



Preparing for SIAS inspections

Guidance for inspectors

Version 1 – August 2006

The Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) is governed by section 48 of the Education Act 2005. This document provides guidance on preparing for 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.

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
1 The importance of careful preparation	1
2 The elements of pre-inspection preparation	2
3 Making a record of your analysis	3
4 Sample analysis records	4
5 Setting the main focus for the inspection	6
6 Key features of the <i>SIAS Inspection Briefing</i>	7
7 Summary analysis	8
8 Hypotheses	12
9 Issues to explore during the inspection	15
10 A sample SIB	19

I The importance of careful preparation

The amount of time available when inspecting a school under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 is very limited. This single fact means that it is important to do as much of the work as possible before the inspection and use the time in school wisely to collect evidence that is not available beforehand.

But there are other reasons, too, for preparing each inspection carefully. The more focused you make the inspection, the easier it is to collect telling evidence that will help answer the key questions in the SIAS framework. Careful preparation enables you to plan how and from where you intend to gather your evidence. By communicating the inspection focus and issues to the school, the school's leaders are able to seek out and provide evidence to support your exploration of aspects of the school. This targeted gathering of evidence is at the heart of efficient inspection practice.

By letting the school know your initial thinking, you also improve the quality of dialogue you have with staff in the school. They know about your early, but tentative, views about the school and the analysis that led to them. With this information, senior leaders will normally find it much easier to engage in professional discussion with you in some depth. Staff can also discuss among themselves the issues you raise beforehand and prepare themselves more effectively for discussions. In this way the inspection is undertaken with rigour but in true partnership with the school.

All this suggests strongly that your inspection preparation should be recorded in written form in your inspection evidence base, for your own future reference. Communicating key points to the school helps senior staff reflect upon the issues you have raised. This is best done by summarising your pre-inspection work in a brief document for the school, the *SIAS Inspection Briefing (SIB)*.

Careful preparation, generating a focus for the inspection and inspection issues, all of which are communicated to the school, means that:

- the inspection makes the best use of the time in school
- the school knows where the inspector is starting from
- the inspection starts with a clear view of what evidence is needed and where it is likely to come from
- the school is better able to provide the evidence that is needed and the evidence gathering is efficient
- the dialogue with the school is more likely to be profitable.

To support this, inspectors need to construct an *SIAS Inspection Briefing (SIB)* for presentation to the school.

2 The elements of pre-inspection preparation

Inspection preparation begins with an **analysis** of the available evidence. This is important as it provides a starting point for your thinking. Thorough analysis helps you identify potential strengths and areas for development, and helps you to focus the inspection on them.

You also need to develop a tentative view of each of the aspects you are inspecting. These **hypotheses** will clearly only be tentative at this stage, as the inspection has not taken place and evidence from the inspection may well mean your views change. Nevertheless, they do provide starting points for your work during the inspection.

Your analysis and hypotheses should lead naturally into a set of **issues** that you will explore when you are gathering evidence in the school. The clearer these issues are, the more likely you are to run an efficient inspection, collecting just as much evidence as you need, and no more.

The fourth element is to **summarise** your analysis, your tentative views so far, and the issues you intend to explore during the inspection, all in your *SIAS Inspection Briefing (SIB)*. You should then provide the school with this document, by email, post or other means, so that the headteacher and other staff can read and digest it before you arrive at the school. The headteacher may also wish to pass it to governors.

Inspectors often worry that schools will challenge their tentative findings. This should not be a concern as the SIB encourages the sort of discussion that will explore such issues during the inspection. It is, after all, a document that sets out the areas for exploration during the inspection, not a draft of the inspection report.

That done, you are finally in a position to **plan** how you will spend your time during the inspection. This involves deciding what evidence you need, and how you will obtain it, and where it will be found. Of course, there is always the chance that you will need to change tack part-way through the inspection because other issues arise. That sort of re-planning is always acceptable and happens frequently in inspections of all types.

Pre-inspection preparation has five key elements:

- analysing the available evidence
- coming to tentative views of the school and aspects of its provision
- identifying issues to explore during inspection time in school
- summarising all this for presentation to the school in the *SIAS Inspection Briefing (SIB)*
- planning how you will gather your evidence.

3 Making a record of your analysis

At this stage of the inspection, the evidence you have available will be in written form. You are likely to have available:

- the toolkit used to support the school's self-evaluation as a church school
- any summary self-evaluation document, such as a diocesan self-evaluation form (SEF), the school has constructed
- the school's Ofsted SEF
- the previous section 48 (or section 23) inspection report.

The most suitable way of analysing these documents is to consider what they tell you under the four main key questions in the SIAS framework. It is not necessary to extract material from original evidence to insert in your analysis, as that merely repeats what is in the evidence. What is needed is your analysis of the evidence, linking it to other pieces of evidence and leading to your view of the school in relation to each of the key questions. Any other material you have from the school can be analysed in the same way.

The format of the record of your analysis is not critical. Some inspectors prefer to use blank sheets of paper, writing the relevant key question(s) on the top of each. Others prefer to work on sheets pre-printed with key headings and prompts. These, and other ways, are equally acceptable. Another way of analysing the evidence is by source, with subheadings related to the four key questions. What is important, however, is to summarise what you have written and, while doing so, ensure that the text you use is evaluative. This will help you to bring the different elements of the analysis together more easily and to help you generate a hypothesis and issues to explore under each key question.

