



Department  
for Education

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23 September 2025

Mr Laurence Nesbitt  
Chair of Trustees  
The Beckmead Trust  
The ArtsXChange  
263-269 City Road  
London  
EC1V 1JX

Company Number: 11830749

By email: [REDACTED]

**Dear Mr Nesbitt**

**Notice to improve: The Beckmead Trust**

We are writing to you in your capacity as the Chair of The Beckmead Trust (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. On that basis, we are issuing the Trust with a Notice to Improve on financial grounds.

As you are aware, the Trust recently requested emergency funding in May 2025 for a cashflow deficit in June 2025. The trust failed to ensure robust financial oversight and this has brought wider concerns around the trust's internal control, risk management and assurance processes.

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. Based on recent conversations, it is clear that the Trust is working hard to mitigate the risk of further cashflow deficits. We understand that the trust set up financial deficit recovery meetings soon after the emergency funding was requested and we have appreciated having sight of the meeting notes. However, our concerns remain in relation to the weak financial position and financial management at the Trust.

Paragraphs 2.1, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9, 2.17 and 2.20 of the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) 2024 clearly state:

*“Trustees and management **must** maintain robust oversight of the academy trust.”*

*“The academy trust **must** have sound internal control, risk management and assurance processes. This should follow a tiered approach comprising:*

- clearly communicated procedures, structures and training of staff*
- appropriate day to day supervision and checks by management*
- internal scrutiny overseen by an audit and risk committee*
- external audit and assurance.”*

*“The board of trustees **must**:*

- ensure that financial plans are prepared and monitored, satisfying itself that the trust remains a going concern and financially sustainable*
- take a longer term view of the trust’s financial plans consistent with the requirement to submit three-year budget forecasts to ESFA*
- set a policy for holding reserves, and explain it in its annual report, including a clear plan for managing reserves.”*

*“A trustee board **must** ensure rigour and scrutiny in budget management.”*

*“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.”*

The DfE has advised the trust of the importance of consolidating its position and ensuring the financial stability of its current schools. Despite this, I am concerned that the trust has failed to ensure robust financial oversight as well as rigour and scrutiny in budget management. This has resulted in the trust seeking emergency funding. I was also concerned that the trust did not contact the SFSO regarding the deficit revenue budget that was realised for the 23/24 annual accounts. I am aware that such non-compliance can be indicative of serious financial and/or governance issues.

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 and continued concerns on governance and oversight of financial management by leaders and the Board.

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] ([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



**Alan Parnum**

**Interim Regional Director, Department for Education**



**Lindsey Henning**

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

CC. Jonty Clark, Accounting Officer (The Beckmead Trust)

## THE BECKMEAD TRUST

### Notice to Improve

## Annex A

This Notice to Improve (the 'Notice') is a consequence of The Beckmead Trust (the 'Trust')

- *Failing to ensure robust financial oversight and rigorous scrutiny in budget management as required in the Academy Trust Handbook paragraph 2.1, 2.6, 2.8 and 2.9.*
- *Failing to notify the Department of the deficit revenue budget being set for 23/24 as required in the Academy Trust Handbook paragraph 2.17.*
- *Requiring significant emergency financial support in June 2025. Failing to notify the Department of forecasted cashflow deficits.*

### Conditions

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

#### Financial management and governance requirements

2. 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.
3. The Trust should take all appropriate actions to ensure the action plan agreed with the department is fully implemented.
4. The department must be satisfied that the Trust is doing everything it can to rectify the weaknesses identified.

#### Monitoring and progress

5. 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.
6. 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

7. 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.
8. 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.

**THE BECKMEAD TRUST****Table of conditions**

The table below summarises the conditions that have been placed up The Beckmead Trust ("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.

<b>Condition 1</b>	The trust is required to engage with peer-to-peer support at executive level from a trust with similar characteristics in the 25/26 academic year.
Evidence required for condition	Progress updates to be submitted monthly to the SFSO caseworker.
Timescale for condition	Identify an appropriate trust by 31 October 2025 and engage in support for at least six months.
<b>Condition 2</b>	The trust is required to engage with the Department's CFO mentoring programme.
Evidence required for condition	The trust is required to accept a CFO mentor on a short-term basis.
Timescale for condition	Accept the offer for a CFO mentor by 31 October and for the mentoring to take place in the 2025/26 academic year.
<b>Condition 3</b>	The trust is required to continue to share monthly management accounts.
Evidence required for condition	Submit monthly management accounts to SFSO caseworker by email.
Timescale for condition	Sent monthly by the final Friday of each month until further notice.
<b>Condition 4</b>	The trust is required to continue to submit cashflow forecasts.
Evidence required for condition	Submit cashflow forecasts fortnightly to SFSO caseworker until further notice.
Timescale for condition	Sent every second Friday until further notice.
<b>Condition 5</b>	The trust is required to continue to share meeting notes from the trust's deficit recovery meeting.
Evidence required for condition	Submit meeting notes to the SFSO caseworker.
Timescale for condition	To be submitted as and when these meetings occur until further notice.

<b>Condition 6</b>	The trust is required to produce a financial recovery plan, which includes ICFP analysis and including financial modelling against worst/best case scenarios.
Evidence required for condition	Submit to the SFSO caseworker a financial model with accurate levels of top-up funding which has been formally agreed between the LA and trust. The trust should provide the Department with clear agreements with all six LA's about their respective top-up rates and places as part of this condition.
Timescale for condition	To be submitted by 7 November 2025.

<b>Condition 7</b>	The trust is required to provide their programme of internal scrutiny for 25/26 with the Department.
Evidence required for condition	To inform the SFSO caseworker by email.
Timescale for condition	Email by 31 October 2025.

<b>Condition 8</b>	The trust is required to pause all conversations with schools/trusts that wish to join TBT until the trust has significantly improved their financial situation to the satisfaction of the DfE.
Evidence required for condition	Email SFSO caseworker of trust's agreement.
Timescale for condition	Email by 31 October 2025 and pause on any new growth until further notice.