

Staffordshire County Council - Focused Inspection Action Plan – June 2014

Area for Improvement: 1. The Inspection Outcomes that Schools Achieve	What did the Focused Inspection Comment on? Decline in inspection outcomes: it is of major concern that eight schools have declined since their previous inspections, six schools have been judged to provide an education for their pupils that is not yet good enough, and three have been made subject to special measures..... the authority has not been effective in arresting the decline of eight schools, including former good schools and one outstanding school.	What do we want to achieve? Improving inspection outcomes – which means more schools sustaining “good” gradings ; more getting to good from RI; reducing numbers of schools in special measures; and more schools moving to outstanding. We want clear evidence that the support and challenge function of the LA is effective is bringing about and improving trend and the school improvement activity we commissioned from Entrust is effective and has impact in delivering the commissioned outcomes.
What we are doing to improve?		What more can we do?
Staffordshire County Council LA Action	<p>1.1 We are improving the way that we identify and categorise risk so that we can identify and work with the schools where there are risks in regard to standards and performance. We are doing this by reviewing and enhancing the functionality of the data dashboard. We are developing district “radars” to better present and share the intelligence internally – and then externally in due course (Tim Moss/Matt Prisk/Suzie Bentley)</p> <p>1.2 We are preparing for a September letter to all schools (HT/CoG) to share with them the LA’s risk categorisation, signalling areas for consideration, and confirming school improvement expectations for 14/15 (Anna Halliday/Trudy Pyatt)</p> <p>1.3 We are continuing our programme of visits to schools for quality assurance dialogue and challenge/support conversation based a rolling programme linked to the risk categorisation (CMI team)</p> <p>1.4 We have commissioned mini-reviews of schools currently graded as good from Entrust – to begin summer term 2014 – as a health-check that will both support readiness for inspection and refresh the LA’s insight and intelligence base for schools that are otherwise “light touch” in our risk approach (CMEs)</p> <p>1.5 We have designed district level school improvement plans to set a clear focus on key themes and issues in a locality. These include step-change targets to stimulate local dialogue and action, which will shape the detail of district level commissioning plans for 14/15 (Anne Newton with CME leads for each district)</p> <p>1.6 We are working in collaboration with specific schools through core groups to drive rapid improvement in performance outcomes and thereby inspection – as a tested and proven mechanism for school improvement (Trudy Pyatt/CMIs)</p> <p>1.7 We have commissioned a programme of training activity to be delivered by Entrust for identified schools to participate in it based on “getting to outstanding” (for schools currently graded good) and “sustaining outstanding” (for schools currently outstanding)</p> <p>1.8 We are reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of our current approach through a new self- assessment and evaluation process for summer 2014 jointly with Entrust and other stakeholders (Anna Halliday/Becky Wilkinson)</p> <p>1.9 We are improving schools at a faster rate and with a much better profile than the sample seen in the Focused Inspection –which was risk-based sampling and not fully representative of Staffordshire’s profile. This is delivered through our SI contract with Entrust. (Anna Halliday)</p> <p>1.10 We are in discussion with HMI to develop a School Review Project with HMI/LLE/LA combining with schools to drive improvement across a group of schools - with 17 identified in E Staffs/Tamworth (CMIs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With more technical support and capacity we can seek to accelerate the development of the data tools, through our work with the Insight team and Angel Solutions, and share the radars more widely in order to promote a more targeted conversation in schools and across localities, modelling trajectories and establishing a school by school timeline for getting to at least good (Tim Moss/Matt Prisk/Suzie Bentley) • With capacity or support we could improve the risk review process and conduct strategic district level reviews to inform district improvement plans and district commissioning plans (Anne Newton) • With support of Entrust, we can do more to impartially assure the quality of the service provided, promoting the best fit of the Entrust officers to specific schools, and to secure high quality feedback and exchange of information to inform the data dashboard update (Anne Newton/Entrust) • With addition CMI capacity we could increase capacity for additional core groups and/or with opportunity for review and redesign we could better differentiate core group activity to reduce reliance on LA leadership and management (Anne Newton/Trudy Pyatt) • With external expertise we could do a more robust evaluation of the data, and strengthen the case study examples that evidence the effectiveness of our approach (Becky Wilkinson with Judith Richardson) • With capacity to strengthen preparation for inspection we could better capture and articulate the difference we are making to counter the impression given by the Focused Inspection letter (request has been made to TSU and CDH)

