

THE INSPECTION OF SCHOOL PROVISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PUPILS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In 2012 Devon SACRE received an evaluation on the extent and quality of Ofsted reports on Devon schools between January and September 2012 in relation to:
- religious education (RE)
 - collective worship/assembly
 - pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)
- 1.2. The present document reports on the same issues during the period September 2014 to the present, taking account of changes in Ofsted guidance for inspectors and drawing comparisons with the 2012 findings.

2. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

- i. This review is based on an analysis of the 40 primary and 3 secondary schools in Devon inspected between September 2014 and March 2015.
- ii. In September 2014 Ofsted published a new *Handbook for Inspection* (revised in January 2015), which provided guidance for school inspectors. In comparison to the earlier guidance (2012), the new handbook gives a higher profile to RE (explicitly and implicitly) and its role in school provision for SMSC. A key question addressed in this paper is 'has the new Ofsted guidance resulted in greater attention to RE in inspection reports?'
- iii. The 2014 *Handbook* includes a new detailed section on RE, reminding inspectors of current legislation. It requires inspectors to consider how well the school curriculum complies with legislation and, (for schools that do not have a religious character), includes a balanced approach to the pupils' RE that is broadly Christian but, as appropriate, takes account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Britain'.
- iv. The new SMSC criteria enhance the importance of young people developing 'tolerance and respect' in preparation for living in modern Britain. In this context the criteria expect pupils to understand different faiths and cultures, which is the core of the RE curriculum.
- v. Taking account of the revised guidance we expected to find in Section 5 reports references to RE in four inspection contexts, where relevant.
 - a. Non-compliance with legal requirements should be reported (this requirement has not changed from previous inspection guidance)
 - b. Reporting on standards and teaching should include a reference to RE where it is a particular strength or weakness of the school
 - c. When reporting on leadership and management, inspectors should ensure that 'the curriculum includes a balanced approach to the pupils' RE that is broadly Christian but, where required, takes account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Britain'.
 - d. Reporting on SMSC should include a reference to pupils' understanding of 'different faiths and cultural diversity'. Evidence from Section 5 reports in the past suggests strongly that pupils are unlikely to gain an understanding of 'different faiths and cultural diversity' in schools without good RE provision.
- vi. None of the reports reviewed include a judgement of non-compliance with legislation on RE or collective worship. SACRE may wish to seek corroborating evidence for this.

- vii. In spite of the importance given in the revised Handbook to pupils understanding faiths and cultures, most inspectors ignore it. RE was mentioned, usually with no details, in just 12% of primary school reports reviewed. References to RE appear in 57% of the 19 secondary school reports but only in lists of successful or unsuccessful GCSE subjects.
- viii. Reporting on SMSC remains vague and imprecise. Inspectors use key terms from the SMSC criteria (e.g. 'reflect', 'values', 'appreciation') but without reference to the key contexts (e.g. knowledge and understanding) which give these terms substance. Most inspectors ignore the new emphasis on beliefs and cultural diversity and most fail to exemplify the school's provision of SMSC with reference to faiths and cultures.
- ix. With two exceptions the 43 reports give a positive judgement on SMSC but without reference to the revised criteria in the *School Inspection Handbook*. This raises questions about the reliability of inspectors' judgments on SMSC.
- x. The result is that with very few exceptions these reports provide no evidence about the quality of RE in Devon schools. It has been Ofsted's policy for many years **not** to report on individual subjects except in cases where they contribute significantly to a broader aspect of school life. In conformity with this policy SACRE might reasonably expect to find examples of RE exemplifying good or poor SMSC, given the subject's unique potential contribution to SMSC and particularly to pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain.

3. CHANGES TO INSPECTION GUIDANCE

- 3.1. The *School Inspection Handbook* (2014) includes significant changes to the guidance for inspectors respecting RE, assemblies and SMSC.
- 3.2. From this point all references to the *Handbook* refer to the current Ofsted guidance for inspectors published in 2014.

