



Department
for Education

Vicky Beer CBE
Regional Director for
North West
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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The Members and Trustees of South Pennine Academies
The Gateway Lowfields Close
Lowfields Business Park
Elland
HX5 9DX

2 February 2023

Dear Michael Kay

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of the South Pennine Academies in respect of Waterhead Academy.

In accordance with clauses 5.F to 5H of the mainstream SFA of the funding agreement for Waterhead Academy (“the Academy”) the Secretary of State may terminate the funding agreement if the Chief Inspector gives notice to the Academy Trust that special measures are required to be taken in relation to the Academy or the Academy requires significant improvement.

I received an Ofsted notification dated 9 January 2023 confirming that Waterhead 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. Of serious concern to me are Ofsted's conclusions that:

- Trustees, executive leaders and school leaders have overseen a decline in the quality of education that pupils receive at Waterhead Academy. Pupils have been failed for far too long. Trustees and executive leaders have not acted quickly enough to tackle the weaknesses in the quality of education. They lack ambition for pupils, and they have not held school leaders to account. Pupils, including those with SEND, have been let down and many underachieve.
- Some adults do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour are too low. Some pupils are exposed to homophobic and racist language. Behaviour on the corridors and

around the school site is unacceptable. Too many pupils truant from lessons regularly. Staff do not routinely challenge poor behaviour, because they lack confidence in the policy and practice of managing behaviour. Teachers' delivery of the curriculum is hampered by constant interruptions to lessons because of pupils' poor behaviour around the site.

- The curriculum is inadequate. It does not develop pupils' subject knowledge effectively, including basic literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum lacks ambition and it does not cover the breadth of the national curriculum. The delivery of the curriculum is ineffective.
- In some subjects, some teachers lack sufficient subject knowledge to deliver specialist subject content with confidence. In other subjects, the work that teachers give to pupils is not as demanding as it should be and fails to build on previous learning.
- Teachers do not routinely use assessment information effectively enough to check that pupils' learning is secure. This prevents pupils from learning effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff have the confidence to deliver the wider personal development curriculum as effectively as they should.

As Regional Director, 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 the trust wish to make in response to this Termination Warning Notice.

I would be grateful for the following evidence, which I will consider when assessing whether the trust is making sufficient improvements.

- **Leadership and governance:** Clear evidence that there is strong and stable leadership and effective governance in place at all levels to drive rapid and sustained school improvement with a culture of high expectations. Please include a digital copy of the action plan, details of the current leadership structure at Waterhead and details of new staff hired across the trust's secondary phase (including external support).
- **Attendance and behaviour:** Clear evidence of a plan and effective policies to be implemented that demonstrate improved behaviour across the school, leading to evidence of a reduction in instances of unacceptable behaviour and truancy.
- **Curriculum, teaching and assessment:** A plan must be in place and fully implemented to ensure that action is taken to fully address the concerns about curriculum design and delivery, ensuring it is broad and ambitious and builds on prior learning. This must include planning, delivery, and support for staff to enhance subject knowledge and use of assessment information, to ensure that pupils including those with SEND are fully supported to achieve well. Please provide details of ongoing work with the education exchange and how this is being implemented.

Please provide me with any representations the trust wish to make by 2 March 2023.

I am copying this letter to Ofsted and Oldham Council. A copy of this letter will also be published on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Beer', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

Vicky Beer CBE
Regional Director for North West

CC:

John Edwards, Director General, Regions Group, DfE

Gerard Jones, Managing Director of Children & Young People

Chris Russell, National director of education, Ofsted

Chris Jones, Director strategy and engagement, Ofsted

Carolan Goggin Regional Director for Yorkshire and Humber, Regions Group, DfE