

Staffordshire's Framework for School Improvement

Implementing the
Achieving
Excellence in
Learning and
Skills Strategy



The Vision for Learning and Skills in Staffordshire: Achieving Excellence

We believe that all children and young people deserve the best. We want outstanding leaders and exceptional teachers in all our schools and settings. We want all of our children and young people to excel and succeed in schools and settings that consistently perform as the best in the country.

Introduction

Staffordshire County Council is committed to improving educational outcomes for all children and young people in the county. Currently pupil outcomes are too variable across the eight districts and improvement has been too slow. This framework sets out how, working together with all school settings and partners, we aim to address this and secure excellence across all our schools so that all children and young people achieve the outcomes set out in our strategy "Achieving Excellence in Learning and Skills". The strategy is driven by Staffordshire County Council's intention to build:

"Connected Staffordshire, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy."

Working Together

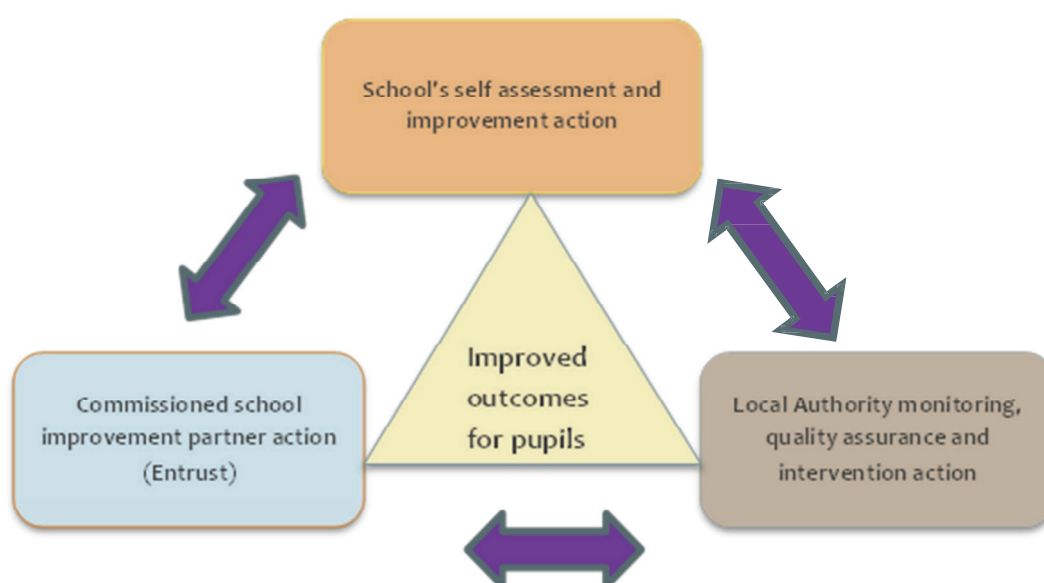
Our approach is based on a shared responsibility and accountability for outcomes, recognising schools autonomy and an increasingly diverse education landscape. This is underpinned by a commitment to working in partnership through liaison and engagement across the full range of education providers and partners. These include:

- Staffordshire County Council (School Quality Assurance Team and other county council functions such as Inclusion and Equalities, Families First and Skills and Employability).
- Entrust, as Staffordshire County Council's provider of commissioned school improvement services
- Schools and settings
- Governing bodies and Schools Forum, Parent Partnership and Young People's Forums
- Teaching schools
- Academies, academy sponsors, trusts, federations
- Independent providers of school improvement that schools choose to commission from
- Ofsted and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI)
- Department for Education (including the Regional Schools Commissioner)
- Diocesan groups
- Universities, colleges and apprenticeship training providers
- Professional associations and teacher unions.

The Framework outlines the relationship between Staffordshire County Council, schools, settings and partners articulating the model for delivering school improvement with our partner Entrust, whilst recognising the part that school self-improvement plays and the importance of school-to-school support.

We know that good and outstanding schools and settings have exceptional leaders and managers who set high expectations for staff and pupils, securing a learning environment that stimulates, motivates and promotes the highest standards and quality. Governors are well informed and robustly challenge leaders and managers about the performance of the school in order to maximise achievement and progress and provide for the future wellbeing and economic prosperity of their pupils. Working together with schools and our partners, this framework seeks to set out clear arrangements for school challenge, support and intervention based on professional dialogue within a climate of mutual trust and transparency.

Working together and in mutually supportive roles we will deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.



Schools will:

- Support every pupil to fulfil their potential through learning experiences that inspire them, raise aspiration and attainment
- Demonstrate high quality leadership, management and governance
- Monitor and track pupil progress setting ambitious targets for individual pupils, vulnerable groups and the school as a whole
- Secure high quality teaching and learning
- Develop and embed rigorous self evaluation using the outcomes to set priorities that drive planning to achieve continuous improvement
- Use all available resources as self-managing schools to secure improvement in standards and quality.

Staffordshire County Council will:

- Fulfil statutory duties including promoting access to a good standard of education for every pupil
- Put in place efficient systems to ensure knowledge of Staffordshire schools and settings is detailed and robust, whatever the school designation

- Use all available school and setting data and intelligence to effectively and appropriately challenge, support and intervene, where necessary
- Commission high quality, timely and well targeted support to schools through its partner Entrust
- Identify and disseminate good practice for the benefit of all schools and settings
- Work with all partners and stakeholders to promote and secure high quality leadership and management in order to raise attainment and improve the progress of all pupils
- Facilitate collaborative partnerships between schools, which identify, build upon and disseminate excellent and effective practice.

Entrust will:

- Deliver high quality school improvement activities commissioned by the county council and by schools which have a positive impact on raising standards and improving quality
- Provide high quality professional training and support opportunities that schools can purchase which secures improvement and value for money
- Engage a wide range of highly skilled school improvement professionals to support school improvement activities
- Through commissioned activities identify best practice which contributes to a wider network of disseminating good practice identified across schools, settings and wider partners
- Work with the county council and schools to regularly review the effectiveness and impact of school improvement commissioned activities.

Academies, Free Schools and University Technical Colleges

This framework for school improvement is applicable to all state funded schools (local authority maintained, academies, university technical colleges and free schools) in Staffordshire.

