

Mrs. Sarah Noon - Chair of Trustees
St Ralph Sherwin Catholic MAT
St Katherine's House
Mansfield Road
Derby
DE1 3TQ

Sent via email - snoon@srsccmat.co.uk

2 February 2026

Dear Mrs. Noon,

Notice to improve: St Ralph Sherwin Catholic MAT

We are writing to inform you, in your capacity as the Chair of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic MAT, that the Department for Education (the department) has assessed the trust's continued breaches of the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) relating to financial management are significant enough to warrant a revised Notice to Improve on financial grounds. We understand 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 actions set out in the Notice to Improve issued on 11 August 2023. We appreciate the trust's cooperation, the constructive engagement with officials and the improvements you have already made to strengthen accounting and internal financial controls. However, our concerns remain about the trust's weak financial position and the effectiveness of its financial management.

This letter and its annexes serve as a revised written Notice to Improve financial management and governance 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, continue to be 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 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.

If 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 Deaglán Lloyd, 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, Deaglán 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lindsey Henning'.

Lindsey Henning

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Duff'.

Jonathan Duff

Regional Director, Regional Director for East Midlands, Department for Education

CC. Kevin Gritton – Accounting Officer

Laura O'Brien, Right Reverend Patrick McKinney, Reverend Father Paul Chipchase,

Reverend Father Simon Gillespie - Members

Peter Giorgio - Diocesan Director of Education