The inspection of religious education (RE) in schools without a religious character

- 3.3. The *Handbook* places a greater emphasis than its predecessors on the school's responsibility to provide RE and inspectors' responsibility to inspect it. It includes a useful summary of legislation regarding RE.
 - RE in maintained schools (except voluntary aided, those with specific trust requirements and voluntary controlled/foundation schools whose parents request denominational RE) should be based on the locally agreed syllabus established by the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).
 - RE should reflect the religious traditions in Britain, which are, in the main, Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Britain.
 - A school or academy without a religious designation must not provide an RE syllabus (or any other) to pupils by means of any catechism or formulary that is distinctive of any particular religious denomination.
 - Academies may, but are not required to, follow the locally agreed RE syllabus. Alternatively, they can devise their own syllabus, but it must be in line with the legislation that underpins the locally agreed syllabus as mentioned above.
- 3.4. Those changes in the 2014 Handbook that have greatest relevance to RE are driven by the enhanced importance given to schools' responsibility to promote *tolerance and respect* in preparing them for life in modern Britain. The *Handbook's* guidance on inspecting a school's leadership and management (Para 152) requires inspectors consider how well the curriculum:
 - is broad and balanced, ***complies with legislation*** and provides a wide range of subjects, preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life in modern Britain

- promotes tolerance of and respect for people of all faiths (or those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations (and other groups with protected characteristics) through the effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (for schools that do not have a religious character) includes a balanced approach to the pupils' RE that is broadly Christian but, as appropriate, takes account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Britain.

The inspection of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- 3.5. Before making the final judgement on the overall effectiveness, inspectors must also evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (*School Inspection Handbook:128*).
- 3.6. Inspectors may (**but do not have to**) write about SMSC in three sections of the school report:
- Teaching
 - Behaviour and safety
 - Leadership and management
- 3.7. Ofsted has made significant changes to its definitions of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. (See Table 1)
- 3.8. The 2015 guidance signals a reversal of the trend in Ofsted documents over the last decade towards increasingly secular definitions of the spiritual. The enhanced emphasis on pupils respecting people of other faiths, their interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues, and their ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues are unlikely to be observable in schools where RE is not a planned component of the curriculum. RE is also highly likely to make a key contribution to fulfilling the recently added criteria for moral development; that 'pupils will be interested in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for *different faiths* and cultural diversity'. School reports from September 2014 would reasonably be expected to exemplify these new criteria from pupils' work in RE. Further analysis of the changes to the SMSC criteria may be found in paragraph 7 below.

Table 1: changes in Ofsted's definitions of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. (*Changes are shown in italics*)

School inspection handbook 2012	School inspection handbook 2015
<p>Pupils' spiritual development is shown by their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values • sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, <i>including the intangible</i> • use of imagination and creativity in their learning • willingness to reflect on their experiences. 	<p>The spiritual development of pupils is shown by their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ability to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values</i> • sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them • use of imagination and creativity in their learning • willingness to reflect on their experiences.
<p>Pupils' moral development is shown by their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong and their readiness to apply this understanding in their own lives • understanding of the consequences of their actions • interest in investigating, and offering reasoned views about, moral and ethical issues. 	<p>The moral development of pupils is shown by their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong, readily apply this understanding in their own lives <i>and, in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England</i> • understanding of the consequences of their <i>behaviour and actions</i> • interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues, <i>and being able to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others</i>

<p>Pupils' social development is shown by their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of a range of social skills in different contexts, including working and socialising with pupils from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds • willingness to participate in a variety of social settings, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively • interest in, and understanding of, the way communities and societies function at a variety of levels. 	<p><i>on these issues.</i></p> <p>The social development of pupils is shown by their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of a range of social skills in different contexts, including working and socialising with pupils from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds • willingness to participate in a variety of communities and social settings, <i>including by volunteering</i>, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively • acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; the pupils develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.
<p>Pupils' cultural development is shown by their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage • willingness to participate in, and respond to, for example, artistic, musical, sporting, <i>mathematical, technological, scientific</i> and cultural opportunities • interest in exploring, understanding of, and respect for cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities. 	<p>The cultural development of pupils is shown by their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage <i>and that of others</i> • understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain • knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain • interest in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for <i>different faiths</i> and cultural diversity, and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their tolerance and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities • willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, sporting and cultural opportunities

The inspection of collective worship in schools without a religious character

3.9. New guidance on inspecting a school's leadership and management (Para 152) requires inspectors consider how well the curriculum:

- includes a rounded programme of assemblies that help to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, providing clear guidance on what is right and what is wrong.

