



Department
for Education

Alan Fielder
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I am writing to inform you of the government's view of your college's position in light of the Further Education (FE) Commissioner's recent visit, and the next steps that need to be taken to secure improvement at Darlington College.

As you are aware, following Ofsted's assessment of the college as inadequate in February 2015 the FE Commissioner, Dr David Collins, was asked to carry out an assessment. The assessment was conducted between 20 and 24 April 2015.

I welcome the renewed energy Darlington College has taken to identify the necessary improvements following the Ofsted inspection. However, considerable further work is required to restore the college's position as 'outstanding' and to improve the level of efficiency to sector norms. The college now needs to urgently widen the range of expertise amongst members of the senior team and should consider a new curriculum appointment to ensure that quality improvement is given high priority and improvements are implemented at a rapid pace.

The college needs to quickly take action to address significant financial issues. Given the current Director of Finance and Funding is due to leave in June, it is imperative that the college takes steps to put in place appropriate leadership of the finance and registry functions in good time. A robust financial recovery plan should be developed utilising the information captured in the various existing documents relating to cost reduction activity. The plan should have clear objectives and performance measures relating to the size and shape of the College, the level of surplus to be achieved and spend on pay as a percentage of income.

The FE Commissioner's team and the Skills Funding Agency will monitor the progress made against the FE Commissioner's recommendations over the next three months and the FE Commissioner's team will undertake a full stocktake assessment at the end of September 2015 to review the position.



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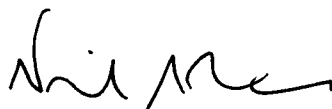
28 May 2015

A summary of the FE Commissioner's assessment and his recommendations is attached.

I would be grateful if you could respond to this letter within two weeks of the date on which it was sent. At that point both the summary and my letter to you will be published on www.gov.uk.

If you have any questions about the FE Commissioner's assessment or this letter please contact Anthony Knowles, SFA, Anthony.knowles@sfa.bis.gov.uk in the first instance.

With best wishes



NICK BOLES MP