In a similar way, the style in which you record your analysis is not critical. Some inspectors prefer to use continuous prose and others use bullet points exclusively. Other inspectors mix styles or use diagrams to form their record. The only critical point, as noted above, is that a clear summary emerges from each piece of analysis.

When recording your analysis of pre-inspection documents:

- structure your analysis under the four key questions in the SIAS framework
- record what you make of the evidence and refer to its source, rather than merely repeat the evidence
- summarise each significant element of your analysis with a clear view, at this stage of the inspection, to support your hypotheses and help generate the issues to explore
- format and style are not important issues, as long as your analysis leads to a clear summary.

4 Sample analysis records

Extract from the record of an inspector's pre-inspection analysis

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

Previous s23 report: not helpful, as very descriptive. Governors, especially foundation governors, said to be supportive of the school, although it is not clear what support they gave. Leadership and management (different HT) not as dynamic as they seem to be now, with a lack of self-evaluation appearing to be the main issue.

SEF: Current HT records a wide range of self-evaluation activities (including observation of lessons, work analysis, discussions with pupils) with examples of impact. HT convincing about how impact of actions is evaluated as part of the development cycle. Involvement of governors through committees in making decisions on the basis of staff evaluation papers and seems strong. Foundation governors noted in SEF for their leadership on church school matters – suggests their role is better defined now than that at time of previous report.

Toolkit: Shows HT has considered leadership and management in relation to the distinctive character of the school and how this can be developed in coordinators, who seem not to have had a very strong role in the last few years (SEF). GB seems now much more intent on promoting the Christian ethos than came through in previous report. Key actions taken include changes to worship, behaviour management, greater involvement of local church and introduction of a school council. Impact on school's ethos seems good, judging by the evaluations in the SEF and toolkit.

Summary

Evidence so far suggests a considerable revitalisation of the ethos of the school since the last s23 inspection and an improved focus on what it is to be a Church of England school. This seems to have been led strongly by the HT and the foundation governors, and supported by the whole governing body. It is not clear yet what the involvement of staff has been in the broad approach, though some seem to have prepared evaluation papers.

Commentary

In this set of extracts covering a particular aspect of leadership and management, the inspector has focused on one pre-inspection source of evidence in each paragraph, while making links with the other material available. So the third paragraph, primarily about the toolkit, refers both to the previous report and the Ofsted SEF.

Nearly all the text comes about as a result of the inspector reflecting on the available evidence, referring to sources but not repeating material unnecessarily. The summary focuses on the positive impact of actions taken by school leaders on the school as a church school, without repeating what is included in earlier paragraphs.

Although it does not result in a hypothesis about leadership and management as a whole, this aspect of leadership and management is positively recorded and will feed directly in to the overall hypothesis that will appear in the SIB.

Extract from the record of an inspector's pre-inspection analysis

How effective religious education?

- Toolkit indicates that standards are above average and progress is good. RE also noted as matching standards in core and other subjects - school-based data on standards in RE noted. Suggests HA pupils do well.
- SEF suggests good data analysis overall, and points to recent low standards in English (tests), history, and geography (TA), potentially conflicting with the toolkit.
- School's website contains a signposted sections on RE, showing pupils' work of good quality, some very good, supporting the schools view of above average standards.
- Curriculum links with literacy, ICT, history and art reflected well in both SEF and toolkit. Website also notes some enrichment clubs linked to Bible study.
- Toolkit suggests teaching and learning are good, with consistent planning, challenging tasks and effective questioning by teachers identified as strengths in the SEF and toolkit through regular monitoring, observations by HT and diocesan adviser. Children said to use religious vocabulary increasingly as they move through the school. Evidence of good use of ICT (IWB) and artefacts.
- Pupils' reports said to include strong focus on RE and contribution to worship. Other faiths (toolkit) seem more focused in CW than RE, and cultural development is not given high profile.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour said to be good in the SEF. The contribution RE makes to pupils' moral development seems limited, but spiritual development clearly seen in reflective poems from RE about a range of New Testament stories on the website.
- Staff said in toolkit to enjoy working in a church school and like teaching RE. This ties in well with the overall view of the school in the SEF and the toolkit, where much is made of the ethos of the school, but shows little to suggest that the contribution RE makes to its Christian character is recognised. Toolkit treats RE as just another subject.

Summary

Some unanswered questions about standards in relation to other subjects but standards in RE itself seem above average (but need to be checked thoroughly). The toolkit suggests that teaching and learning might be good but will need exploring in the light of suggested mismatch of standards with core and other subjects. Links well with what seems to be good attitudes to RE and behaviour. Main strength seems to be RE's contribution to spiritual development, and need to explore the place of RE in the school, and its contribution to moral and cultural development.

Commentary

Here the inspector has taken an issue at a time and combined available evidence in each bullet point, where a range of evidence was available. The summary presents some hypotheses and suggests issues that should come through in the SIB.

The inspector has not recorded much in this set of notes about the leadership and management of RE, although comments about central monitoring and evaluation suggest that the role of the RE coordinator need exploration. The inspector has not brought this through to the summary and so this could well be lost. It may, however, be well covered in the leadership and management sections.