Staffordshire County Council holds statutory duties including securing high quality education for all children and young people in the local area. Acting as a champion for all children and parents the county council will undertake a scrutiny and monitoring function, reviewing the performance and outcomes in **all** schools, including academies. This will be undertaken working within the guidance set out by the Department for Education on Schools Causing Concern and reflecting the new role of Regional Schools Commissioners in respect of academy performance, standards and intervention.

Where the county council has any cause for concern in respect of an academy, this will be raised with both the academy and the Department for Education, with notification to sponsors where applicable.

School-led Improvement

This framework is intended to support a collaborative, school-led improvement system that:

- provides a supportive and challenging environment for school leadership and governance

- moves high performing schools or groups of children and young people to the next level of achievement and success
- challenges underperformance and/or low achievement by schools and/or groups of children and young people (for example free school meals or high mobility)
- promotes autonomy but enables schools to choose to work collaboratively for innovation and practice development so as to improve leadership, management, teaching and learning
- shares information on practice and professional development and makes this available to all schools
- expects high performing schools to support the development of the wider school community.

School to School Support

The county council respects the autonomy of schools and the freedoms and flexibilities of a local system that promotes self-determined alliances, partnerships and networks that support school improvement. We will work with school-led alliances, teaching schools, multi-academy trusts, federations and peer networks in promoting an effective school to school system for delivering improvement.

To maximise school to school support the county council will:

- Facilitate and promote strategic dialogue and partnering which will include the establishment of a strategic partnership for schools
- Provide information, intelligence and sign-posting to schools both through the Staffordshire Learning Network (SLN) and through direct contact or school improvement dialogue led by the School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team
- Commission targeted school to school support to deliver school improvement priorities at school or district level, including through Entrust
- Use the expertise of National Leaders in Education (NLEs), National Leaders of Governance, Local Leaders in Education (LLEs), Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) and others in our interventions in schools with greatest need.

The County Council's School Improvement Process

Staffordshire County Council's School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team (Appendix A) have oversight of the school improvement function. Reporting to the Commissioner for Education and Wellbeing, this team is led by the County Commissioner for Education, and comprises of the Senior Commissioning Lead for School Improvement, County Managers for Education (CME) and the Commissioning Managers for School Improvement (CMI). A wider team of officers support with the provision of data and insight, finance and HR intelligence, and performance and contracting information.

A five step approach is set out below (which is summarised as a flow diagram in Appendix B).

Step 1: Policy, process and protocols are published

Staffordshire County Council has an overarching strategy "Achieving Excellence in Learning and Skills". The Strategy is delivered in a number of ways including through the School Improvement Framework. The Framework has been developed in partnership and reviewed by a working party of head teachers, principals, county council officers and Entrust representatives before being shared across the wider network of partners and stakeholders.

In this first step, other key protocols for data sharing, including a schedule of releases' is agreed. An early alert to the annual event calendar, detailing opportunities to get involved in a series of termly school improvement meetings led by the county council is also shared.

Step 2: School level self-evaluation and improvement planning

Each school and setting has a fundamental responsibility to lead and manage their own self-improvement as independent and autonomous institutions, with the relevant governing body overseeing and scrutinising that activity. Schools are free to commission support and advice from any provider to support this work and moderation or validation through peer review is another feature of good practice that schools will typically consider.

Independent of the school's self-evaluation, the county council will undertake its own review and evaluation process for each school. Using a broad evidence base, collated into the School Improvement Information Dashboard, officers will establish a view as to whether provision is effectively meeting requirements and supporting high levels of pupil performance and good levels of progress. This view is summarised in a categorisation process.

Categorisation

The county council's School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team will complete an annual analysis of each school in Staffordshire, including academies and free schools. To inform this, a variety of available data are used including; pupil performance; attendance; exclusions; Ofsted inspection reports; leadership and management; quality and range of teaching and learning; school balances and finances; safeguarding concerns and parental complaints as well as the school's capacity to sustain outstanding performance or to improve. In addition, the performance of identified groups and the support and welfare of the pupils is considered. Pupils' performance in relation to the Government's floor standards, where relevant, and Ofsted judgments have a significant weighting on the overall categorisation.

This analysis is completed annually at the beginning of the Autumn term, and reviewed on a regular basis. The county council's School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team inform each school of the assessment of concern at least on an annual basis via a categorisation letter (see Appendix C) by the end of September each year. The county council will review and amend a school's category at any point where there is sufficient evidence to do so or where the county council is alerted that circumstances have changed significantly enough to impact on pupils, particularly regarding safeguarding matters. This enables early action to be taken where appropriate.

The county council will benchmark the criteria for the overall effectiveness of each school based on the most recent School inspection handbook - *Handbook for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended by the Education Act 2011)*.

The categories A – D listed in the table below will be used to identify the county council's categorisation and level of concern for each school drawing on the following factors:

- The application of the current Ofsted School inspection handbook overall effectiveness criteria
- Contextual information about the school

Local Authority Category	Local Authority Assessment
A	No Concern
B	Low Concern
C	Medium Concern
D	High Concern

All head teachers and chairs of governors are notified in writing of the outcome of the categorisation by the end of September. A named point of contact within the School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team is also provided and they will lead the dialogue with the school.

Categorisation allows the county council to differentiate and target our engagement with schools and secure the biggest impact for the benefit of pupils. Where there are no concerns or a low level of concern (category A and B) school leaders and governors can expect a proportionate light touch approach. Schools categorised medium concern (category C) will have more detailed discussions to validate and provide assurance regarding the school's improvement approach and to target early help and support to the school from the county council, where this is appropriate and necessary. All schools categorised as high concern (category D) will have a Core Group established to lead rapid action to address the school improvement priorities identified, and priority for commissioned support will be given to these schools.

Categorisation is reviewed on at least an annual basis and the county council will amend a school's category at any point where there is sufficient evidence to do so or where the county council is alerted to circumstances that have changed significantly enough to impact on pupils, particular in regard to safeguarding matters.

Following categorisation, the Commissioning Manager for School Improvement will take the opportunity to triangulate the assessment evidence with the school at their next visit. This will provide schools with the opportunity to present evidence to further inform the local authority's assessment of the category assigned to the school, to support improvement planning and inform the on-going evaluation of risk. However, no compromise will be made when standards are below expectations, or where the safety of pupils is a concern.

