



Department
for Education

Department for Education
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www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

Email enquiry form:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

4 April 2025

Veronica Daly
Chair of the Board
Mary Ward Settlement
275-285 High Street
London
E15 2TF

Dear Veronica

Financial Notice to Improve: Financial Health

The Department for Education is issuing this Financial Notice to Improve to the Mary Ward Settlement following the serious cashflow pressures facing the college and the consequential provision of an Emergency Funding facility from the Department. This means the Mary Ward Settlement is now placed into intervention.

This is in accordance with our published policy ([College Oversight: Support and Intervention](#)), which states that:

- a) Where new emergency funding is provided, we will usually place a college in intervention.
- b) Where serious cash flow pressures are identified, we may decide to place a college in intervention.

This letter and its schedules constitute the Notice to Improve (NTI) in line with clauses within the [Accountability Agreement](#) between the Secretary of State for Education, acting through the Department for Education on behalf of the Crown, and the Mary Ward Settlement. It sets out the additional conditions of funding that Mary Ward Settlement is required to comply with in order that the Department 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.

In line with our published policy, we do not want colleges to remain in intervention for longer than is necessary and will assess when Mary Ward has made the necessary progress for this NTI to be lifted.

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

Referral to the FE Commissioner

In line with the requirements of the College Oversight Guidance, this Ntl refers the Mary Ward Settlement to the FE Commissioner's team 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 have 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

The Department 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 and the local community.

Compliance

If Mary Ward Settlement 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 Mary Ward Settlement 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 where the summary report of the FE Commissioner will also be published. You will be required to also publish the summary report on your website within 14 days of it being issued and to 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, the GLA and the FE Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Alan Krikorian
Deputy Director, London, South East and East Anglia Place Based Team

Cc: Therese Reinheimer-Jones, Warden (CEO) Mary Ward Settlement

FEandSkillsData@ofsted.gov.uk - Ofsted
Laura Eden, Director of Education, Newham Council
Christopher Wright, Greater London Authority
Shelagh Legrave, FE Commissioner

Schedule: Financial Health

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

Timescales

The additional conditions outlined within this schedule must be addressed swiftly.

Once the FE Commissioner's team has completed its 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's Place-based Team (PBT) and the FE Commissioner team. The frequency of these meetings will be confirmed by DfE.

Specific Conditions

1. The college must work with DfE and the FE Commissioner's team 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 FE Commissioner or her Advisers by the agreed deadline/s so the assessment can be made.
2. The college governors and leadership team must then work with the FE Commissioner's team and the DfE PBT to develop a Single Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP must set out the priorities and actions needed to improve the college's financial health and secure a financial health grade of at least 'Requires Improvement' as well as addressing all areas for improvement identified in the FE Commissioner's recommendations and this Ntl. The college must share a draft SIP with DfE who will review and make an assessment of whether the proposed activities will secure the college's financial position.
3. The SIP should then be approved and finalised by the Governing Body after DfE's PBT and FEC advisers' comments have been received by the college. The FE Commissioner team adviser will provide a SIP template to use.

The SIP will need to detail specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) activities and milestones, and should cover but not be limited to:

- detailed financial planning tables, including supplementary narrative to explain assumptions in the planning
- the outcomes of exploration into further staff savings for 2024/25 and 2025/26, which should include a thorough review of curriculum areas.
- student number projections and staff planning assumptions, and a detailed sensitivity analysis on these assumptions; for both in year savings and moving forward with a mind to any future structural solutions
- actions to implement savings you have identified, manage expenditure and maintain or increase income, including specific measurable objectives for how you will ensure financial sustainability
- governance and governor ownership and monitoring of the actions within the plan

- the management of any risks to the delivery and quality of education provision

DfE PBTs and the FE Commissioner will monitor progress against the SIP to ensure that sufficient progress is being made and agreed milestones are being reached.

4. The college must attend regular case conferences with DfE's PBT and FE Commissioner's team advisers. Attendees should include, as a minimum, the Accounting Officer (CEO/Principal) and the Chair or other governor to represent the governing body 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 [REDACTED], Senior Manager, London, South East and East Anglia PBT, at [REDACTED].
5. The college should continue to undertake a regular review of potential cash flow requirements, and the college is required to supply DfE with a rolling 13-week short-term cashflow forecast, reconciled to your bank, and a copy of management accounts by 20th of each month.
6. The DfE reserves the right to request that the college procures and pays for an external independent review of its financial, management and governance control environment, with a duty of care to the DfE and the scope of the work to be agreed with the DfE.
7. This Ntl may be revised and updated after the date of issue to reflect progress and/or any change in circumstances including, following the FE Commissioner's intervention report and recommendations. The DfE will formally review this Ntl with you, at least annually, to ensure it remains appropriate and current.
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 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.
9. DfE will determine when the college has made sufficient progress for the Ntl to be lifted. The definition of 'sufficient progress' will be determined following the FE Commissioner's Intervention visit report and set out in an update to this Ntl. This will be when sufficient progress with the actions in the college's SIP have been made. When the college complies with the actions within the timescales set out, DfE will lift the Ntl and confirm this in writing.