



Department
for Education

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Regional Director for the South West
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The Members and Trustees of the Richard Huish Trust
Richard Huish College
South Road
Taunton
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3 May 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of the Richard Huish Trust in respect of The Taunton Academy

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 29 November 2022 that The Taunton Academy (“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. I invited the trust’s representations in response to the notification letter, which the trust provided on 19 December 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 have met with the CEO, [REDACTED], and the CFO, [REDACTED], recently to discuss the Termination Warning Notice process and next steps.

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

I need to be satisfied that the trust is taking action to raise standards at the 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 Richard Huish Trust since 2015. The Academy joined the Trust with a Requires Improvement judgement. In January 2017 the Academy was judged to be Inadequate by Ofsted. In September 2018, the Academy received a Requires Improvement judgement and subsequently a further Requires Improvement judgement in September 2022.

Areas for improvement identified in the 2022 report focused on the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, and leadership and management:

- In some subjects, leaders have not considered the content and sequencing of the curriculum deeply enough. Teachers are not clear about what knowledge pupils need to take the next step in learning. This means that pupils' learning is hindered. Leaders should support teachers and subject leaders to have a secure understanding of the key concepts and knowledge they want pupils to learn.
- Some pupils do not have the opportunity to study a full and broad curriculum. Consequently, they may miss out on learning in particular areas, such as modern foreign languages. Leaders need to ensure that there is an ambitious and high quality curriculum for all pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently use the information contained in the plans for pupils with SEND to provide appropriate levels of support. This hampers their learning. Leaders need to ensure that teachers use the information they receive to plan and deliver an effective curriculum for pupils with SEND in all subjects.
- There is a range of literacy intervention programmes to support pupils. However, pupils who are in the early stages of reading do not secure their knowledge of phonics. As a result, these pupils do not have the reading knowledge to access the curriculum. Leaders need to make sure there is a comprehensive programme to support pupils who are in the early stages of reading.
- Too many pupils are absent during lesson time. As a result, these pupils are not learning the full intended curriculum effectively. Leaders need to ensure that the rate of pupils' attendance at lessons increases.

I acknowledge that there are also positive elements to this report, including pastoral support, the extra curricula offer, expectations around behaviour, and the development of an ambitious curriculum. 'Personal development' is judged to be Good. However, I also take note that in the 2018 Requires Improvement report, the Academy was judged to be 'Good' in Effectiveness of leadership and management, which has since declined, and Personal development, behaviour and welfare, with 'Behaviour and attitudes' now Requires Improvement in the 2022 report.

I am pleased that your relationship with the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, brokered and funded via the department's Trust and School Improvement offer, has been productive and is having a positive impact on the Academy.

However, given the stagnation of Ofsted judgements and the still below average outcomes for pupils at the Academy, I am not yet fully assured that the Trust's support for The Taunton Academy will bring about necessary and sustained improvements.

I understand this Termination Warning Notice will come as a disappointment to the Trust. 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 sections 2B and 2D of the Academies Act 2010.

- Provide the department with an improvement plan that addresses the outstanding concerns, in particular:
 - (i) Ensuring the curriculum is fully implemented, is broad and ambitious. It must identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and ensure that these are addressed.
 - (ii) Ensuring leaders are supporting teachers and subject leaders in having a secure understanding of key concepts and knowledge that they want pupils to learn.
 - (iii) Ensuring that there are clear and robust policies in place to raise standards of behaviour, leading to reduced rates of absence, and evidence of these policies having a positive impact.
- The plan must be shared with the department by 5 June 2023, and its contents must be agreed with the department. The plan should be implemented immediately after approval and progress against milestones and the impact of actions are to be reviewed termly with Regions Group at dates to be set in due course. The first of these review points will be 10 July 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 Regional Director, Ofsted, [REDACTED], Director of Children's Services, Somerset County Council, and [REDACTED], Director of Education, Diocese of Bath and Wells. 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
[REDACTED], Diocese of Bath and Wells