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2 St Paul's Place  
125 Norfolk Street  
Sheffield, S1 2FJ

Tel: 0370 000 2288

[www.education.gov.uk/efa-enquiry-form](http://www.education.gov.uk/efa-enquiry-form)

27 February 2017

Mr Grant Birchby  
Interim Principal  
St Mary's Sixth Form College  
Shear Brow  
Blackburn  
BB1 8DX

**Dear Grant**

### **Issue of a Financial Notice to Improve**

Following a request from the college in January 2017 to adjust the EFA funding profile for 2016/17 to address a cash flow issue, the college was asked to provide an updated Financial Plan for 2016-18.

A subsequent review of the revised financial plan was undertaken in February 2017 which resulted in the EFA grading the financial health of St Mary's College Blackburn as inadequate for 2016/17 and 2017/18. This confirmed the colleges self assessment grading of inadequate financial health.

In light of this, as detailed in the Department for Education's (DfE) published position on [16-to-19-education-accountability](#), where a sixth-form college is graded inadequate in relation to its financial health for the current, or forecast year, it is deemed to be in financial failure.

I can therefore confirm that St Mary's College Blackburn is considered to be in financial failure, and as a result I am issuing you with a Financial Notice to Improve. The Notice is attached and copied to the Chair of Governors for the college and the Chief Executive of Blackburn with Darwen Unitary Authority.

In addition to the 16-19 Accountability guidance there is further information about Government intervention in *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills>

The EFA will have regard to the Department's policy, and also to the terms and conditions laid out in the Funding Agreement between St Mary's College and the EFA.

As part of the Notice a referral will be made to the Sixth Form College Commissioner to undertake a formal assessment of the long term financial viability of the college including value for money appraisal.

A report will be published following the assessment by the Sixth Form College Commissioner. The college will be given the opportunity to fact check this before it is finalised.

The assessment, along with this Notice, will both be published in line with the EFA policy to publish Financial Notices to Improve (please refer to the DfE website for further details of this: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sixth-form-colleges-financial-notices-to-improve>) .

We ask that the college share this letter with their Diocese.

You will wish to note that this letter requires acknowledgement of receipt within five working days.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Williamson

Territorial Director - North

Education Funding Agency – Skills Funding Agency

**Cc:** Nick McNeil, Chair of Corporation, Harry Catherall, Chief Executive, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council., Peter Mucklow Sixth Form College Commissioner