



Department
for Education

Hannah Woodhouse
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The Members and Trustees of Ambitions Academies Trust
Ambitions Academies Trust
Evering Avenue
Poole
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4 July 2023

Dear Ms Sard,

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of the Ambitions Academies Trust in respect of Oak Academy.

I notified the trust on 7 October 2022 that Oak Academy (“the Academy”) is not making necessary improvements.¹ On 2 March 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 16 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 therefore intended to issue a Termination Warning Notice.

In accordance with clauses 5.B to 5.E of the funding agreement for Oak Academy, the Secretary of State may terminate the funding agreement 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.

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.

I understand that both my Deputy Director and delivery team have met with the trust CEO, Sian Thomas, to discuss the Termination Warning Notice process and next steps.

The Academy has been part of Ambitions Academies Trust since 2017. The Academy joined the trust with a Requires Improvement judgement from March 2016. In November 2018 the Academy was judged Requires Improvement. In May 2022 the Academy received a further Requires Improvement judgement.

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

- *The expectations for pupils' conduct and attitude to learning are not always clear. As a result, some pupils choose not to participate in lessons or to disrupt the learning of others. Leaders should ensure that all staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and fairly.*
- *Older pupils are not able to explain what they know and remember as well as pupils in the younger years. They have gaps in their knowledge and some then find it difficult to apply what they know. Teachers should ensure that they regularly check what pupils have learned and make adaptations to the curriculum where necessary.*
- *Leaders do not evaluate the impact of their actions to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance carefully enough. Therefore, leaders are not clear about what is working well and what is not. Leaders should evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies in a timely manner to help inform future decisions.*

I do acknowledge that there are also some positive elements to this report, which highlights a broad curriculum for all pupils, positive personal development for pupils, a good careers programme, and staff being well supported with their workload. 'Personal development' was judged to be Good. However, I also take note that in the 2018 Ofsted judgement the Academy was judged to be Good in 'Effectiveness of leadership and management', but that this declined to Requires Improvement in the 2022 Ofsted judgement.

I am pleased to hear about your collaboration with external stakeholders such as the Jurassic Maths Hub, and your engagement with United Learning Trust to understand the work they do to support their schools with similar cohorts.

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

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 clauses 5.B to 5.E.

- Agree to enter a partnership with a school improvement partner through the department's 'Trust and School Improvement' (TSI) offer. The school improvement partner will have a strong track record in delivering school improvement and will be identified by me and my team. This arrangement should be entered into by Friday 29 September 2023, and you should inform my team when this is confirmed.
- Work with the identified school improvement partner to review the latest Oak Academy 'Raising Achievement Plan' for A) any areas of weakness, and B) to identify additional measures that could be put in place with a specific focus on: driving rapid improvement in KS4 performance outcomes; attendance; and those areas highlighted in the Academy's May 2022 Ofsted report as outlined above. A revised and externally quality assured plan must be in place and shared with my team by Friday 15 December 2023. The plan and milestones will be subject to agreement by the department, and progress against the plan must be shared on a termly basis with me and my team.
- Commission an external review of the trust's governance arrangements to identify any gaps and recommendations for changes that will lead to improvements at Oak Academy. My team and I will support you to identify an experienced NLG to undertake this review. The scope of the review will be shared with me and my team for agreement by Friday 29 September 2023. The trust must also share the findings of the review and submit the trust's subsequent action plan in response to the review's recommendations by Friday 15 December 2023. The plan and milestones will be subject to agreement by the department, and progress against the plan must be shared on a termly basis with me, my team, and the NLG who undertook the review.

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 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 Friday 21 July 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 Friday 21 July 2023, I may issue a notice terminating the Academy's funding agreement.

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

Yours sincerely



Hannah Woodhouse
Regional Director, South West Regions Group

CC: SCP LA