3.10. The 2012 Handbook makes no reference to collective worship. The revised 2015 Handbook includes a summary of legislation regarding collective worship:

- Non-faith academies must provide collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Inspectors should note any requirements of their funding agreements.
- A school can reflect the religious backgrounds represented in its community in its collective worship and RE, as long as the majority of provision is broadly Christian. Alternatively, the family backgrounds of some or all pupils may lead the headteacher and governing body to conclude that broadly Christian collective worship is not appropriate. The headteacher can apply to the local SACRE to have the broadly Christian requirement disapplied and replaced by collective worship distinctive of another faith. The headteacher should consult the governing body before doing so. Academies should apply to the Secretary of State via the Educational Funding Agency (EFA).

4. THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF REPORTING ON RE IN DEVON SCHOOLS

Evidence base

4.1. Table 1 shows the number of reports analysed in 2012 and 2015 .

Table 2: The number of school reports providing evidence for the 2012 and 2015 Devon SACRE reports.

	2012	2015 Schools inspected after 01/09/2014
Primary	37	40
Secondary	3	3

References to RE in Devon reports (including references to RE content where the subject has not been named)

Table3: The number of school reports analysed in 2012 and 2015 in which RE is mentioned

	2012	2015 Schools inspected after 01/09/2014
Primary	3	4
Secondary	0	2

4.2. Overall, RE is mentioned in very few reports and inspectors' comments are rarely informative.

Inspectors' judgements about RE in primary schools

4.3. With one exception, references to RE in primary school reports are illustrative of SMSC in the following categories:

- *Opportunities to learn about faiths and cultures.* In two of the three cases where this was reported, inspectors noted that RE made a strong contribution to pupils' tolerance and respect for people of other beliefs and cultures.
- *Reflection on beliefs and cultures.* Two reports noted that pupils had opportunities to ask questions about and reflect on traditions (e.g. fasting in Judaism) or beliefs (e.g. beliefs about the nature of God).

4.4. One inspector reported that the school governors were informed about how 'the new National Curriculum and the local agreed syllabus for religious education is implemented throughout the school'; adding, 'However, it is too early to measure the impact of this work'.

4.5. Although a slight improvement on the findings of the 2012 SACRE report, evidence for RE remains very thin.

Inspectors' judgements about RE in secondary schools

4.6. In secondary school reports RE is named among other subjects to illustrate:

- *Teaching:* in one report RE was named along with art as a subject where 'teaching strategies are often varied, creative and well conceived, and there is some very effective teaching across the school'.
- *Leadership and management (SMSC):* SMSC is most frequently reported on in the leadership and management section of school reports. In only 1 of the 3 secondary reports reviewed here was RE named as contributing to SMSC. In this school 'more effective attention has been given to developing students' better understanding of the cultural diversity within Britain' and (possibly associated with this - we are not told), the school is about to provide more time for RE.

4.7. The lack of attention to RE, particularly its contribution to SMSC is disappointing.

5. THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF REPORTING ON COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN DEVON SCHOOLS: a comparison between 2012 and 2015

Table 5: The number of school reports making reference to collective worship

	2012	2015 Schools inspected after 01/09/2014
Primary	8/37	10/40
Secondary	0/3	1/3

