Core school improvement activities - Havering Education Quality Assurance Process 2025-2026

Quality Assurance Cycle

A key objective of the Local Authority (LA) is that all children will attend a school that is judged to be "effective" by Ofsted.

To support the maintenance of high standards, all LA maintained schools will be included in the LA Quality Assurance (QA) cycle. Schools in Federations have individual URNs and will therefore be deemed to be separate schools for purposes of the QA cycle.

Schools which are stand-alone academies, or schools that are part of an academy trust are welcome to participate in all aspects of the cycle in the same way as maintained schools. However they are not required to participate in the way that LA schools are, and if they choose to participate then there will be a charge from April 2026.

However, as a minimum, schools that are an academy will be strongly encouraged to participate in Keeping in Touch (KIT) visits. The KIT visits may focus, by negotiation on individual member schools within the cycle window, and an overview of the trust schools within Havering and trust quality assurance processes generally. The KIT will ensure that the LA has the necessary information to ensure that elected members are kept fully engaged in the local education system. We also encourage the sharing of good practice between all providers in our education community regardless of governance arrangements.

The LA proposes the following cycle of QA for "effective" schools:

Timeline

Year 1 – Post Ofsted Inspection leaders attending to 'Areas for Improvement'
Year 2 - KIT visit or Peer Review Programme, if eligible
Year 3 - Full QA (Ofsted Readiness) visit
Year 4 - KIT visit
Year 5 - Ofsted Inspection (Courtesy call) (possible KIT)

A school will join a point of the LA QA cycle according to when it was last inspected by Ofsted. This will be done by term as near as possible.

KIT Visits

A school judged to be "effective" will have a Keeping in Touch (KIT) visit 12 months after inspection.

A KIT visit of up to half a day, will include a discussion about:

- the strengths of the school and evidence to support
- area of improvement/focus, improvement planning, impact of actions taken and evidence to support this
- pupil outcomes
- concerns the school or the LA may have
- brokerage of support

If a KIT visit suggests that one or more areas of the school's practice appears vulnerable, the school is strongly encouraged to engage with a specialist advisor to undertake a more in depth analysis of that area of practice in order to address any area of vulnerability.

If prior to September 2024 a school was graded Requires Improvement following a Graded Inspection or the evidence gathered during an Ungraded Inspection suggested that the grade may be lower than Good if a Graded Inspection was to be carried out, or post September 2024 a school is judged not to be "effective", then the school will be subject to 'Requiring Additional Intervention & Support' by the LA in the case of maintained schools. In academies, the LA will offer additional support and encourage engagement with the plans for improvement, or if necessary engage with the DfE Regional Director. Support from the LA would be chargeable.

Where serious concern is identified the DfE will continue to intervene, including by issuing an academy order. From September 2024 the policy of government intervention for two or more consecutive judgements of "requires improvement" will be one of providing support.

In year 2 of the cycle, following inspection, schools not subject to 'Requiring Additional Intervention & Support' are encouraged to be involved in school-to-school improvement programmes, e.g. facilitated peer review, peer support and HSIS school improvement packages. Where an LA officer is a participant in the facilitated peer review, in some circumstances where the focus is suitable, this may replace the KIT visit.

It is envisaged that these programmes will support leaders to address the areas for improvement noted in the inspection report and others that are identified as well as identifying excellent practice that can be shared with other schools in order to support the agenda of self- improving schools.

In year 4, the school would again receive a KIT visit. A further KIT may be agreed in year 5 or later, where the inspection timetable becomes considerably overdue.

Full QA (Ofsted Readiness) Visit

In year 3, the QA Ofsted Readiness visit will be a more in-depth school evaluation involving a team of relevant specialist advisors, and will include:

- A review of key information provided in advance of the visit e.g. School Self-Evaluation, School Development Plan, Safeguarding S175 audit (there is a requirement for the audit to have been externally validated either by the LA or an external provider within the previous 12 months.)
- A short pre-visit meeting for leaders to share their evaluation of improvements made in the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection, the Quality of Education, and to confirm visit arrangements and areas of focus. This meeting may be held virtually or in-person.
- The in-school visit will include discussions with the school's senior curriculum leader and leaders in subjects and other areas of focus, with an emphasis on their leadership and its impact. This will be led by the LA QA Link Officer supported by one or more LA Officers according to focus. The Leadership of Reading in school will always be an included area. There will also be discussions with pupils.
- Visits to lessons, looking at pupils' work and where possible discussion with teachers are also likely to be included.

