



Department
for Education

Department for Education
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Email enquiry form:
www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

Date: 1 July 2026

Fee Stagg
Chair of Trustees
Mighty Oaks Academy Trust
Priorslee Primary School
Priorslee Avenue
Priorslee
Telford
TF2 9RS
Company number: 07481145
By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Fee Stagg

Notice to improve: Mighty Oaks Academy Trust

We are writing to you in your capacity as the Chair of Mighty Oaks Academy 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.

We understand that this decision may be disappointing and want to assure you that we recognise the positive engagement demonstrated by the trust. We also acknowledge that the trust has undergone a significant leadership change since September 2025, including the appointment of a new Accounting Officer and, more recently, a new Chair of Trustees in May 2026.

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 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 conditions and/or 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 conditions and/or 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 conditions and/or 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 ([Education staff wellbeing charter - GOV.UK](#)) 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.

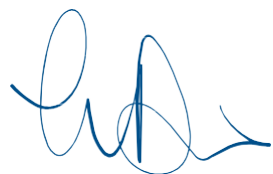
We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Sue Lovelock

Regional Director for West Midlands, Regions Group, Department for Education



Gavin Davies

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

CC. Ian Hunt, Interim Accounting Office of the Trust
Alun Harding – Member
Ellen Osborne - Member
Julian Cobley - Member
Sam Lane – Member
Sean Westaway - Member

Annex A: Mighty Oaks Academy Trust

Notice to Improve

This Notice to Improve (the 'Notice') is a consequence of Mighty Oaks Academy Trust (the 'Trust')

- breaching the following paragraphs of the ATH: 2.8, 2.10, 2.18, 2.19, 2.20

Conditions

1. The Trust is required to comply with all of 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 must 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.

Annex B: Mighty Oaks Academy Trust

Table of conditions

The table below summarises the conditions that have been placed upon Mighty Oaks Academy 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.

Condition 1	We will expect the trust to supply the following financial information on a monthly basis for a period of 12 months from agreement of the plan. The frequency of reports thereafter will be determined by the DfE, based on progress against the Trust financial plan: 1. Revenue income and expenditure report with a narrative explaining any significant variances for the current full academic year. Income and expenditure classifications in this report should follow those in the Trust financial plan. 2. A balance sheet showing the position at the end of the last calendar month and forecast to the end of the academic year; and 3. A detailed monthly cash flow forecast rolling 12 months ahead. 4. Details of any further aged creditors, which cause cash flow pressures. 5. Provide separate accounting details for any 'central' or 'core' teams within the trust.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 1	Trust submits the required information to DfE on time for a minimum of 12 months and until further notice.
Timescale for condition 1	By the 20 th of each calendar month, until the department have confirmed that assurance of sustained financial stability has been evidenced

Condition 2	The trust must prepare and submit a revised Trust financial plan and must include, as a minimum: i. how the trust will achieve cumulative surplus position by the end of August 2028, and each year thereafter. This must be supported by robust budget forecasts through to 2027/28 with evidence to support realistic pupil number forecasts ii. a clear efficiency and savings plan setting out specific areas where further savings can be made across the trust
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 2	The Trust is to submit a revised forecast showing financial recovery which is consistent and demonstrated in each year's budget forecast return and the audited financial statements.
Timescale for condition 2	Within 8 weeks of the Notice being formally issued

Condition 3	The department receives notice of all board meetings, including extra-ordinary meetings; and that the draft minutes (in particular all information relevant to the trust's financial or governance position) are forwarded to the department as soon as they are available.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 3	Minutes to be shared 5 working days following each board meeting. Evidence demonstrating the board is providing the right balance of challenge and has the skills necessary to carry out its duties effectively should be evidenced in the trust board meetings minutes.
Timescale for condition 3	On-going

Condition 4	The trust must submit a credible plan confirming which of the SRMA's recommendations will be implemented, and how. The plan should clearly demonstrate how the trust will achieve the intended outcomes, such as financial recovery, financial sustainability and improved financial governance.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 4	Submit evidence to the department via an action plan showing progress and completion of each action point which is to be discussed at regular engagement meetings with the department in line with the timescales set.
Timescale for condition 4	Plan to be received 4 weeks after issuing of notice, followed by monthly progress updates until all actions have been completed.

Condition 5	The Trust must request approval from the department, in advance, for any actions under the revoked freedoms in 6.19 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.
Evidence required to show compliance with condition 5	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 5	Until the Ntl is lifted.

Condition 6	The Trust to continue working with St Barts Multi Academy Trust and the DfE to facilitate the planned transfer of the trust as soon as possible. If unreasonable delay is caused to the transfer the Trust must a) adopt the latest Model Funding Agreement and Articles of Association b) undertake an External Review of Governance, terms to be agreed by, and findings shared with the DfE
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Evidence required to show compliance with condition 6	Trust provides information and completes all required actions for the transfer in accordance with the timeframe agreed. Academy transfers and the Trust winds up Delays to the transfer caused by the Trust will be considered to be a breach of this condition.
Timescale for condition 6	The Trust will actively progress transfer discussions and satisfy all DfE requirements, with transfer to complete as soon as reasonably practicable following approval of the transfer package and legal documentation.