Inspectors' judgements about collective worship in primary schools

- 5.1 There has been little change in the detail of reporting on collective worship (assembly) since 2012. Reports on assemblies fall into two categories; those which make a brief statement with no explanation or illustration and those which explain the contribution of assembly to SMSC.
- 5.2 A quarter of the reports making reference to assemblies gave no more than a judgement; e.g. 'assemblies have a strong spiritual and moral message'; 'assemblies are effective'.
- 5.3 The remainder made an explicit link between assemblies and SMSC on the basis of eight broad rationales:
- *Promoting values.* It was most commonly argued that assembly contributed to SMSC by promoting values. For example, 'the inspector saw the theme of gratitude highlighted in assembly'. Other values celebrated included 'belonging', 'forgiveness', 'compassion', 'humility' and 'courage'. 'Values in action' were observed, where assemblies were used to promote charitable work and helping others.
 - *Reflection.* Opportunities for pupils to reflect continues to justify the contribution of assemblies to SMSC. For example, 'an assembly, led by the headteacher, provided a wonderful opportunity for all pupils to reflect upon the most important thing in the world for them'.
 - *Understanding faiths and cultures.* Some reports, particularly those written after September 2014, stress the new criteria for SMSC, demonstrating how assemblies are used to promote tolerance and respect. One inspector links this with reflection: 'Pupils are given the opportunity to think and reflect on how their lives, and the opportunities they have, could be very different to others of different backgrounds, faiths and belief'.
 - *Prayer.* Only one report noted the 'regular opportunities for pupils to reflect and pray during assemblies'.
 - *Special occasions.* Assemblies were occasionally used to celebrate special festivals and occasions, for example: 'The community and school came together during the inspection to present a truly memorable harvest festival assembly to parents and grandparents. The assembly was led by members of the local church and included readings, songs and stories from the pupils'.
 - *Group identity.* As was the case with the harvest festival, 'assemblies are a special time when the pupils join together as a family'.
 - *Behaviour.* Once one of the most common purposes of assembly, in only in one of the schools inspected 'assemblies are used well to celebrate achievement and good behaviour'.

Inspectors' judgements about collective worship in secondary schools

- 5.4 The single reference to assembly in a secondary report simply states that 'The school's assembly and tutorial programme provides a wide range of opportunities for students to develop their understanding and appreciation of life in modern Britain'. The role of RE is not stated.

6. THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF REPORTING ON SMSC IN DEVON SCHOOLS: a comparison between 2012 and 2015

Table 6: Number of reports on Devon schools to include one or more judgements on SMSC.

	2012 PRIMARY	2015 PRIMARY	2015 SECONDARY
Overall judgement	0	17	0
Teaching	28	0	0
Behaviour and Safety	7	4	0
Leadership and Management (includes SMSC and curriculum)	33	33	3
Number of reports making at least one reference to SMSC	32	39	0

- 6.1 The reduction in report length has led to a truncation of inspectors' reporting on SMSC. In particular it is now rare to find a reference to SMSC anywhere in the body of a report other than the section on leadership and management, which includes curriculum. However, in nearly half of the summaries in reports on primary schools SMSC is named as a strength of the school.

7. IMPLEMENTING THE NEW OFSTED GUIDANCE

- 7.1 The details outlined above in this report suggest that the revised guidance to inspectors published in the 2014 *Handbook* has had little impact on the extent and quality of reporting on RE, collective worship and SMSC.
- 7.2 In the *Handbook* Ofsted has made a tighter distinction between spiritual/social and moral/cultural development. Spiritual and social development are to do with pupils' attitudes, values and dispositions, whereas moral and cultural development provide the intellectual foundation that informs pupils' developing attitudes and dispositions. Hence the terms 'understand', 'apply', 'investigate' and 'knowledge' only appear in the criteria for moral and cultural development. This implies that, in an educational context, attitudes and values are not developed in a vacuum but in relation to the knowledge and experience gained within and beyond the curriculum.
- 7.3 It is the new rigour in Ofsted's definitions of moral and cultural development that has made RE indispensable to schools' promotion of SMSC as a whole. For example in coming to 'respect other people's faiths and values' (spiritual), and showing 'respect and tolerance' for those with different beliefs (social), pupils need to understand and appreciate 'the viewpoints of others' on moral and ethical issues (moral), and to develop an 'understanding of different faiths and cultural diversity' (cultural). It would be unusual for pupils to develop such understanding in any other part of the curriculum except RE.

Reporting on RE using the revised criteria

Reporting non-compliance.