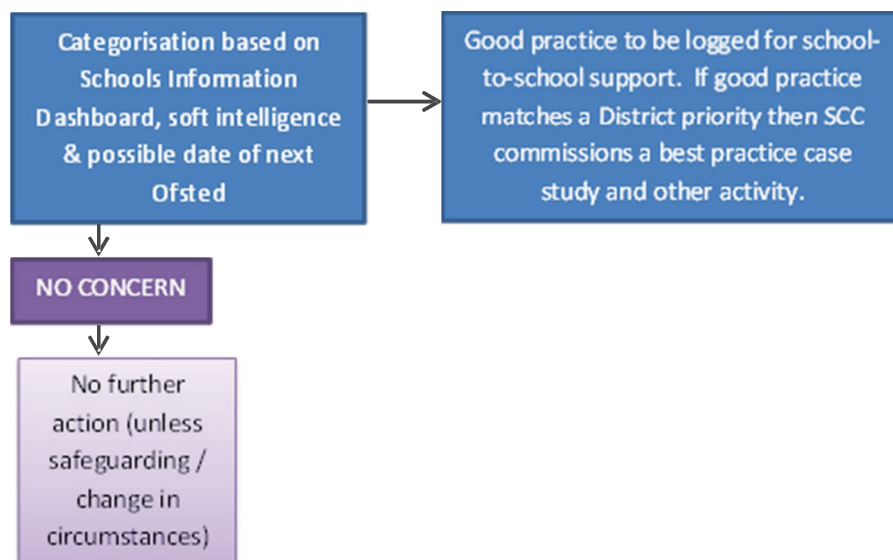
Whilst this framework seeks to encompass all Staffordshire schools, it is appreciated that for academies it will be for the Department for Education (DfE) to identify those that are a 'cause for concern'. However the county council will continue to review the performance for all children and young people educated in schools in Staffordshire and will inform the academy of the outcome. The county council maintains a regular dialogue with the DfE about all schools and where appropriate will raise concerns about the performance of academies during this dialogue, and where appropriate and necessary formalise concerns in a letter to the DfE, including the relevant school.

The county council has applied the same approach to **Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units** but by their very nature, these schools have particular performance aspects that may be different from mainstream schools. Consequently the approach to evaluating performance and standards affecting pupil outcomes in these schools will be moderated through discussion with each school. However, no compromise will be made when standards are below expectation or where the safety of pupils is a concern.

All county council maintained schools will receive at least an annual quality assurance visit based on need. The following flow charts indicate the expectation for each category of school.

How does the county council work with a school or setting in each category?

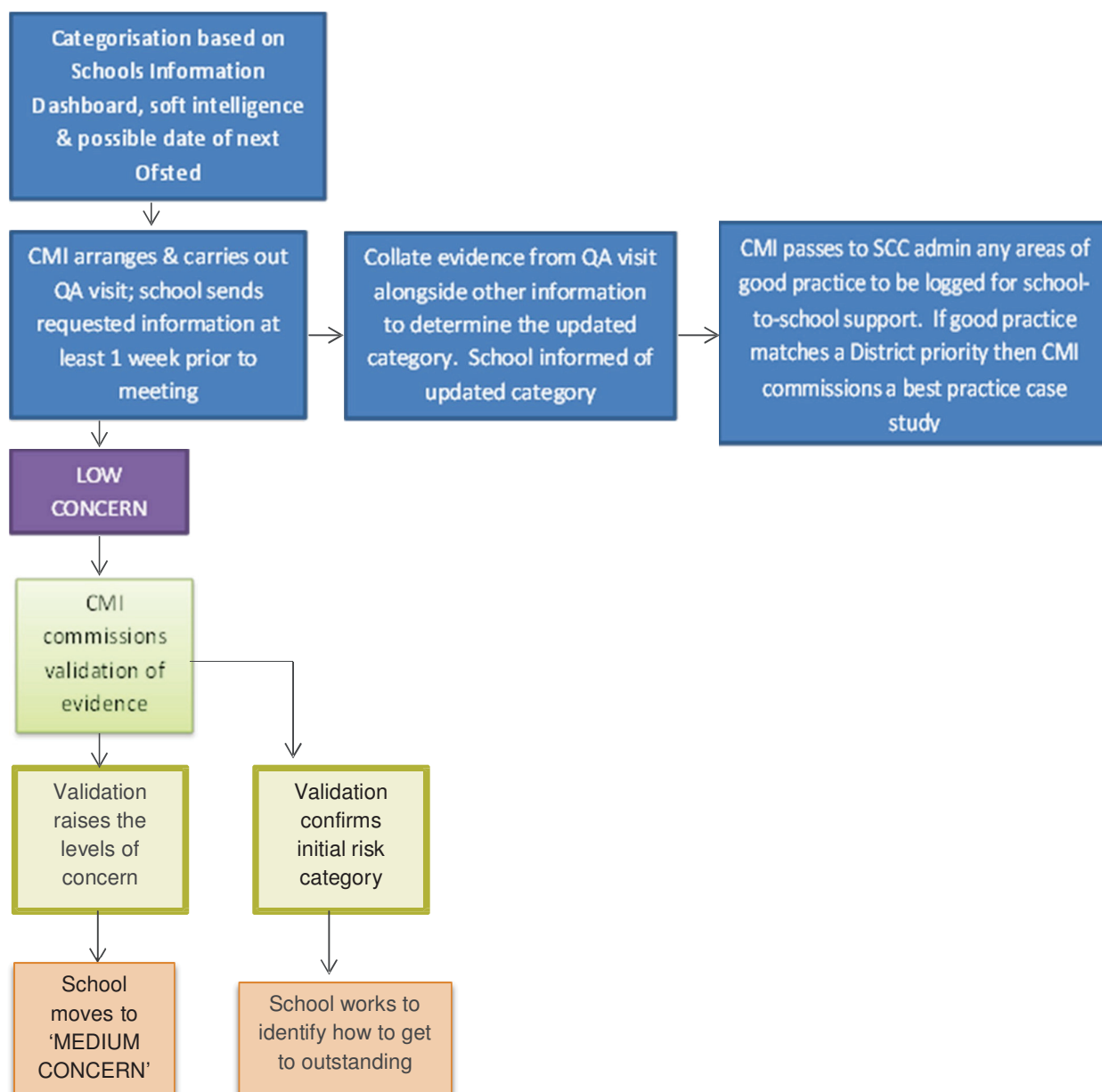
What will happen for a category A school?



