

Draft Ofsted inspection pack

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Inspection of religious education (RE) and collective worship

33. The Secretary of State designates certain schools as having a religious character.²⁴ In schools without a religious character, Ofsted inspects RE and collective worship as part of inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. This is different in schools with a religious character. In these schools, denominational education and collective worship are inspected by a body appointed by the maintained school's governing body under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 or as provided in the academy's funding agreement.²⁵

34. If a school has been designated as having a religious character, Ofsted is not able to comment on the content of collective worship or on denominational RE. Inspectors may, however, gather evidence from anywhere relevant (including RE lessons and assemblies) to evaluate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, personal development and/or behaviour and attitudes. The fact that the school has been designated as having a religious character must be referenced in the 'Information about this school' section of the inspection report.

35. Section 48 inspections (or the equivalent inspection of an academy) are carried out every three to five years²⁶ (and usually within two to three years of a new voluntary-aided school or academy/free school opening). Ofsted's lead inspector will check the section 48 arrangements, including when the next inspection is due, and will write about this in the 'Leadership and management' section of the inspection report. They will ensure that the required consultation has taken place with the prescribed faith body when a school has a prescribed faith body, and decides not to use that body's inspection service but appoint its own inspector.

36. Inspectors will familiarise themselves with any issues raised in any section 48 inspection (or equivalent) held since the last Ofsted inspection. Inspectors will not, however, use that evidence in an Ofsted inspection.²⁷ The lead inspector will report if the section 48 inspection (or equivalent inspection of an academy) is overdue and that, therefore, the school is failing in its statutory duty. They will do this in the 'Leadership and management' section of the inspection report.

37. If a section 48 inspection (or equivalent inspection of an academy) happens at the same time as an Ofsted section 5 inspection, inspectors will mention this in the 'Information about this school' section.²⁴ A school with religious character – often called a faith school – is designated under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;

²⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents. In a faith school, pupils are educated in the context of the principle of a religion. It is normal for there to be a formal link with a religious organisation.

²⁵ Regulation 9 of The Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005:
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/2038/regulation/9/made.

²⁶ Regulation 4 of The Education (School Inspection) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009:
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2009/1564/made.

²⁷ Protocol between Ofsted and signatory faith group inspectorates.

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Curriculum flexibility

158. The curriculum sets out the aims of a programme of education. It also sets out the structure for those aims to be implemented, including the knowledge, skills and understanding to be gained at each stage. It enables the evaluation of pupils' knowledge and understanding against those expectations.

159. All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the national curriculum subjects, religious education and age-appropriate sex education. 58 Academies are expected to offer all pupils a curriculum that is similar in breadth and ambition to the national curriculum, including the requirements to teach English, mathematics, science, and religious education.

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Curriculum narrowing

161. Ofsted's research into the curriculum has shown that some schools narrow the curriculum available to pupils, particularly in key stages 2 and 3. Our research shows that this has a disproportionately negative effect on the most disadvantaged pupils.⁶⁰ It is appropriate that, in key stage 1, teachers focus on ensuring that pupils are able to read, write and use mathematical knowledge, ideas and operations. From key stage 2 onwards and in secondary education, however, inspectors will expect to see a broad, rich curriculum. Inspectors will be particularly alert to signs of narrowing in the key stage 2 and 3 curriculums. If a school has shortened key stage 3, inspectors will look to see that the school has made provision to ensure that pupils still have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects in Years 7 to 9.

162. At the heart of an effective key stage 4 curriculum is a strong academic core: the EBacc. The government's response to its EBacc consultation, published in July 2017, confirmed that the large majority of pupils should be expected to study the EBacc. It is therefore the government's ambition that 75% of Year 10 pupils in state-funded mainstream schools should be starting to study EBacc GCSE courses nationally by 2022 (taking their examinations in 2024), rising to 90% by 2025 (taking their examinations in 2027). It is important that inspectors understand what schools are doing to prepare for this to be achieved, and they should take those preparations into consideration when evaluating the intent of the school's curriculum.