- 7.4 We should reasonably expect inspectors to report any non-compliance with the legal obligation on schools to teach RE to all registered pupils. This is not a new inspection

requirement but the 2015 guidance gives it added significance because without an RE programme it would be difficult for a school to implement the new criteria for SMSC. Since non-compliance is not reported in any Devon reports, we should be able to assume that RE is taught in every school to every registered pupil. This raises the question, why is RE so rarely given as evidence of SMSC?

Reflection on beliefs

- 7.5 Ofsted's revised definition of spiritual development is an improvement. In the old *Handbook* pupil's spiritual development was shown by their 'beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values'. This implied that pupils' beliefs were under scrutiny. Inspectors now evaluate the extent to which pupils are able to *be reflective about* their beliefs.
- 7.6 The only occurrence of the term 'reflect' in the criteria appears in the context of the spiritual, where it is made clear that what is meant is 'reflection on personal beliefs' rather than some vague, unfocused 'reflection'. Yet in the 8 reports that made reference to pupils being 'reflective' in the context of SMSC; in only two were personal beliefs the subject of this reflection. In one of these reports it is said that pupils had the *opportunity* to reflect on their beliefs: in the other pupils 'ask searching questions about their world and the nature of God'. In other reports we are told that pupils reflect on values, 'issues', personal qualities, 'what is important to them' and how their lives could be very different to others of different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs.
- 7.7 The point is here that inspectors are making positive SMSC judgements on unspecified 'evidence' that does not match the specificity of the criteria.

Preparation for life in modern Britain

- 7.8 A key criterion for evaluating SMSC introduced to the *Handbook* in 2014 is pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain. Of all the revisions to the SMSC criteria, this is the one that inspectors have taken most seriously. Understanding faiths and cultures, as seen above, is fundamental to this preparation. These terms are not new to education in modern times. They were included in the government's definition of British values in the 2011 Prevent Strategy.
- 7.9 The Ofsted handbook gives the following as evidence that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain:
- Morally, pupils can:
 - recognise the difference between right and wrong, readily apply this understanding in their own lives and, in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England
 - show interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues, and being able to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.
 - Socially, pupils accept and engage with the fundamental British values¹ of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual **respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs**; the pupils develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.
 - Culturally, pupils:
 - understand and appreciate the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and that of others

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc
www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-smsc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools.

- understand and appreciate the range of different cultures within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain
- have knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain
- are interested in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity, and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their tolerance and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities.

7.10 These criteria are very clear and inspectors should have no difficulty in using them to evaluate the extent to which pupils are prepared for life in Britain. 31 of the 40 primary reports include a judgment on pupils' preparedness for life in Britain: all but two judgements are positive. However, when we come to look at the evidence for these judgements we find the following:

Tolerance and respect

- 7.11 In the new Handbook respect and tolerance are key terms permeating Ofsted's expectations of the curriculum and of SMSC.
- 7.12 Tolerance and respect are mentioned in 11 of the 40 primary reports but none of the secondary. The emphasis in the new Ofsted criteria is on outcomes - specifically that pupils should become tolerant and respectful of other faiths and cultures. Most reports fall short of saying this, concentrating instead on **provision** through the curriculum and in developing pupils' understanding' of tolerance and respect. Typically, 'The leadership team works to extend pupils' understanding of modern British society effectively by developing **an understanding of** qualities such as tolerance and respect for different cultures'. Pupils 'learn the value of being respectful' and 'know that it is important to tolerate and respect people who are different from themselves'. All of these reports stop short of saying that pupils **are** respectful of **those who are different**.
- 7.13 Seven reports note tolerance and/or respect as qualities observed in the pupils, but not quite in the context expected by Ofsted. Reports are full of vague claims such as 'Pupils learn the value of working together, being respectful and helping each other. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain'. Pupils are 'friendly, polite and show consideration and respect for others' is a recurring phrase in these reports. In this sense pupils are being generally respectful in their daily relationships with others. Ofsted is requiring something far more challenging; a mind shift in attitudes to people beyond the school community who belong to religions and cultures which pupils in Devon may never have encountered first hand.

