



Department
for Education

Hannah Woodhouse
Regional Director for the South West

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The Members and Trustees of Beacon Education MAT LTD
Minehead Middle School
Ponsford Road
Minehead
Somerset
TA24 5RH

3 May 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of the Beacon Education MAT in respect of Minehead First School

In accordance with sections 2B and 2D of the Academies Act 2010¹, any funding agreement of an academy may be terminated by the Secretary of State where the academy is coasting as set out in the Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022, and the Secretary of State has notified the Academy Trust that the academy is coasting.

I notified the trust on 5 October 2022 that Minehead First School (“the Academy”) meets the legal definition of a school that is coasting (not making necessary improvements) as defined in the Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022. On 1 November 2022 I invited the trust’s representations in response to the notification letter, which the trust provided on 18 November 2022.

I wrote on 9 March 2023 to inform the trust that, after considering all of the information and evidence, I was not satisfied that the academy trust has the capacity or capability to deliver rapid and sustained improvements at the Academy and that I therefore intended to issue a Termination Warning Notice.

I understand that my team met with you and the CEO, REDACTED, in February to discuss concerns regarding the trust and to hear your plans for the future. I also understand that REDACTED is in regular contact with the CEO regarding the Termination Warning Notice process.

I need to be satisfied that the trust is taking action to raise standards at the

¹ Inserted by section 14 of the Education and Adoption Act 2016

Academy. In considering whether to take intervention action, I have taken into account all the available evidence, including the representations received from the trust. I have also applied the principles set out in the published document, [regional directors decision making: 2022](#) and considered the Academy's circumstances in line with the criteria set out in chapter 4 of the [schools causing concern guidance](#).

The Academy has been part of Beacon Education Trust (formerly West Somerset Academies Trust ("the Trust")) since May 2016. The Academy joined the Trust with a Good Ofsted judgement. In April 2019 the Academy was judged to be Inadequate by Ofsted. In July 2021, the Academy received a Requires Improvement judgement.

Areas for improvement identified in the 2021 report focused on the quality of education and early years provision:

- *There is variability in the quality of the curriculum in a few subjects. As a result, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, which still holds them back. Leaders should ensure that there is the same high-quality curriculum for pupils in all subjects.*
- *Curriculum plans are not complete in all subjects. Consequently, pupils do not always make links between subjects to deepen, or apply, their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is planned, organised and sequenced to enable pupils to be able to connect what they know in different areas of learning.*
- *Some aspects of the pre-school curriculum are underdeveloped. Therefore, children are not as well prepared for the start of school as they could be. Leaders should implement robust plans for nursery-aged children in all areas of learning.*

I acknowledge that there are also positive elements to this report, which highlights good behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management. However, I also take into account other recent Ofsted judgements across the trust, including an Inadequate judgement at Minehead Middle School and a Section 8 inspection of St Peter's Church of England First School which states that should a Section 5 inspection be carried out at this time, the result might not be Good or better. I also note that Danesfield Church of England Middle School, while not eligible for the new 'coasting' intervention process, now has two consecutive Requires Improvement judgements.

I also take into consideration the External Review of Governance recently completed by [REDACTED], National Leader of Governance. While I acknowledge positive aspects of this report, such as how the trust board is taking steps to embed improvements, I must also note that it highlights concerns about compliance across the trust, and trustees' effectiveness at holding the CEO to account for performance across the trust.

I understand this Termination Warning Notice will come as a disappointment to the Trust as you embed recent changes across schools, governance and leadership. As Regional Director, I need to be satisfied that the Trust has the capacity to deliver rapid and sustained improvement at the Academy.

The following actions (“the Specified Actions”) must be taken by the stated timescales or the Secretary of State may issue a notice terminating the Academy’s funding agreement pursuant to clause 5.B.1.

- Progress bespoke school improvement support, funded by the department’s Trust and school improvement (TSI) offer and delivered by a school improvement partner, identified by the Department, that has a track record in delivering improvements in schools. As steps have already been made to establish this support from the Bath and Wells Diocesan Multi Academy Trust, we would expect this partnership to continue. Arrangements for the support to be in place within six weeks of the date of this letter.
- Work with the identified school improvement partner to review the Minehead First School development plan for any areas of weakness and to identify additional measures that could be put in place with a specific focus on driving rapid improvement in areas highlighted in the Academy’s recent Ofsted report. Revised and quality assured improvement plan in place and shared with my team by the end of the summer term. The plan and milestones will be subject to agreement by the Department, and progress against the plan must be shared with me on a termly basis. The plan should highlight how the trust will ensure that 2023 phonics and KS1 outcomes for pupils at the Academy will be in line with, or above, the national average.
- Share with the department your action plan and milestones in relation to your recent External Review of Governance. This should be shared with me by 5 June 2023 and progress should be shared on a half-termly basis.
- The Trust must set out its plan and timeline for appointing a permanent headteacher at the Academy and implement the plan. This plan must demonstrate the ability to effect a marked improvement in leadership capacity and track record at both school and trust level. Please share this by 5 June 2023.

I will monitor progress made towards meeting the Specified Actions. This will be through board reports, school improvement progress reports and termly meetings arranged with my office in addition to any Ofsted monitoring reports. If the trust fails to meet any of the above Specified Actions by the specified dates, I will consider whether to terminate the funding agreement in order to transfer the Academy to an alternative trust.

I reserve the right to amend this Termination Warning Notice to specify further action which the trust must take, and the date by which it must be completed.

The trust must respond to this Termination Warning Notice by 25 May 2023, making any representations the trust wishes to make in response to this

Termination Warning Notice and the above Specified Actions, or providing confirmation that the trust intends to comply with the above Specified Actions by the specified dates.

If the trust fails to respond to this Termination Warning Notice by 25 May 2023, I may issue a notice terminating the Academy's funding agreement.

I am copying this letter to [REDACTED], South West Ofsted Regional Director, and to [REDACTED], Director of Children's Services, Somerset County Council. A copy of this letter will also be published on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely

Hannah Woodhouse
Regional Director for the South West

CC: [REDACTED], Ofsted
[REDACTED], Somerset County Council