Quality Assurance and Improvement Policy

Date First Published	**January 2023**
Version	**3**
Last approved	**October 2025**
Review Cycle	**Annual**
Review Date	**October 2026**

"Learning together, to be the best we can be"

1.Context

1.1. Quality assurance within Nexus Multi Academy Trust involves the systematic audit and review of practice, programmes, systems and processes to maintain and improve the quality of education in all our settings, leading to improved outcomes and life chances for all our learners framed around the "Big 3" improvement priorities of our Collaborative School Improvement Framework (CSIF):

- All our children and young people enjoy their learning and make at least good progress.
- All our children are responsible citizens who make an active contribution to society.
- All our Academies are continually improving our quality of provision.

1.2. The Trust seeks to work in a manner underpinned by appreciative inquiry, undertaking quality assurance activity in a strengths-based way to perpetuate a learning culture across the organisation. We believe children need a safe space to learn from mistakes, and we apply this same philosophical approach to the leadership and management of our schools. In this regard, our quality assurance system has a clear focus on equality of support and challenge.

1.3. To support our academies in an impactful and purposeful way, it is important that Trust officers understand the priorities within each of the academies, including recommendations from internal and external reviews including any areas for improvement as defined by Ofsted, and any emergent policy, statutory guidance or research publications.

1.4. Wherever possible, the Trust will endeavour to collate school priorities to inform Trust-wide improvement work. This collation of priorities ensures that Trust-wide improvement work enables the principles of collective efficacy and collaboration.

1.5. Collated priorities are identified within the CSIF delivery plan, which is refreshed annually. This outlines what we will achieve, how we will do it and why it is important.

1.6. Fundamentally, this model is in place to ensure that all Nexus MAT academies are working together to improve outcomes for children. Central to the model is ensuring appropriate levels of:

- Monitoring and challenge;
- Support and system leadership;
- Intervention (where needed).

1.7. Quality assurance is essential for accountability, as well as to support the ongoing improvement of schools and challenging school leaders to adapt to the changing needs of pupils and improve the quality of education for all learners.

1.8. In addition to priorities collated from all schools, the Trust also takes account of local and national priorities when planning quality assurance and improvement activity.

2. Purpose and scope

2.1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that a fair, robust and consistent process is applied to all academies, always having regard for supporting their development within the context of the Trust's strategic plan for improving educational provision and performance.

2.2. This will ensure that there is a systematic, transparent, auditable and anticipatory process in place for the review of school self-evaluation and improvement planning, with judgements made that are rooted in evidence.

2.3. Ultimately this will enable executive leaders and governors to "stress test" the robustness of self-evaluation and improvement planning of Nexus MAT schools, and furthermore, triangulate and validate the judgements of Headteachers.

2.4. Quality assurance is the process for evaluating the quality of education through a variety of school level and Trust level activity. It is intended be a supportive and developmental process designed to ensure that all academies have the support they require to carry out their core business effectively.

2.5. Quality assurance also allows the Trust to celebrate success and share best practice.

3. Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

3.1. The Trust recognises that the core business of schools is to offer a high quality of education to the community it serves. As such, our process places this at the centre of all activity.

3.2. An annual quality assurance calendar is published, considering workload and shared with Executive leaders and Headteachers in order to ensure that Headteachers know when activity is scheduled and when, being mindful of the school calendar and the need to maintain a heathy work life balance for school leaders and school staff,

3.3. It is essential that an objective and robust view is formed for how well our academies are performing and to have a mechanism to ascertain our collective strengths, areas for improvement and to connect schools together within the Trust and beyond.

3.4. The Trust has several established systems and processes in place to offer robust quality assurance of school self-evaluation, summarised in Figure 1.

3.5. **Figure 1 – Map of quality assurance sources**

3.6. **Dashboard**

3.6.1. The Trust Board of Directors has defined a suite of key performance indictors (KPIs) which align to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework but go beyond it, to reflect the wide legal and statutory duties of Directors.

3.6.2. Headteachers are required to self-assess the strength of practice in school for each indicator, using the defined rating system, on a termly basis. These self-evaluated ratings are moderated with the allocated Regional Director and Executive Assurance Partner. These are then scrutinised by the Trust executive at the Schools' Performance Scrutiny Board before they are submitted to Directors for their review.

3.7. Data Submissions

3.7.1. A range of data is collated centrally and used to form questions for further enquiry. The data collected includes:

- Tracking data and outcomes data in, at least, reading, writing, mathematics.
- Attendance.
- Behaviour.
- Safeguarding.

3.8. Annual health check

3.8.1. All schools will receive an annual health check in the summer term to identify improvement needs ahead to the next school year and test the robustness of the school offer in relation to the areas for improvement (AFIs) as identified in the last school OfSTED inspection.