Understanding different faiths and cultures

- 7.14 As already noted, Ofsted recognises that acquiring the attitudes of tolerance and respect is inseparable from learning about and understanding different faiths and cultures. Culturally developed pupils should understand and appreciate the range of different cultures within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain. They should be interested in 'exploring, improving understanding of, and showing respect for *different faiths* and cultural diversity'. Their cultural development is shown by the 'extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their tolerance and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities'. These phrases could have been taken from the aims of an agreed syllabus for RE.
- 7.15 In relation to cultures and faiths it is important that; pupils' tolerance and respect' should be underpinned by knowledge and understanding. Nine reports (all primary) refer to pupils' understanding of other cultures, which is said to be promoted through links with overseas countries such as Australia, France, Italy, South Africa, Borneo and Tanzania.

It is interesting that all these examples refer to what Ofsted calls the 'global' community. Nothing is reported about pupils' 'tolerance and respect' for groups in the 'local' and 'national' community.

- 7.16 Only in six primary reports and none of the secondary reports is any reference made to learning about faiths. In three of these it is simply stated that pupils learn about faiths and/or beliefs. In two schools pupils learn about other faiths particularly through celebrating a range of religious and cultural festivals. Only in one report do we find a clear reference to the contribution of RE, that associates learning with attitudes; 'The teaching of religious education is a strength of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures. A group of pupils explained to the inspector that 'Obviously, we don't have a mix of cultures in our school but we are all different and respect each other's differences. We learn about a range of cultures and religions and we find similarities as well as differences.'
- 7.17 The importance of knowing about and respecting people of different faiths is integral to SMSC criteria and yet, in making their SMSC judgement, only 6 out of 40 inspectors mention it. The question is, was the evidence not there, or did the inspectors not look for it? If the evidence wasn't there, why did inspectors not report this as a weakness?

Knowledge and understanding of the democratic system of modern Britain

- 7.18 Pupils' knowledge of our democratic system was mentioned in 4 out of 40 primary reports. The evidence given to support these judgements, though sparse' was among the most convincing among SMSC judgements. In one school through studying Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech, 'pupils considered democracy and individual equality and liberty'. In two schools 'pupils' experience of democracy has been deepened by the election of the school council'. In a third school 'Years 5 and 6 were well aware of the impending general election and had studied the referendum on Scottish independence. They were also well informed about the dangers of extremism, having discussed recent sad events occurring in Paris and elsewhere'.

Heritage

- 7.19 There are two references to heritage, both claiming that pupils learnt about their British heritage on trips to London. However, in neither case are we told what they learnt about their heritage in London and neither report referred to pupils understanding the 'wide range of cultural influences' that has shaped their own heritage and that of others.

Right and wrong

- 7.20 Only two reports made reference to pupils' ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong; neither in the context on respecting the law, which is not mentioned in any reports. Neither is Parliament.

Foundations for inspection judgements

- 7.21 The question remains; if inspectors are judging pupils' preparedness for life in Britain to be overwhelmingly positive with very little reference to the detail of Ofsted's criteria, on what basis are they making these judgments?
- 7.22 Several reports give no supporting evidence, stating simply that the school prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain. Where evidence is provided it is included in questionable statements such as:
- Because of the school's emphasis on its values, pupils have a strong sense of fairness and right and wrong which serves to reinforce their understanding of being British and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
 - Assembly themes such as 'forgiveness' and 'compassion and humility'...extend the pupils' moral and cultural awareness and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
 - The school, in planning for the new National Curriculum, has paid careful attention to ensure pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils now study what it means to be part of Europe.

- Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities and to discuss moral and ethical issues. Together with the broad and balanced curriculum, this means they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Close links with the church and assembly themes, such as perseverance, enhance pupils' spiritual and moral understanding and readiness for life in modern British democratic society.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to explore subjects in depth. Pupils...have discussed where they spent their summer holidays and why there are checks at airports, helping them to gain an understanding of British values and identity.
- Pupils are eager to represent the school and take on roles of captains and members of the school council. This is preparing them well for life in modern Britain.

