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Chair of Trustees  
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Leinster Avenue  
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21 November 2022

Company Number: 10377760

By email: ██████████

**Warning Notice to Improve: Failure to provide sufficient assurances and adhere to statutory policies.**

Dear ██████████

Thank you for your letter dated 27 September 2022. I can confirm that, as outlined in **Annex A**, we are satisfied with some of the assurances you have provided relating to previous requests for information and/or allegations shared with you as set out in the letter you received from Regions Group on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and subsequent letter on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

However, the trust has failed to provide sufficient assurances in relation to other allegations raised. These were also shared with you in previous letters from Regions Group.

The trust has also failed to review several policies, as listed in **Annex B**, to ensure compliance to departmental guidance. As an overarching framework for the implementation of effective financial management and other controls including Safeguarding, it is a formal requirement for trusts to adhere to the [Academy Trust Handbook 2022 \(ATH\)](#), [Education \(independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) and the Funding Agreement that the school/trust holds with the Secretary of State (SoS), as outlined below.

- [Paragraph 1.15](#) of the ATH clearly states:  
*“Academy trust boards have a duty to:*
  - *safeguard and promote the welfare of children*

- *have regard to any statutory guidance on safeguarding issued by the Secretary of State*
  - *ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, volunteers, contractors and proprietors.”*
- [Paragraph 7 \(Part 3\)](#) of the regulations state:
    - “*The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that:*
      - a) *arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and*
      - b) *such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State”*
- Additionally, the trust’s [Funding Agreement](#), paragraph 7.1 sets out the requirement for the trust to share information with the SoS:
    - “*The Academy Trust must promptly provide to the Secretary of State any information about the Academy Trust, or the Academies, which he (she) regards as necessary to fulfil his (her) role and responsibilities”*

Failure to provide sufficient assurances and to update said policies is a breach of the above legislative requirements, with further breaches to [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSIE\)](#). We are very concerned by the trust’s inability to make these returns and we are aware that such non-compliance is often indicative of serious governance issues. Where the Department for Education (DfE) has concerns about governance in an academy trust, it may choose to issue a Notice to Improve (Ntl).

To provide assurances of your compliance to departmental guidance and policies, including those of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), we now require you to submit evidence that you meet the conditions set out in **Annex C** by the corresponding dates. Responses should be submitted to Suzie Carr by email [suzie.carr@education.gov.uk](mailto:suzie.carr@education.gov.uk).

If we do not receive your acceptance of the conditions and the evidence requested by the required dates, the DfE has the power to issue a Ntl to the trust. The DfE publishes all Ntl’s on gov.uk. This would lead to the revocation of all of the delegated authorities and other freedoms outlined in the ATH. All transactions previously covered by the delegations, regardless of their size, would be subject to approval in advance by ESFA, specifically but not restricted to:

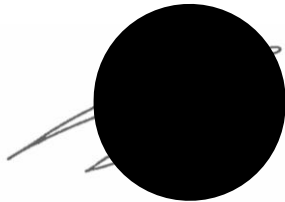
- special staff severance payments
- compensation payments
- writing off debts and losses
- entering into guarantees, indemnities, or letters of comfort
- disposals of fixed assets beyond any limit in the funding agreement
- taking up a leasehold or tenancy agreement on land buildings of a duration beyond 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






I should be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this letter by 24 November 2022 and confirm acceptance of the conditions and the corresponding deadlines by 30 November 2022. I will also be able to deal with any questions you should have on this matter.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A large black circle redacting the signature of the sender.A black horizontal bar redacting the name of the sender.

Deputy Director – Regions Group

- CC.  – Accounting Officer  
 – Regional Director – Regions Group  
 –  
Members  
 – Senior Caseworker – School Financial Support and Oversight (SFSO), ESFA  
 – Senior Caseworker – School Financial Support and Oversight (SFSO), ESFA

## Annex A

I can confirm we are satisfied with the following assurances, which relate to our previous requests for information and/or allegations previously shared with you, as listed in italics:

- *Information on staff annual training in relation to racism, discrimination, safeguarding concerns and harassment, including detail on how this is included in the induction for new staff:*  
New starters induction process outlined, including assurances that new starters read Safeguarding, equality and diversity, and staff code of conduct policies which are stored in HR files. Confirmation that the training is carried out annually and monitored by Academy's office manager.
- *Further information on what monitoring systems have been put in place to ensure training is completed by staff and how this is monitored:*  
Assurances provided that staff training for, without limitations, safer recruitment, e-safety, educational visits, health and safety, risk assessments, child protection and safeguarding is carried out annually in September on the online SSS learning platform. The Academy's office manager monitors sufficient completion of the training, to include time taken, and certificates are stored in staff HR files, which are checked by the academy's Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- *Evidence of Risk Assessments policy being followed:*  
Evidence of risk assessments being carried out in a variety of areas, including subject specific areas and for individual students, in line with the Risk Assessments policy. All were dated appropriately for review.
- *Details about how statutory staff training is delivered on GDPR regulations and how the trust monitors adherence to this policy:*  
GDPR policy shared, and assurances provided that GDPR training is carried out annually. The Academy's office manager monitors sufficient completion of the training and certificates are stored in staff HR files.