Characteristics of a category A school:

- The school will be seeking to maintain excellent standards
- The school will identify and share the good practice examples it has
- The school will support and partner with others to enable school to school improvement and support.

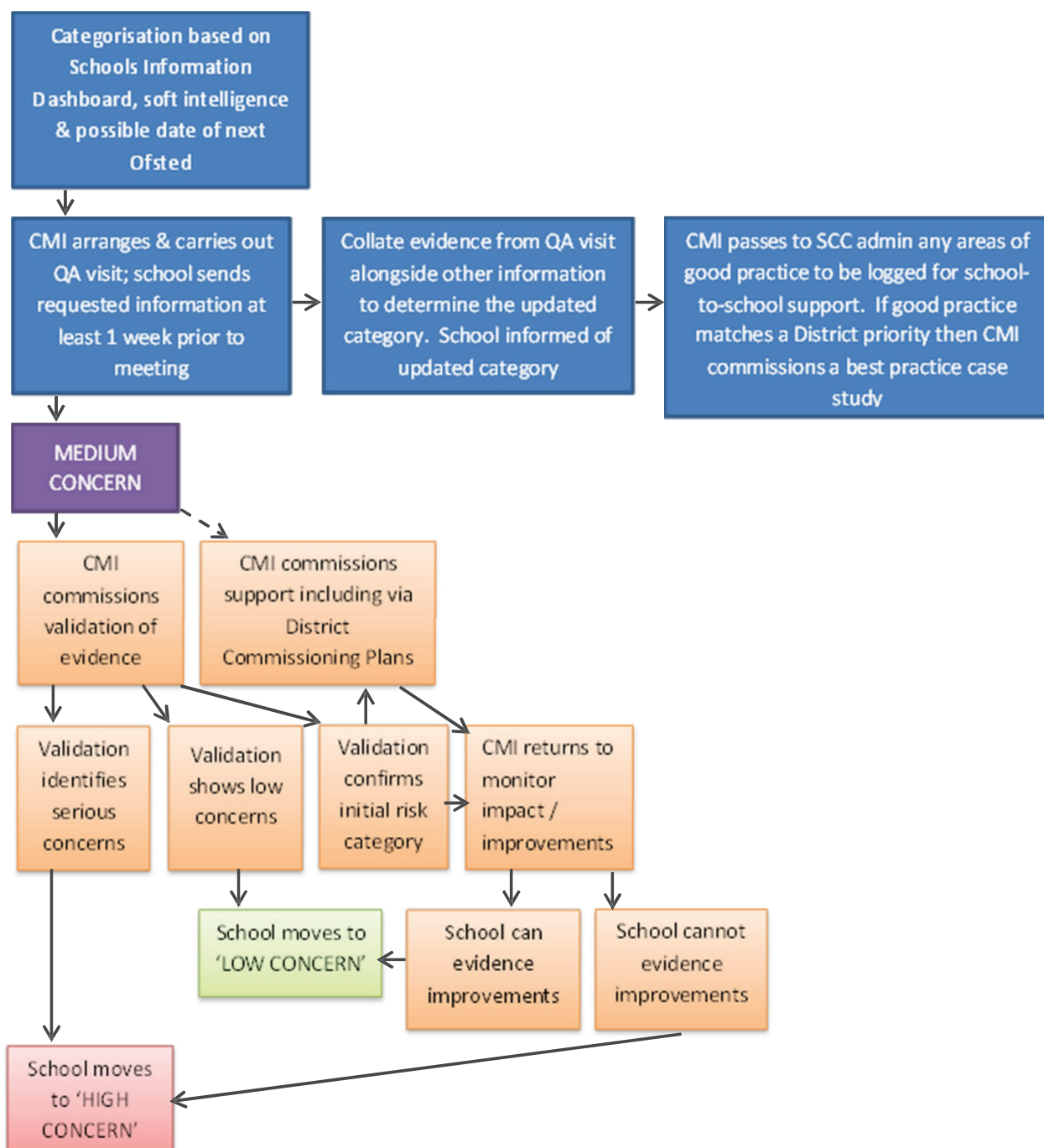
What will happen for a category B school?



Characteristics of a category B School:

- The school will be seeking to move to outstanding
- The school will be action planning to address any aspects of performance identified through self-evaluation or validation discussion
- The school will identify and share good practice examples
- The school will work collaboratively to support school to school improvement.

What will happen for a category C school?

