



Department
for Education

Department for Education
7/8 Wellington Place
Leeds
LS1 4AP

www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

Email enquiry form:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfes

28 November 2024

Gary Lovatt
Furness College
Channelside
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria
LA14 2PJ

Dear Gary

Quality Notice to Improve – inadequate Ofsted

This letter and its schedules constitute a Quality Notice to Improve (NtI) in line with clauses within the [Accountability agreement 2024 to 2025 \(colleges\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Accountability_agreement_2024_to_2025_colleges.pdf) 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 Furness College is required to comply with in order that ESFA can continue to fund the college. The conditions set out in the schedule(s) of this NtI are in addition to the conditions of funding set out in Funding Agreements or contracts.

I am issuing this letter because Furness College's overall effectiveness has been assessed as inadequate by Ofsted following inspection between 8th and 11th October 2024. The report lists all the inspection grades as:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| • Overall effectiveness | Inadequate |
| • The quality of education | Requires Improvement |
| • Behaviour and attitudes | Requires Improvement |
| • Personal Development | Requires Improvement |
| • Leadership and management | Inadequate |
| • Education programmes for young people | Requires Improvement |
| • Adult learning programmes | Requires Improvement |
| • Apprenticeships | Requires Improvement |
| • Provision for learners with high needs | Requires Improvement |
| • Sub judgement for contributing to meeting skills needs | Limited |
| • The overall effectiveness at previous inspection in March 2019: | Good |

Ofsted also deemed Governance as not effective, noting that Governors do not hold leaders well enough to account and are too reliant on what leaders tell them rather than

scrutinising the information that they have available to make the improvements that are needed.

The outcome of this inspection means that Furness College is in **intervention**.

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

Referral to the FE Commissioner

This Ntl aligns with DfE's published policy, [College oversight: support and intervention](#). It also brings Furness College into scope for referral to the FE Commissioner for an independent assessment of the college, and the capacity and capability of its leadership and management, and governing body to bring about the required changes and improvements.

Once the FE Commissioner's team has undertaken this assessment, we reserve the right to vary the terms of the Ntl to reflect any recommendations made. These recommendations would be included in an additional Schedule to, or reissue of, this Ntl. The FE Commissioner's office will contact you regarding the arrangements for the assessment.

DfE may consider this Ntl when determining any eligibility for growth funding and/or it may also affect your ability to be successful in tendering for other funds, and other competitive tendering processes for new provision.

Monitoring

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

Compliance

Compliance, in respect of the additional conditions of funding set out in this Ntl, is improvement at re-inspection to at least an overall effectiveness grade of Requires Improvement.

If, on re-inspection, Ofsted judges Furness College to have inadequate provision, the college will have failed to comply with the additional conditions. This will result in non-compliance and in DfE pursuing 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 Furness 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 [complaints about the DfE](#).

Publication

DfE publishes all NtIs on GOV.UK.

When DfE places a college in intervention and issues a Ntl, the FE Commissioner will always undertake an independent assessment of the college's capability and capacity to

make the required changes and improvements. The summary report will be published on GOV.UK.

You will be required to also publish the summary report on your website within 14 days of it being issued and retain it on the website until the Ntl is lifted.

Reviews

DfE will regularly review this Ntl with you. It is likely that the Ntl will be revised, at least annually to ensure the terms and conditions remain relevant. DfE reserves the right to revise 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 Ntl is being copied to Ofsted, your local authority, Office for Students, and the FE Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Karen Sherry

Northern Territory and ESF Director, Post 16 Skills Group, Department for Education

Cc: Nicola Cove, Principal and Chief Executive, Furness College

Jos Parsons, Ofsted

Mil Vasic, Director of Children's Services, Westmorland and Furness Council

Office for Students

FE Commissioner

Schedule: Inadequate Ofsted Inspection

The DfE is issuing a Notice to Improve as a consequence of Furness College being judged by Ofsted as Inadequate in the published report dated 28 November 2024, this has resulted in the college being placed in intervention.

The summary of your Ofsted grade is as set out in the table below.

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
The quality of education	Requires Improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires Improvement
Personal Development	Requires Improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Education programmes for young people	Requires Improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires Improvement
Apprenticeships	Requires Improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires Improvement
Sub judgement for contributing to meeting skills needs	Limited
The overall effectiveness at previous inspection in March 2019:	Good

This schedule sets out the additional conditions of funding relating to intervention action.

Timescales

The additional conditions outlined within this schedule must be addressed during the period up to re-inspection.

Monitoring and Progress

All conditions will be reviewed at case conference and monitoring meetings with the DfE's Place Based Team (PBT) and the FE Commissioner (FEC) team. The frequency of these meetings will be confirmed by DfE.

In addition, in the event, that the college fails to secure a majority of assessments of 'reasonable progress' or better at any monitoring visit by Ofsted, DfE reserves the right to take further action if deemed necessary.