7.23 Several of these judgements refer to values that might appear in a list adopted by the school. These include 'compassion', 'humility', 'fairness' and so on. However, 'values' in the *Handbook* has taken on new meanings. In the definitions of spiritual and social development the 'values' referred to are specifically respect and tolerance for those with different cultures and beliefs; in the context of cultural development, British values are referred to.

Conclusion

7.24 Although inspectors have been using the revised guidance since September 2014, very few of them have taken account of, or perhaps understood, the changes.

7.25 There are three particular weaknesses in reporting:

- vague, woolly text which uses key terms in the SMSC criteria (e.g. 'reflect', 'values', 'appreciation') but without reference to the key contexts which give these terms substance. In particular, inspectors have failed to make reference to pupils' understanding of faiths, beliefs and cultures in Britain, which is the core of the RE curriculum.
- the use of vague and woolly 'evidence', which again does not reflect the rigorous evidence required by Ofsted. Examples can be seen in the many statements in 7.24 (above). Several of these may be classed as *non sequiturs*, as in the following example. 'Year 6 wrote poems they had written about rock climbing [on a school trip]...; these were read in an assembly so in addition to promoting good literacy skills, the teacher was using the residential experience to develop further the pupils' social spiritual and moral awareness'. It is not at all clear why the fact that children read their poems in assembly rather than in a lesson developed their 'spiritual and moral awareness.'
- an avoidance of stating impact as evidence. The Ofsted criteria for SMSC are written in terms of what pupils can do. Too often inspectors give school provision as evidence.

7.26 Four key questions emerge from this inquiry:

- Are inspectors failing to refer to valid evidence for their judgements because they are unfamiliar with the revised guidelines or because they cannot find the evidence in schools? Or of course, both?
- If inspectors are not finding evidence of pupils' knowledge of faiths and cultures, as seems to be the case, this implies that the RE curriculum is at fault. If RE is not being taught well enough or often enough, why are inspectors not reporting this either in the summary of weaknesses or as non-compliance?
- Given the overwhelmingly positive judgements on SMSC without convincing reference to the evidence in the Ofsted criteria, how reliable are inspection judgements on SMSC?
- Why have these concerns not been identified through Ofsted's monitoring process?

- 7.27 The absence of reference to RE is worrying because it is so obvious. A school wanting to demonstrate that its pupils have knowledge of faiths and cultures need only refer inspectors to the RE curriculum. It may be argued that RE might not have been taught on the day(s) of the inspection, whereas assembly (which is referred to in more reports) is still generally daily. However, it is difficult to believe that inspectors could find no evidence of the contribution of RE to SMSC in over 43 schools; not only in lessons but in the curriculum, pupils' work and discussions with pupils.
- 7.28 All of the concerns identified above can be addressed, as illustrated in two primary school reports by different lead inspectors. In the first school, 'the cultures of pupils present in the school are celebrated' but 'discussions with pupils showed that they have little awareness of the different cultures present in other parts of modern Britain'. In the second, 'Pupils... show understanding and compassion for each other as well as British values of respect, forgiveness and honesty, linked to the school's five core values'. But then we are told that 'Pupils' understanding of the range of religious and ethnic heritages represented in modern Britain, however, is not explicitly planned into the curriculum carefully enough to prepare pupils for later life in modern Britain'. Most reports would stop at the end of the first sentence in each of these reports. But these two inspectors alone have understood that according to Ofsted's revised criteria, 'celebrating' difference and adhering to values such as 'respect' and 'honesty' is not sufficient preparation for life in modern Britain. Pupils need knowledge and understanding of those who they are expected to 'respect' and 'tolerate'.

SUGGESTED TEXT OF LETTER TO Ofsted (HMCI) from the chair of SACRE

Dear Sir Michael

Devon SACRE recently considered from an independent researcher, an analysis of the xxx Ofsted Section 5 reports on Devon schools since xxxxxxxx. In particular SACRE wanted to know whether there had been any improvement since our last commissioned report in 2012 in the quality of reporting on religious education (RE) and on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).

