



Lord Agnew Kt DL

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System
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Mark Conboy
Chair of Governors
St Mary's College
Shear Brow
Blackburn
BB1 8DX

21 February 2020

10/16

Dear Mr Conboy,

I am writing following the assessment of St Mary's College by the Further Education (FE) Commissioner. The FE Commissioner's team conducted an intervention assessment on 25 to 26 November 2019, following further deterioration of the college's financial position since the intervention stocktake visit in July 2019.

From the FE Commissioner's report, it is clear that previous efforts to secure the college's financial position since being placed in intervention have failed. The college is currently operating under extreme financial duress and is unsustainable without immediate exploration of possible structural solutions.

Given the urgency of this situation, I am concerned by the FE Commissioner team's observation that the college's current governance arrangements are unsuited to supporting structural change. I strongly advise both you and the board to work with a National Leader of Governance to urgently address deficiencies in college governance and ensure there are sufficiently robust arrangements in place to undertake a structural change process with confidence.

Due to the instability of the college's financial position, I fully support the FE Commissioner's recommendation for St Mary's to be placed in supervised status with immediate effect. Whilst the February structure and prospects appraisal begins to assess options for structural change, I urge you, the board and the principal to work with your bankers, the ESFA and FE Commissioner's

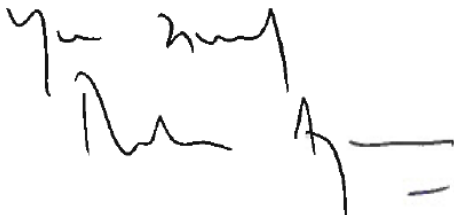
team to secure short-term stability and solvency to the college.

I have accepted all the recommendations of the FE Commissioner and a copy of the 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) what actions you are taking to address all of the recommendations and your timetable for doing so.

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

Kate Hollern MP	Blackburn
Nigel Evans MP	Ribble Valley
Sara Britcliffe MP	Hyndburn
Rt Hon Jake Berry MP	Rossendale and Darwen
Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP	Chorley

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodore Agnew', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

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