3.8.2. The health check will follow similar methodology to that of an Ofsted inspection, though it will focus specifically on the quality of education and the AFIs from the last school Ofsted inspection.

3.8.3. The health check will be typically be 1 or 2 days in duration, and will be undertaken by at least one of the central Trust Executive Assurance Partners (though typically not the same individual who works with the school on improvement activity throughout the year, so as to create a more objective assessment). The health check may also involve other central trust staff/curriculum experts and an external reviewer.

3.8.4. Where schools have been subject to an Ofsted inspection in the preceding summer or spring term, they may not be required to have an annual health check. However, the school will receive a "beyond Ofsted" meeting, chaired by the Executive Regional Director, to debrief and discuss the future school priorities in readiness for the Annual Support and Challenge Board.

3.9. Annual Support and Challenge Board

3.9.1. In the autumn term, Headteachers will agree the school Partnership Improvement Plan (PIP), informed by the Ofsted identified Areas for

Improvement and the Trust annual health check report (or the 'beyond Ofsted' meeting) undertaken in the preceding summer term.

3.9.2. The Board features in the Trust Scheme of Delegation as a formal subcommittee of the Trust's Standards Committee.

3.9.3. Intended outcomes from this Board are that it will:

- Inform the priorities for any bespoke work commissioned by the Trust through the academic year.
- Inform the qualitative focus of the Trust's governance cycle; and
- Identify best practice, innovations and shared areas for improvement across the Trust.

3.10. Executive Assurance Partner and Specialist Consultant engagement with schools

3.10.1. The Trust Executive Assurance Partner role is designed to ensure that there is a systematic and auditable process in place for the review of school support plans, at least termly, as informed by the annual health check.

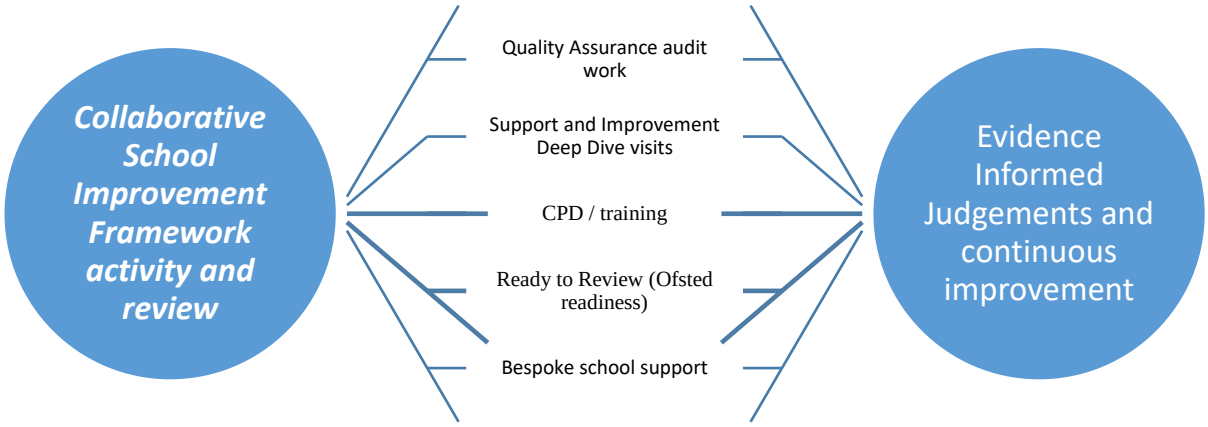
3.10.2. Each school will be allocated an Executive Assurance Partner and/or Specialist Consultant who will support a schools improvement agenda as identified within the Partnership Improvement Plan at the annual support and challenge board, as well as any other emergent priorities (e.g. any areas for improvement identified from an in-year Ofsted inspection).

3.10.3. A cycle of quality assurance activity will take place at least each term by the Executive Assurance Partner and other Trust leads to 'stress test' the judgements made by Headteachers within the Dashboard within Quality of Education. This will include a deeper dive into specific areas of the Dashboard.

3.10.4. A cycle of audit activity is planned and shared with Headteachers at the beginning of the school year. Audit activity will examine the schools' compliance and progress in a number of areas, including safeguarding, behaviour, wellbeing, attendance, website, English and Mathematics.

3.10.5. Other experts may be utilised from within the Trust, in addition to the assigned Executive Assurance Partner, if the school has specific needs around a particular area.

3.10.6. **Figure 2 – Flow of QA and improvement activity**



3.10.7. At the Annual Support and Challenge Board, the Headteacher, ERD and EAP will agree a Partnership Improvement Plan which will detail the AFI's and inform the Executive Assurance Partner / Consultant work programme dependent upon the schools level of intervention.