5 Setting the main focus for the inspection

In a section 48 inspection you will need to gather a lot of evidence in a very short time. This might be through observation, the analysis of pupils' work and school documentation, or discussion. Your pre-inspection analysis may well throw up a host of ideas for areas to explore in the inspection, but you will not have time to explore them all. It is essential to set out your priorities, so that you can focus most of your effort on gathering evidence in the most important of the areas. This will also help the school to work with you in providing the sort of evidence you need.

You can take this further, once you have recorded your analysis and completed the SIB, and determine a **main focus** for the inspection. If a very significant potential weakness emerges during your pre-inspection work, you will almost certainly wish to focus on that. Equally, you could select a significant strength in a good school as the main focus, to determine how such a good outcome has been achieved.

The quality of the school's self-evaluation is another important factor in setting the focus for the inspection. The SIAS framework suggests the school's self-evaluation will fall into one of three broad categories – secure, developing, or ineffective. Although these are not inspection judgements to be communicated in the inspection report, they do give a good steer to the main focus of the inspection. No matter what issues are explored, the way you explore them will be different, depending on the security of the school's self-evaluation.

Where the school's self-evaluation is very secure, you will tend to verify the school's view as you explore issues from the SIB. Where self-evaluation is ineffective, you have a dual role in supporting the school in improving the self-evaluation process and ensuring that you have sufficient evidence to get to the bottom of the main issues you have identified. Developing self-evaluation will often lead to a mix of these approaches, depending on the issue you are exploring and the availability of evidence from the school. For a recognisably higher-achieving school, the inspection still needs to add value and a strong emphasis on the way the school's self-evaluation focuses on the distinctiveness of the school as a church school is likely to be appropriate, especially if the school receives a reduced tariff section 5 inspection.

When setting the main focus for the inspection:

- prioritise your pre-inspection findings carefully to ensure you focus most effort on the most important issues
- take account of the security of the school's self-evaluation to determine how you might approach the gathering of evidence
- consider how the school can work in partnership with you in providing evidence to support the inspection.

6 Key Features of the *SIAS Inspection Briefing*

The *SIAS Inspection Briefing* (SIB) is an evaluative document that results from careful thought. It is not sufficient to repeat material provided by the school through the use of a self-evaluation toolkit, a self-evaluation form on the school as a Church of England school, or the Ofsted self-evaluation form (SEF). It must present to the school your analysis and views so far, based on the evidence available to you, but in a way that does not pre-judge the outcomes of the inspection. It must also indicate the issues you intend to follow up during the inspection. There is no need for a context section to set the scene, as this has been done for you by the school in the documents it has provided.

The SIB needs to cover the ground of the SIAS inspection framework and you should structure it according to the four key questions in the framework:

- How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?
- What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?
- How effective is religious education?
- How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

Each section of the SIB is best structured under three subheadings: **summary analysis**; **hypothesis**; and **issues to explore**. The style is flexible and the text could be in continuous prose, bullet points, or a combination of the two. The SIB should be no longer than three A4 pages of text (that is, a maximum of four sides, including the cover).

Most importantly, the SIB must be a professional document that models the sort of evaluative writing expected from schools in their own self-evaluation. This means you must give enough time to preparatory work so that you can analyse the evidence thoroughly, record your analysis in whatever form you choose and prepare the SIB.

A sample SIB is included in section 10 of this guidance, and a template for use by inspectors is available on the National Society's website: www.natsoc.org.uk .

The *SIAS Inspection Briefing* (SIB) is a document, shared with the school, that is:

- written evaluatively, setting out the inspector's views so far
- a summary of your pre-inspection analysis, identifying hypotheses and issues to explore during the inspection
- structured according to the key questions in the SIAS framework
- the result of thorough preparatory work.

7 Summary analysis

The summary analysis must help the school understand how you have come to the tentative conclusions you have reached in the hypotheses and why you will be exploring a particular set of issues during the inspection. One of the main areas to cover in the analysis is the school's view of itself, expressed in documents relating to the school as a Church of England school and Ofsted's SEF. Here you will need to consider how well the school's evaluation of its performance and provision is supported by the evidence available.

Depending on the quality of the self-evaluation recorded in these documents, you may be convinced by the school's account of itself and the accuracy of its evaluation. In such cases the analysis will reflect this view. However, if you find inconsistencies within the school's documentation, or if the school's documents are more descriptive than evaluative, you may wish to challenge the school's views or suggest the need for more evidence. No matter what you write, it is important to be both sensitive and tentative.

Sensitivity is important because the school will work in partnership with you during the inspection. Senior staff will read the SIB as a professional critique of the aspects of its work relevant to a SIAS inspection and will expect the school's documents to have been valued highly as evidence in the pre-inspection phase. Tentativeness is important because schools are often concerned that inspectors have made their minds up before coming into the school, when the purpose of the inspection is to use the evidence available in the school to explore the issues in the SIB.

Include:

- your interpretations of the school's evidence
- coverage of the relevant subsidiary questions in the SIAS inspection framework
- how effectively issues from the previous inspection have been tackled
- potential strengths and areas for development
- tentative views so far.

Avoid:

- material merely copied from school documents
- descriptive material not supporting an evaluation
- premature inspection judgements
- commenting on the quality of the documentation itself (you are more interested in the evidence it contains)
- views unrelated to the SIAS inspection.

You will not, of course, include every piece of your analysis in the SIB, as it is designed to be a summary. You will need to focus on the most important areas that will influence the inspection, therefore. It is also important to achieve a balanced view of the school at this stage of the inspection, avoiding an over-critical approach, as the analysis will lead directly to your hypotheses.

