

Review of the National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic Schools

Invitation to contribute

Dear colleagues,

In his recent letter on the mission of Catholic education *Drawing New Maps of Hope*, Pope Leo reminded the Church that the work of education is not simply administrative or technical, but a participation in the Church's care for the human person. Schools are places where faith is nurtured, knowledge is deepened, and young people are formed in wisdom, hope and service. Those entrusted with the oversight of Catholic education therefore share in a task that is both professional and pastoral: a labour of love that serves the flourishing of each generation.

Inspection forms part of that responsibility. At its best, if it is true to Pope Leo's call, it will not merely be a process of external scrutiny but an act of hope in its own right: a way of helping schools flourish in their mission, taking care of the soul of the school community and sustaining the promises made from one generation to the next. As with all educative action, it is part of the "profession of promises" that education holds out to the world; it calls for time, confidence and professional skill. It also asks us to hold together justice and mercy: speaking truthfully about what we see while encouraging those who labour daily in the work of Catholic education (see *Drawing New Maps of Hope*, 3.2).

For that reason, it is important that the framework through which inspection is carried out continues to command the confidence of the Catholic communities it serves. The Catholic Schools Inspectorate is therefore beginning a review of the National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic Schools, Colleges and Academies, with any changes to be implemented from September 2027.

This review comes at a moment of wider change in the educational accountability landscape. The new Ofsted inspection framework was launched in September, and it has been more than a year since Ofsted routinely used an overall effectiveness grade in its reports. While denominational inspection has a distinct purpose and foundation in canon law, it is important that our own framework remains clear, coherent and proportionate within this wider context in which schools operate.

In addition, we are now entering the second half of the current five-year inspection cycle. This provides a natural opportunity to reflect on the experience of inspection under the present framework and to consider how it might continue to serve the mission of Catholic education in the years ahead, before the next cycle of Catholic school inspection begins in September 2027.

What is and is not in scope

This consultation does not revisit certain foundational principles of inspection. The following matters are not in scope:

- The fact that Catholic schools are inspected.
- The purpose of inspection.
- The areas of inspection, namely:
 - Catholic life and mission
 - Religious education
 - Prayer and liturgy.

Instead, the review will focus on three aspects of the framework that are in scope:

1. Process

How inspections are carried out, including matters such as:

- notice periods
- team size and duration of inspections
- the relationship between inspectors and school leaders
- inspection activities and the gathering of evidence
- how inspection teams arrive at valid judgements.

2. Substance

What inspection examines and how judgements are framed, including:

- what should and should not be included in the inspection criteria
- the nature and clarity of grade descriptors
- how judgements are formed.

3. Outcome

How inspection findings are expressed, including:

- the structure of inspection reports
- the use of grades or narrative judgements
- the number and naming of judgements
- how findings are communicated.

Your experience and insight will help ensure that inspection continues to serve Catholic schools faithfully and effectively in their mission.

How to respond

We invite you to share your reflections by completing the survey below:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=SSQzRY2fT0OpJmB_Xy63KLfjEZ6a7UxMnONEDY6s8p5UNEtRRUNCVTdKQTVUMzFXR0tITk1ENFINNy4u

The deadline for responses is **1 May 2026**.

We would be grateful if schools could share this invitation widely within their communities, including with:

- parents and carers
- parish clergy
- governors
- members of staff.

All responses will inform the structured review process over the coming year as we prepare the next stage of the inspection framework.

Thank you for contributing to this important conversation about the future of inspection and the continuing service of Catholic education.

Philip Robinson

Chief Inspector

Catholic Schools Inspectorate