



**Lord Agnew Kt DL**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System  
Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Mervyn Ward  
Warrington and Vale Royal College  
Winwick Road  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA2 8QA

23 January 2020

*Dear Mr Ward,*

I am writing following the assessment of Warrington and Vale Royal College by the Further Education (FE) Commissioner. The FE Commissioner's Team visited the college on 23 July and 29 August 2019 to undertake a formal intervention following the issuance of a notice of concern by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on 17 June 2019. This had been triggered by the college's inadequate financial health grade.

The FE Commissioner's report confirms that the college is in a very weak financial position and is at significant risk of insolvency by 2020/21 unless appropriate steps are taken to secure the liquidity of the college.

I am encouraged by the FE Commissioner's Team's observations that you, the board and the college executive are well placed to address the current issues and have demonstrated that you are prepared to act quickly and decisively to achieve financial stability to the college through the sale of its Hartford Campus. The importance of this sale to ensuring the future viability of the college cannot be overstated and I advise you to prioritise its successful completion and to continue making robust financial preparations to maintain solvency should the sale be delayed further.

I am in full agreement with the FE Commissioner that the significant and continuing loss of learners from the former Mid-Cheshire campuses is an extremely concerning trend which the senior leadership team must address with immediate effect. As recommended by the FE Commissioner, a clear

strategy must be developed to ensure that this decline is reversed as soon as possible.

I understand that the college has recently secured an overall 'Good' Ofsted grade. This is a positive achievement which demonstrates the substantial progress the college has made with its quality improvement agenda. Despite recent success, there are still some areas of weakness that I would urge you to address, particularly in apprenticeship provision.

I have accepted all of the recommendations of the FE Commissioner and a summary of the initial assessment is provided with this letter. This document and my letter will be published on gov.uk.

Please confirm within three weeks to the FE Commissioner, [FE.Commissioner@education.gov.uk](mailto:FE.Commissioner@education.gov.uk), what actions you are taking to address all of the recommendations and your timetable for doing so.

I have written separately to the following local MPs who may have learners attending the college from their constituency to inform them of the FE Commissioner's findings:

- Charlotte Nichols MP                      Warrington North
- Andy Carter MP                              Warrington South
- Sir Graham Brady MP                      Altrincham and Sale West
- Kate Green MP                                Stretford and Urmston
- Barbara Keeley MP                          Worsley and Eccles South
- James Grundy MP                            Leigh
- Conor McGinn MP                            St Helens North
- Marie Rimmer MP                            St Helens South and Whiston
- Mike Amesbury MP                          Weaver Vale
- Rt Hon Esther McVey MP                    Tatton
- Derek Twigg MP                              Halton
- Edward Timpson MP                          Eddisbury
- Justin Madders MP                          Ellesmere Port and Neston
- Fiona Bruce MP                               Congleton
- Dr Kieran Mullan MP                        Crewe and Nantwich
- Christian Matheson MP                      City of Chester
- Owen Paterson MP                            North Shropshire

You may  
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**THEODORE AGNEW**  
**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System**