Suggested Schools Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools to assess themselves against the new Ofsted framework • Schools to securely plan their own Ofsted preparation, taking up the offer of health check and/or training as appropriate • Schools to make effective use of training including follow through evaluation and embedding of practice/learning • Schools to grow their confidence in strategic use of data – including progress data, tracking and outcomes • Schools to better utilise the range of tools, information and guidance available to them both through the LA and wide range of other sources • Schools to ensure representation at key briefings and once-termly LA event for schools 	
Area for Improvement: 2. Clarity and understanding of the LA/Entrust relationship	What did the Focused Inspection Comment on? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and understanding of the LA/Entrust relationship and how it drives improvement: Headteachers and governors have found the recent change to school improvement services confusing.... lack of clarity about the relationship between the local authority and Entrust and the local authority's school improvement strategy 	What do we want to achieve? All schools to understand the LA's role and how it delivers its statutory functions, through a commissioning approach. Schools to understand and engage with the Framework for School Improvement in Staffordshire – recognising how risk is identified, what data is held where, and knowing who they can speak to/where they can look in the LA to gain clarification if it is needed. Schools would understand the role of Entrust as a provider of school services, including commissioned services for school improvement . They would be clear about who pays and why. They would know how school improvement happens – including their pivotal role and responsibility within this. The transition period experienced in summer 2013 and into autumn 2014 will have completed and new ways of working will be trusted and familiar.
Staffordshire County Council LA Action	2.1 We have set out the relationship in key documents including the Framework for School Improvement. This was published and discussed at district meetings with HT and CoG in Spring 2013, and reinforced through a range of written communications and updates (Anna Halliday/team) 2.2 We are developing and enhancing our communications and engagement approach with schools – and are implementing improvements to the school bag, issuing an e-newsletter, reviewing and refreshing the structure of information posted on the SLN (Anna Halliday/team) 2.3 We are reviewing our communications and contacts with Governors – as one critical success factor in our Learning and Skills Strategy (Anna Halliday/Len Brazier/Russ Sheldon) 2.4 We are continuing to strengthen our strategic dialogue with a wider range of school groups – including school forum, diocesan groups, professional associations, trust networks, districts, members groups etc (Anna Halliday/team) 2.5 We are releasing as September Letter to each school (as 1.2 above) which will further reinforce and clarify school improvement roles and risk assessment (CMEs/Trudy Pyatt) 2.6 We have agreed branding protocols and joint working arrangements with Entrust in order to support effective comms (Comms) 2.7 We are committed to transparency in our dealings with schools – and have shared information about what we commission for school improvement in our Commissioning Priorities and Intentions document 2014/15 (Anna Halliday) 2.8 We are investigating the better use of Nexus and Perspectives Lite as a platform for data and information sharing between the LA and schools (Anna Halliday/Tim Moss/Suzie Bentley/Trudy Pyatt) 2.9 We have reviewed and refreshed the roles and responsibilities across the LA team – CME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to refresh and reinforce the positioning of the Framework as the key handbook for School Improvement (Anne Newton) • We need a strengthened and concerted campaign of stakeholder communication with a Comms lead, offering a purposeful narrative and key messaging on the benefits of the approach, with clear evaluation and testing for effectiveness/penetration (Sarah James/Gina Wookey) • We could produce a simple/easy to follow “Guide for School Leaders/Govs on School Improvement in Staffordshire” including FAQ (Anna Halliday/Anne Newton) • We could further strengthen and better utilise key channels of communication including Governor Pack information circulated by Entrust (Russ Sheldon/Len Brazier) • We could be sharper and crisper in delineating roles through more effective use of the branding protocol (Comms/Entrust) • We could produce a specific protocol for Academies or further strengthen the articulation of our approach to academy schools within the Framework by sectioning it separately (Anne Newton) • We could further explore the potential of Nexus for newsfeed and document share – as new functionality is developed (Tim Moss/Angel Solutions) • We could further strengthen the co-design with schools, better using local champions and leaders or key influencers (CME/District Commissioning Leads)

