



Education
Funding
Agency

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Dear

Sixth Form College Commissioner: One Year In

We are now fast approaching the end of another academic year and I wanted to reflect on my first year as the Sixth Form College Commissioner.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate sixth form colleges for a year of improved overall inspection performance against higher standards. There have been 31 Ofsted inspections of sixth form colleges during this academic year - a greater volume of inspections than normal. Of these 42% (13) demonstrated an improved overall grade and this should be celebrated.

There has been only one college where I have had to intervene as the Sixth Form College Commissioner following an Ofsted judgment. A summary of my assessment and the recommendations agreed by the Minister are available publicly on GOV.UK. I am monitoring closely the progress being made at the college, which has been very co-operative with the new process, and I will make a follow up visit.

Next year, however, will be challenging for many colleges as the financial climate gets tougher. This will call for difficult decisions to be made by leaders and managers to ensure that institutions remain in good financial health for 2015/16 and beyond. It will require strong, confident challenge and support from governors on financial matters.

I have started discussions with the Sixth Form Colleges' Association and Association of Colleges to consider what more financial information we can make available to support your governing bodies to secure a closer scrutiny and more effective challenge on financial planning and management. Colleagues at the Department for Education are also working with the Education and Training Foundation to ensure that in future their leadership and governance training is appropriately targeted and can meet the financial management needs of sixth form college leaders. You will have also already received David Collins' (the Further Education Commissioner) termly note in which he shared a performance grid based on his experiences of

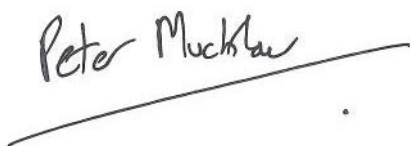
cases triggered by financial concerns in general FE colleges. Some of his [general advice](#) and those indicators may be useful to you and your Board.

Your financial plans, due by 31 July 2014, are starting to arrive. The EFA will be reviewing them more swiftly and with a greater degree of scrutiny, in line with its responsibilities outlined in [Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills](#). I will be paying close personal attention to these. Many sixth form colleges are in strong financial health and have plans to ensure they remain so, or to return to that position. Where, however, you have concerns about future viability you will wish to consider and discuss with your Governors different possible future structures or delivery models. EFA Territorial Directors will be interested in hearing about your plans should you wish to discuss them at an early stage.

Where our assessment of your financial plan leads to an inadequate rating for financial health and/or management and control, and therefore poses a risk to delivery, I will arrange a visit to assess the capacity and capability of your current leadership and governance teams to deliver the required financial improvements within an agreed timeframe. The assessment will also lead to the issue of a financial notice to improve. As part of greater transparency arrangements, any financial notice issued from September 2014 will be published on GOV.UK. This is in line with warning notices for academies, which are already published, and is provided for in the funding agreement for 2014/15.

It is important to remember that sixth form colleges remain a successful and substantial part of post-16 education, as Ofsted's judgments consistently demonstrate. I look forward to working with you in the next academic year to ensure that sixth form colleges continue to provide successfully for young people in your communities.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Mucklow". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

Peter Mucklow
National Director for Young People