- There will always be a focus on SEND and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Risk Register and Schools Monitoring Group

The LA regularly maintains a risk register analysis of all educational establishments within the borough, in order to pre-empt difficulties and offer support, fulfil our statutory duties (Support and intervention in schools statutory guidance September 2025) and engage with local elected members, Ofsted, safeguarding complaints, and the DfE Regional Directors.

The Schools' Monitoring Group (SMG) meets each half-term to monitor progress in schools at risk of not sustaining an "effective" school judgement in their next inspection (Schools 'Requiring Additional Intervention & Support'), take decisions regarding the utilisation of Local Authority Powers of Intervention, engagement with the DfE Regional Directors, deploy School-to-School Support resources and broker HES support.

All teams within LA Children's Services relating to schools contribute triggers which could be areas of concern, or suggest vulnerabilities in relation to their areas of work. These triggers are published in ***Appendix 1***. Triggers are not exclusive and other situations may arise from time to time. All service areas are represented at the SMG meeting, so that relevant information can be shared to identify any emerging vulnerabilities so that activity can be coordinated.

Schools 'Requiring Additional Intervention & Support':

There are five trigger points for a school to be deemed to be 'Requiring Additional Intervention & Support':

1. Prior to September 2024 Ofsted grading less than "Good" /suggestion less than "Good" following an Ungraded Inspection, or post September 2024 a school is judged not to be "effective".
2. LA year 3 Ofsted readiness QA suggests the school may not be judged to be "effective" at its next inspection.
3. Information gained during an LA KIT visit suggests significant risk.
4. LA identification following an SMG periodic risk register analysis e.g. attendance, behaviour, complaints, pupil outcomes suggests significant risk.
5. Self-identification by a school to generate additional support through strategic link officer.

Progress Review Meetings (PRMs)

For maintained schools (and academies by agreement), where a school is considered vulnerable and 'Requiring Additional Intervention & Support', the relevant LA officers will discuss the situation fully with the Headteacher/Executive Headteacher/Principal and the Chair of Governors.

Where a school is judged to be 'Requiring Additional Intervention & Support':

- Progress Review Meetings (PRMs) will be implemented if trigger 1 or 2 occurs and if required depending on outcomes of findings for trigger 3 or 4.
- Points 3, 4 and 5 will lead to a full school or area review and if deemed that the school is a vulnerable school, will be subject to regular PRMs.
- PRMs are meetings chaired by a senior LA Officer and are attended by the Headteacher, the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors and others by invitation of the LA Officer.

- PRMs will include an element of first-hand evidence validation undertaken with school leaders.

Their purpose is for the LA to:

- oversee the implementation of action plans to secure rapid and sustained improvements, so are likely to be 'front-loaded' with more frequent meetings at the outset.
- monitor progress of actions taken to ensure they have maximum impact.
- commission additional resources when needed to support rapid improvement.
- monitor the impact of brokered support, including partnership support.
- where possible, gather direct evidence of progress for LA monitoring and reporting to Schools' Funding Forum' and for Ofsted.

Summary

For maintained schools, the activity described above as part of the wider Quality Assurance Cycle, PRMs, further in-school support such as a full school review, or review of an area of the school's practice, would all be funded from the de-delegated 'School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant', and spend will be reported to Schools' Funding Forum. However, this is subject to Schools' Funding Forum approval.

PRMs are not mandatory for academies but can be offered if requested, but would be chargeable to cover direct costs of LA officer resource, as would any in-school support, such as a full school review or review of an area of the school's practice.

Appendix 1 – LA Children's Services School Vulnerability Triggers

Admissions, attendance and behaviour

- High number of deletions from school registers – parents transferring schools
- High number of Permanent Exclusions being issued
- High levels of attendance absence
- High levels of referrals from schools requesting pupils directed 'off site'
- High levels of suspensions / exclusions of pupils with undiagnosed SEND needs – where schools have not dealt with the basics
- A high number, significant increase in parents wishing to Electively Home Education as pupils unhappy with school
- A significantly high number of bullying incidents, reports and reasons pupils are not in a specific school

Asset Management

If schools chose **not to**

- Carry out their statutory tests and inspections on their school buildings i.e. building compliance
- Keep their school buildings safe and in good working order by tackling poor building condition and or health and safety issues.
- Use their devolved formula capital budget appropriately

