



Department
for Education

Department for Education

Eastbrook
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
CB2 8DR
[REDACTED]

The Members and Trustees of Mount Grace Academy Trust
Potters Bar
Hertfordshire
EN6 1EZ

(Sent via email to: [REDACTED])

16 October 2023

Dear [REDACTED], Chair of Trustees,

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of Mount Grace School

I notified the trust on 5 October 2022 that the Mount Grace School is not making necessary improvements¹. On 31 January I invited the trust's representations in response to the notification letter. 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 30th March. 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.

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 the Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022

In accordance with sections 2B and 2D of the Academies Act 2010, 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.

In taking my decision I have considered that Mount Grace has been operating as a single academy trust since 1 August 2011. During that time Ofsted have carried out five full inspections and three monitoring visits. Since its conversion to academy status, the school has not been able to achieve an inspection outcome better than Requires Improvement. I therefore consider the school would benefit from the support and intervention that membership of a multi academy trust would bring.

I recognise the positive way in which the trust is engaging with my team in relation to the future of the Mount Grace Academy Trust and we will continue to work together on this.

In taking my decision I have considered the following concerns highlighted by Ofsted in its December 2022 inspection outcomes:

- Leaders have not ensured that teachers use assessment consistently well to check what pupils know or can do. As a result, some pupils struggle with learning during lessons and do not get the support they need from teachers to make progress. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers use assessment effectively to check what pupils know, and then provide the appropriate support where there are gaps in pupils' understanding or knowledge.
- Leaders have ensured that the needs of pupils with SEND are effectively identified. Where strategies have been identified to support these needs, leaders have not ensured that teachers adopt these consistently well in lessons. As a result, pupils with SEND get an inconsistent level of support from teachers. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers consistently adopt the identified strategies to support pupils with SEND.
- Governors have not ensured that a consultation on the school's RSE policy has taken place or that an up-to-date policy is in place. As a result, the school has not met one of its statutory duties. Governors need to ensure that robust quality assurance processes are in place, so all statutory duties are met.

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:

- By 30 November, provide me with the school improvement plan for Mount Grace academy for the academic year 2023/24. The improvement plan with milestones will be subject to agreement by the Department. The plan should allow me to identify the steps being taken to address the areas of concern identified by Ofsted, highlighted above, and to assess the extent of progress addressing those issues since the last inspection.

- Implement the agreed plan and provide termly updates on the actions and milestones within the plan (or other information as requested) and where there are delays or risks how these are being addressed.
- Accept bespoke school improvement support, funded by the Department's Trust and School Improvement (TSI) offer, and delivered by a school improvement partner (approved by me) that has a track record in delivering improvement.
- Continue to work closely with the school improvement partner to support improvement at the academy. Implement actions identified through the partnership and provide me with termly updates on progress.

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 6 November, 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 6 November, I may issue a notice terminating the Academy's funding agreement.

I am copying this letter to Ofsted and to Hertfordshire local authority. 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

██████████, Executive Director of Children's Services, Hertfordshire LA