



Department
for Education

**Regional Schools Commissioner's
Office**

Eastbrook
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
CB2 8DR
[REDACTED]

The Members and Trustees of The Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust
Diocesan House,
109 Dereham Road,
Easton
Norwich,
Norfolk,
NR9 5ES

22 July 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust in respect of Middleton Church of England Primary Academy

In accordance with sections 2A and 2D of the Academies Act 2010¹ any funding agreement of an academy may be terminated by the Secretary of State where special measures are required to be taken in relation to the academy or the academy requires significant improvement and the Chief Inspector of Ofsted has given notice of that under section 13(3)(a) of the Education Act 2005.

I received an Ofsted notification dated 1 July 2022 confirming that Middleton Church of England Primary Academy was judged to be inadequate and requires special measures. For the reasons set out below, I now consider it necessary to issue this Termination Warning Notice.

- The curriculum is not ambitious and carefully considered. It does not meet pupils' needs. Leaders do not precisely select the knowledge they want pupils to learn and do not therefore ensure that the curriculum is well sequenced. As a result of this, teachers do not have the subject knowledge to ensure pupils learn well over time. Pupils often do not remember knowledge well because teachers do not revisit prior learning. Pupils in different year groups often learn the same information again without adults giving thought to how learning builds over time. A significant number of pupils are not learning with pupils of the same age group because leaders' expectations are not high enough.

Leaders need to construct an ambitious curriculum that will equip teachers with the subject knowledge to ensure pupils gain knowledge that builds clearly on what they have learned before.

- Leaders do not accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result of this, pupils with SEND do not receive the precise support they need to learn well. Leaders must ensure that they fully identify and clearly understand the needs of pupils in their care. They need to provide appropriate and precise support for those pupils. They also need to ensure regular and timely review of this support to check how well it is working.
- Pupils' reading books are not always matched closely enough to their ability. As a result of this, some pupils are not regularly reading familiar language and they do not become fluent readers. Those pupils that have fallen behind with their reading do not receive the precise support they need to improve. Reading activities are not well planned to enable older pupils to learn to read effectively. Leaders must ensure that pupils access reading books which contain much familiar language, matched to their current ability, which they regularly practise.
- Teachers do not address some negative behaviours consistently and a minority of pupils use homophobic language. Most pupils do not appreciate this. It is not in keeping with the largely open minded and welcoming attitude of most pupils. Leaders have been slow to ensure that pupils access reading books that celebrate diversity. Leaders need to ensure that there are appropriate systems to report and manage behaviour which staff apply consistently.
- Some curriculum time is not used effectively in the early years. As a result of this, children do not have opportunities to learn as much as they could. Leaders need to ensure that no time is wasted in the early years curriculum and that it provides a firm foundation for pupils' subsequent learning.
- Leaders' systems for quality assurance are not effective. Leaders do not rigorously check how well systems in the school are working, for example, to improve and manage behaviour. As a result, leaders, governors, and the trust do not know the effectiveness of different aspects of the school's work. This results in the right actions not being taken when needed and leaders not having sufficient oversight of what is working well. Leaders, governors, and the trust must review quality assurance systems to ensure they precisely identify what will make a positive difference. They must evaluate the effectiveness of the quality of education and how this ensures all pupils achieve well.
- Leaders are focusing on many different areas of the school's work. As a result, leaders, governors, and the trust have lost sight of what actions will make a positive and significant difference. Leaders have accepted too many different ideas about improving the curriculum without reflecting on what is precisely needed to provide a high-quality education.

As Regional Schools Commissioner, I need to be satisfied that the trust has capacity to deliver rapid and sustainable improvement at the academy. If I am not satisfied that this can be achieved, I will consider whether to terminate the funding agreement in order to transfer the academy to an alternative academy trust.

In making the decision on whether to terminate the funding agreement I will consider any written representations you wish to make in response to this Termination Warning Notice.

I would be grateful for the following evidence, which I will take into account when assessing whether the Academy is making sufficient improvements:

- the Post Inspection Action Plan
- Information on what action is being taken to support educational improvement at the academy and the timescales of this work
- any additional information you consider would be helpful.

Please provide me with any representations you wish to make by 12 August 2022.

I have also received representations from Paul Dunning, DDE. I note his concerns about the academy and his comments about the actions that are already being undertaken in order to address the issues. He has shared with us the strong SATs results for Middleton this year. I also note his comment that the Diocese wants the school to remain in a church trust and that St Benet's MAT is not suitable geographically.

I am copying this letter to Ofsted, Norfolk County Council, The Diocese of Norwich. A copy of this letter will also be published on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Duff

Regional Schools Commissioner
East of England

CC: Ofsted,

Dominic Herrington, National Schools Commissioner

Sara Tough, Director of Children's Services, Norfolk County Council

Paul Dunning: Director of Education for Diocese of Norwich

ⁱ Inserted by section 14 of the Education and Adoption Act 2016