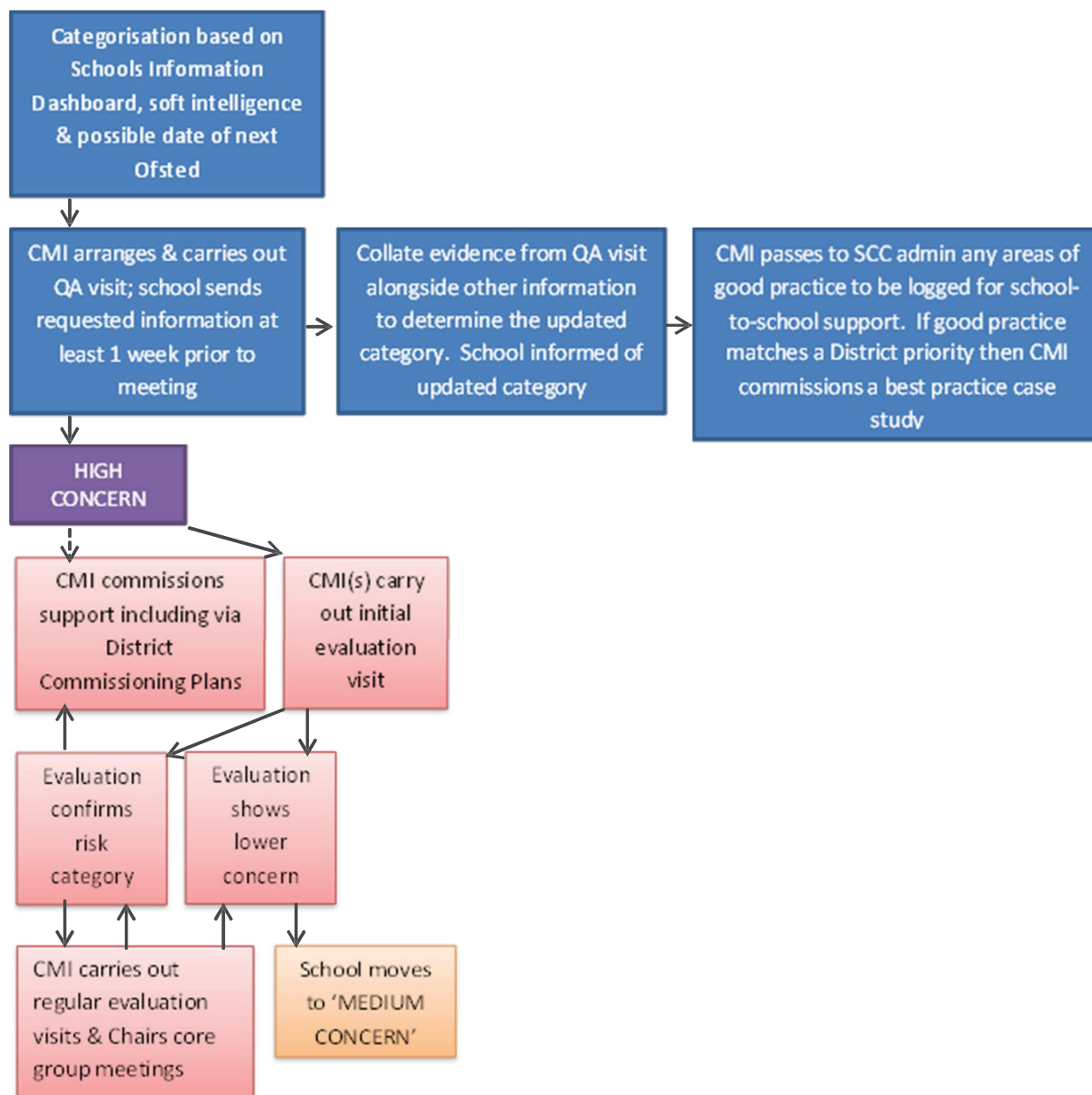


Characteristics of a category C School:

- The school will be taking rapid and decisive action to address areas of concern
- The school will engage in robust school improvement dialogue with their Local Authority Commissioning Manager for School Improvement (CMI) if a maintained school, or DfE representative if an academy

- The school will have a clear and specific plan to get to good
- The school's leaders and governors will prioritise school improvement including participation in school to school support.

What will happen for a category D school?



Characteristics of a category D School:

- The school will be taking urgent action to address the areas for concern
- The school leaders and governing body will work with the county council's Commissioning Manager for School Improvement (CMI) to establish and resource a

Core Group to deliver rapid improvement (or make links with their DfE lead if the school is an academy)

- The school will prioritise resources for school improvement
- The school will be open to exploring a full range of options to deliver rapid improvement
- The school will have a clear plan to get to good.

Step 3: Review, validation and assurance dialogue

Having determined the schools category and priorities for improvement an assurance conversation is arranged by the school's county council link officer in the School Assurance Team. Officers seek to challenge the head teacher in the context of testing the accuracy of the school's own self assessments and to gain assurance regarding demonstrable action planning and capacity to improve. School conversations will have a clear agenda setting out the requirements for that professional dialogue in order for the school to fully prepare. Records from the discussion will be shared.

Step 4: Agreeing actions and commissioning improvement activity

The actions from the professional dialogue may include recommendations to commission school improvement actions. Schools have complete discretion to commission work that they fund, either from Entrust or any other appropriate provider with a proven track record, based on agreed school priorities as reviewed in assurance visits. School to school support can also be brokered by the county council. Where necessary the county council will commission school improvement activity from their delivery partner Entrust, in order to accelerate improvement and add value to the school's planned approach.

All county council commissioned action will be in support of the strategic priorities for school improvement, as set out in our Learning and Skills Strategy and annual Commissioning Intentions. A summary is set out below:

1. Access to Excellence	2. Rapid Improvement	3. Nothing less than Good	4. Sustained Progress	5. Best Start
We want all children and young people to have an excellent education so we will increase the % of pupils attending good or outstanding schools from 63% in 2012 to 90% in 2016	We want schools and settings that are judged to be failing to improve rapidly within 8-12 months, reducing the % graded as inadequate to zero by 2016 (from 5% of schools in 2012)	We want all Staffordshire schools to be good or outstanding, therefore we will challenge them to ensure that we are lower than the national average for schools not yet reaching the benchmark of good from 65% in 2012 to 90% by 2016	We want the attainment and progress of all learners to at least match national level of expectation at each key stage, so progress between and across key stages is at least in line with national averages by 2016, reversing current weak trends from 2012 baseline	We want all children to get the best start in life including in education. We will reduce the number of schools below the floor standard for attainment and progress at key stage 2 from 17 schools in 2012 to no more than 12 in 2016

District Priorities

Through a detailed analysis of local data the following development areas for Staffordshire have been identified. Detailed district commissioning plans are developed by the Commissioning Manager for Education leading in each district to secure training and development from Entrust around each theme:

- 1) What works well at Key Stage 2
 - Improving writing at KS2
 - Improving reading at KS2
 - Improving maths at KS2
- 2) Accelerating Progress in Key Stages 2-4
 - Accelerating progress in English
 - Accelerating progress in maths
- 3) Best start for Boys
 - From EYFS to KS4
- 4) Staffordshire Leadership Programme
 - For middle leaders in primary schools
 - For middle leaders in secondary schools
 - For governors
 - For aspiring Head teachers
- 5) Staffordshire schools as Good or Outstanding
 - Securing Good
 - Becoming Outstanding
 - Sustaining Outstanding
 - Good and outstanding mini review
- 6) Pupil Premium – Investing in Achievement
 - Closing the gap

Commissioning Partnerships

The county council's School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team work with a number of different partners including HMI to further improve the outcomes for all pupils. HMI projects will be district based and focussed on the development of our key priorities, drawing on the support of LLEs, NLEs, SLEs and other leaders in good and outstanding schools.

