



Department
for Education

Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Date: 26 June 2025

Mark Bridle
Chair of Trustees
Goldington Green Academy
Goldington Road
Bedford
MK41 0DP

Sent via email to: Mark Bridle [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Bridle

Notice to improve: Goldington Green Academy

We are writing to you in your capacity as the Chair of Goldington Green Academy (the trust), to inform you that the Department for Education (the department) has assessed that the trust's breaches of the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) relating to financial management are significant enough to warrant a Notice to Improve. Specifically, we are concerned that the trust has breached the following paragraphs of the ATH:

- 1.6** *The majority of members should not also be trustees.*
- 2.17** *The board of trustees must notify ESFA within 14 calendar days of its meeting, if proposing to set a deficit revenue budget for the current financial year, which it cannot address after taking into account unspent funds from previous years, as this would be non-compliant with the funding agreement and this handbook.*
- 2.18** *The trust must prepare management accounts, including an income and expenditure account, variation to budget report, cash flow forecasts and balance sheet every month setting out its financial performance and position.*
- 2.19** *Management accounts must be shared with the chair of trustees every month and the board must consider these when it meets and be assured that it has appropriate oversight of the trust's financial position.*
- 2.20** *The board must ensure appropriate and timely action is being taken to maintain financial viability, including addressing variances between the budget and actual income and expenditure.*

2.21 *The trust must manage its cash position robustly. It must avoid becoming overdrawn on any of its bank accounts so that it does not breach restrictions on borrowing.*

On this basis, we are issuing the trust with a Notice to Improve on financial grounds. We understand that this decision may be disappointing and want to assure you that we recognise the positive action the trust has taken to date to address the concerns.

As you know, the department has been monitoring the trust's progress towards meeting the conditions set out in [REDACTED] letter of 14 February 2025 and [REDACTED] letter of 18 March 2025. We recognise the cooperation and extensive discussions that have taken place between the trust and officials and the changes you have already made to strengthen accounting and internal financial controls. However, our concerns remain in relation to the weak financial position and financial management at the trust.

This letter and its annexes serve as a written Notice to Improve financial management at the trust (Notice to Improve or "the Notice"). It reflects the weak financial position of the trust, significant breaches of the Academy Trust Handbook, and that inaccurate financial information was provided to the department.

The trust is required, pursuant to the provisions of the ATH and the Funding Agreement (FA), to comply with the terms of this Notice. These terms are set out in Annex A and Annex B.

Being issued with a Notice means that certain delegated authorities, as defined in the ATH, are revoked. All transactions previously covered by these delegations, regardless of their size, must now be approved in advance by the department, specifically:

- special staff severance payments
- compensation payments
- writing off debts and losses
- entering into guarantees, indemnities or letters of comfort
- disposals of fixed assets beyond any limit in the funding agreement
- taking up a leasehold or tenancy agreement on land and buildings of a duration beyond any limit in the Trust's funding agreement
- carry forward of unspent GAG from one year to the next beyond any limit in the funding agreement
- pooling of GAG

If the trust seeks retrospective approval from the department this will be deemed a breach of the ATH. Further details of the approval process will be forwarded to the trust's Accounting Officer upon acknowledgment of receipt of this letter. These delegated authorities shall be returned to the trust once we are satisfied that the requirements of the Notice have been, and will continue to be, complied with to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State.

The department will monitor progress made towards meeting the requirements of this Notice and will keep us updated through regular case reviews. A decision to lift the Notice will be taken when we are satisfied the requirements set out in the Annexes have been met in full.

We will support the trust as it implements the required changes through regular contact and clear routes of escalation to resolve any questions or queries you might have. However, if the trust is unable to deliver the necessary improvement and fails to make sufficient progress against the original conditions, we reserve the right to issue a revised Notice and add further specific conditions. Should it become evident that the trust is unlikely to fulfil the

conditions and / or requirements set out in this Notice and / or within the agreed timescales, we will explore the contractual intervention options available.

In the event that the trust fails to meet the requirements of this Notice to our satisfaction, it will be considered to have failed to comply with the terms of the ATH. Failure to comply will be deemed a funding agreement breach and may lead to termination.

If continued non-compliance with the ATH occurs, we may also refer the case to the Charity Commission and/or Insolvency Service for further investigation, as deemed appropriate in the circumstances.

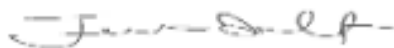
We should be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this letter by email within three working days of the date of this letter to [REDACTED] who will be your main point of contact related to this Notice to Improve. In line with the requirements set out in our publishing policy, the trust has 10 working days to offer any final comments on factual accuracy to DfE colleagues before publication. The trust is required to publish the Notice on its website within 14 days of it being published on GOV.UK and retain it there until the Notice is lifted.

We recognise that this may be an uncertain time for the trust and its staff. We are mindful of creating additional pressures on individuals involved. Therefore, we ask the trust to ensure appropriate provision is in place to support all its staff, as necessary. You may find the Education staff wellbeing charter (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter>) helpful.

We will continue to keep clear and regular lines of communication open with you. As such [REDACTED] will be in contact shortly to answer any questions you may have, and to discuss the next steps in more detail including any support the trust may require to drive the necessary improvements.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Duff
Regional Director for East of England, Department for Education



Lindsey Henning
Director, Schools Financial Support & Oversight, Regions Group, Department for Education

cc. Caroline Skingsley – Accounting Officer
Andrew Williams, Leonie Perrone, Suzanne Jones, Victoria Carter - Members

This Notice to Improve (the 'Notice') is a consequence of Goldington Green Academy's (the 'Trust')

- breaching the following paragraphs of the ATH: **1.6; 2.17; 2.18; 2.19; 2.20, and 2.21**
- serious failures of financial governance

Conditions

The Trust is required to comply with all of the conditions set out in Annex B.

