

ESTYN: Update for inspectors (April 2018): Spiritual development and daily acts of collective worship

In the guidance handbooks for the inspection of schools, we require inspection teams to consider the provision for pupils' spiritual development and daily acts of collective worship under 4.2.

The relevant sections for ease of reference are these:

“Inspectors should consider the extent to which the school provides effective opportunities for pupils to develop secure values and to establish their spiritual and ethical beliefs. They should consider how well the school develops pupils’ ability to reflect on religious and non-religious responses to fundamental questions and to reflect on their own beliefs or values. They should consider how well the school promotes principles that help pupils to distinguish between right and wrong. They should consider how far the school fosters shared values, such as honesty, fairness, justice and sustainability, and helps pupils to understand the needs and rights of others, both locally and as members of a diverse global world.”

“Acts of worship and assemblies can play an important part in pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors should consider acts of collective worship in all schools that do not provide denominational education. They should consider the quality of acts of collective worship in their own right and how well the school plans them over time. Inspectors should report on daily acts of collective worship where they are particularly good or where they are weak or do not meet statutory requirements.”

It is important to remember that inspection teams must consider these aspects on each inspection and each report is likely to contain some comment on these aspects of pupils' development. However, each report does not need to contain a set number of sentences dealing with the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, and we do not expect inspectors to report on these aspects in a formulaic way. It is up to each inspection team to weigh up the significance of any strengths and weaknesses in each inspection area. The section of the inspection guidance on 'making judgements' sets out the following advice:

“Inspectors will always include clear evaluations in relation to the reporting requirements in each inspection area. They will also consider all aspects of these reporting requirements as set out in the inspection guidance handbook. However, what inspectors report on within each reporting requirement may differ depending on the relative significance of what they find in each school.”

Inspectors may also report on acts of collective worship 'by exception'. This means that they may report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or significant weaknesses. Therefore, we do not expect formulaic reporting on whether a school meets the statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship, but we do expect inspection teams to look at this on each inspection. If the school does not meet its statutory duty in this regard then we would normally expect a comment in the report.

However, a failure to meet the statutory duty might not affect the judgement for IA4. This is something for the team to consider. The team will need to weigh up a number of factors in each specific case, such as the number of pupils that it affects, and the

team will have to decide whether this is significant or not and whether it should affect the overall judgement for IA4.

Irrespective of whether or not inspectors decide to report on collective worship, they must always report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.