Step 5: Monitoring progress, impact and intervention

Staffordshire's approach drives rapid improvement and change by commissioning for impact and outcomes. Process and activity measures are useful as milestones but success is judged based on the measurable and sustained benefit to pupils. The CMIs assessment is checked against soft and hard intelligence and agreed outcome measures with appropriate timescales.

Monitoring is intended to secure rapid progress, supporting the identification of effective and timely interventions, and supporting sustained and embedded change. CMIs may focus their attention on evaluating one agreed aspect of the schools self-evaluation to validate or otherwise review the robustness of the schools ability to self-evaluate.

Proportionate Intervention

The county council's interventions are usually implemented in schools categorised as D – High Concern.

Core Groups

Core Groups are established in all maintained schools categorised as high concern. The purpose of the Core Group is to enable the county council to support and challenge the school leadership in promoting rapid improvement of the school's performance to good or better. As part of a Core Group:

1. The governing body will form a strategic group to oversee the school's progress towards good
2. Initially there will be one meeting of this group each half term, during the school day, to which the county council's CMI will be invited. This would be a Core Group meeting
3. The school will have completed a Core Group Evaluation Form provided by the county council to indicate key performance indicators and data, in preparation for the meeting. This will inform evaluation during the meeting
4. The head teacher will attend the Core Group Meeting, along with other relevant leaders, according to the agenda.

The CMI will conduct a review of school practice, prior to the Core Group meeting, which may include one or more of the following areas: quality of teaching, capacity of middle leadership, capacity of senior leadership, behaviour and attendance (including safeguarding), and the impact of external support. The CMI will bring to the meeting their evaluation of the reviewed area(s). This will enable governors to review the school's evidence against that of the county council. The meeting will allow the county council to make an informed judgement about whether the school is taking effective action at appropriate pace. This will in turn support governors in their evaluation and prioritisation.

Local Authority Notice of Concern

Where the outcome from two consecutive Core Group meetings indicates that the school is not able to evidence impact against the school improvement priorities a Local Authority Notice of Concern will be issued to the governing body. This Notice of Concern will set out the concerns in writing and will include:

1. The matters on which the county council's concerns are based
2. The actions which the governing body are required to take in order to address the concerns raised in order to bring about the rapid school improvement necessary. This will include a meeting with the County Commissioner for Education where the options available to bring about the rapid school improvement will be explored
3. The actions which the county council are minded to take (under one or more of sections 63 to 66 of the 2006 Act or otherwise) if the governing body does not take the required action.

The county council may also find it necessary to issue a warning notice (Local Authority Notice of Concern) to a school irrespective of an established Core Group in certain circumstances. This will include:

1. A school causing such concern that if it were to be subject to an Ofsted inspection, it would be judged to have *serious weaknesses* or *special measures*. In these cases, Section 72 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 may be applied. This Act places a statutory duty on all local authorities to have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.
2. The standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low, and are likely to remain so unless the authority exercises their powers.

The county council will review the impact of the actions taken to bring about rapid improvement within 6 – 8 weeks. If at this time sufficient improvement has not been made and evidence justifies both the county council's continuing concern and the school is demonstrating a reluctance or inability to address these concerns, the county council may choose to take one of the following statutory interventions:

- Appoint additional governors
- Issue a Performance Standards and Safety Warning Notice, as set out in Section 60 of the 2006 Education and Inspections Act.
- Apply to the Secretary of State to replace the governing body with an Interim Executive Board
- Suspend the right to a delegated budget for maintained schools
- Require the governing body to collaborate in arrangements to improve education standards and quality for children and young people at the school

Before the county council exercises such powers the required consultations with governing bodies, diocesan authorities or relevant bodies for foundation or voluntary schools will take place. Copies of all letters will be shared with the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills, and the DfE.

Schools judged by Ofsted to Require Improvement

Schools judged to require improvement will be categorised as D – high concern and a Core Group established if there is not one in operation. Depending on individual school circumstances, the judgements and recommendations contained in the latest Ofsted Section 5 or Section 8 report, the county council will consider the use of other interventions listed above.

Schools judged by Ofsted to be inadequate

Schools judged to have Serious Weaknesses or those that require Special Measures will be categorised as D – high concern and a Core Group established if there is not one already in operation. The county council, in these circumstances, must consider the use of its additional statutory powers of intervention listed above. "Schools Causing Concern" statutory guidance for local authorities makes it clear that: "the expectation is that a persistently underperforming school or a school that is in an Ofsted category will become an academy. Any such academy would be a sponsored academy." (p22). The county council

will liaise with the school and the DfE regarding the DfE's appointment of a suitable sponsor, and also act to co-ordinate the conversion process as required.

Governance of the Education System

Staffordshire has the strengths of being a large and diverse county with close to 400 schools and settings. Working together is critical to achieving a self-improving education system where the strengths we have are shared and developed more widely, and the challenges we face are tackled together. The DfE research shows that the most effective system leaders in education are those who:

- Look out for each other
- Signpost support
- Maintain the dialogue
- Foster innovation
- Inspire trust
- Follow through with action
- Empower others.

To achieve this, the county council will provide support for a new strategic partnership with schools. Developed with and by school leaders, governors and stakeholders our strategic partnership will provide system-wide leadership and accountability.

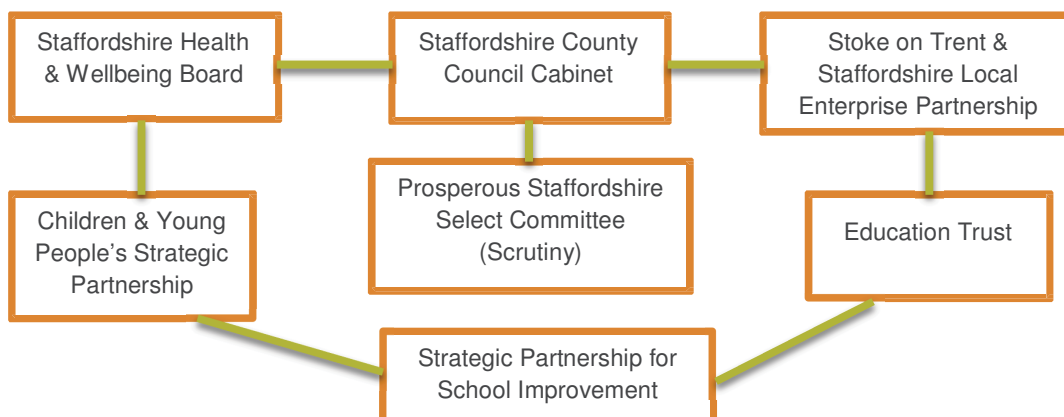
Other key governance functions are linked to the role and responsibility of the Schools Forum in providing oversight of the system, particularly in regard to the effective use of the resources available to schools. In addition, school networks and forums operate across phases, localities and clusters, all of which will contribute toward delivering school improvement.