SACRE welcomes the changes in the Handbook *for Inspection*, which has been in use since September 2014. We were pleased to see the introduction of extended guidance on inspecting RE in paragraphs 18 and 152. In particular we welcome the revised descriptions of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their explicit emphasis throughout on the importance of pupils being prepared for life in modern Britain and in this context, the importance of them developing respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We believe that given the national and international issues which our young people are likely to face throughout their lives, the place of RE in the curriculum must be guaranteed.

We have noted that the SMSC guidance does not mention RE by name. However, in the experience of SACRE members, who include governors, head teachers, teachers, advisers and inspectors it would be unusual to find pupils developing knowledge of faiths and beliefs in any depth other than through RE teaching. This conclusion is corroborated by our reading of Section 5 reports as well as Ofsted's excellent publications on RE.

Taking account of the revised guidance we expected to find in Section 5 reports references to RE in four inspection contexts, where relevant.

- a. Non-compliance with legal requirements should be reported (this requirement has not changed from previous inspection guidance)
- b. Reporting on standards and teaching should include a reference to RE where it is a particular strength or weakness of the school
- c. When reporting on leadership and management, inspectors should ensure that 'the curriculum includes a balanced approach to the pupils' RE that is broadly Christian but, where required, takes account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Britain'.
- d. Reporting on SMSC should include a reference to pupils' understanding of 'different faiths and cultural diversity'. Evidence from Section 5 reports in the past suggests strongly that pupils are unlikely to gain an understanding of 'different faiths and cultural diversity' in schools without good RE provision.

We were disappointed to discover the following:

- i. None of the reports reviewed include a judgement of non-compliance with legislation on RE or collective worship. This is surprising and SACRE will seek corroborating evidence.
- ii. RE was mentioned, usually with no details, in just 12% of primary school reports reviewed. References to RE in secondary school reports appear only in lists of successful or unsuccessful GCSE subjects.
- iii. Very few inspectors exemplify the school's provision of SMSC with reference to the RE curriculum. In spite of the welcome emphasis on tolerance, respect, faith, belief and cultural diversity in the revised SMSC descriptions, most inspectors ignore these terms.
- iv. Reporting on SMSC remains vague and imprecise. Inspectors use key terms from the SMSC criteria (e.g. 'reflect', 'values', 'appreciation') but without reference to the key contexts (e.g. knowledge and understanding) which give these terms substance.
- v. Only 2 of the 43 reports analysed reported on SMSC with reference to knowledge of beliefs, faiths and cultural diversity as a prerequisite for living in modern Britain.

- vi. With two exceptions the 43 reports give a positive judgement on SMSC but without reference to the revised criteria in the *School Inspection Handbook*. Frequently the 'evidence' given in support of good SMSC is unconvincing. This raises questions about the reliability of inspectors' judgments on SMSC.

We appreciate that inspectors are given limited time to complete their work and that they have many priorities to consider. However, SMSC has always been one of those priorities. Nearly all inspectors write a few lines about SMSC in the school. Our expectations are that their judgements should be based clearly on Ofsted's criteria and that any evidence referred to clearly backs up the judgement.

Devon SACRE asks you to refer the enclosed report to HMI with specialist expertise in RE and SMSC and to give us assurances that:

- i. Section 5 lead inspectors will be updated on the changes relating to RE and SMSC in the revised *Handbook* and the implication of these changes for inspection;
- ii. Inspectors will seek reliable and relevant evidence for pupils being prepared for life in modern Britain. This will include their attitudes of respect and tolerance and their understanding of faiths, beliefs and cultural diversity.
- iii. Where there is evidence that pupils' understanding of faiths, beliefs and cultural diversity is weak or inadequate, inspectors will report on this.
- iv. Where weaknesses in pupils preparation for modern Britain, at all key stages, are consequences of deficiencies in the RE curriculum or of non-compliance with the statutory requirement that RE should be taught to all registered pupils, then this must be reported.
- v. Ofsted's monitoring procedures will include a scrutiny of reporting on SMSC and RE.

cc

Dr Joyce Miller Chair REC
Secretary of State for Education
Home Secretary
Chair of the APPG
Chair of NASACRE