



York Diocesan Board of Education (YDBE)
Accompanying Guidance notes on Church School Overview report from Local Governing Body (LGB) to MAT Board
September 2025

The purpose of the report is:

- To draw certain key areas of Church school oversight in one place as a summary document for Local Governors and the Board, whilst reflecting delegations set out in the Scheme of Delegation.
- To prompt reflection and questioning in key areas related to the Church foundation and to enable strategic oversight appropriate to the relevant tier of governance.
- To enable the Board to report to Members and to provide the necessary assurances that the foundation of the CE schools continues to be preserved and developed.

The document is separated into tabs to enable different types of information to be isolated and analysed in greater detail by both the LGC and the Trust Board. The order of this guidance reflects the order of the newly ordered report. You may wish to discuss this document with your advisor. DYET (as the Diocesan Corporate Member) will be reviewing and discussing all reports from each Trust to enable feedback to be provided around common themes arising. **If you are unsure about any aspect of the report or this guidance, please contact your Advisor or George Edmond (Assistant Director of Education) – George.edmond@yorkdiocese.org**

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

This is about the LGB reflecting on whether Collective Worship is legally compliant and in line with the school's Trust deed, and affirming to the Board that it is. It is also about sharing with the Board how oversight in this area takes place.

Considering the position across all Church schools, the Board may wish to ask/reflect on how the Trust contributes to and enhances the schools' worship and spiritual life.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

This is about the LGB reflecting on whether the legal requirements around RE syllabuses have been met and whether the % curriculum time for RE is adequate and in line with the RE Statement of Entitlement - and giving the Board assurance on these points. It is also about sharing with the Board the LGB's assessment as to whether the curriculum and its delivery is effective in enabling all pupils to flourish. The reported information in this area should enable the Board to understand:

- Whether the provision/profile/priority/resourcing of RE reflects its place as a core curriculum subject.
- Whether the curriculum is challenging, accurate, well-sequenced, well-balanced, relevant, and diverse.
- What is the quality of teaching?
- How assessment informs teaching and learning.
- Whether all pupils make progress in their learning – and what patterns emerge in this regard.
- The monitoring that is conducted to verify this.

Considering the position across all Church schools, questions the Board may wish to ask include:

- How does curriculum time allocated to RE differ across the Trust? What are the reasons for this? What does this say about the profile of RE in the Trust?
- How does the Trust support the schools to ensure that the RE curriculum and its delivery is effective in enabling all pupils to flourish? How is this monitored by the Trust?
- What does attainment and progress in RE look like across the schools?
 - Are there notable differences between the schools?
 - How do they compare to other subjects?
 - How do they compare nationally (secondary only)?
 - What do outcomes look like over time?
 - How does attainment and progress of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils compare?
- Are there areas of weakness where additional support is needed? Could schools with strong RE provision support those who are identifying vulnerabilities?

STRUCTURAL MATTERS

Admissions - this is about:

- confirming that certain key statutory requirements relating to admissions are being complied with (the policy is determined annually, whether or not material changes are being made, public consultation takes place every 7 years, the YDBE's guidance has been considered prior to recommending/determining admission arrangements etc in line with the Admissions Code.
- Understanding the patterns of admissions in the context of the any faith-based criteria and enabling conversation.

The Board should ask questions if, for example, a former VC school is using faith-based oversubscription criteria (as it should not be). The Board might also want to probe as to the inclusion of faith-based oversubscription criteria in policies if this is not being used in practice: there is no requirement that faith-based criteria are included in any CE school policy.

Policies - This is about the Board receiving assurance that there is a cycle of review being undertaken to ensure that key policies are reviewed to reflect the CE vision. Progress should be seen over time.

Compliance – It is important that information relating to the site trustees is known about. Previously this would have been recorded in the school's Instrument of Government (which does not apply to academies). If there are gaps in knowledge, schools should contact the Diocese. It is also important that the requirements of the Church Supplemental Agreement (which was agreed at the time the school converted to an academy) are known and being complied with.

LOCAL GOVERNING COMMITTEE

This is about ensuring that:

- The composition of the LGB reflects the former status of the school and the position agreed with the YDBE.
- All are clear as to the delegations relating to CE school matters.
- The LGB is in a good position to fulfil their responsibilities under those delegations e.g. there is a full foundation local governor contingent, all LGB members have made a personal commitment to uphold the CE foundation, appropriate training is being accessed, and CE school matters are routinely discussed in the appropriate forums.
- The LGB reflects on, and the Board are aware of, the local structures that are in place for the protection of the school's CE foundation and the strengths and weaknesses within the structure. The detailed oversight might be conducted by a Church school committee or similar, with regular reporting to the Governing Body, or by the full Governing Body itself.

Questions the Board might ask could include:

- Are the local governors accessing the relevant Diocesan training/keeping up to date with local and national policy/guidance?
- Why do all the Church schools in the MAT oversee the CE foundation in diverse ways? Is this a reflection of their individuality? Could schools learn from one another? Would a more unified way of working better enable MAT wide collaboration?
- Do we have challenges identifying people to fulfil the foundation local governor role? Is there anything we can do as a Trust to support this?