Democratic accountability is led through the county council's Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills. A Children's Improvement Board of elected members and officers also operates to review outcomes for all children and young people in Staffordshire. Staffordshire's Select Committee system provides a scrutiny function, with membership including co-opted members representing school leaders and governors.

Wider partnership arrangements report to the Health and Wellbeing Board, with the Children's Strategic Partnership bringing commissioners and stakeholders together to address strategic outcomes including "a good education". The Local Enterprise Partnership supports a focus on skills and employability outcomes, securing a transition to adult working life and economic prosperity. The Education Trust is the partnership group leading on behalf of the LEP.

The county council will promote the school improvement priorities of the Learning and Skills strategy, as set out in this Framework, across the whole partnership system, sharing updates and appropriate information to meet the needs of the relevant groups, and to marshal support for achieving excellence in learning and skills.

Illustration of the Partnership Arrangements:



Communication

Across a diverse and extensive network of schools and with multiple stakeholders effective communication underpins good partnership working. The county council will route all key communications with schools through Staffordshire Learning Net (SLN) wherever possible, with the e-school bag as the regular weekly system for updates and alerts.

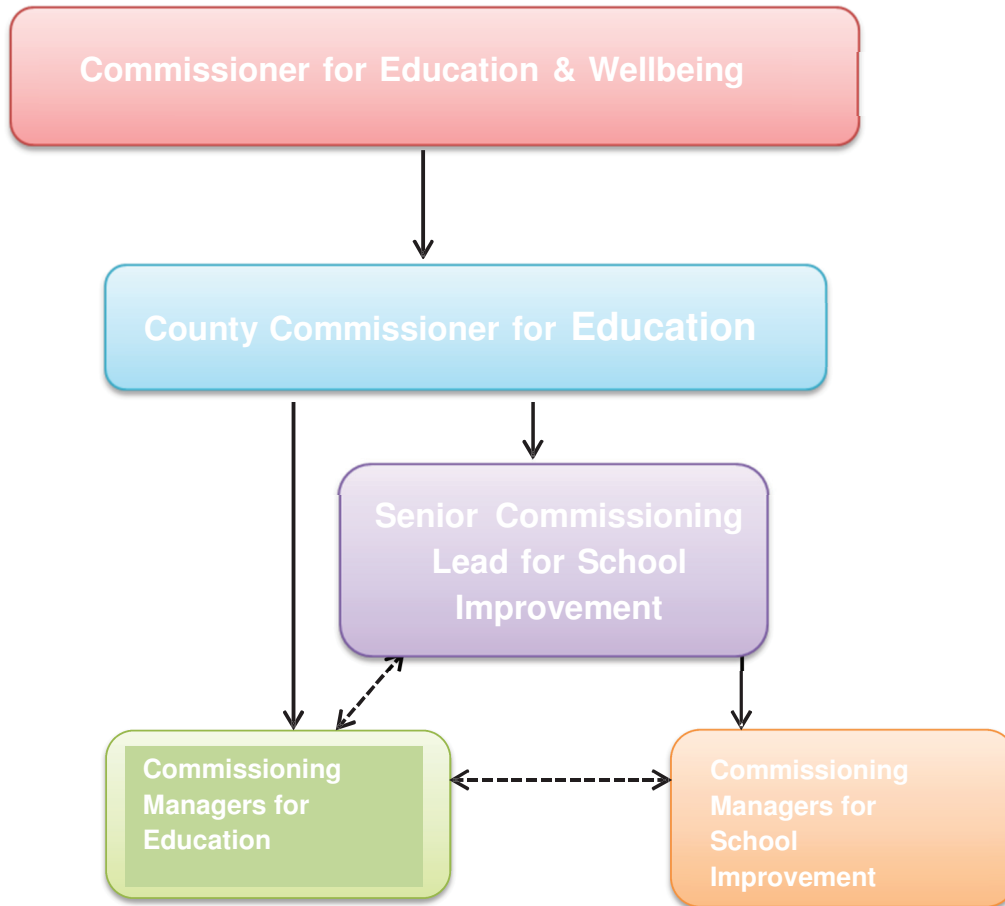
Each school has a named county council officer contact – confirmed through the September categorisation letter.

Further contact can be made at any time by email at:
school.improvement@staffordshire.gov.uk.

Your feedback is always welcome.