The following extracts illustrate some successful and less successful practice in writing the summary analysis sections for a SIB.

Analysis – example 1

- ✓ SEF details support mechanism now in place for middle managers from the leadership group. But it isn't obvious from the toolkit how potential inconsistencies are avoided between the different line managers who monitor T&L in RE on one hand, and the HT and diocesan adviser, who also monitor T&L, on the other. It is not clear whether they use the same focus, for example, when observing lessons. SEF shows that improving standards in RE is a priority, but it is not clear how the two systems work together to do this.

Commentary

This short piece notes a potential issue about the school's dual-track monitoring process and, drawing together material from SEF and toolkit, uses a good understanding of monitoring and evaluation to recognise it. This point would undoubtedly be an area to explore in the inspection.

Analysis – example 2

- ✗
 - Previous report says Christian ethos is very good, pupils well motivated to succeed, relationships between staff and pupils very positive.
 - SEF states that learners' personal development and well-being are outstanding.
 - Toolkit notes enthusiasm of pupils for school is high, and that they enjoy RE and collective worship especially. School has conducted a questionnaire with pupils to obtain their views.

Commentary

This repeats statements from the various evidence sources without any attempt at analysis. If the inspector were to proceed to the inspection thinking that all was well, this would be entirely concluded on the basis of the school's assertions and the previous report. The inspector needed to consider what the school used as evidence for outstanding personal development and high levels of enjoyment, and see whether these actually fitted the criteria for the grades awarded by the school. It is also not possible, on the basis of the evidence put forward here, to determine the inspector's tentative view at this stage of the inspection.

Analysis – example 3

- ✓
 - Collective worship was very strong in the previous (s23) inspection, and the toolkit gives several examples of creative approaches to worship that suggest it may well have improved.
 - Pupils' high levels of participation in CW are well evidenced in pupil questionnaires about the Christian ethos of the school, and in the summary of CW evaluation outcomes in the toolkit. The school's grade of outstanding is well supported in the toolkit.
 - The SEF indicates how the school has ensured that CW in classes is meaningful on non-assembly days, although from the comments these seem to be broadly Christian rather than stemming from the Anglican tradition.

Commentary

In each of these bullet points, the inspector has given a personal view of the evidence found in different sources, as well as including sufficient detail to support that view, so the school know where the hypothesis has come from. The inspector is prepared to take on trust from the school the reported outcomes of questionnaires, but has a healthy scepticism about the content of class CW.

Analysis – example 4

- ✘ The school has a “common vision of excellence”, and a “highly committed and hardworking staff.” The “experienced leadership group” has “good knowledge of the school” and the “leaders are highly visible and approachable”. (SEF)
- At coordinator level “curriculum leader for RE is reflective and leads improvement.” There is “good teamwork among teaching, education support and admin staff that builds on Christian family traditions”. (Toolkit)
- The HT has “established a cycle of self-evaluation and curriculum area reviews” and these lead to feedback to co-ordinators. “Middle leaders have had good quality training on classroom observation from specialist” but are “reluctant to see colleague’s lessons regularly”. (SEF)
- Standards in RE are “high and improving all the time.” In the last review a year ago “the RE coordinator had several areas for improvement”, one of which was “improve the consistency of teaching”. (Toolkit)

Commentary

While there is nothing wrong with approach of taking elements of evidence from two sources, this example falls down on two counts. First, the extensive use of quotes from the school’s documents is pointless, as the school already knows this information. We can usually presume the headteacher wrote both the SEF and toolkit, or oversaw their writing, and is unlikely to need reminding. The extensive quotations also detract from the ability of the inspector to provide any analysis. Second, the inspector has made no attempt to draw together the various strands of this evidence to suggest that all is not well with RE in this school. The inconsistency in teaching from the toolkit and the reluctance to undertake observations from the SEF raise the question of whether the school’s self-evaluation is actually effective. If introduced as an issue for inspection without analysis, the school will not necessarily make this connection, and so the SIB needs to make it, explicitly.

Analysis – example 5

- ✔ The last inspection showed good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. This was attributed to the school’s Christian ethos, which was strong. This does not sit easily alongside the SEF, which reports that the school’s recent evaluation of pupils’ personal development still found good behaviour but their attitudes to learning needed more attention, with much off-task chatter in classes.
- SMSC was good at the last inspection, with outstanding cultural development. The SEF indicates, through the rich cultural activities in and out of class, that this is likely still to be outstanding, but the evidence for spiritual development improving to outstanding since the last inspection is thin, and relates mainly to the fact that the school now complies fully with the law on CW. Spiritual development is covered in least depth in SMSC, and the toolkit does not make the sort of links between the Christian ethos and SMSC usually expected.
- The toolkit quotes from the outcomes of a pupil survey on self-esteem, and suggests that the school’s focus on the most and least able has left a vacuum where middle ability pupils do not feel sufficiently valued. Setting this alongside the other evidence suggests a deterioration in meeting the needs of all learners through the school’s Christian character, conflicting with the school’s evaluation of good.

Commentary

Here the inspector carefully assembles a range of contradictory evidence from the SEF and toolkit to suggest the school’s self-evaluation in this area is inaccurate. The deterioration is suggested, rather than stated as a fact, both because the view is based only on the evidence so far available, and also to avoid pre-judgment and support the exploration of the issue during the inspection.