	and CMI roles have been differentiated and thematic leads established, with team development sessions and activities to support the transition into commissioning roles and new operating practices (Anne Newton/Anna Halliday/Trudy Pyatt)	
Suggested Schools Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools to commit to attending key briefings and sharing and using that information in their school/setting School Leaders to ensure they read key documents and regularly review key communication channels such as e-school bag and SLN <p>Schools to be proactive in asking questions or seeking clarity from their linked CME or CMI, or through the generic mailbox of school.improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Area for Improvement: 3. Confidence in the LA and its Leadership	What did the Focused Inspection Comment on? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidence in LA leadership and approach: less positive about local authority leadership than in the past because they believe that the local authority does not know its schools as well as it used to..... the authority focuses its attention on schools which are not yet good.. its approach is seen by some as reactive rather than proactive engagementand communication with schools, particularly governing bodies, is not fully effective. 	What do we want to achieve? <p>We want schools to know that the LA has a robust and effective understanding of its schools, accepting that the LAs differentiated approach is a strength in system as it demonstrates confidence in schools that are good and outstanding and targets resources effectively to where they are most needed. We want schools to feel both informed and engaged in the shaping of commissioned activity, with schools providing effective feedback and using their expertise and resources to work in collaboration with the LA to tackle intractable school improvement challenges.</p>
Staffordshire County Council LA Action	<p>3.1 We are stabilising our staffing structure and operating arrangements following a major period of radical change and transition. The new leadership is offering visible, accessible and regular communications through both established and new channels, and new operating models and procedures have been documented and published (Anna Halliday/Anne Newton/team)</p> <p>3.2 All new approaches and products are tested and piloted or shared for comment with representative schools – in order to draw on sector expertise and build confidence in the approach. Feedback received has demonstrably shaped documents and approaches (Anna Halliday/Anne Newton/team)</p> <p>3.3 We are planning an annual calendar of LA school improvement action, to strengthen both forward planning and communications potential, giving visibility to planned LA contacts communicating regularly – through district events, termly letter, summer conference (Anna Halliday/team)</p> <p>3.4 We have refreshed and published our structure chart and team contacts (Anna Halliday/team)</p> <p>3.5 We are targeting schools for mini-reviews and health checks that will add updated information to the LA's intelligence on good and outstanding schools (Anne Newton/Trudy Pyatt)</p> <p>3.6 We are strengthening our strategic governance of school improvement by establishing SHIELD (Staffordshire Heads Improving Education Leadership and Delivery) as a strategic Board to oversee school improvement at county level, and to provide a focal point for networking to wider infrastructure of schools (Trudy Pyatt/Anna Halliday)</p> <p>3.7 We are strengthening our strategic links with a wider network of key organisation, including LEP, HWB Board, Children's Strategic Partnership and on to partner agencies and organisations (DfE, EFA,)</p> <p>3.8 We are recruiting only high calibre staff with the credentials and ability to undertake the demanding roles we have available. This includes a Talent Search approach for key strategic lead posts (Anna Halliday/HR team)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to accelerate progress to fill remaining gaps in the team and support stable links as far as possible to give continuity and confidence to schools on LA link officers (HR with team leads) We could add greater visibility and formality to the process of co-design and consultation – to ensure more schools are engaged and all know that this degree of engagement and testing takes place (Anna Halliday/Anne Newton/team) Redesign our internet site and organise and brand our school improvement approach linked to strategy Look at survey options to better understand and then target those where there are concerns to make the offer explicit (Comms) Accelerate progress on the Governance strand of the strategy to include stronger communication and understanding through effective briefing, training and engagement action (Len Brazier/Russ Sheldon) Develop better systems for sharing effective practice and support school to school support – possibly through Nexus. Further develop the use of TSAs – through commissioning and brokering.
