



Department
for Education

Department for Education

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The Members and Trustees of
The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust

Letter by email
caroline.haynes@dcvst.org

16 January 2024

Dear Caroline Haynes

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust in respect of Mistley Norman Church of England Primary School

I notified the trust on 5 October 2022 that the Mistley Norman Church of England Primary School (“the Academy”) is not making necessary improvements.¹ On 31 January 2023 I invited the trust’s representations in response to the notification letter, which the trust provided on 6 February 2023. 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](#).

As stated in my letters, 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.

The school has been with The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust since September 2016. It has been inspected by Ofsted twice while with the trust, in January 2018 and November 2021. Both these inspections resulted in requires

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

improvement judgments. The November 2021 inspection recognised the “considerable turbulence in leadership and staff since the previous inspection” with a “new and effective senior leadership team now in place.”

At the most recent inspection in November 2021 Ofsted identified the following weaknesses.

- Some curriculum plans are not well designed and sequenced... Leaders should ensure that curriculum leaders have the time, knowledge and expertise they need, and that all curriculum subjects are carefully designed and implemented effectively.
- [Governors] are not as robust in checking the quality of education in other subjects. Governors need to check that leaders implement a curriculum that supports pupils to learn well across the full range of subjects.

Improvements in pupil outcomes have been slow and were significantly below the local and national averages in the period prior to the Pandemic. We therefore have concerns about the ability of the trust to make the rapid and sustained improvements that are required.

Your representations submitted in February 2023 reflected on the actions that the trust have taken to date; putting together a targeted plan of support, replacing the local governance arrangements with a new Trust Intervention Board, centralising financial decision making, securing permanent leadership at the school. However, the representations were not comprehensive and did not provide extensive evidence on the areas of targeted support. As such I was not provided with sufficient confidence that the school is securely Good.

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.

- Must put in place a school improvement strategy and set this out in a school improvement action plan (the ‘Plan’). The Plan should address curriculum planning and governor capacity and oversight, as well as demonstrating that there is capacity within the trust to drive forward improvement in the Academy. Please provide your Plan by Friday 9 February. The Plan and milestones for compliance will be subject to agreement by the department.
- Implement the agreed Plan and provide termly updates to my team on the progress against the actions and the impact of those actions in the Academy. Where there are delays or risks, please provide details how these are being addressed. Please provide the first update on Thursday 28 March and thereafter on or before the last day of each term until I confirm that no further updates are required.
- Along with termly updates, my team will hold termly progress meetings with

you to discuss this. **Please email rg.eoe@education.gov.uk within 10 days of this letter to arrange the first meeting.**

We are mindful of creating unnecessary pressures on school leaders and staff, and as such we would ask the trust to ensure that appropriate provision is in place to support the school workforce. We also ask the trust not to create specific documents for the purpose of the termly updates, but to share any existing documents which provide evidence of the progress made against the actions in the Plan and the impact of those actions in the Academy. We may request additional information from the trust if the evidence provided by way of existing documents is incomplete and where this would be reasonably expected as part of normal high quality trust processes.

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 9 February 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 9 February, I may issue a notice terminating the Academy's funding agreement.

I am copying this letter to Ofsted, and to Helen Lincoln and Carrie Prior. A copy of this letter will also be published on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Duff
Regional Director for East of England

CC: Ofsted, Helen Lincoln, Executive Director for Children, Families & Education at Essex County Council, Carrie Prior, Director of Education at the Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Education