3.10.8. A tiered approach (Routine, Enhanced or Formal intervention) ensures that support is proportionate, targeted, and responsive to each school's unique context.

3.10.9. Each school will receive a core offer of at least one half day visit each term to Deep Dive an aspect of Quality of Education.

3.10.10. Each school will receive an Annual Audit / Quality Assurance in the areas of safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, website, English and Maths.

3.10.11. The team undertaking collaborative enquiry will include the assigned Executive Assurance Partner, Headteacher and any other relevant Trust officers. Senior and Middle leaders, teachers and pupils may be involved as part of the Deep Dive process.

3.10.12. Feedback and evidence collated from quality assurance and improvement work will be shared with key stakeholders in the central Trust team via the Soft Intelligence Sharing Forum, in preparation for the Schools' Performance Scrutiny Board and Standards Committee.

3.11. Schools' Performance Scrutiny Board

3.11.1. All evidence collated from quality assurance activity will be presented and triangulated at the Schools' Performance Scrutiny Board (SPSB) which takes place each term.

3.11.2. This Board:

- Scrutinises data held by the Trust for each school alongside evidence collated through line management, audit and review and the Executive Assurance Partner visits;
- Stress tests the robustness of Self-Evaluations and Improvement Plans of Nexus schools, and validate Dashboard judgements from evidence;
- Identifies the priorities for the Executive Assurance Partner bespoke work;
- Informs the qualitative focus of the Trust local governance cycle;
- Identifies best practice, innovations and shared areas for improvement across the Trust.
- Moderates the school's self-assessment in the Dashboard before the executive reports to Directors.

3.11.3. The Board features in the Trust Scheme of Delegation as a formal subcommittee of the Trust Board.

4. Quality Assurance into Improvement

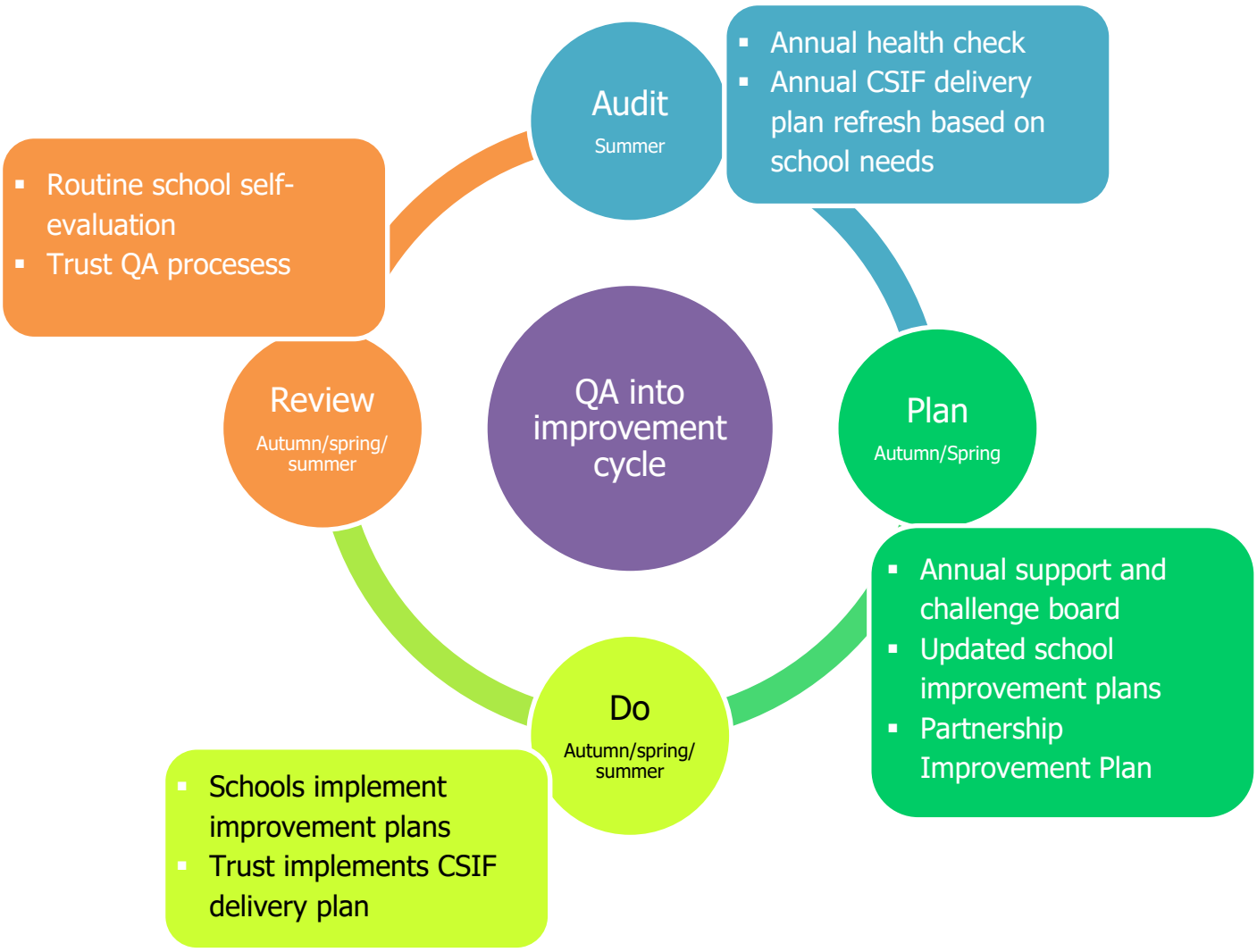
4.1. There is a clear cycle of 'audit, plan, do, review' in place at school and Trust level. (See Figure 3).

