



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/dfe

30 April 2025

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 (Ntl) 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/125444/accountability-agreement-2024-to-2025-colleges.pdf) between the Secretary of State for Education (DfE) on behalf of the Crown.

It sets out additional conditions of funding that Furness College is required to comply with in order that DfE can continue to fund the college. The conditions set out in the schedule(s) of this Ntl are in addition to the conditions of funding set out in Funding Agreements or contracts.

This constitutes a revised Ntl, to replace that issued to the college on 28 November 2024 and to reflect the recommendations made following the college's FE Commissioner assessment that was undertaken on 10 and 11 December 2024.

In addition, Furness College's intervention has been escalated to include Supervised College Status due to DfE's assessment that there is increased risk to the college's longer-term stability as a result of the inspection outcome. This revised Ntl, therefore, also includes additional conditions related to Supervised College Status.

The Ntl is as a result of Furness College's overall effectiveness being assessed as inadequate by Ofsted following inspection between 8 and 11 October 2024. The report listed 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.

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

Continued co-operation with the FE Commissioner

The FE Commissioner undertook an independent assessment of the college, the capacity and capability of its leadership and management, and the capacity of the governing body to bring about the required changes and improvements, on 10 and 11 December 2024.

The assessment report and recommendations were published on GOV.UK. on 30 April 2025.

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 college website until the Ntl is lifted.

The FE Commissioner team also undertook a stocktake visit on 25 March 2025, during which the college's progress was assessed and progress against the recommendations reviewed.

DfE expects that Furness College will continue to work cooperatively with the FE Commissioner, and in accordance with any current and future recommendations, whilst under intervention and subject to a Ntl.

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.

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.

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 in line with current Ofsted framework.

If, on re-inspection, Ofsted judges Furness College to have inadequate provision (based on the current framework), 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](#).

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

Ofsted

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

Office for Students

FE Commissioner

Schedule: Inadequate Ofsted Inspection

The DfE issued a Notice to Improve as a consequence of Furness College being judged by Ofsted as Inadequate in the published report dated 28 November 2024, which 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 continue to be reviewed at case conference and monitoring meetings with the DfE's Place Based Team (PBT) and the FE Commissioner (FEC) team.

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 continue to work with the PBT and the FEC and her advisers to undertake the recommendations made as part of the FEC assessment which took place on 10 and 11 December 2024.
2. The college must continue to participate in subsequent FEC stocktake assessments and will supply all necessary information to the FEC or her advisers by the agreed deadline/s so the assessment can be made.
3. The college must continue to implement its post inspection action plan (PIAP) to ensure that the issues identified in the Ofsted inspection are addressed, to enable the college to achieve at least Requires Improvement at the next inspection.
4. The college's Single Improvement Plan (SIP) should be approved and finalised by the college Governing Body and the college must provide evidence that the SIP has been approved by the Governing Body by 30 June 2025.
5. 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.
6. The PBT and the FEC advisers will monitor progress against the SIP, PIAP, and other related plans as part of the college's improvement to ensure that sufficient progress is being made and that agreed milestones are being met.
7. Governors must participate in the independent external review that has been commissioned to undertake a 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.

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

8. The college and Governors must continue to cooperate with, and participate in, the FEC led structure and prospects appraisal (SPA), to evaluate and decide on the college's future structure.
9. The college must increase management capacity and capability to rapidly improve quality and teaching and learning. It must implement an impactful college-wide CPD strategy focussed firmly upon improving teaching and learning.
10. The college must implement a comprehensive and impactful communications strategy to ensure the college's reputation across both internal and external key stakeholders improves.
11. The college must review leadership structures and visibility of senior leaders, to accelerate the pace of improvement and support a single college culture.
12. The college must continue to undertake a monthly forecast of cash flow requirements, factoring in the potential impact of reduced income, and provide it to the PBT alongside monthly management accounts and supportive narrative, by 25th of each following month.
13. As a 'supervised college', the college will be subject to enhanced supervision.

This means that the college should consult and inform the PBT and FEC on strategic management decisions that affect the long-term future of the college. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. any planned changes to the senior leadership team structure or postholders, including the appointment and/or replacement of senior staff
- b. exceptional capital or revenue financial commitments in excess of £25k. The college should inform the PBT by 25th each month on the provided template.
- c. significant change in ownership of property assets including any sub-letting agreements, asset disposals and/or developments

14. The PBT will continue to 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.
15. The college Principal should continue to work effectively with, and actively seek support from, the assigned National Leader of Further Education. The Chair of Governors should also work productively and proactively with the assigned National Leader of Governance for Further Education, to improve Board impact.
16. The college must continue to attend regular case conferences with the PBT and FEC advisers, as scheduled by the PBT. Your first point of contact is [REDACTED], Senior Manager, Place Based Team (Cumbria and Liverpool City Region)
17. The college will receive monitoring visits from Ofsted. The college must invite the PBT to attend the monitoring visit feedback meeting. The 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.
18. When Ofsted notifies the college of its full re-inspection, the college must invite the PBT to attend the formal Ofsted feedback meeting.
19. This Ntl may be revised and updated subsequent to the date of issue to reflect progress and/or any change in circumstances. It may also be revised and updated following any subsequent FEC stocktake visits resulting in recommendations. The PBT will also formally review this Ntl with the college, at least annually, to ensure it remains appropriate and current.
20. If, in the 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.
21. The 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, the DfE will lift the Ntl and place the college into PIMS and confirm this in writing.