## **Annex B**

### Outdated policies:

Lansdown Park Academy:

- Child Protections & Safeguarding policy – review date September 2022
- Engagement and Behaviour policy – review date September 2021
- Anti-Bullying Strategy – Not found on website
- Attendance policy – review date June 2021
- Capability Procedures to Teachers – review date March 2022 (No longer on website)
- Curriculum policy – review date June 2021
- Equality and Diversity policy – review date October 2021
- Pupil Premium policy – review date July 2020
- SEND policy – review date November 2021
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions – review date March 2019
- Whistleblowing policy – review date July 2022 (No longer has a date)

## Annex C

| Condition  | Evidence of requirements  | Timespan  |
|--|---|---|
| <p>The trust must review and update its current policies, for the trust and its academies, and establish a process for regular updates and compliance checks. The updated policies must be approved by the governing body.</p> <p>This process should include arrangements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) scheduling annual updates to child protection policies aligned with KCSIE, including KCSIE 2022 updates in paragraph 98-99.</li> <li>b) ensuring other safeguarding policies are revised following updates to guidance, legislation etc, for example: annual updates detailed in <a href="#">KCSIE</a>.</li> <li>c) Regular policy reviews, in line with departmental guidance, and sign off through the trust board.</li> </ul> | <p>The trust must submit copies of its updated policies (listed in <b>Annex B</b>) to Regions Group</p> <p>The trust must submit a board approved process for regular review and update of policies/processes as listed a) – c) to Regions Group</p>  | <p>5 December 2022</p> <p>19 December 2022</p>  |
| <p>The trust must commission an external review of safeguarding to identify any gaps and recommendations for improvement.</p> <p>The terms of reference of the review should include, but not be limited, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Trust safeguarding arrangements: as a minimum an assessment of the oversight exercised by the trust board, a skills &amp; training audit of the current staff and trustees, arrangements and training for the Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies.</li> </ul>  | <p>The trust must submit:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A copy of the remit for the review, to include the terms of reference listed in this table and the points in <b>Annex D</b> as a minimum, to be agreed by Regions Group prior to commissioning of the review.</li> <li>2. Evidence of procurement and commissioning.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5 December 2022</li> <li>2. 19 December 2022</li> </ol> |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>b) Trust safeguarding procedures and policies, and their implementation.</p> <p>c) Trust recruitment processes, including compliance with all statutory requirements.</p> <p>The review should consider the above areas in view of the regulatory framework governing academies and provide assurance on the level of compliance with those requirements, in particular, the trust's <a href="#">Funding Agreement</a>, <a href="#">The Academy Trust Handbook</a>, <a href="#">Keeping children safe in education 2022</a>, <a href="#">Working together to safeguarding children 2018</a> and the <a href="#">Education (independent School Standards) Regulations 2014</a>.</p> |  |  |
| <p>The trust must ensure academy leadership are following the trust whistleblowing policy and dealing with complaints and concerns raised appropriately, as per ATH paragraphs 2.43-2.48</p>  | <p>The trust must provide evidence of the internal whistleblowing policy being followed. This could include records of whistleblowing reports, action taken etc.</p>   | <p>5 December 2022</p>   |
| <p>The trust must ensure compliance to governance policies and good practice as set out in the DfE guidance and legislation and provide evidence to this effect, in compliance with paragraphs 7.1 and 7.4 of the trust's Funding Agreement.</p> <p>Following the trust's recent external review of governance, if the review highlights gaps in skills or experience, the trust must fill any gaps.</p>  | <p>The trust must share with the Department the full report produced following their recent external review of governance.</p> <p>The trust must provide a consequent action plan from the recent external review of governance.</p> <p>If the review highlights gaps in skills and experience, the trust must provide an action plan to fill these gaps to Regions Group.</p> | <p>24 November 2022</p> <p>5 December 2022</p> <p>12 December 2022</p> |

**Annex D – Review of Safeguarding procedures at Lansdown Park Academy, including the trust’s oversight of the academy, and all other academies within the trust.**

- The trust must ensure inclusivity and promotion of equality and diversity for staff and pupils.
- The trust must ensure the staff code of conduct is implemented and adhered to, including but not limited to, ‘low-level concerns’ as per KCSIE paragraphs 424-445 and the trust’s staff code of conduct.
- The trust must implement and ensure compliance to an effective behaviour policy that ensures the safety of pupils and teacher, specifically, but not limited to dangerous and violent behaviour in the classroom and playground, and harassment (including sexual) between pupils and towards staff, in line with updated advice published in September 2022 in [Behaviour in Schools Guidance](#).
- The trust must ensure the academy’s “trips and visits” policy is adhered to, particularly for Category A trips, in relation to; transport, risk assessments, safety checks, insurance and approval.
- The trust must ensure compliant training and completion of all record keeping, including, but not limited to the use of CPOMS, signing in/out books and accident books.
- The trust must ensure the site is always secure, ensuring local procedures are followed.
- The trust must ensure sufficient staffing levels for supervision of children.
- The trust must ensure understanding of [Prevent duty](#) guidance within the academy and ensure appropriate action is taken when concerns are raised regarding a child’s influence from their home environment. This should include, but not be limited to local Prevent referral and risk assessments for children of concern.
- The trust must ensure it has oversight of all safeguarding policies, procedures and implementation at Lansdown Park Academy, and all other academies within the trust, ensuring the policies and procedures are working in each academy.