4.2. The Trust uses all quality assurance activity to support schools to audit current systems and processes, plan for the implementation of new activity or intervention, support training and development and support monitoring and evaluation.

4.3. The Trust facilitates school leaders to meet regularly to discuss and systematically cover different aspects of school performance and improvement.

4.4. The Trust regularly evolves its infrastructure and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support shared professional learning. There is a strong culture of subject networks, peer-to-peer coaching and reflective practice, linked to improvement priorities.

4.5. **Figure 3 – The QA & Improvement Commissioning Cycle**

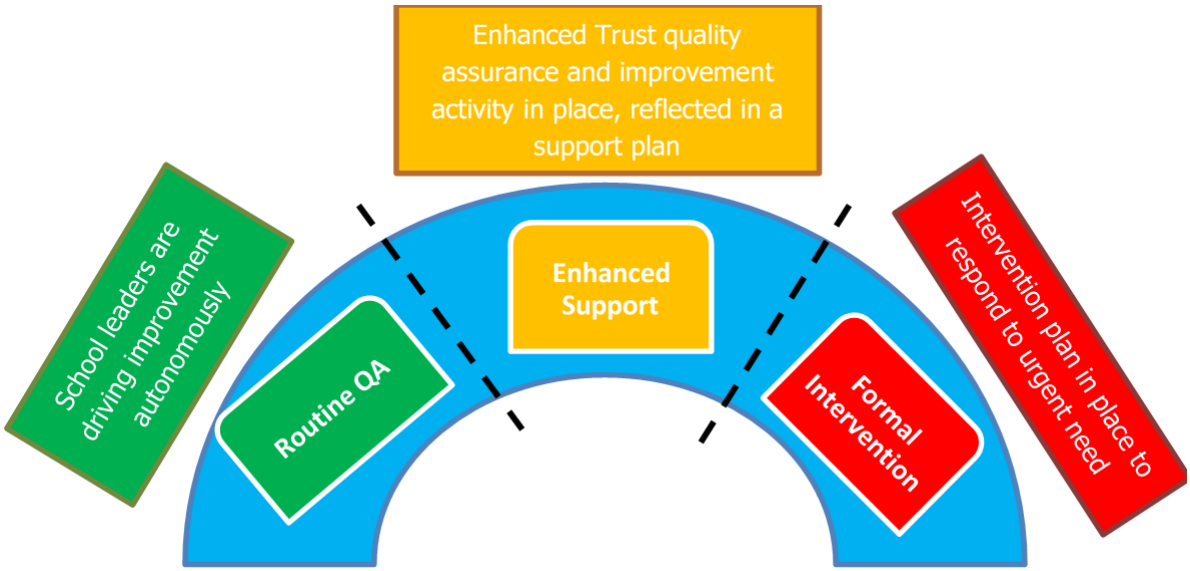


5. Intervention Model

5.1. From the quality assurance work of Trust officers and senior leaders with the oversight of the Schools' Performance Scrutiny Board, the Trust formulates an evidence informed view of the support required by schools to consolidate their practice or where they need additional input.

5.2. The aggregated judgements from the schools dashboard will indicate whether a school falls within 3 defined categories (figure 4); Routine QA, Enhanced Support or Formal Intervention. More detail about this is included in the Academies of Concern and Sponsored Academy Policy, which guides the bespoke activity offered to each school.

5.3. **Figure 4 – Tiers of intervention and classification of schools**



6. Governance

6.1. Outcomes from the Schools' Performance Scrutiny Board is reported directly to the Trust Standards Committee at least every term.