



Inspection Newsletter No. 3

November 2013

Section 48 Inspections 2013-2014

We have almost reached the point of being wholly detached – or, to use the correct word, de-coupled - from s5 with our inspections. A few schools have not been inspected by Ofsted in the last five years; they will be inspected after s5. In the first half of this autumn term we have not carried out any inspections but there will be 15 during November and early December. Of these 13 will be primary schools and 2 secondary, all of whom have been informed. There will be roughly the same number next term and I hope to get notifications out for any in the first half term before Christmas.

When will your next section 48 inspection take place?

The regulations from the DFE are set out at the end of this newsletter. In normal circumstances if you were inspected in 2011, for example, and judged by us to be good or better, your next inspection would be in 2016. It would not necessarily be in the same term as in 2011. That might depend upon how many other inspections are scheduled.

If you were inspected in 2011 and judged to be satisfactory or less you would normally be inspected again in 2014.

Schools which had their inspections deferred by Ofsted after an interim assessment will be inspected following their s5. There remain only a few of these schools.

Outstanding schools will be inspected 5 years after their last inspection and have a reduced tariff inspection. Academies will be not normally be inspected within two years of conversion to MAC status (see footnote at the end of the newsletter).

The DES reserves the right to hold an earlier inspection should there be serious concerns about the Catholic life or religious education in any school. This might be with DFE approval and so produce payment to the DES or, if necessary, might take the form of a Canon Law inspection using the s48 framework.

No further detail can be given about when your inspection will take place. Notification will be given approximately half a term prior to your next inspection.

Requires Improvement to be Good

While at first I resisted changing the judgement of 'satisfactory' to 'requires improvement', I feel now that the word satisfactory has been stripped of all its meaning in relation to inspection. The other dioceses did change when s5 did and I am now reluctantly recognising



the necessity to do so. I will, however, emphasise that the full terminology *requires improvement to be good* must be used. In terms of our current inspection format, it is most likely to be used in relation to school self-evaluation as that is predominantly what we are judging. If schools themselves consider that there are areas of Catholic life, leadership, collective worship or RE which are not yet good they should be prepared to use the term in their self-evaluation, indicating what planning seeks to improve those areas and what action is being taken. Our judgement about self-evaluation could then still be 'good.'

General guidance applicable to all schools

Formal systems for monitoring and evaluating Catholic life and collective worship

As notified in the March 2013 newsletter but modified by the abandonment of the judgement of satisfactory, any school which does not have formal systems or processes in place for monitoring and evaluating Catholic life including collective worship will be judged to require improvement to be good. While this is true also about RE, we have only rarely found a school without clear processes for monitoring the subject. So, in reports that are about the quality and effectiveness of self-evaluation, this must be a limiting factor.

Catholic life and RE

We have found that aspects of our schools which have long been diocesan expectations are not observed in a small but increasing number. It is intended to be helpful to schools to set out what some of those expectations are:

Leadership of the Catholic life of the school is the responsibility of the senior leadership team and governors. In practical terms, the Catholic leader of the school is the headteacher. Some of the responsibility may be devolved upon another member of the SLT, but this cannot be an abdication by the headteacher. It cannot be the responsibility of the RE subject leader simply because (s)he leads RE, though it could be if the subject leader is also a member of the SLT and the headteacher retains ultimate responsibility with the governing body.

School self-evaluation document (SSE): a corollary to what has just been stated about leadership of Catholic life is that the production of the SSE should not be left to the subject leader of RE. The subject leader should contribute to the summary document but it is an evaluation which is the responsibility of the headteacher and governors. Inspectors will be expected to ask who produced the SSE and will ask governors about their contribution – for example whether they have received it and discussed it and, where appropriate, contributed their understanding. If the senior leadership team and governors are not taking responsibility for Catholic life and the SSE, this will contribute to a judgement of “requires improvement to be good”. This is a second limiting factor.

Status of Religious Education: in a Catholic school religious education is a core subject and should be treated as such. The requirement of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales is that RE should have 10% of curriculum time up to Year 11 and 5% in the Sixth Form. While we know that league tables and judgements about progress in English and maths bring pressure to bear on schools, Catholic schools exist for broader and specific purposes. In the last century, the then Diocesan Department of Religious Education used to



insist that the subject leader for RE should be rewarded equally with those for English and maths. Where a school falls significantly short of the required provision, inspectors will judge whether this is the consequence of a failure by the school to recognise that religious education is a core subject in a Catholic school. This will be a third limiting factor.

Final Reminders about Self Evaluation Documents

- As s48 inspection judges the quality of school self evaluation, it is essential that schools present their judgements honestly and accurately identifying both strengths and areas for development.
- SSE's should clarify the systems and procedures used to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the s48 framework.
- If the diocesan SSE is not used, schools should ensure that their format responds to the expectations of the framework.
- If another format is use, please still complete Part B of the diocesan SSE to provide the inspector with necessary information about the school.
- Inspectors will request other supporting evidence of monitoring and evaluation when in school.

DFE Policy Statement for s48 Inspection, Letter of Lesley Hollick 17 July 2013

1. The legal requirements for s48 inspection remain the same as set out in the Education Act 2005 and The Education (School Inspection) Regulations 2009.
2. Academies designated as having a religious character will be inspected in accordance with the existing regulations.
3. Good or outstanding schools, judged as such by s48 inspection, will be inspected again within 5 school years.
4. Any school judged to be less than good may be scheduled within 3 to 5 years.
5. With the agreement of the DFE, in exceptional circumstances, a school warranting inspection earlier than the stated intervals may be subject to s48 inspection.
6. Where a new voluntary aided or academy/free school opens, s48 inspection should be scheduled between 3 and 5 years from the date of opening. [In the case of existing schools which become part of a MAC inspection, they will not normally be scheduled for s48 inspection within two years of becoming an academy¹].

John Lally (Dr)
Diocesan Education Service
Don Bosco House
Coventry Road
Coleshill
Warks
B46 3EA
Tel: 01675 464755
Email: john.lally@theredepartment.com

¹ Occasionally an inspection may have been scheduled and is due to take place within days or a week or two of "academisation". In these circumstances it may well go ahead.