Suggested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools to engage in a professional dialogue with the LA about prioritisation and targeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Schools Action	<p>of resources, participating in decision-making groups such as schools forum, and in consultation mechanisms and local engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools to contribute to improved communications including through offering feedback and by shaping the offer by articulating what works best for a school in regard to communications Schools to volunteer as local leaders and harness their networks to share key messages and champion collaborative improvement actions, working constructively with LA leads and wider partners 	
Area for Improvement: 4. Quality of Contact	<p>What did the Focused Inspection Comment on?</p> <p>Capacity, frequency, volume and continuity of LA officer contact/relationship: Schools gave a very wide range of responses about the frequency and quality of contact with local authority officers.....many raised concerns about capacity within the authority: they believe that there are too few officers for the number of schools. (NB. Quality of support and relationships with CMIs was flagged as a strength in the feedback letter)</p>	<p>What do we want to achieve?</p> <p>An appreciation and understanding of the role of the LA and the capacity associated with this. A commitment to school-to-school support and to the sharing across the school system of expertise and resources to generate improvement. A realigned expectation of what the LA can and should do for self-improving schools, and a reflection on the quality and impact of LA relationships with schools (replacing volume or frequency).</p>
<p>Staffordshire County Council</p> <p>LA Action:</p>	<p>4.1We have published the Framework to secure understanding and transparency of the approach and explain the differentiated and proportionate LA response to schools in different circumstances (Anna Halliday/team)</p> <p>4.2We are recruiting to fill the vacancies that exist in the CMI team – one new FT appointment and we are seeking two interims to ensure capacity whilst substantive appointments are in train (HR Laura Elson/Trudy Pyatt/Anne Newton)</p> <p>4.3We have rebalanced the role descriptions and portfolios of the CMI to secure support based on risk categorisation (Anne Newton/Trudy Pyatt/CMI team)</p> <p>4.4We have maintained the quantum of commissioner resources invested to secure school improvement and curriculum support delivery from Entrust and have put in place more effective commissioning processes to secure value from the commissions (Anna Halliday/Ian Benson/Matt Prisk)</p> <p>4.5We have strengthened the team capacity with appointment of seconded Headteacher Trudy Pyatt as Senior Commissioning Lead securing improved line management as a further benefit (Anna Halliday)</p> <p>4.6We have begun to explore other models - including peer-to-peer review and support - to supplement and enhance LA targeted work (Anne Newton/Anna Halliday)</p> <p>4.7We have commissioned mini-reviews and health-checks in good and outstanding schools from Entrust to supplement the LA's QA conversations which will also act to refresh the intelligence base for schools deemed light touch by the LA (Anne Newton/CME team)</p> <p>4.8We have moved to further strengthen contracts and client-side function with appointment of a Performance Officer (Matt Prisk/Tim Moss)</p> <p>4.9We have further developed and embedded the governance arrangements with Entrust – standardising and formalising commissioning processes and systems, risk registers are used to capture any emerging issue and Joint Operations Board has embedded (Anne Newton/Matt Prisk)</p> <p>4.10We have continued to strengthen and build on the positive partnership dialogue and relationship with Entrust, including between Commissioner and senior officers in Entrust to identify and tackle any issues at earliest point (Anna Halliday/Jane Longfield/Sharon Kelly)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We could ensure that a comms campaign supports the embedding of the new approach with schools, including survey work to test wider sample of school leaders/governors and to measure progress over time (Sarah James -Comms/with OD support) We could seek urgent measures from HR to source solutions to fill vacancies in the team (Anne Newton/Laura Elson) We could review and refresh the Framework to further clarify the contact arrangements and quality assurance processes (Anne Newton) Explore how Entrust, Peer Network, TSA and other networks (eg. prof assocs) can better contribute Look at appropriate KPI and measures that track contact, so we can demonstrate improvement (changes) in level of contact, support, feedback from schools We could work with Entrust to improve communications and management around their staff change and officer capacity (Anne Newton/Comms) We could seek to further increase visibility at appropriate meetings e.g. HT meetings to show partnership working but also to provide clarity of roles (Anne Newton/CME team) We can share the rationale for commissioned reviews with all schools so that there is clarity about why a school will receive a 'health check' and when. Build how this is used to inform risk assessment into strategy (CME team/Trudy Pyatt)
Suggested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools to understand and support the rationale and reason for differentiating the LA 	

School Action:	<p>support to schools based on risk and need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools to maintain a strong and positive relationship with their linked CME - a relationship that has been consistent and stable across the period of change (Geoff Crockett, Lynn Hill, Tim Moss, Russ Sheldon) Schools to support the whole system approach by engaging in the termly key LA event and sharing their views, ideas and understanding Schools to better use the feedback processes and the formal mechanisms where appropriate to raise any concerns or issues they may have with LA and/or Entrust Schools to continue to develop their capacity to act as an intelligent customer of commissioned service – setting clear expectations about what they want delivered as outcomes from work commissioned from Entrust or any other provider (regardless of whether this is school or LA funded activity) 	
