



Department
for Education

Regional Director's Office

Lucy Livings
Regional Director for the South West
3 Glass Wharf
Avon Street
Bristol
BS2 0PS

The Members and Trustees of Sherborne Area Schools Trust
The Gryphon School
Bristol Road
Sherborne
Dorset
DT9 4EQ

By email only

19 June 2026

Dear Mr Middleton

Termination Warning Notice to the Members and Trustees of the Sherborne Area Schools' Trust ("the Trust") in respect of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Child Okeford ("the Academy")

In accordance with clauses 5.F to 5H of the funding agreement for the Academy, the Secretary of State may terminate the funding agreement if the Chief Inspector gives notice to the Trust that special measures are required to be taken in relation to the Academy or the Academy requires significant improvement.

I received an Ofsted notification dated 12th May 2026 confirming that the Academy 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 20th May 2026 highlights the following areas for improvement:

- Leaders and the trust should ensure that learning activities in the early years have a clear learning intent and promote children's learning and language development effectively.
- Leaders should ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support to overcome their barriers to learning and make progress from their starting points so that they achieve as well as they should.

- Leaders should make sure that teachers use assessment information effectively to identify when pupils have mastered a concept, so that subsequent work can be adapted to deepen their understanding further.
- Leaders should ensure that their approach to teaching handwriting is implemented consistently well so that pupils' writing fluency and the quality of their work improve.
- Leaders and the trust should ensure the outdoor provision is purposeful so children in the early years can practise the skills they need to support their physical development.
- Leaders should ensure that they have a clear focus on evaluating the impact of the school's work so that this information can be used to celebrate effective practice and quickly identify further action that needs to be taken.
- The trust should ensure there is a clear strategy for sustainable school improvement and that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities within this.

I am also concerned about the trust's wider performance at Key Stage 2 with only 51% of pupils meeting the expected standard for Reading, Writing and Maths in 2024/25 which is well below the national average of 62%.

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 Academy's funding agreement in order to transfer the Academy to an alternative academy trust.

In making the decision on whether to terminate the Academy's funding agreement I will consider any written representations the Trust wish to make in response to this Termination Warning Notice.

Please provide me with any representations the Trust wish to make by Friday 10 July.

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 Academy's workforce.

I am copying this letter to Ofsted, the Trust's CEO, Dorset Council and the Diocese of Salisbury. A copy of this letter will also be published on GOV.UK.

Yours sincerely



Lucy Livings
Regional Director for the South West

CC: James McNeillie (South West and West Midlands Regional Director for Ofsted), Dave Watson (SAST CEO), Paul Dempsey (Director of Children's Services Dorset Council), Katie Fitzsimmons (CEO Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education, and Diocesan Director of Education)