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Mrs Usma Saeed  
Chair of Trustees  
Fir Vale School  
Owler Lane  
Sheffield  
S4 8GB

7 July 2023

Dear Mrs Saeed

**Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of Fir Vale School Academy Trust in respect of Fir Vale School**

Carolán Goggin, Interim Regional Director, notified the trust on 11 January 2023 that Fir Vale School (“the Academy”) is not making necessary improvements.<sup>1</sup> On 9 February 2023 I invited the trust’s representations in response to the notification letter, which the trust provided. I have 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](#).

I refer to my letter of 26 May 2023. As stated in that letter, as Regional Director I must be confident, based on the information available and evidence provided, that the trust can deliver rapid and sustained improvements at the Academy. Currently, I am not satisfied this is the case. I acknowledged, however, that the trust is currently engaging with the department on options to transfer the Academy to a strong trust, appreciating the benefits that the transfer will bring. I also stated that, although you have agreed to work with the department on a transfer, I intend to issue a Termination Warning Notice to reflect the fact that the Academy remains subject to this intervention power, and the trust remains accountable for the outcomes of the Academy and its pupils until the transfer takes place.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “not making necessary improvements” is used in the Schools Causing Concern guidance (October 2022 update). A reference in that guidance, and in this letter, to schools “not making necessary improvements” should be read as meaning that such schools meet the statutory definition of ‘coasting’, contained in the Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022

In accordance with sections 2B and 2D of the Academies Act 2010<sup>2</sup>, any funding agreement of an academy may be terminated by the Secretary of State where paragraphs (2), (3), (4) or (5) of regulation 4 of the Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022 applies to the academy and the Secretary of State has notified the Academy Trust.

Fir Vale School converted to academy status in November 2012. At the time of conversion, the school was judged outstanding by Ofsted. Since conversion, four full Ofsted inspections have occurred – three of those inspections have resulted in overall requires improvement judgements, including the two most recent inspections on 6 March 2019 and 18 October 2022.

The October 2022 Ofsted inspection shows some improvement compared to the inspection of March 2019 and that *“leaders have improved several aspects of the school”*. However, the report also identified areas for improvement, particularly in relation to the quality of education. The report stated that:

- *“For some pupils, the curriculum lacks sufficient breadth and depth”*.
- *“There is variability in how well the curriculum is designed and implemented between subjects”*.
- *“Teachers do not adapt the curriculum consistently well for pupils with SEND”. “As a result, some pupils with SEND have gaps in their knowledge”*.

I acknowledge the history and previous challenges at the academy, that you detail in your representations, and the actions undertaken by the trust since then to improve the personal development offer and behaviour at the school. These actions are praised in the October 2022 Ofsted report: *“the conduct of pupils is markedly better than it was in the past. Pupils benefit from a strong personal development offer”*. However, from the information available and from your representations, I am not yet assured that the changes required to improve the quality of education and outcomes for pupils will be achieved and/or delivered at the necessary pace.

Given the concerns outlines in this letter, I require the trust to take the specified actions below. 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:

- Enter into a partnership with a school improvement partner. The trust should consider a school improvement partner proposed by me and my team. Such arrangements must be entered into within **6 weeks** from issue of this TWN and my team must be informed when this arrangement is confirmed.
- Work closely with the school improvement partner to produce an improvement plan focussing on the areas for development identified by Ofsted and also any additional measures that the school improvement

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<sup>2</sup> Inserted by section 14 of the Education and Adoption Act 2016

partner may consider necessary. **Please provide me with this information by 30 November 2023.**

- Implement the agreed improvement plan and provide me with termly updates on the agreed actions and milestones. **The first meeting being held before 31 December 2023.**

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 dates, I will consider whether to terminate the Academy's 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 **8 September 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 8 September 2023, I may issue a notice terminating the Academy's funding agreement.

Once again, I appreciate the trust's willingness to work with the department to secure the best outcomes for children at the Academy.

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

Yours sincerely

**Alison Wilson OBE**  
**Regional Director for Yorkshire and the Humber**

CC:

Ofsted

Meredith Dixon-Teasdale, Strategic Director of Children's Services, Sheffield City Council

Rachel Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Fir Vale School Academy Trust