Training: We recommend enclosing training trackers or logs where available to enable the trust and the Diocese to monitor training undertaken to enable targeted advice around areas of training need to be given.

INSPECTIONS AND SELF-EVALUATION

This section is about the LGB reflecting on the key Church school priorities included in the School Development Plan (including any outstanding areas for development from the last inspection and any other areas identified through self-evaluation) and reporting to the Board in summary terms in those areas so that the Board knows the core priorities, sees that steps that have been taken/are still to be taken and the impact of those steps to date. Having to hand key inspection and self-evaluation information should help to focus minds on where the school is, and where it should be, on its Church school journey. It is also an opportunity for academies to provide feedback around key themes the Diocese of York have identified through its work across church schools and through DYET in its role as the Diocesan Corporate Member.

Note: The Church School Overview report prompts schools to report priorities by reference to the SIAMS Inspection Questions. Where there is overlap, schools should include the priority under the area that appears to be the most relevant. Please note:

- *There is no requirement/expectation that schools have an area for development against each Inspection Question – in fact, the opposite would be true.*
- *Whilst IQ7 is not relevant to the inspection of a number of schools under the SIAMS framework, it is still relevant to the school as a Church school (and as such has been included in the template for all schools).*

This section should enable the Board to be assured that the LGB is taking effective action and, through their consideration of the position across all Church schools, help the Board to identify areas where Trust-wide support and collaborative working would be helpful. Questions the Board might wish to ask include:

- Does the information provided give us comfort that plans are in place/have been implemented in key priority areas raised by the previous SIAMS inspection/identified by the school?
- Are we seeing progress with plans and impact over time (e.g. when seeing the reports each year)?
- Is there any overlap between the different school priorities that might give the opportunity for collaborative working across the MAT?
- Is any additional support/resource needed to support schools in key areas?

DBE SUPPORT

This is to prompt the LGB to reflect on, and to give comfort to the Board relating to, the level of engagement with, and support from, the Diocese.

All schools should be signed up to the YDBE's SLA with at least the standard package, which should see them accessing a minimum of 3 visits over 2 years. It would be expected that the focus of those visits would dovetail with areas for development and/or key identified priorities as set outlined the Key Church school priorities box. This box also highlights the importance of the role of the Chief Executive/Executive Principal (or similar) with CE school oversight – in the same way that they are expected to oversee standards etc, they should also assure themselves that the CE foundation of the Church schools is being preserved and developed. It is important for Boards to know that they have the information available to them to enable them to carry out this function.

Questions should be asked by the Board if it does not look like there is engagement with and/or support from the Diocese or oversight of CE school matters may not be receiving sufficient focus from the Trust leadership.

THEOLOGICALLY ROOTED CHRISTIAN VISION

This is about capturing and raising awareness of the school's Christian vision and ensuring that it is known by, and promoted by, leadership at all levels.

Given the importance of the vision, which is reflected in the prominence of the vision in the new SIAMS inspection framework, the Board may wish to explore questions such as:

- Is the Vision distinctively Christian and theologically rooted?
- How has the vision been developed? Who was involved in formulating the vision?
- How do leaders know that the vision is enabling people to flourish? Are leaders at all levels aware of, and guided by, the vision? What strategies to leaders employ to ensure that the vision is a living reality?

Considering the position across all Church schools, the Board may wish to ask/reflect on:

- How does the vision of the Trust resonate with the schools' theologically rooted Christian vision in a way that enhances the work of the schools and their Christian foundation?

PARTICULAR AREAS FOR CELEBRATION

This is an opportunity for the LGB to highlight some key areas to celebrate. By reviewing the areas to celebrate across Trust schools, alongside the SIAMS current development priorities across the Trust, this might help the Board/Church School Effectiveness Group to identify areas where school-to-support can be useful/collaboration can be encouraged.

STAFF

This is about giving assurance that the necessary staff resource is in place and ensuring that everyone who needs to be is familiar with those fulfilling certain key roles. It is also intended to provide assurance as to (or enable challenge regarding) the CPD and wider support available for staff relating to their specific roles/working in a CE school.

Questions the Board might like to ask could include:

- Are staff accessing the relevant Diocesan and internal training/support?
- How are we developing future Church school leaders?

OVERALL

Given it is anticipated that most of the support and oversight of the CE foundation will take place at local level, it is important that the Board receives a specific assurance from the LGB that it is satisfied that the CE foundation of the school is being preserved and developed (or the Board is informed otherwise) and that there is an opportunity for the LGB to bring other CE school specific matters to the Board's attention. Boards should understand in broad terms what evidence LGBs have seen to enable them to come to this conclusion e.g. SIAMS self-evaluation, headteacher presentations, link governor reports, ethos committee minutes etc. to ensure that the LGB's assessment is robust.

They key overall question that the Board will need to ask itself is whether, based on this document, the assurances given and the wider work of the Boards' Church School's Effectiveness Committee/Group, it has the assurances it needs to confirm to Members that the CE foundation of the school has been preserved and developed. In turn, the Trust Board will need to confirm the position to the Members in the same vein.

The date the LGB has approved the report and the date the Board has subsequently approved the report should be recorded in this section.