Appendices

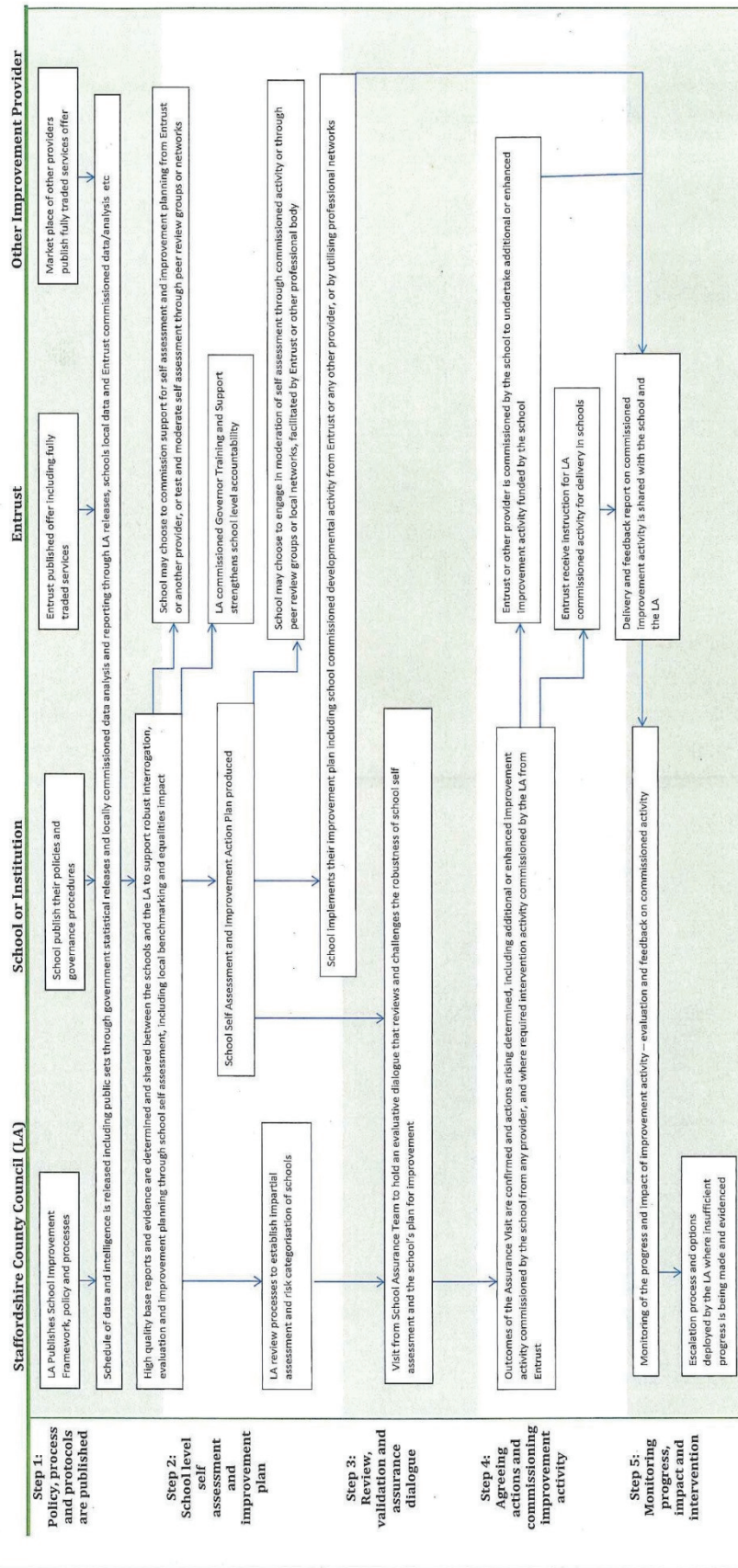
Appendix A – The School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team structure:



Appendix B – Staffordshire's School Improvement System: Overview and Flow

Staffordshire's School Improvement System – Overview and Flow

Our vision: We believe that all children and young people deserve the best. We want outstanding leaders and exceptional teachers in all our schools and settings. We want all our children and young people to excel and succeed in schools and settings that consistently perform as the best in the country.



Appendix C – Example school categorisation letter (maintained schools)

Our Ref: AN/CS

Date: 23 September 2014

Dear **INSERT****HEADING**

Staffordshire County Council is committed to improving educational outcomes for all children and young people in the County. Our Framework for School Improvement sets out how, working together with all school settings and partners, we aim to address this challenge and secure excellence across all our schools so that all Staffordshire children and young people achieve the outcomes outlined in our strategy "Achieving Excellence in Learning & Skills".

Good progress is being made – and in August 2014 78% of schools had been graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted. This means that we are now well-positioned to build on the strengths of many of our schools to accelerate our ambition to have schools that perform as amongst the best in the country.

Working together, in a climate of mutual trust and transparency, we are setting out our arrangements for school challenge, support and intervention based on professional dialogue. This will ensure that county council support is targeted to those schools that are most in need.

Staffordshire County Council's School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team have completed an annual analysis for each school in the county, leading to a categorisation based on the level of concern regarding pupil outcomes, performance and standards. This letter shares with you the current categorisation for your school. We trust this will be helpful to inform both your discussions as a school and as a basis for our collaboration with you to deliver school improvement. Further details on the data and intelligence underpinning the categorisation are set out in our Framework for School Improvement, along with the features of each category.

Your schools is currently categorised as:

INSERT

Categorisation allows the county council to differentiate and target our engagement with schools and secure the biggest impact for the benefit of pupils. Where there are no concerns or a low level of concern (category A and B) school leaders and governors can expect a proportionate light touch approach, as set out in our Framework document, with at least an annual conversation taking place. Schools categorised medium concern (category C) will have more detailed discussions to validate and provide assurance regarding the school's improvement approach and to

target early help and support to the school from the county council. All schools categorised as high concern (category D) will have a Core Group established to lead rapid action to address the school improvement priorities identified, and priority for commissioned support will be given to these schools.

Categorisation is reviewed on at least an annual basis and the county council will amend a school's category at any point where there is sufficient evidence to do so or where the county council is alerted to circumstances that have changed significantly enough to impact on pupils, particular in regard to safeguarding matters.

The School Improvement and Quality Assurance Team have dedicated link officers for your school to work with over the next academic year. Your key contacts are:

Commissioning Manager for School Improvement (CMI) **INSERT**

County Manager for Education (CME) **INSERT**

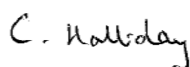
Senior Commissioning Lead for School Improvement – Trudy Pyatt

These team members will liaise with you to discuss your school's improvement plans, and to understand and share good practice examples that our wider network of schools can benefit from. The team will prioritise and target county council support for schools in most need, and where appropriate discuss with you the commissioning of school improvement activity with our partner Entrust. All commissioned activity is jointly developed and agreed with you, including the impact and outcome measures that commissioned delivery will contribute toward.

If you have any immediate queries regarding the categorisation of your school then please contact Emma Johnson or Rachel Helliwell (School Improvement Team Administration Co-ordinators) on 01785 276208/01785 277439 or email emma.johnson@staffordshire.gov.uk or Rachel.helliwell@staffordshire.gov.uk. They will direct your query to the relevant officer.

I very much look forward to working with you over the coming year and wish you continued success in your school's improvement.

Yours sincerely



Anna Halliday, Commissioner for Education & Wellbeing