

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS)

Deferral Policy

There may be rare cases when diocesan staff identify exceptional circumstances or particular concerns in a school that warrant consideration of a delayed inspection. In such cases, it is expected that the school is inspected as soon as possible after the original date and no later than six working weeks.

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedure for requesting a deferred inspection in accordance with the protocol agreement between the Church of England Education Office and the Department for Education.

Dioceses have considerable discretion in the timing of inspections within scheduling protocols. When submitting their schedule for the year dioceses are advised to use local intelligence to avoid, where possible, dates which might require a deferral. This should also make it possible to predict and procure sufficient inspectors to cover the number of inspections the diocese has requested. Of course, some situations cannot be predicted.

There are two ways of moving an inspection:

1. Adjustments

An adjustment is moving an inspection from one term to another term in the same academic year.

This can be achieved with limited financial complication and should be the first consideration when a diocese has identified a need to move an inspection.

Please note that adjustments must be requested and approved by the SIAMS Manager of the Diocese when prompted by Peter Churchill during the previous term. Failure to do so may result in funding being withdrawn.

School A is seeking an adjustment because there are concerns about the effectiveness of the Vicar. This is related to Parish issues rather than the school but it means that the Vicar is in dispute with some of the foundation governors. The school is open and the situation is not impacting the pupils in any significant way.

In this situation, there are no grounds for an adjustment or a deferral. The SIAMS inspection should take place as planned.

2. Deferrals

A deferral means moving an inspection from one academic year to another. This is far more complicated and should be avoided where possible.

In the event that the Diocese does feel there is a case for an adjustment or a deferral, diocesan staff should **first conduct a review** to establish whether the concerns/issues identified are having such a profound impact that a SIAMS inspection would be unable to evaluate the school's Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness. If the inspection is scheduled within the first or second terms of an academic year consideration should be given to making an adjustment instead of a deferral.

Listed below are some examples of the type of things that **might** warrant an adjustment or a deferral:

1. The school has experienced a major incident, such as a fatal accident involving a member of staff or pupil.
2. The head teacher or a member of the school's senior leadership team is the subject of a current police

investigation which would be compromised by an inspection of the school.

3. The school is closed to all pupils – for example, owing to adverse weather conditions – for at least half of the period for which the inspection has been scheduled.
4. At least three quarters of the pupils will not be at school – for example, owing to a school trip or a religious festival – for at least half of the period for which the inspection has been scheduled.
5. Other exceptional circumstances which, in the judgement of the Church of England Education Office, justify deferral or cancellation of the inspection as the named religious authority in the Section 48 Agreement with the DfE.

Once the Diocese is satisfied that they need to request an adjustment or a deferral they will need to make a request to The Church of England Education Office addressed to the School Character and SIAMS Development Manager. It cannot be a unilateral decision by the Diocese or any of its officers. This request should be in the form of an email, so there is an evidence trail, from the SIAMS Manager or the Diocesan Director of Education with an explanation of the reasons relevant to the individual circumstances of the school which is the subject of the request.

The School Character and SIAMS Development Manager will then make a decision on whether an individual school can have its inspection adjusted or deferred or not.

School B. A member of the senior leadership team with two young children in the school was diagnosed with terminal cancer earlier this year. She is deteriorating fast and is now in a hospice with only a few weeks to live. The pupils are aware of the situation and have recently said their goodbyes when the teacher visited the school last week. The school and clergy are working hard to support the staff and pupils but many are emotionally exhausted.

Whilst in many ways this may show the school as a Christian community at its best, the extra strain and stress caused by a SIAMS inspection would not be helpful and so the inspection can be deferred or adjusted.

Applications to adjust or defer a planned inspection on the following grounds will **not** be accepted as pupils at the school are still receiving education:

- The head teacher is out of school
- The school has been judged to require improvement by Ofsted
- Difficult relations between the governing body and the senior leadership team
- The school wants more time to improve in order to secure the best judgement
- An imminent change of leadership
- The Diocese hasn't been able to secure enough inspectors
- The school is about to become an academy or join a MAT

On occasion, it may happen that a SIAMS inspection is scheduled and an Ofsted team contact the school to inform them they will be inspecting on the same day or turn up to do a no notice inspection on the day of the SIAMS inspection. In such a situation, it is possible for both inspections to take place concurrently, indeed there may be advantages to this. However, if the head teacher feels that the two inspections running concurrently will place too much pressure on the school staff, governors or pupils the SIAMS inspector must stand down. The Diocese in conjunction with the inspector will then arrange for the inspection to take place at the earliest date possible.

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