Finance

- **Deficit Balances:** Schools with a deficit balance of more than £10,000 at the end of the previous financial year which they have not budgeted to recover within this financial year and there is no agreed recovery plan.
- **Deficit budget:** Schools setting a budget with an in year deficit ***in excess of £100,000 or 50% of their total balances at the end of the previous financial year***, with projections indicating this deficit will *increase over the next three years.*
- **High Surplus:** Schools carrying a budget surplus in excess of ***8% of their total income at the end of the previous financial year*** where the school has excess surplus balances and no agreed plan to use these.
- **Audit Outcomes:** Schools that received a ***'limited assurance' or 'no assurance' rating*** in their most recent internal audit or financial health check, highlighting significant weaknesses in financial controls, governance, and risk management practices.
- **Leadership and Financial Oversight:** Schools with a combination of an ***inexperienced or interim School Business Manager (SBM) and a newly appointed or interim Head Teacher***, indicating potential financial vulnerabilities due to a lack of experienced oversight in budget management.
- **Non-Compliance with Financial Reporting:**
    - (i) ***Failure to submit*** the school budget, three-year financial plan, or the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) by the required deadlines.
    - (ii) ***Non-submission of monthly financial reconciliations for three consecutive months***, without a valid justification, despite repeated reminders from the local authority.
    - (iii) ***Failure to submit year end returns*** *and backing documents by required deadlines or significant errors*
    - (iv) ***Poor quality forecasting and budgeting*** *– a pattern of* significant unforecast variances to budget

Governor Services

- High governor turnover
- Governor vacancies and lack of engagement by GB to fill vacancies
- Chair – new or lack of engagement
- Parental complaints
- Relationship between governors and SLT
- Meetings being re-arranged or not planned effectively
- Indications of lack of governor effectiveness
    - Gaps in skills / experience across the GB (evidenced by skills audit)
    - Evidence of lack of challenge (evidenced by meeting observation, feedback from clerks and minutes)
    - Lack of strategic working and/or over involvement in operational issues
    - Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities by GB collectively or by individual governors and/or HT
- Non-compliance with GB Code of Conduct

Havering School Improvement Services (Hsis)

<u>Leadership:</u>

- Inexperienced Head Teacher –in first year of headship.
- New Head Teacher, not new to Headship
- Interim Head Teacher arrangements in place
- Lack of capacity of leadership team, including vacancies
- Substantial concerns raised following a S175 audit

<u>Quality of Education:</u>

- Leadership of overall Curriculum
- Leadership of a significant curriculum area or a number of areas
- Inappropriate use of alternative provisions
- Outcomes for pupils
    - Academic achievement
    - Other – PD/Well-being, support for mental health/Gatsby principles, benchmarking/Destinations/NEET/wider curriculum

<u>Other:</u>

- Concern re pupil behaviour/conduct
- Concern re low attendance/high persistent absence
- School recently amalgamated/become part of a federation
- Complaints, including from Ofsted
- Staffing: Absences/vacancies/turnover/ recurrent HR issues
- Lack of engagement with staff development opportunities
- Website –intelligence gathering pre a school visit e.g. PP, SEND, Reading… not compliant or out of date

Health & Safety

Management Audit Scores:

- Overall score <=50%
- Specific sections scores:
- Risk assessment <80%
- Maintenance <80%
- Inspection <80%

Human Resources

HR monitors Employee Relations casework and how schools perform in their duty under relevant school employment policies and procedures.

- Effective use of employment policies and procedures across the whole school that demonstrates best practice in the management and motivation of all school staff. Unlikely to have any active casework.
- Any active casework completed in line with policies/procedures with effective use of HR support/guidance provided.
- Employee Relations casework complex, requiring regular HR support/guidance, likely to lead to potential collective disputes (up to and including dismissal), and where the school is not effectively following HR advice and guidance.
- Significant Employee Relations casework (high number of cases or complex casework) requiring significant leadership input and requiring regular HR support/guidance and where the school is not effectively following HR advice and guidance. One or more of these cases is likely to lead to collective disputes, dismissal(s), settlement agreement(s) or possible Employment Tribunal claim(s).

SEND

- A high number or significant increase in parental complaints (either formal or informal) to the SEND Service
- A high number, significant increase in, or inappropriate or illegal use of reduced timetables, alternative provision, suspensions/exclusions
- A high number or significant increase in placement breakdowns or requests for change of placements for pupils with SEND
- Failure to comply with statutory requirements relating to SEND processes (e.g., consultation responses, annual reviews)
- Evidence of poor, exclusionary, or potentially illegal/discriminatory practice in regards to pupils with SEND
- Resistance or a lack of openness to external services and to support from external teams to develop SEND processes, practice, and promote inclusion