Area for Improvement: 5. First-hand knowledge of schools	<p>What did the Focused Inspection Comment on?</p> <p>First-hand knowledge of schools: a very wide range of views about how well the local authority knows its schools. These ranged from ‘not at all’ to ‘knows very well.’ Governors of schools judged to be ‘good’ or better generally felt more distanced from the authority.Some governors felt that the local authority knows the data about a school’s performance, but that its first-hand knowledge of the school and of the quality of teaching was not so strong.</p>	<p>What do we want to achieve?</p> <p>We want school leaders and governors to have confidence in the LAs approach, to recognise the CMI as the LA’s front line contact with the school, and to have strong relationship with their linked CME for the district so that they know the LA well and feel the LA knows them too. We want to schools to know themselves well, and be confident in sharing their first-hand knowledge with us. We want them to support and feel confident about the LA’s proportionate and targeted approach to school quality assurance and challenge, so that they continue to grow as self-governing and autonomous institutions.</p>
Staffordshire County Council LA action:	<p>5.1We have stated through our Framework and the briefings we have shared with schools how it is that the LA knows its schools well. This combines data and intelligence with first-hand experience (Anne Newton)</p> <p>5.2We have established a rolling programme of visits to schools, to conduct assurance conversations, and these are effective in strengthening first-hand knowledge of schools (Anne Newton/Trudy Pyatt)</p> <p>5.3We are commissioning mini-reviews of schools where the LA’s risk categorisation would not place priority on an LA visit, to further strengthen both readiness for inspection and updated intelligence on the school (CMe/CMIs)</p> <p>5.4We are working differently with Governors as part of our strategy for Learning and Skills, engaging more directly and reviewing the programme of work to strengthen effective governance (Len Brazier/Russ Sheldon)</p> <p>5.5We are investing in new tools and modes for effective sharing of information, including Nexus and the use of Perspectives Lite as a platform for exchange of information (as above)</p> <p>5.6We are working to rebalance and reframe expectations of the relationship with LA – it cannot operate as it used it and the new approach is proving effective – this evidence needs to be shared (Anna Halliday/Entrust)</p> <p>5.7We are sharing the risk assessment with schools through our planned September letter, which will support improved communications and further clarify expectations (Anna Halliday/Trudy Pyatt)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are reviewing our means of engagement with schools, and could look to restore functionality of the district briefing that school leaders have said they most valued and now miss. We are looking to publish a year plan of LA scheduled meetings on school improvement – based on a termly contact – with more local and school-level conversations below that tier of communication and contact Accelerate the delivery plans underpinning the 7 success factors in the Learning and Skills strategy, placing appropriate priority and resources linked to implementation Transform how first-hand knowledge is garnered eg through parent panels and pupil-partner perspectives, to secure robust knowledge of school performance Explore/instigate a range of other methods of capturing and strengthening first-hand knowledge, eg. through surveys and through strengthen comms (as with other actions including “Guide” and FAQs
Suggested Schools Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools to share first-hand knowledge with the LA so that by working in partnership the full suite of key information, knowledge and experience combines to deliver a strong and collaborative approach to school improvement Schools to discuss and explore the respective responsibilities and duties of each 	

	<p>partner: the school, the LA, the school improvement service provider so that expectations can align to new operating approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools to engage in dialogue and briefings with the LA so that all partners are better informed about the contextual and operational challenges and environment that we are working within • Schools to be ready to accept and adapt to change – working collaboratively to seek the best options for Staffordshire schools and communities from the professional dialogue on school improvement 	
<p>Area for Improvement:</p> <p>6. School-to-school support</p>	<p>What did the Focused Inspection Comment on?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the strengths of good schools to help others/school to school support: the authority is not yet fully effective in identifying strengths in good and outstanding schools and using these to help other schools to improve..... Governors are unclear about whether the local authority or Entrust broker support from good and outstanding schools to support others..... the local authority does not have a sufficiently clear and recognised strategy for ensuring that best use is made of school-to-school support 	<p>What do we want to achieve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vibrant and effective offer of school-to-school support, so that the strengths in one area can be shared with another in order to bring about improvement. We want schools to work with the LA to identify aspects of their practice that is particularly effective and to secure a simple mechanism for making that available to support other local schools in need of that support. We want the infrastructure costs of this to be kept to a minimum, so that there are few barriers to efficient transfer. We want all key agencies and partners who have expertise to share to be part of this pool of school-to-school support, including teaching school alliances, hard federations, trusts, phase, locality or subject-based collaborations, and more.
