



Department for Education

Regional Director for North West
Piccadilly Gate
Manchester
M1 2WD

Mr Paul Jones
Chair of Trustees
Great Academies Education Trust
249 Cavendish Street
Ashton-Under-Lyne
OL6 7AT

5 September 2023

Dear Mr Jones

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of the Great Academies Education Trust in respect of Great Academy Ashton

I notified the trust on 12 May 2023 that the Great Academy Ashton (“the Academy”) is not making necessary improvements.¹ On 12 May 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 21 July 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 therefore intended to issue a Termination Warning Notice.

In accordance with sections 2B and 2D of the Academies Act 2010², 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.

I recognise the positive way in which the trust has engaged with my team, but I need to be satisfied that the trust is putting in place support, which will raise standards at the Academy.

The Academy has been part of Great Academies Education Trust since 2008. At its first three inspections the Academy was rated satisfactory/requires improvement overall by Ofsted, but declined to Inadequate by February 2017, before moving to Requires Improvement in June

¹ 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 regulation 4 of the Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022.

² Inserted by section 14 of the Education and Adoption Act 2016

2019 and Requires Improvement in March 2023. The trust has had more than fourteen years of leadership at the school to secure an improved grading of Good at the Academy.

The last Ofsted inspection in March 2023 judged the school to be Requires Improvement. The Ofsted report published following the inspection highlighted that:

- There is inconsistency in how middle leaders have set out how the curriculum should be implemented. As a result, teachers do not always plan activities that are consistently matched well to subject content, so pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This variation is not systematically addressed by middle leaders. Senior leaders and the trust must ensure and assure themselves that middle leaders can accurately evaluate the quality of provision, so it continues to improve.
- Some teachers do not routinely check what all pupils know and remember. This means that some gaps in learning are not identified as quickly as they could be. Leaders should ensure that assessment strategies are used effectively in lessons so that pupils are able to learn and move through the curriculum securely.
- Leaders do not systematically identify weaker readers in Year 11. This means that some pupils do not receive the additional reading support that they need to catch up with their peers. Leaders should ensure that teachers identify pupils in Year 11 who are falling behind and help them to read fluently, accurately and with good comprehension.
- Behaviour systems are not consistently applied by some staff. Some pupils do not follow the school rules and cause disruption as a result. Leaders should support staff at all levels to consistently apply the behaviour policy.

For this reason, 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.

- Provide an improvement plan that addresses the following areas:
 - (i) ensuring the curriculum development is fully implemented, 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 are fully supported to achieve well; and
 - (ii) ensuring the progress pupils make improves, leading to clear evidence of raised and sustained progress and attainment performance for pupils; and
 - (iii) ensuring there are clear and robust policies and process in place to raise standards of behaviour; and
 - (iv) ensuring strategies to identify and improve weaker readers are fully implemented to improve access to the curriculum.

Ensure that a fully reviewed and quality assured development plan is in place and shared with my team by **26 September 2023**. The department will need sight of the plan and milestones to ensure there are clear deadlines and measurable outcomes, which can be tracked effectively.

- 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. The first update to be submitted by the **20 October 2023** and thereafter on or before the last day of each term, until further notice.
- Accept bespoke school improvement support, funded by the department’s trust and school improvement and Priority Education Investment Area targeted offer, and

delivered by a school improvement partner, identified by the Department, that has a track record in delivering improvement. Arrangements for the support to be in place on or before **26 September 2023**.

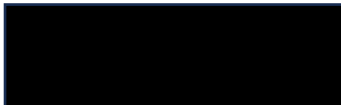
I will monitor progress made towards meeting the Specified Actions. If the trust fails to meet any of the above Specified Actions by the specified date, I will consider whether to terminate the funding agreement in order to transfer the Academy to an alternative trust.

The trust must respond to this Termination Warning Notice by **26 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 **26 September 2023**, I may issue a notice terminating the Academy's funding agreement.

I am copying this letter to Ofsted, and to Alison Stathers-Tracey at Tameside Council. A copy of this letter will also be published on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Vicky Beer CBE.

Vicky Beer CBE
Regional Director for North West Region

Cc: Andrew Cook, Regional Director North West and West Midlands, Ofsted
Cc: Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director of Children's Services, Tameside Council