



Department
for Education

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[Department for Education - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
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20 October 2023

Fiona Wheeler
Chair of Governors
Strode College
Church Rd
Street
BA16 0AB

Sent by email

Dear Fiona,

Financial Health Notice to Improve - Strode College

This letter and its schedules constitute a Notice to Improve (NTI) in line with clauses within the Funding Agreements between the Secretary of State for Education (DfE) acting through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on behalf of the Crown.

It sets out additional conditions of funding that Strode College is required to comply with in order that ESFA can continue to fund. The conditions set out in the schedule(s) of this NTI are in addition to the conditions of funding set out in the Funding Agreements.

This NTI is issued because through the 3 academic years 2019/20 to 2021/22, Strode College failed to ensure sufficient oversight of subcontracted delivery of Traineeship provision. This has led to funding being 'at risk of recovery' due to non-compliance which is likely to result in inadequate financial health. Strode College is now in intervention.

Schedule 1 attached sets out the action required under this NTI.

Referral to the FE Commissioner

This NTI aligns with the Department's published policy, *College Oversight: Support and Intervention*. This NTI also brings Strode College into scope for referral to the FE Commissioner for an independent assessment of the college's capability and capacity. Once this assessment has been undertaken by the FE Commissioner, we reserve the right to vary the terms of the NTI to reflect any recommendations made by her. These recommendations would be included in an additional Schedule to, or

reissue of, this NTI. The FE Commissioner's office will contact you regarding the arrangements for the assessment.

Monitoring

DfE will closely monitor progress made towards meeting the additional conditions through the scheduled case conferences and will work with you and wider agencies to secure the best outcome for learners, employers, the local community.

Compliance

If Strode College does not comply with the additional conditions within the specified time period, DfE will pursue one or more of a range of options outlined in, or incorporated into, the funding agreements. This may include the use of further education statutory intervention powers as set out in section 56A of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

In all cases, the removal of the additional conditions will occur when Strode College receives a letter from DfE indicating that the additional conditions have been met.

Complaints

If you consider that DfE has acted unreasonably or not followed a proper procedure in issuing the additional conditions, you can make a complaint under the procedure for [dealing with complaints about the DfE](#).

Publication

DfE publishes all NTIs on gov.uk

Reviews

DfE will regularly review this NTI with you. It is likely that the NTI will be re-issued, at least annually, to ensure the terms and conditions remain relevant. DfE reserves the right to reissue at any point should circumstances significantly change.

Action required

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter and the schedule below by writing to me within five working days of the date of this letter.

This NTI is being copied to Ofsted, Somerset Council, Office for Students, and the FE Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Willmot
Deputy Director, Place Based Team Central and South West, DfE

Cc:

John Revill, Chief Executive / Principal

Jos Parsons, Ofsted

Claire Winter, Executive Director Children and Families, Somerset Council

Office for Students

FE Commissioner

Schedule 1: Intervention- Strode College

This schedule sets out the additional conditions required through this NTI. It has been issued because DfE has assessed Strode College as requiring intervention following historical lack of oversight of subcontracted Traineeship delivery (between 2019/20 and 2021/22), which resulted in non-compliance with funding rules.

Timescales

The additional conditions outlined within this schedule must be addressed swiftly. Once the FE Commissioner has completed the assessment, amendments may be issued to confirm any additional conditions that are required.

In addition, where it is evident that sufficient improvement is not or cannot be achieved within the timescales specified, the DfE reserves the right to take further action open to it at any point.

Monitoring and Progress

All conditions will be reviewed at case conference and monitoring meetings with the DfE Territorial Team and the FE Commissioner (regularity to be confirmed by DfE).

Specific conditions

1. The college must work with DfE, ESFA and the FE Commissioner and her advisers to undertake an independent assessment of the college's capability and capacity. The assessment will include a review of subcontracting arrangements, a review of leadership/governance capacity and give consideration to actions required to meet the interests of learners, employers and the local community.
2. This will include supplying all necessary information to the FE Commissioner or her advisers so the assessment can be made.
3. The college must request permission from the DfE before entering into any new sub-contracting arrangements.
4. The DfE reserves the right to procure a third party firm to undertake an Independent Business Review (IBR), where an IBR is commissioned, the college must fully co-operate with this process.
5. The college must attend regular case conference meetings with DfE. Attendees should include, as a minimum: the Principal, Director of Finance and Chair, or other appropriate Governor to represent the Corporation. The meetings will focus on the college's progression against a set of agreed milestones or plan as appropriate, where the college will be expected to provide information to demonstrate proper oversight and timely implementation of agreed actions. DfE will arrange these meetings and your first point of contact is Rosie Dixon.

6. The college should undertake a monthly review of potential cash flow requirements and the college is required to supply DfE with a monthly cashflow forecast along with monthly management accounts by the 20th day of each month relating to activity within the preceding month.
7. The DfE reserves the right to attend governing body meetings and audit committee meetings as an observer until it is satisfied that there is sufficient oversight and challenge of the recovery plan or until the college achieves an improved financial assessment. In addition, the college must supply in advance copies of agendas and papers for meetings as requested.
8. If, in DfE's view, the college fails to take the necessary actions (in whole or part) within the timescales set out, or if evidence of progress is not appropriate or not available, the DfE will take further action.