<p>Staffordshire County Council</p> <p>6. LA Action:</p>	<p>6.1 We have positioned school-to-school support as a key feature of the Framework for school improvement so the structural and policy approach is in place for this to flourish. This will be strengthened in the refresh of the Framework (Anna Halliday/Team)</p> <p>6.2 Working with Entrust we have piloted new approaches to school to school support, including an innovative approach to governor peer networks working with a proactive and enterprising governor, and facilitating growth/roll-out of the initiative through Entrust (Paul Woodhead/Len Brazier)</p> <p>6.3 We have previously invested in NLE and LLE training in order to grow the pool of local leaders that can play a key role in school-to-school support (Team)</p> <p>6.4 With Entrust we have begun to build a bank of case studies that can be shared through accessible platforms such as SLN or Entrust community of practice website (CME/CMI Team)</p> <p>6.5 We have been successful if utilising LLE and NLE as part of Core Group and improvement activity by securing a mechanism and “work around” solution with Entrust (Anne Newton/Sharon Kelly)</p> <p>6.6 We have strengthened the dialogue and link with Teaching School Alliances and with local Universities in order to better align and promote their work in partnership (Anne Newton/Anna Halliday)</p> <p>6.7 We have organised the summer conference as a Staffordshire Showcase of effective practice, to give a platform for celebrating and sharing examples of what works to improve outcomes for pupils (Trudy Pyatt/Anna Halliday/Team)</p> <p>6.8 We have used local expertise within IEBs where these have operated to drive change at pace, and to good effect (Anne Newton/CME Team)</p> <p>6.9 We have developed District School Improvement Plans and are developing district commissioning plans to operate to deliver local action, including support for action-research that will contribute to sharing and school to school support</p> <p>6.10 We are brokering and collaborating in HMI-led training and projects, attracting new practice into Staffordshire (CMIs and wider team)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could strengthen the strategic leadership for school-to-school support through the establishment and terms of reference for SHIELD (ref 3.6) as the key SI partnership for Staffordshire • We could/should assign a thematic lead on school-to-school support from within the CME team (Anne Newton/CMEs) • We could develop separate and explicit guidance to articulate our approach to school to school support – as part of refresh/republication of the Framework Eg flow chart/decision tree indicating “options for support” including how to access school to school and a “who pays” as well as evaluating impact, QA etc (Anne Newton) • We could seek to commission a local approach to school-to-school support based on ideas from the Tamworth primary HTs • We should renegotiate the approach to school to school support with Entrust – client-side dialogue and change control if necessary to promote this approach (Anna Halliday/Matt Prisk) • Look at visibility and profiling of school to school capacity – self declared strengths, and possible “buyers guide” or “what worked for us” feedback forum for schools, governors etc (CME/Matt Prisk) • We could further develop the database of effective practice to support school to school support – possibly through Nexus. (Trudy Pyatt/Tim Moss) • Further develop the use of TSAs – through commissioning and brokering (Anne Newton)

	<p>6.11 We have commissioned Entrust to develop best practice case studies to be shared with all schools (Trudy Pyatt/Anne Newton)</p> <p>6.12 We dedicate officer time to contribute to Trust Boards and senior officers and lead member regularly meet with key network leaders such as Co-operative Trust, Diocesan representatives, Academy sponsors etc (Anna Halliday/Cllr Ben Adams/Team)</p>	
Suggested School Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School to school support relies heavily on schools engaging positively to identify what works well and to be prepared to share that in a spirit of collaboration. It also relies on schools being open to support from other schools. • Good and Outstanding schools can take a more proactive stance in setting out what they can offer and contribute to school to school support. • Governors can challenge their schools position and actively support the resources and capacity needed for school to school support, including governor to governor support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Area for Improvement:</p> <p>7. Quality of Contracted Support</p>	<p>What did the Focused Inspection Comment on?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Contracted Support: They claim that the local authority’s contracted arrangements do not always secure the necessary knowledge, skills or experience to review, evaluate and feed back to headteachers..... Several headteachers stated they judged they have little confidence in the local authority’s contracted arrangements for curriculum support which they regard as especially weak. It is unclear to some schools who is responsible for evaluating the impact of this support. 	<p>What do we want to achieve?</p> <p>We want highly effective and efficient commissioned provision, that is well-tailored to meet the needs of the school, and that delivers the intended outcomes: rapid and sustainable improvements in outcomes for pupils. We want the commissioned service to be good value for money, to be well-received and valued by the beneficiaries, and for it to contribute tangibly to the delivery of our strategic goals for the county. To achieve this, the service has to be credible, professional, reliable and it has to make a difference, in order to win the trust and respect of schools. The LAs contacting arrangements need to be robust in securing this , and in tackling any issues that arise in regard to standards and quality of delivery. Effective contract monitoring and quality assurance, performance reporting, risk management and dispute resolution are all features of a strong client-side function that would give confidence to both commissioners, clients and the service provider.</p>
