



Department  
for Education

Department for Education  
Eastbrook  
Shaftesbury Road  
Cambridge  
CB2 8DR

The Members and Trustees of Lift Schools  
1 Edcity Walk  
Edcity  
London  
W12 7TF

[By email only: [REDACTED] ]

23 July 2025

Dear Mr Hall,

**Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of Lift Schools in respect of Columbus School and College**

In accordance with sections 2A and 2D of the Academies Act 2010<sup>i</sup> 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 2 July 2025 confirming that Columbus School and College was judged to require significant improvement. For the reasons set out below, I now consider it necessary to issue this Termination Warning Notice.

The Ofsted report published on 9 July 2025 highlights the following areas to improve:

- The school has not ensured that staff know the specific safeguarding risks pupils are vulnerable to. Inappropriate behaviours are not always identified as safeguarding concerns and reported as such. The school must ensure staff know how to identify and report concerns, including for harmful sexual behaviours. The school must ensure that all concerns are accurately identified and addressed.
- Temporary support staff are not sufficiently informed about pupils' needs, their communication tools or specific safeguarding risks. This means that these staff do not always provide pupils with the support they need. They do not know how to recognise and report some safeguarding concerns. The school must ensure that agency and temporary staff have the information and knowledge they need to identify and report safeguarding concerns and support the pupils they work with effectively.
- The school does not use patterns and trends from safeguarding concerns or staff views to prioritise whole-school safeguarding actions. This limits how well the school mitigates for risks repeating. The school needs to ensure that the

strategic oversight of safeguarding is in place so that risks are effectively and sustainably addressed.

- Students in the sixth form follow a narrow curriculum with low ambition. They are not suitably prepared for adulthood and/or are limited in the qualification routes they can follow. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum in the sixth form is ambitious and tailored to providing the life skills and/or qualifications students need for their next stage in education and life beyond school.
- The school does not ensure that all pupils study all of the required age-appropriate RSE curriculum. This means pupils do not learn all that they need to know to stay safe and be prepared for adulthood. The school must ensure pupils receive this important knowledge for their safety. The school must ensure parents are consulted about this curriculum content.
- In some subjects, including reading, the curriculum is not consistently taught as the school intends. This results in some pupils not achieving as well as they should. The school should ensure that the agreed curriculum is implemented consistently well in all subjects.
- The trust and school have not acted effectively to maintain the quality of provision or ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Some actions are very recent. This means that some parents and staff lack confidence in the work of the school, particularly its work to keep pupils safe. Some parents do not engage with the school. The trust and school must act with urgency to secure the improvements needed and regain the confidence of stakeholders in the work of the school.

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.

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.

These should include, but are not limited to:

- **Safeguarding:** Evidence of rapidly improving safeguarding compliance at the academy. Evidence of the academy using patterns and trends from safeguarding concerns or staff views to prioritise whole-school safeguarding actions. A clear plan to show that the academy has strategic oversight of safeguarding and effective governance.
- **Quality of education:** Clear evidence of a plan demonstrating how teachers will be supported to ensure they can consistently deliver the curriculum effectively, particularly reading, to support pupils to achieve. How the academy will ensure that all pupils study all of the required age-appropriate RSE curriculum.

- **Leadership and management:** Evidence of a plan with clear timescales, demonstrating how the trust and school will regain the confidence of stakeholders, including parents and pupils.
- **Sixth form provision:** Evidence of a plan for a new and ambitious sixth form curriculum, tailored to the life skills/qualifications the students need for their next stage in education and life beyond school.

Please provide me with any representations the trust wishes to make **by 2 September 2025**. The typical 15 working day deadline has been extended to take account of the school holiday.

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, the trust CEO, and Essex LA. A copy of this letter will also be published on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely,



**Jonathan Duff**  
**Regional Director for the East of England**

CC: Ofsted, Rebecca Boomer-Clark [academy trust CEO], Clare Kershaw [Director of Education at Essex LA].

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<sup>i</sup> Inserted by section 14 of the Education and Adoption Act 2016