



Department
for Education

Regional Director's Office

Dame Kate Dethridge
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The Members and Trustees of Anthem Schools Trust
Anthem Schools Trust
8-10 Grosvenor Gardens
Victoria
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Sent by email to: [REDACTED]

04 February 2025

Dear Mr Bhutani,

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of the Anthem Schools Trust in respect of Oakbank School

In accordance with sections 2A and 2D of the Academies Act 2010ⁱ any funding agreement of an academy may be terminated by the Secretary of State where special measures are required to be taken in relation to the academy or the academy requires significant improvement and the Chief Inspector of Ofsted has given notice of that under section 13(3)(a) of the Education Act 2005.

I received an Ofsted notification dated 13 January 2025 confirming that Oakbank School was judged to require special measures. For the reasons set out below, I now consider it necessary to issue this Termination Warning Notice.

The Ofsted report of November 2024 highlighted the following areas for improvement:

- The trust has not been successful in mitigating the negative impact of turbulence in staff. They have been too slow to identify and rectify weaknesses in pupils' education, behaviour, personal development and safeguarding. This means that pupils continue to receive an unacceptable standard of education and they are not suitably safeguarded. The trust must ensure that they take effective action to tackle the shortcomings at the school.

- The school does not consistently follow its own procedures to keep pupils safe from harm. This includes making timely referrals to relevant agencies when there are significant safeguarding concerns. The school must ensure that everyone understands, and follows, the agreed safeguarding processes consistently so that pupils are protected from harm.
- The school does not ensure that the expectations of pupils' behaviour are consistently high. In many lessons, disruption leads to disorderly classrooms. This negatively affects pupils' learning. Pupils do not apply themselves fully or show the same levels of respect to all pupils or all of their teachers. The school must ensure that staff are suitably equipped to follow the behaviour systems consistently well so that incidents of poor behaviour reduce, and pupils have the chance to learn.
- Teaching is not adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND effectively enough. This means that pupils with SEND are not supported to build their knowledge and skills consistently well. This accounts for their poor achievement. The school should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and expertise that they need to help them meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- The curriculum does not include RE and computer science for all pupils. As a result, many pupils do not develop their understanding of different beliefs and values. They do not develop the computational thinking skills required for the digital age. The school must ensure that it develops and teaches a suitable curriculum in RE and computer science to all pupils.
- The curriculum is poorly implemented. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding or address misconceptions. As a result, many pupils have gaps in their knowledge. They do not achieve as well as they should. The school must ensure that teachers have suitable expertise to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.
- The PHSE curriculum is not delivered well. Staff have varying levels of confidence and expertise to teach some topics in the programme. Pupils' poor behaviour often means that they do not learn essential knowledge. As a result, they are ill-prepared for life in modern Britain. The school must ensure that the PHSE programme is taught consistently well so that pupils learn all that they need to know in readiness for their next steps.
- Turbulence in staffing, including in leadership and management, have impacted on the workload and well-being of senior leaders, teaching and support staff. It also means that the capacity to improve the school is weak. The trust must ensure that it builds capacity so that weaknesses are tackled firmly. It should also take timely action to consider the workload and well-being of leaders and staff.

The same Ofsted report also included the following concern:

- The board of trustees has failed in their statutory duty to keep pupils safe. The school and those responsible for governance have not done enough to ensure that pupils behave well and receive an acceptable standard of education.

Oakbank School has been part of the Anthem Schools Trust since it opened in September 2012. In 2014, the school received its first "Requires Improvement" judgement. Despite improving to a "Good" rating in June 2016, the school's Ofsted judgements have since begun to decline. By January 2020, it was again rated as "Requires Improvement," with specific ratings of "Requires Improvement" for the quality of education, "Good" for behaviour and attitudes, "Good" for personal development, and "Good" for leadership and management. In November 2023, the school was once more judged as "Requires Improvement," with a decline in some sub-judgements: "Requires Improvement" for the quality of education, "Good" for behaviour and attitudes, "Good" for personal development, and "Requires Improvement" for leadership and management. Ofsted judged that the school requires special measures and that each key judgement area was rated 'inadequate'.

As Regional Director, I need to be satisfied that the trust has capacity to deliver rapid and sustainable improvement at the academy. If I am not satisfied that this can be achieved, I will consider whether to terminate the funding agreement in order to transfer the academy to an alternative academy trust.

The trust has already provided some assurances about the safeguarding concerns raised in Ofsted's provisional judgment. However, I would be grateful if the trust could share the copy of the voluntary safeguarding audit from Wokingham Borough Council which I originally requested in the letter I sent to the trust, dated 10 December 2024.

In making the decision on whether to terminate the funding agreement I will consider any written representations the trust wish to make in response to this Termination Warning Notice. I also note that the trust has confirmed that it wants to work with the department to transfer the school to a strong trust.

Please provide me with any representations the trust wish to make by 25 February 2025.

We are mindful of creating unnecessary pressures on school leaders and staff, and as such we would ask the trust to ensure that the appropriate provision is in place to support the school workforce.

I am copying this letter to Ofsted and *Wokingham Borough Council*. A copy of this letter will also be published on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely



Dame Kate Dethridge

Regional Director for South East Regions Group

CC: Matthew Purves, Regional Director, South East, Ofsted. Emma Cockerell, Director of Children's Services, Wokingham Borough Council.

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