Specific conditions

1. The college must work with DfE's PBT and the FEC and her advisers to undertake an independent assessment of the college's capability and capacity to make the required changes and improvements. This will include supplying all necessary information to the FEC or her advisers by the agreed deadline/s so the assessment can be made.
2. The college must prepare a post inspection improvement plan to address the issues identified in the Ofsted inspection to enable the college to achieve at least Requires Improvement at the next inspection:
 - a. the college draft plan must be provided to DfE's PBT and FEC advisers by 13 January 2025. The plan must provide DfE with sufficient comfort to enable ESFA funding to continue.
 - b. the plan should clearly articulate how and when the actions will be achieved, measured (identifying activity milestones) and who is accountable for delivery, implementation, and progress.
3. The post inspection improvement plan will form part of the Single Improvement Plan (SIP) the college will develop following the FEC assessment visit.
4. The SIP will need to detail specific, measurable, achievable, realistic (SMART) and timely activities and milestones. It could cover but not be limited to the following areas:
 - a. identified risks and issues and how these will be managed so that the delivery and quality of education provision is improved.
 - b. student number projections and staff planning assumptions, and a detailed sensitivity analysis on these assumptions.
 - c. articulate how Governors will ensure delivery of the plan and how they will monitor progress of the actions within the plan.
 - d. demonstrate how college staff will be engaged in implementation.
5. The college must share a draft SIP with DfE's PBT and FEC advisers who will review and assess whether the proposed activities will secure the college's improvement.
6. The SIP should then be approved and finalised by the college Governing Body after DfE's PBT and FEC advisers' comments have been received by the college. The FEC advisers will provide a SIP template to use.
7. The college must provide evidence that the SIP has been approved by the Governing Body. The Governing Body should review the frequency and arrangements with which it and/or its committees monitor implementation of the actions in the SIP to ensure effective oversight of progress.
8. DfE's PBT and the FEC advisers will monitor progress against the SIP and as part of this college improvement and other related plans to ensure that sufficient progress is being made and that agreed milestones are being met.
9. Governors must commission an independent external review of:
 - a. how the Governing Body supports and holds the college executive to account.
 - b. college leadership and management, to demonstrate that there is sufficient capability and capacity to deliver the required changes at the pace needed.

The scope of the external review, and the proposed facilitator, must be agreed with DfE's PBT and FEC advisers in advance of commissioning.

Governors must then provide strong governance to oversee the delivery, at pace, by the college leadership team.

10. The college must undertake a monthly forecast of cash flow requirements, with consideration to potential impact of reduced income as a result of the inspection outcome, and supply DfE's PBT with the forecast and monthly management accounts, including supportive narrative, for review by 25th of each following month.
11. DfE's PBT will attend governing body meetings until it is satisfied that there is sufficient oversight and challenge, or until the college achieves an improved Ofsted inspection outcome. The college must supply copies of agendas and papers in advance for all meetings.
12. The college Principal should seek support from the FEC, and this may take the form of engagement with a National Leader of Further Education. The Chair of Governors should also engage with National Leaders of Governance for Further Education, through the FEC programmes.
13. The college must attend regular case conferences with DfE's PBT and FEC advisers. Attendees should include, as a minimum, the Accounting Officer (CEO/Principal) and the Chair or other governor to represent the Corporation i.e. Chairs of appropriate committees. The meetings will focus on the college's progression against the milestones in the plan, where the college will be expected to provide information to demonstrate proper oversight and timely implementation of the plan. The PBT will determine the regularity of, and arrange these meetings, and your first point of contact is the Senior Manager, Place Based Team (Cumbria and Liverpool City Region).
14. The college will receive monitoring visits from Ofsted. The college must invite a representative of DfE's PBT to attend the monitoring visit feedback meeting. DfE's PBT will consider the monitoring visit outcomes as evidence of progress being made and reserves the right to take further action in the event that the college fails to secure a majority of assessments of 'reasonable progress' or better.
15. When Ofsted notifies the college of its full re-inspection, the college must invite a representative of DfE's PBT to attend the formal Ofsted feedback meeting.
16. This Ntl may be revised and updated subsequent to the date of issue to reflect progress and/or any change in circumstances including following the FEC's intervention report and recommendations. It may also be revised and updated following and subsequent FEC stocktake visits resulting recommendations. DfE's PBT will also formally review this Ntl with you, at least annually, to ensure it remains appropriate and current.
17. If, in DfE PBT's view, the college fails to take the necessary actions (in whole or part), or if evidence of progress is not appropriate or not available, it may take further action. 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.
18. DfE's PBT and the FEC will determine when the college has made sufficient progress for the Ntl to be lifted, and for it to be placed into post-intervention monitoring and support (PIMS). This will be when the Ofsted grade has improved from Inadequate to at least Requires Improvement at its next full inspection. When the college complies with

this, DfE's PBT will lift the Ntl and place the college into PIMS and confirm this in writing.