Analysis – example 6

- ✓ The school's self-evaluation processes are clearly described in the SEF and focus strongly on first-hand observations of lessons. The toolkit takes this further for RE and CW, summarising recent observations supporting the 'good' grade given and leading to a priority in the school's development plan for improving pupils' participation in CW. This suggests a well organised and rigorous process of evaluation of practice.

Both SEF and toolkit describe the use of questionnaires to evaluate pupils' attitudes to school and their responses to lessons. Outcomes are reported as very positive with very strong responses for RE in particular and also suggests that self-evaluation is strong.

Foundation governors appear to take a particular interest in the outcomes of the RE and CW evaluations, and the toolkit suggests they are fully involved in identification of strengths and areas for development when the development plan is produced.

The toolkit shows no evidence of this evaluation extending into whether the Christian character of the school is promoted strongly and whether it has an impact on pupils. Little mention of the distinctiveness of the school as a church school in the SEF, also suggesting this may well be an area that is not well enough evaluated.

Commentary

This passage is very reflective and focuses on apparent strengths in the school's self-evaluation of delivery of lessons and CW, and in gaining pupils views, but notes a lack of focus on one of the most important elements of a Church of England school, its distinctiveness. This suggests that the school may well focus more on the detail, rather than the 'big picture' of what the school is like as a whole, where the focus on distinctiveness might come through more strongly. The inspector has been careful to balance the potential strengths of some elements of self-evaluation with the area which is likely to be one to explore within leadership and management.

Analysis – example 7

- ✓
 - The SLT appear to have had a strong focus on the ethos of the school but as the SEF and toolkit cover similar ground, it is not clear whether this has been related to the school's Christian character, but the absence of any specific mention suggests not. The school's view that behaviour is still a major issue raises questions about the impact of actions taken.
 - Little seems to have been done from the SEF to deal with very low standards throughout the school and nothing suggests a drive to improve teaching, although the school now has specialist staff in post, including for RE. This sits uneasily with the satisfactory grade for L&M in the SEF and the good grade in the toolkit, where the work on ethos seems to have been the determining factor in making it good, despite its lack of reference to the Christian character of the school.
 - The governors seem to be very supportive of the HT, but the SEF and toolkit both suggest that they do not question, only receive and approve. The foundation governors seem to have no voice over the vision of the school as a church school, seeming to go along with the rest of the GB very readily, a point noted in the toolkit.

Commentary

This school seems to be in trouble. The lack of focus on teaching and learning is a major issue when standards are very low. From the Church of England perspective, the lack of mention of the school's distinctiveness is also a serious issue. Other factors, such as the lack of impact of the school's actions and weaknesses in governance, suggest that the leadership and management of the school will need exploring in considerable depth.

8 Hypotheses

The summary analysis in the SIB should lead logically to your hypotheses. You will normally only need one broad hypothesis for each of the four key questions in the SIAS framework for inspection. Sometimes, however, differences between key stages, for example in RE, or other specific features of the school may mean that more than one hypothesis is necessary.

The main purposes of the hypotheses are to communicate your view of each aspect of the school, so far, to its senior leaders and to signal where the inspection will start from. The issues to explore during the inspection should then stem from the hypotheses, with any detail coming from the preceding analysis.

Your hypotheses should be direct and clearly stated, giving an overview of where you stand on each the four key questions, at this stage of the inspection. So as not to pre-judge the school, hypotheses should be written tentatively. To avoid any possible upset or offence, they should be written in sensitive language. It is best to avoid questions, as schools see these as very challenging, especially where the evidence suggests the school is not doing as well as it should. Where a particular potential strength and/or a particular area for development stands out, it is acceptable to make reference to that in a rider to the hypothesis.

Where there is insufficient evidence to form a view, it is acceptable to state this. However you should, wherever possible, come to a tentative view, even if it is likely to change during the inspection, as it does set the scene for the issues you wish to explore. You also need to come to a single tentative judgement and not hover between two grades. At this stage, you can afford to make you view clear, accepting that it could well change later.

Include:

- a view of the key question taken as a whole
- concise sentences containing single points
- tentative and sensitive language
- normally one, but no more than three hypotheses for each section.

Avoid:

- too much detail
- definite judgements, as they pre-judge the school
- questions, as they can be seen as threatening to schools
- 'sitting on the fence'
- further detailed analysis following the hypothesis.

The following extracts illustrate some successful and less successful practice in writing hypotheses for a SIB. The examples are in the same order as those related to analysis in Chapter 7 and refer to the same issues, so they can be tracked through.

Hypothesis – example 1

- ✓ Leadership and management of the school as a church school appear to be good, with potential strengths in the way the Christian vision has been restated and promoted recently. The way the school splits responsibility for monitoring RE, while involving several staff, suggests that some areas of self-evaluation may only be satisfactory.

Commentary

The overall hypothesis that the area is likely to be good is clearly stated, but does not pre-judge the inspection findings. The only other points to be made here are to identify a potential strength and to suggest that something the school feels is good may well turn out to have some areas for development.

Hypothesis – example 2

- ✗ The school meets the needs of all learners well and its Christian ethos permeates the whole school and supports learning well

Commentary

This hypothesis, though concise, prejudices the school. It also does not say much specific about the school, focusing more on restating criteria. The last part of the sentence does not relate, as it should, to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Hypothesis – example 3

- ✓ The evidence at this stage of the inspection supports the school's view that collective worship is outstanding and has a profound impact on pupils. Pupils' participation in whole-school worship seems to be at a very high level, although the acts of worship in classes may not relate strongly enough to Anglican practice.

