questions are answered through the use of phrases that relate specifically to the school. For example, the impact of Christian values is shown through the care and concern shown for each other.*
- **Use clear, direct statements and short sentences** that tackle one idea only. Simplicity helps make difficult ideas clear. Complex sentences with many ideas quickly lose the reader's attention as they struggle to work out what they mean.
- ✘ A strong culture of reward and praise is evident everywhere not least in behaviour management which focuses on developing rather than punishing the child and the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation is central.
- One of the main points about the school's behaviour management in this inelegant sentence is lost in a series of subordinate clauses.*
- ✔ The concept of forgiveness and reconciliation is central to behaviour management, which focuses on developing rather than punishing the child. The result is a culture of praise and reward throughout the school.
- Here, the main point, reflecting the nature of the SIAS inspection, comes first, directly stated in its own sentence. The second sentence then considers the impact of this policy. Each sentence expresses a single idea and the text is much more readable.*
- **Highlight the main point** you want to make first.
- ✘ The vicar makes regular contributions to worship. The head teacher has plans to further this with acts of worship in the parish church. While contributing well to the creation of an excellent learning environment and to children's moral and spiritual development, worship makes an outstanding contribution to the life of the school.
- Here, the main point of the last sentence comes at the end, and many readers will not reach it. The first sentence could well be termed "So what?" evidence and the second sentence is speculative.*
- ✔ Worship makes an outstanding contribution to the life of the school. The vicar's weekly contributions set high expectations for pupils' moral and spiritual development, and the calm approach used daily supports the excellent learning environment.
- In this revision, the main point now comes first. The second sentence then explains why the judgement of outstanding has been reached. The speculative sentence has been omitted, as it adds nothing to the inspection judgement and the plans may not come to fruition.*

- **Use simple constructions when starting sentences**, particularly avoiding the tendency to start sentences with “There werewhich”

✘ Worship is important within the life of the school. However, recently there have been several changes of staff which have resulted in some inconsistencies in expectations and practice across the school. There are examples of creative leadership within worship linking areas of the curriculum which provide times of awe and wonder as well as reflection.

Two consecutive sentences in this report are unnecessarily complex in construction and this makes it harder to understand them.

✔ Worship is important in the life of the school. Creative leadership has linked worship to areas of the curriculum so that pupils experience periods of reflection in, for example, geography and art lessons. However, several recent changes of staff have resulted in inconsistencies in expectations and practice across the school.

In this revision, the third sentence has been moved up to provide good exemplification of the headline evaluation, and the concern about inconsistencies is made as a subsidiary point. The complex construction has been removed in each case, making the language more direct.

- **Explain why you came to your judgements**, selecting the most significant features of the school to write about. Using “because” is often helpful.

✔ The recently appointed senior leaders have contributed significantly to the success of this school because they quickly and very accurately identified its main strengths and weaknesses and then took decisive action to bring about improvement in its ethos.

The explanation here supports the judgement of good leadership and management stated earlier in the paragraph. It covers self-evaluation, decisive leadership, and specifies the area in which the main improvement was made. Its main drawback is its length, and the sentence could well have been split without losing too much impact.

- **Communicate your judgements clearly**, and don’t avoid them or hide them with descriptive accounts of incomplete developments.

✘ Teaching and learning [of religious education] are satisfactory. A policy document is currently being produced and schemes of work are being written in line with the Diocesan Guidelines. The GCSE syllabus is under review at present and it is expected that all pupils will take the full course at the end of Year 11.

The headline judgement is clear, but what follows leaves the reader to infer that teachers are not supported by a clear policy and scheme of work and that the GCSE entry policy has not been resolved.

✔ Teaching and learning are satisfactory but teachers do not benefit from a clear school policy or scheme of work for RE, which is currently being written. Not all pupils who want to can take a full GCSE course at the moment, but the curriculum is under review for next year to make this possible.

Here, the weaknesses are clearly stated, with indication of what the school is doing about them. Depending on its significance, it may have been appropriate to highlight inconsistencies in teaching between classes as a result of the lack of a scheme of work.

- **Highlight specific areas for development**, without giving advice about how to bring about the changes needed.

- ✓ Establish a clear system for coordinating religious education throughout school, including regular checks on the quality of teaching and how effectively pupils learn.

This tells the school what is needed, without suggesting how the coordination is set up or the monitoring and evaluation is carried out. It also avoids the use of the term ‘monitoring and evaluation’, which is not readily understood by parents.

- **Write evaluatively from the evidence**, avoiding speculation, personal preferences and advice.

- ✗ More opportunities for pupils to use the school’s interactive white boards as teaching aids in most lessons would enhance this provision, further stimulating thinking at all levels and contributing to personalised learning.

This sentence makes several assumptions about the value of interactive whiteboards when the main issue is the quality of teaching that goes with their use. It also proffers advice that implies that personalised learning and thinking are best stimulated by using interactive whiteboards when other strategies can do this equally well.

- ✓ Teaching uses interactive white boards effectively to stimulate thinking at all levels but many opportunities are lost for pupils themselves to use them to increase their involvement in the lesson.

Here, the positive point hidden in the phrase “further stimulating thinking” has been highlighted and the key point that teachers, not pupils, use them has been made clearly. This sentence is entirely evaluative, and does not speculate about the value of whiteboards.

- Use the **active voice** rather than the passive to bring life to the writing.

- ✗ Prayer is said on a class basis before lunch and at the end of the school day. A choir is provided for worship at the parish church and school worship and the number of families attending the Christingle service has shown a recent increase.

This pair of sentences is written mainly in the passive voice (“... is said ...” and “... is provided ...”), mixed with an active past tense at the end of the second sentence.

- ✓ Children participate well in prayers in class before lunch and at the end of the day. The school choir contributes well to worship in school and at festivals at the parish church. As a result, attendance at the Christingle service has increased.

The active language here is livelier and more evaluative. In the revised version, the editor took the opportunity to clarify which services the choir attended to make more sense of the last sentence, and to focus on the impact of the school’s work on the community..

- Use **everyday language** and avoid jargon.

- ✘ However, the school's senior leaders and governors have not given consistent attention to the ongoing development of some key aspects of its Anglican foundation. Limited use has been made of the YYYYY Diocesan or National Society's self-evaluation toolkit as an audit of where the school stands in respect of self-knowledge and what needs to be prioritised for continuing improvement.

This sentence is full of problems: "ongoing development" is tautologous; "key aspects" is not precise enough and fudges the issue; parents will not know what the "toolkit" is; "prioritised" is clumsy; and the sentences are padded by extra words.

- ✔ However, the school's Christian ethos has declined since the last inspection, and does not promote pupils' spiritual development. The school's senior leaders and governors have not done enough to review the school's effectiveness as a Church of England school and are not aware of what needs to be done to improve the situation.

In this revision, the specific area of weakness is highlighted, and the lack of self-evaluation is linked to the absence of a clear plan for improvement

- **Make the report come to life**, choosing words carefully and avoiding overused words.

- ✔ Children achieve well in religious education. They talked enthusiastically about how women are portrayed in the Old Testament, for example, giving vivid examples from their work to illustrate their views.

This telling example gives a feel for the way children were engaged in their work but also indicates that the work involved more than recall of facts by referring to pupils' views on the topic.