Financial management and governance requirements

The Trust is responsible for its own financial management, control and governance and is expected to take appropriate action to strengthen the weaknesses identified and return to compliance with the ATH.

The Trust should take all appropriate actions to ensure the action plan agreed with the department is fully implemented.

The department must be satisfied that the Trust is doing everything it can to rectify the weaknesses identified.

Monitoring and progress

The Trust is required to submit the evidence for the specific conditions to the timescales outlined in Annex B to enable the department to monitor compliance and progress.

Should it become evident that the Trust is unlikely to fulfil the conditions and / or requirements set out in this Notice and / or within the given timescales, the department will begin to consider and explore the contractual intervention options available.

Compliance and the end of the notice period

As outlined in Annex B, the Trust is required to submit evidence to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of this notice, which the department will use to monitor the Trust's progress. Annex B sets out the detail of the evidence required to fulfil the condition and the timescales to submit this evidence to the department.

When the Trust meets all the conditions outlined in this Notice, is fully compliant with the most recent edition of the ATH and no other breaches have been identified, we will write to the Trust to confirm that the Notice has been lifted.

GOLDINGTON GREEN ACADEMY**Table of conditions**

The table below summarises the conditions that have been placed upon Goldington Green Academy ("the Trust"). It sets out the evidence the Trust must provide, and the timescales the Trust must meet, to show that they have complied with the Notice to Improve ("the Notice"). All conditions set out in the table must be met before the Notice can be lifted.

Condition 1	<p>The Trust is required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Comply with the funding agreement requirement to submit all audited reports, accounts and statements to the department on time and without qualification. b) Submit an Academies budget forecast return outturn (BFR) by the deadline required by the department. <p>Contact the department at an early stage if it believes it is not able to follow, or is falling behind, the schedule set out in their Trust financial plan.</p>
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 1a	The department receives the Trust's audited financial statements by 31 December 2025, each year until the Ntl is lifted.
Timescale for condition 1a	Submit audited reports, accounts, and statements by 31 December 2025, and each year thereafter until the Ntl is lifted.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 1b	The department receives the Trust's BFR by the date required, each year until Ntl is lifted.
Timescale for condition 1b	Submit BFR by date required, each year until Ntl is lifted.
Condition 2	<p>The Trust must request approval from the department, in advance, for any actions under the revoked freedoms in 6.18 of the Academy Trust Handbook. These requests should be sent using the Customer Help Portal. Retrospective approval will be deemed as a breach of the Academy Trust Handbook.</p>

Evidence required to show compliance with condition 2	The Trust must submit a request for approval for any actions relating to the delegated freedom revoked under the terms of the Notice.
Timescale for condition 2	Until the Ntl is lifted.

Condition 3 (initially applied through financial support letter dated 14 February 2025)	Adhering to the Trust Financial Plan and complete the repayment of recoverable funding by March 2027.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 3	Regular meetings with DfE Submission of monthly management accounts to DfE. Trust board meeting minutes and its finance committee meeting minutes submitted to DfE.
Timescale for condition 3	Until full repayment has been made.

Condition 4 (initially applied through financial support letter dated 14 February 2025)	Increase the regularity of the trust's Finance and Risk Committee and Audit Committee meetings to meet five times during the 2024/25 academic year.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 4	Committee meeting minutes submitted to DfE.
Timescale for condition 4	Until the Ntl is lifted.

Condition 5 (initially applied through financial support	Submit monthly management accounts to DfE by the 15th of each month until further notice. The management accounts should include:
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letter dated 14 February 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Previous month's income and expenditure account, with cumulative opening and closing balances ii. Monthly cashflow, with a forecast for the rest of 2024/25 financial year supported by the bank statement as at the preceding month-end. iii. Balance Sheet as at the preceding month-end. iv. Aged debtors and creditors report
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 5	Submission of monthly management accounts to DfE.
Timescale for condition 5	Until the Ntl is lifted.

Condition 6 (initially applied through financial support letter dated 14 February 2025)	Submit minutes from the trust board meetings and its finance committee meetings to the DfE by the 15th of each month until these conditions have been fully resolved
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 6	Submission of trust board meeting minutes to DfE.
Timescale for condition 6	Until the Ntl is lifted.

Condition 7 (initially applied through financial support letter dated 14 February 2025)	Agree to regular review meetings with the DfE, to ensure progress is being made and give the opportunity for the trust to discuss any ongoing issues.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 7	Attendance to meetings.
Timescale for condition 7	Until the NTI is lifted

Condition 8	If the academy has not transferred into a strong trust by 1 February 2026, it must commission an independent governance review, to be conducted by an organisation with relevant expertise, and produce an action plan to act on any subsequent recommendations.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 8	<p>A terms of reference for the governance review.</p> <p>Providing the resulting report within two weeks of it being finalised.</p> <p>Providing an action plan with key milestones and timelines based on the resulting report</p>
Timescale for condition 8	<p>Confirmation of the chosen organisation to conduct the review by 16 February 2026.</p> <p>Providing the terms of reference by 2 March 2026.</p> <p>Sharing the report within two weeks of it being finalised.</p> <p>Sharing the resulting action plan within four weeks of the report being finalised.</p>