Commentary

In this hypothesis, the inspector has chosen to focus the content on the way the school's own grade is supported. This is a clear view from the inspector but also makes explicit the recognition of the value of the school's self evaluation. Again, it highlights a specific potential strength, but also the area which will appear as an issue to explore during the inspection.

Hypothesis – example 4

- ✗ RE is likely to be good in this school because of the strong Christian vision and commitment to high standards. However it might not be as strong if the monitoring of RE as not taken place regularly, and that might reveal weaker teaching. In addition, any inconsistencies in teaching might well stem from the leadership and management of the subject, where areas for improvement have been identified.

Commentary

In evaluating, even tentatively, RE as good on the basis of the analysis put forward in Chapter 7, this hypothesis is very weak as it merely restates the school's views. The second main problem with this hypothesis is that, after the first sentence, it stops being the hypothesis it should be and becomes speculative thinking, without the depth of analysis that is needed. All the material after the first sentence should have been moved into the analysis section, the speculation removed and a clear evaluative statement constructed.

Hypothesis – example 5

- ✓ The school, through its Christian character, appears to meet the needs of its learner satisfactorily. Although the school's self-evaluation suggests that this area has improved since the last inspection, and cultural development may well remain outstanding, the evidence so far on spiritual development and the way pupils feel valued indicate that these aspects may well have declined.

Commentary

This sort of hypothesis is probably the most difficult to write. It directly challenges the school's self-evaluation, and needs to do it in a way that does not alienate the school. Here, the repetition from the analysis, not usually a good idea, has brought in a potential strength, and the evidence for the lower than expected grade is rehearsed to enable the school see how the inspector has come to that conclusion.

Hypothesis – example 6

- ✓ The leadership and management of this school as a church school appear to be good with some potential strengths in self-evaluation. The evaluation of the distinctiveness of the school and its Christian character do not come though strongly, however, suggesting this element may well only be satisfactory at best.

Commentary

This hypothesis provides a tentative overview of leadership and management of the school, based on more evidence than is presented in example 6 in Chapter 7. The inspector has highlighted the possibility that there will be some strengths in the area of self-evaluation, without indicating which those areas are, as they have already been identified in the analysis. The concerns about the focus of self-evaluation are highlighted, again through a clear but broad statement, with a view that they are not likely to be as good as for other areas of leadership and management. Given the importance of this issue, it is as well to indicate that this likely to be weaker in case it does become one of the main areas of focus for the inspection.

Hypothesis – example 7

- ✗ The leadership and management are inadequate and the governing body does not provide the support it should, leading to an inadequate school overall.

Commentary

This hypothesis is seriously flawed on several counts. First, it is far too definite, as the inspection has not yet taken place. Second, the issue about governance is not about support, but the level of challenge given to the headteacher and the role of the foundation governors in bringing a focus on the school's Christian ethos to the governing body. Third, it is not appropriate to come to conclusions about the school as a whole before an inspection, as the purpose of the pre-inspection work is to determine what areas of the school need exploration. Only when the evidence in those areas is available can a decision be made about the school as a whole. However, it is acceptable to suggest that the answer to one of the key questions is likely to be negative (on the evidence so far), as that view is important when exploring the relevant issues during the inspection.

A more appropriate hypothesis in this case may have been:

“The leadership and management of the school as a church school appear to be inadequate, with monitoring, evaluation and governance potential areas for development.”

This is tentative, gives a link into the main issues for exploration, but its directness leaves the school in no doubt about the angle from which the inspector will be coming.

9 Issues to explore during the inspection

Each section of the SIB should conclude with a set of issues to explore during the inspection. These should stem from the hypothesis immediately preceding the issues, and relate to the analysis that you undertook and summarised in the SIB.

Common sense suggests that you should only select a small number of the most important issues to pursue – typically two or three in each section, but certainly no more than four. Too many could well prove difficult to pursue in the time available during the inspection.

The issues you choose need to be sharply focused, using material from your analysis, so that you can immediately see what evidence you need and how you will obtain it. In short, they lead directly into evidence trails. A lack of focus tends to lead to inspections that rely too much on framework criteria without having the depth of diagnosis that is needed. A sharp focus all helps to make sure that you can track back from the issues to the analysis, and that no issues are presented ‘out of the blue’.

Some inspectors prefer to write issues as questions, while others prefer simple statements of what is being explored. Either is acceptable. However, if you do use questions, make sure they are open ended, and don’t just ask questions that cry out for ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answers.

Include:

- sharply focused issues that will drive the inspection
- usually two or three issues per section
- issues that lead naturally into the collection of evidence.

Avoid:

- generic issues that will be covered anyway
- having more than four issues
- questions that just demand a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answer
- issues that come out of the blue.

The following extracts illustrate some successful and less successful practice in writing issues for a SIB. Again, the example numbers follow through from the examples in Chapters 7 and 8, so you can keep track of how each issue is dealt with at the pre-inspection stage and how the issues link back to the analysis.

Issues – example 1

- ✓ • Track the way the Christian vision has been restated and promoted, as a potential strength of leadership and management.
- Explore the relationship between the leadership team's and the RE coordinator's monitoring and evaluation of RE and how these two processes contribute to the school's plans and actions for improving standards in RE.