Staffordshire County Council LA Action:	<p>7.1 We have established a dedicated contract management function within the LA’s Commissioning Delivery Hub with an Entrust Contract Manager (Matt Prisk), supervised by a Client-Side Lead (Ian Benson) and reporting through to Head of Business Improvement (Anu Singh)</p> <p>7.2 We have recruited to further strengthen that function, through appointment of a Performance Officer due to take up post by Summer 2014 (Matt Prisk)</p> <p>7.3 We have re-scoped the redeveloped the School Improvement specification with Entrust and this has been operating since mid-Autumn 2013 (Anna Halliday/Anne Newton/ Matt Prisk)</p> <p>7.4 We have jointly redefined the metrics associated with the specification in order to ensure that the outcome measures are clear for each commission and for the specification as a whole –and reporting against these measures has been functional from December 2013 (Anna Halliday/Anne Newton/Matt Prisk)</p> <p>7.5 We have worked with Entrust to redesign the reporting formats, so that key measures and risks can be more readily identified and addressed (Matt Prisk/Anne Newton/Entrust)</p> <p>7.6 We have reviewed the quality assurance processes linked to the commissions provided to Entrust, with a more effective and efficient process for initiating and establishing a school-responsive commission that is signed off within the LA (Anne Newton/Trudy Pyatt)</p> <p>7.7 We have established a more robust co-produced approach to commissions with school leaders/core group sign off and monitoring the work commissioned securing better</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further strengthen and embed all of the actions we have instigated • Promote Client side leadership on quality control and monitoring of delivery activity (as distinct from officers that are QA’ing the quality of the commissions passed through to Entrust) (Matt Prisk/Ian Benson) • Develop agreed standards – and publish these so there is a shared understanding and expectation of what commissioned service should do/involve (Matt Prisk/Ian Benson) • Promote improved customer choice/control/feedback – in match of consultants to specific commissioned pieces. Make clear school responsibility and mechanism in QA processes/feedback as co-commissioner and key beneficiary (Matt Prisk/Ian Benson) • Dialogue with Entrust on their QA process so that robust and transparent overall system can be articulated and shared (link to “Guide”) (Matt Prisk/Anne Newton) • Differentiate the approach – identify weaker areas of delivery eg curriculum support/subject leadership which were identified in Focused Inspection feedback (Matt Prisk/CMI) • Explore an offer of guidance and/or training for schools/govs on “how to commission high quality support” to up-skill and empower schools in their commissioning role (Anne Newton/Anu Singh) • Establish regular and transparent mechanism for reporting the collective impact of commissioned activity – both internally and to stakeholders – recognising links to scrutiny and to the SHIELD Board, so impact is transparent, accessible, visible (Client Side with

	<p>understanding of expectations, relationships and quality of dialogue and responsiveness to the customer (CMI team/Trudy Pyatt)</p> <p>7.8 We have set up an Entrust Commissioners Board to bring together all LA commissioners of Entrust services to secure a joined-up approach to commissioning and cascade improvements to all areas of commissioned business (Anna Halliday/Matt Prisk)</p> <p>7.9 We have recognised the need to strengthen the impartial quality assurance of delivered activity – as reliance is currently placed in Entrust QA of their own work (Matt Prisk/Ian Benson)</p> <p>7.10 We have established good relationships for frank dialogue and mutual challenge between senior officers LA and Entrust, to identify and tackle any issues early on and support progress toward a resolution – with meetings as often as twice weekly when required (Anna Halliday/Anne Newton/Jane Longfield/Sharon Kelly)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>Commissioning Leads/Comms)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to explore with Entrust the mechanisms for sharing quality and performance intelligence with the school community against fully-traded activity – where the QA processes and mandate of the LA is not established in the same way as with direct commissions (Anna Halliday/Anne Newton with Entrust)
