

Maintained faith school characteristics

Voluntary aided schools

Voluntary aided schools are mainly funded by the state with the foundation responsible for at least 10% of capital works but having greater influence over the school. The governing body runs the school, employs the staff and decides the school's admission arrangements, subject to rules set by Welsh Government. Pupils follow the national curriculum. In these schools, religious education (RE) is to be determined by the governors and in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed relating to the school or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, with the religion or denomination mentioned in the order designating the school as having a religious character.

Voluntary controlled schools

Voluntary controlled schools have all their costs met by the state and are controlled by the local authority. The land and buildings are typically owned by a charitable foundation, which also appoints about a quarter of the school governors. However, the local authority employs the school's staff and has primary responsibility for the school's admission arrangements. Pupils follow the national curriculum. RE provision in voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character is to be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. However, where the parent of any pupil at the school requests that RE is provided in accordance with provisions of the trust deed relating to the school (or, where there is no provision in the trust deed, in accordance with the religion or denomination mentioned in the order designating the school as having a religious character). The governors must make arrangements for securing that RE is provided to the pupil in accordance with the relevant religion for up to two periods a week unless they are satisfied that there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so.

Maintained school inspection: section 28 and section 50 inspections

Section 28 of the Education Act 2005 sets out Estyn's inspection duties in relation to maintained schools.

If a maintained school has a religious character, as designated by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, denominational religious education and the content of collective worship are inspected under section 50 of the Education Act 2005. The inspectors who conduct section 50 inspections are appointed by the school's governing body in consultation with the appropriate religious authority and are normally drawn from the relevant faith group's section 50 inspectorate (for instance, the Catholic Education Service in the case of Roman Catholic schools). Where religious education is required to be provided using the locally agreed syllabus relevant to the school, as in the case of voluntary controlled schools for example, religious education would be inspected under section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Although section 50 inspectors inspect acts of collective worship, religious education (RE) (in the case of voluntary aided schools) and or those lessons designated as providing denominational RE (in the case of voluntary controlled schools), Estyn inspectors and section 50 inspectors may attend acts of collective worship and may observe lessons in which RE is provided. In such cases, the Estyn inspector will not inspect or report on matters which are the responsibility of the section 50 inspector – generally the denominational content provided. The relationship between section 28 and section 50 inspections is governed by a protocol between Estyn and faith group inspectorates.

When inspecting RE lessons or acts of collective worship Estyn inspectors can comment on

- progress in learning
- skill development i.e. literacy or numeracy
- attitudes to learning
- the contribution of assemblies/ RE lessons to pupils' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education
- the quality of teaching

Estyn inspectors should avoid commenting on

- specifically denominational contents of assemblies or RE lessons
- the specific denominational nature or quality of the school's ethos. Avoid such phrases as: 'The school is very successful in promoting a strong Christian ethos'

Independent faith school characteristics

This guidance attempts to provide you with some background information to each type of independent faith school and the etiquette expected. Even in faith schools that follow the same religion there may be slight differences in etiquette.