Commentary

The first of these issues is to gain further information about a potential strength so that this view is secured. It also ensures that there is sufficient detail to write something specific about the school in the report, rather than writing about the criteria. The second issue is vital in getting to the bottom of the way RE is monitored and evaluated by two distinct groups. It may be that the two systems dovetail well, and the issue is resolved. However, if they do not, this could well provide the evidence trail for an area of focus for the inspection report. Both are, therefore, priority issues to explore.

Issues – example 2

- ✗ • Do pupils feel valued?
- How does the school promote SMSC?
- Is pupils' personal development good, and if so why is it not outstanding?

Commentary

All these issues are problematic. The first two are not specific enough to the school and are repeated broadly from the SIAS framework, and they will not focus the inspection securely. The third is derived from the SEF and not the SIAS framework and, though interesting, is outside the remit of a section 48 inspection. The first also asks a question demanding a 'Yes' or 'No' answer and, although the second asks a more open question, both can be seen as threatening to the school. The last issue has a sting in its tail, in that, although it might seem to suggest a positive approach, the way it is written could be seen by the school to challenge the SEF in a particularly unhelpful way.

Issues – example 3

- ✗ • Confirm the hypothesis that collective worship is outstanding
- Check the class-based collective worship for Anglican practice.

Commentary

The first issue is not specific enough, as it sets a focus for the inspection that is as broad as the SIAS framework. A more profitable approach would have been to focus on the participative nature of worship and explore what effect this had on pupils. The second seems very straightforward at first reading, but could well represent a misunderstanding of the SIAS framework. The framework does not expect all acts of worship to be set in a particular Anglican style, but to support pupils' understanding of Anglican faith and practice – a very different evaluation. These issues are disappointing, given the more appropriate analysis and hypotheses evaluated in Chapters 7 and 8.

Issues – example 4

- ✓ • To what extent does monitoring of teaching in RE bring about consistent classroom practice?
- How effective have the actions taken by the RE coordinator been in improving standards in the subject?

Commentary

Despite the weak analysis and hypothesis, this inspector has focused in on the right issues – consistency of teaching and leadership and management by the RE coordinator. Rather than challenge the RE coordinator by treating the issue as a question of the regularity or effectiveness of monitoring, the inspector has left a more open but clear first issue to explore. Similarly, the second issue could well have challenged the coordinator to say what actions have been taken, but the inspector chose a more subtle route that assumes that actions have been taken (even if the inspector suspects they have not) so that the RE coordinator is able to engage with, rather than be defensive about, the question.

Issues – example 5

- ✓ • Explore the school's approach to supporting pupils' spiritual and cultural development in the context of a Church of England school
- Identify the main ways in which the school, through its Christian ethos, values its pupils and what they bring to the school.

Commentary

Here the inspector has combined the exploration of spiritual and cultural development to avoid appearing negative; the issue can be neutral as the hypothesis is challenging enough in itself. Similarly, there is no need to restate in the challenging hypothesis in the second issue and so the issue is written neutrally, although it does give very useful areas to explore with pupils. In both cases the focus is sharp and the explorations will throw considerable light on the areas covered in the hypothesis.

Issues – example 6

- ✓ • Explore how the school evaluates its distinctiveness as a Church of England school and the effectiveness with which it promotes a Christian vision among its stakeholders.
- Explore how the priorities for CW and RE in the school's development plan can be tracked back to the monitoring and evaluation of RE and CW, and identify potential strengths in the process.

Commentary

The first of these issues is designed to check the extent to which the school takes its distinctiveness seriously, as well as making a judgement about the quality of evaluation in this area. The second, unusually, suggests working from the priority in the development plan and searching for evidence trails back to the first-hand monitoring and evaluation. The reverse route is likely to have been equally effective. The purpose of identifying strengths is to see whether elements of this process can be transferred, as is likely, into the context of the evaluation of the distinctiveness of the school.

Issues – example 7

- ✓ • Explore the rigour with which the school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning in RE and the impact of the actions already taken in raising standards in the subject.
- To what extent do the school's foundation governors understand their role in relation to the school's status as a Church of England school, and to what extent do they challenge other governors and senior leaders to bring about the necessary improvements?

Commentary

The two focuses of monitoring and evaluation and of governance are reflected in one key issue each. The inspector has resisted the temptation to get involved in areas of the school covered by the section 5 inspection (for example, monitoring of teaching and learning generally, and the governing body's role in monitoring and evaluation), preferring to be very specific about RE. This issue of governance is tackled through exploring the specific role of foundation governors, and how well they fulfil it. These are challenging areas to explore in a single day's inspection, and the directness of the revised hypothesis suggested in example 7 in Chapter 8 is needed to ensure the school is in no doubt over the importance of the issues to be explored.

10 A sample SIB



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

SIAS inspection briefing

SAMPLE

School: St Joseph's Church of England (VA) Primary School

Date of inspection: 31 August 2006

Inspector: Joan Smith

Introduction

The *SIAS Inspection Briefing* (SIB) is a summary of the inspector's pre-inspection evaluation, drawing on the evidence available at that time, and provided for discussion with the school. It identifies the main focus for the inspection and the particular issues that will be explored during the inspection before coming to conclusions about the four key questions in the SIAS framework for inspection. It will form the basis for discussion with the school's senior leaders during the inspection.