<p>Suggested School Action:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools could better develop their skills and abilities as effective commissioners of the services that they purchase for themselves • Schools could work with the LA to provide robust feedback on the quality and impact of the services they receive, working within an agreed protocol for quality assurance and service delivery improvement – linked to the SHIELD Board • Schools could provide valuable feedback to their CMIs where a commission is instigated on their behalf by the LA, to ensure service delivery meets expectations and delivers school improvement outcomes • Schools could better track and share the impact of both commissioned and non-commissioned activity on school improvement outcomes so that it is easier to identify what works, thereby supporting accelerated improvement across the wider system 	
<p>Area for Improvement:</p> <p>8. A more proactive approach</p>	<p>What did the Focused Inspection Comment on?</p> <p>Proactive Approach: dips in school performance are not noted until after the event and too late to prevent schools declining..... a perceived lack of proactive engagement with academy schools surveyed</p>	<p>What do we want to achieve?</p> <p>We want all schools to be good and outstanding. We need to prevent failure and promote success. Identifying early on the challenges, barriers and issues that affect school performance and standards and acting early will mean that we are not in a position of responding to failure. Identifying what works well to improve and accelerate success will further support a proactive approach. We want all schools to participate and to understand that the LA acts on behalf of its citizens, regardless of the type of school.</p>
	<p>8.1 We had identified as part of our self-evaluation in 2013 that there was opportunity to move to a more proactive approach, after the necessary targeted support to schools not yet good and understanding had had opportunity to drive the step-change that was required. In our planning for 2014/15 we are introducing a district commissioning tier to LA activity, identifying key themes for local improvement and targeting LA resources to add value to the work schools are doing for themselves, and/or together on key performance areas, such as pupil premium, learner progress at KS2, subject leadership in maths and English (CME/CMI team)</p> <p>8.2 We are publishing school improvement commissioning intentions and priorities for 2014/15 as a further improvement in articulating our approach to all schools – to share our priorities and to provide a foundation for local discussion to shape the detail of commissioning plans at local level (Anna Halliday/Trudy Pyatt/CME/CMI team)</p> <p>8.3. We are auditing our contact databases and lists to ensure that all schools, including academies are represented and in receipt of key communications from the LA (Kathy Maitland/Business Support)</p> <p>8.4 We are engaging with academy leads and sponsors both through county-wide and district</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could look to further enhance the risk approach to support proactive and more regular review and triggers, to be more alert to granular changes in performance (such as termly tracking id data was supplied by schools) • Strengthen school instigated alerts eg commission a termly survey return or telephone survey of CoG on hot topics/concerns/requests, to inform both traded and commissioned offer • We could look at the Nexus development as a key tool to support more proactive work with all schools, as above. • The % of schools good and outstanding has increased by +10% since Aug 2012. With around 75% now good and outstanding the shift to a different commissioning model will be easier to deliver, as the trend of decline is being reversed and more schools are moving from RI to good. • The historical factors that appear in the data that trigger risk-based inspections have been roundly tackled over the last 12-18 months under a new commissioning approach. The effectiveness of this approach means that opportunity for a new approach emerges.

	<p>discussions, and in one-to-one conversations where appropriate (Anna Halliday/Cllr Ben Adams/DCLs)</p> <p>8.5 We are reshaping our strategic partnership through SHIELD, and this could serve to strengthen engagement with academy schools (Anna Halliday/Trudy Pyatt)</p> <p>8.6 The LA Framework applies to all state-funded schools regardless of type. Academies are integrated into this framework and part of LA approach, including “call-in” and risk categorisation. This can be made clearer in the refresh of the documentation (Anna Halliday)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could survey all academies to test more robustly their links and contacts with the LA – as the sample size from the Focused Inspection was very small and potentially not representative (Comms/OD)
Suggested Schools Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools can further improve their tracking and early identification, sharing data proactively with the LA, to better support QA dialogue that is preventative rather than reactive • All schools, including academies can commit to engage positively through networks and their LA link officer • Schools can ensure that they are linked – through representatives and through briefing, e-newsletters etc – to the SHIELD Board, and through this inform and influence the collective work of the whole system to deliver more proactively to meet local need • Schools can understand and accept the key role of the LA – as set out in our strategy, Framework and Commissioning Priorities/Intentions is changing, and support the strengths of the new approach. The LA has to use its resources to fulfil a wide a range of functions, which necessitates careful targeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •