



Department
for Education

Dame Kate Dethridge
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The Members and Trustees of The Woodland Academy Trust

The Woodland Academy Trust

Wheelock Close

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By email: <redacted>

20 February 2024

Dear <redacted>

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of The Woodland Academy Trust in respect of Knockhall Primary School

I notified the trust on 28 September 2023 that Knockhall Primary School (“the Academy”) is not making necessary improvements¹ and invited the trust’s representations in response to the notification letter, which the trust provided on 16 October 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 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 and I am therefore issuing a Termination Warning Notice.

In accordance with clauses 5.B to 5.E of the funding agreement for Knockhall Primary School, 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

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.

State has notified the Academy Trust.

After assessing the representations that you submitted on 16 October 2023, I am not confident that The Woodland Trust can deliver rapid and sustained improvements at the academy.

Knockhall Primary School has been in The Woodland Trust since January 2017. It was inspected by Ofsted in September 2019 and June 2023, and on both occasions it was graded as Requires Improvement. A number of issues were common to both reports, namely the teaching of reading, curriculum planning, and provision for students with SEND, bringing into question the trust's capacity to drive improvement.

Ofsted said in its June 2023 report:

In some subjects, the curriculum does not have a sufficiently detailed sequence Inspection report: Knockhall Primary School 20 and 21 June 2023 4 or clearly defined end points. As a result, teachers do not set tasks that enable pupils to build cumulatively sufficient knowledge. Leaders must ensure that the knowledge that pupils need is carefully sequenced and mapped out clearly across all year groups.

Teachers do not consistently check whether pupils have understood the work set, either in lessons or in reviewing work. As a result, pupils can develop misconceptions or lack precision in the work that they produce. Leaders must make sure that all staff are trained to assess pupils' understanding and to adapt their teaching accordingly.

In subjects where the curriculum is not as securely planned, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to explore difficult concepts. As a result, some pupils do not develop a deep understanding in their thinking. Leaders must ensure that in all subjects, teachers ensure that pupils encounter appropriately challenging knowledge and concepts.

Leaders have not made sure that weaker readers have had consistent and frequent support. As a result, too many of these pupils do not close the gaps in their reading. Leaders must make sure that support for weaker readers is an absolute priority and that it is delivered to a high standard.

The attendance of pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged is too low, and too many of these pupils are persistently absent from school. As a result, they are missing out on critical learning, and many find it hard to keep up when they are back in school. Leaders must ensure that the attendance of these pupils improves and that persistent absenteeism is tackled effectively.

For this reason, I require the trust to take the actions specified 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 clause 5.E of the school’s Supplementary Funding Agreement.

- The Woodland Trust must put in place a school improvement strategy and set this out in a school improvement action plan (the ‘Plan’). The Plan should address the issues identified by Ofsted with the curriculum, teachers’ assessment and monitoring of pupils’ progress, opportunities for pupils to explore difficult concepts, support for those pupils who are weaker readers, how you will improve the attendance of pupils with SEND or those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and demonstrate that there is capacity within the trust to drive forward improvement in the Academy. Please provide your Plan by Friday 22 March 2024. The Plan and milestones for compliance will be subject to agreement by the department.
- Implement the agreed Plan and provide half-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 Friday 17 May 2024 and thereafter on or before the last day before each half-term until I confirm that no further updates are required.

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 half-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 Thursday 14 March 2024, 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 Thursday 14 March 2024, I may issue a notice terminating the Academy’s funding agreement.

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

Yours sincerely,

<redacted>

**Dame Kate Dethridge
Regional Director, South East Regions Group**

CC: Ofsted, Kent County Council.