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

Summary analysis

Toolkit and SEF are very clear about the way the school's work is rooted in Christian values and how this drives its ethos. Both go some way to support the school's view that this area is outstanding. Children said to adopt Christian values as their own and incorporate Christ's teaching and prayer in their own lives, but toolkit focuses more on opportunities than outcomes, suggesting that the area may be good if outcomes are not as strong. School puts much emphasis on individual needs, with the SEF detailing what seems to be good assessment processes, clear tracking systems to check progress, and regular reviews. Toolkit notes that support for pupils with special educational needs is based on Christian values.

Evidence of good behaviour and attitudes in SEF and toolkit, and of pupils taking responsibility and of good cooperation with staff. Good example given of use of playground buddies for peer mediation. Little evidence at this stage of how Christian values influence relationships in the school. SMSC appears strong with the prospectus putting it at the heart of worship, and evidence of strong focus on pupils' SMSC development. Again, less evidence of outcomes but much on provision at this stage.

Hypothesis

The school seems to meet the needs of learners well and to base its work on a strong set of Christian values, suggesting good (grade 2) for this area.

Issues to explore during the inspection

- How far the opportunities provided have had an impact on pupils' SMSC development.
- The extent to which pupils have engaged with Christian values and prayer in their own lives.
- How the Christian character of the school has influenced relationships.

What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

Summary analysis

Toolkit quotes extract from CW policy which focuses worship on 'fundamental and most precious beliefs and values', although prospectus does not mention a Church of England approach. Daily worship includes weekly visit to St Joseph's church for worship led by vicar.

School's self-evaluation notes how well pupils enjoy worship, particularly their participation, which seems to be an improvement since the last (s23) inspection. Pupils involved also in some class planning of CW on Tuesdays. Strong evidence of evaluation of CW by pupils and staff, supporting the school's view that CW is outstanding.

Toolkit asserts that children incorporate prayer into their daily lives, but little evidence at this stage of when or where this happens, particularly as prayer boxes are planned and not fully in place. Previous (s23) inspection gave spiritual development as a strength, also reflected in very recent Ofsted (s5) inspection. The vicar said in toolkit to provide input about the Eucharist via teaching about the Last Supper, but there seems to be no school Eucharist in place. Given that the school describes St Joseph's as very low Anglican, Eucharist and Anglican practice may not be high on the school's agenda.

Hypothesis

While high levels of participation in worship suggest that CW is at least good, the absence of evidence of any development of Anglican practice suggests that it may not be outstanding, and the impact of CW may well be good (grade 2) overall. The evaluation of CW may well be a strength.

Issues to explore during the inspection

- How far the school develops an understanding of Anglican practice among pupils.
- Confirm the suggested high levels of participation in CW.

How effective is religious education?

Summary analysis

RE is seen as a core subject along with En, Ma and Sc. Recent Ofsted (s5) inspection reports that standards are high and achievement outstanding. Toolkit evidence from data and work analysis matches standards in RE with those in En, Ma, and Sc. Teaching said to be consistently good and sometimes outstanding (SEF and toolkit). Assessment and marking in RE are in line with other subjects.

Toolkit suggests RE makes a strong contribution to pupils' SMSC development, particularly the weekly contribution to teaching from the vicar, which has a spiritual focus. Pupil evaluations show most pupils think RE is their favourite subject, and attitudes to RE seem very good. Not clear at this stage how far RE contributes to the distinctive Christian character of the school or whether it is seen as another subject, albeit a very successful one.

Hypothesis

The high standards and achievement suggest that the effectiveness of RE is at least good (grade 2), and possibly outstanding.

Issues to explore during the inspection

- The contribution RE makes to the distinctive character of the school.
- Achievement in RE, as a potential major strength of the school.

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

Summary analysis

The toolkit is fairly thin in this area, focusing more on what appears to be a very good evaluation of CW and standards in RE than on the school's distinctiveness as a church school. Potential inconsistencies between the toolkit (L&M graded 1) and the evidence (no text mention of Church of England in toolkit, mission statement or prospectus) suggest that the leadership of the school may not have focused sufficiently on its effectiveness as a church school. There is also little to suggest the school includes this area in its self-evaluation, identifies appropriate areas for development but appears a little generous. Toolkit and SEF describe a supportive governing body that holds the school to account over standards but it is not clearly what input it makes outside this area. Staff morale seems to be good, but little in the SEF of toolkit about their involvement.

There is strong evidence of regular contact with parents and extensive consultation on many issues. Parents and pupils contribute regularly to the school's self-evaluation. The toolkit suggests strong links with St Joseph's Church and with the cathedral through its annual schools festival.

Hypothesis

Many aspects of leadership and management appear good, suggesting that this area is likely to reach good (grade 2). However, the significant lack of focus on the distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Joseph's as a church school means that leadership and management are unlikely to be outstanding.

Issues to explore during the inspection

- How far the leadership and management of the school are grounded in a distinctive Christian vision.
- The extent to which the governing body, and the foundation governors in particular, challenge the school to account for itself as a Church of England school.
- How effectively the staff are involved in the leadership and management of the school.

Main focus for the inspection

- How far the school has a distinctive Church of England ethos, as against as broadly Christian ethos, and the contributions made to this by RE, CW and the leadership and management of the school.

Note: the name of the school and the inspector used in this sample SIB are fictitious.