



Department
for Education

Department for Education
Eastbrook
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
CB2 8DR

Email: RG.EOE@education.gov.uk

Professor Julius Weinberg
Chair of Trustees
Ormiston Academies Trust
1 Victoria Square
Birmingham
B1 1BD

08 March 2023

Dear Professor Weinberg,

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of Ormiston Academies Trust in respect of Ormiston Denes Academy.

In accordance with clauses 5.B to 5.E of the funding agreement for Ormiston Denes Academy (“the Academy”) the Secretary of State may terminate the funding agreement if the Academy is coasting as set out in the Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022, provided that the Secretary of State has notified the Academy Trust that the Academy is coasting.

I notified the trust on 7 October 2022 that 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 12 October 2022. I invited the trust’s representations in response to the notification letter. The trust provided its representations on 10 November 2022.

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](#).

Having considered all the information and evidence, including the trust’s representations, I am not satisfied that the trust currently has the capacity or capability to deliver sustained improvements at the Academy. For the reasons set out below, I am issuing a Termination Warning Notice to the trust in respect of the Academy. I need to be satisfied that the trust is taking action to address the outstanding concerns, and the purpose of this Termination Warning Notice is to set out the actions that I expect the trust to comply with in order to raise standards at the Academy.

The Academy has been part of Ormiston Academies Trust (“the trust”) since 2013 and has been judged by Ofsted on four separate occasions to be no better than requires improvement. Under the trust’s leadership, the Academy has once been judged inadequate.

There are some positive comments in the Ofsted inspection report of July 2022. For instance, the report reflected that *“Leaders are developing a broad and ambitious curriculum so that pupils have wider choices for their future careers”* and that *“Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading”*, and *“Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are receiving a better deal than was previously the case”*. However, the report also highlights that:

- *“In a few subjects, leaders have not thought carefully about the key knowledge pupils need to learn and in which order. This means that some pupils find it harder to complete complex tasks and make connections in their learning. Leaders should ensure that they clearly design the curriculum in every subject to identify the key concepts and knowledge that pupils should learn. This is so pupils gain increasing subject knowledge, learn more and undertake more difficult tasks”*.
- *“Leaders are not clear in their expectations of how they want teachers to check pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding. This means that some teachers do not know well enough where pupils have gaps in their learning. Leaders need to clarify what they expect teachers to do, ensuring the checks teachers make are used to inform lesson planning and delivery so pupils achieve well”*.
- *“The rate of suspensions is too high. Some teachers are not making reasonable adjustments for pupils with complex behavioural needs and are not using the warning system as outlined in the school’s behaviour policy. This means that pupils have time out of lessons and are not progressing through the curriculum as well as they might. Leaders need to ensure that staff implement the behaviour policy as intended and staff are well supported to cater for pupils with complex behavioural needs so they thrive”*.
- *“Some staff are not promoting the school’s values sufficiently or consistently well. Some staff do not consistently uphold the respectful culture that leaders are trying to create. This results in pupils believing there is acceptance of unkind comments. Leaders should ensure that staff are consistent in their expectations of pupils so pupils know clearly what it means to be respectful”*.

I am not assured by the information provided by the trust in its representations and continue to be concerned that the necessary improvements will not be achieved at pace or to the level required.

I note in the trust’s representations that you have outlined some priority areas in which you are seeking to improve leadership and the quality of education at the Academy. I have also considered that you state you have:

- addressed leadership within the Academy, which has addressed the issue identified by the Ofsted inspectors. The current Principal is respected and continues to lead the Academy effectively. The new Principal and her team, supported by OAT's education director, is well placed to continue to progress the Academy at pace.
- designated an experienced OAT education director to work with the Academy leadership team.
- deployed a team of subject lead practitioners to support curriculum development and subject specific pedagogy.

Notwithstanding the above actions, I am not convinced that these actions are sufficient to address the long-standing issues – *leadership and management* has not been judged good by Ofsted in the four full inspections that have occurred at the Academy since it joined the trust.

Whilst there are some positive comments within the Ofsted report of July 2022 the academy's history of underperformance means I am not fully confident that improvements will be embedded or sustained, nor will it have the significant impact on pupil outcomes that is required. I am sure that, like me, the trust board is concerned about the pace of progress in the Academy and is keen to ensure that it receives all the support it needs to achieve a good judgement at the next Ofsted inspection and significantly improved pupil outcomes.

Given these concerns, I require the trust to take the following actions ("the Specified Actions"), which I consider will help it secure the rapid and sustained improvements that are required at the Academy. 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 5E.

- Accept bespoke school improvement support, funded by the department's trust and school improvement (TSI) offer, and delivered by a school improvement partner (identified by me) that has a track record in delivering improvements in schools and for pupils with a similar context. Arrangements for the support to be in place within 6 weeks of the date of this letter.
- Work with the school improvement partner to review the Ormiston Denes Academy 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 pupil outcomes. Revised and quality assured improvement plan in place and shared with my team by the end of June 2023. The plan and milestones will be subject to agreement by the department.
- Implement the agreed plan and provide termly updates to my team on progress against the action plan and impact of those actions in the Academy with the first update submitted by the end of this academic year.

I will monitor progress made towards meeting the Specified Actions. If the trust fails to meet any of the above Specified Actions by the specified date, I will consider whether to terminate the funding agreement in order to transfer the Academy to an alternative trust.

I hope that the trust will continue to work positively with the department in taking forward the above Specified Actions in respect of the Academy. 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 29 March 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 29 March 2023, I may issue a notice terminating the Academy's funding agreement.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Duff
Regional Director
East of England, Regions Group

CC: Ofsted, Suffolk County Council