



Department  
for Education

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

[www.gov.uk/contact-dfe](http://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe)

Email enquiry form:

[www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe)

Date: 18 May 2026

Mr Meredydd David OBE, DL, FRAgS  
Chair of Governors  
Furness College  
Channelside  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA14 2PJ

Send via email to:

Dear Meredydd

### **Quality Notice to Improve –Ofsted**

This letter and its schedules constitute a Quality Notice to Improve (Ntl) under the Accountability Agreement 2025–2026 for colleges [DfE education and skills agreements and accountability agreements: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#) and in line with published [college oversight policy](#).

It sets out in the attached schedule the reason for intervention and conditions that Furness College is required to comply with under the terms of the Funding Agreement in order that the DfE can continue to fund the college. These conditions are additional to those in the Funding Agreements (Accountability Agreement and conditions of funding).

I am revising the Ntl issued 30 April 2025 following review to reflect the most recent Ofsted inspection report dated 10 February 2026 and following Ofsted's move to a new inspection framework and the Department's updated college oversight policy. Furness College continues to be in intervention.

Furness College remains in Supervised College Status.

This updated Ntl is issued because Furness College is assessed by Ofsted as 'needs attention' in thirteen of the fifteen evaluation areas with only two meeting the expected standard. The report published on 20 April 2026 lists the inspection gradings as follows:

<b>Provider level</b>			
<b>Leadership and Governance</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Contribution to meeting skills needs</b>	<b>Safeguarding</b>
Needs attention	Needs attention	Needs attention	Met

	<b>Provision-type level</b>		
	<b>Curriculum, teaching and training</b>	<b>Achievement</b>	<b>Participation and Development</b>
<b>Education and training for young people</b>	Needs attention	Needs attention	Needs attention
<b>Adult provision</b>	Needs attention	Needs attention	Needs attention
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	Needs attention	Needs attention	Expected standard
<b>High Needs provision</b>	Needs attention	Needs attention	Expected standard

The overall effectiveness at previous inspection between the 8 and 11 October 2024 was inadequate. This inspection took place under Ofsted’s previous inspection framework and condition 3 of the Ntl required the college to achieve at least “Requires Improvement” at its next inspection. The Department’s college oversight policy has since been updated to reflect the fact that Ofsted have moved away from single word judgments. The policy now requires a college to demonstrate sustained improvement against the Single Improvement Plan and to have fully met the conditions of funding set out in the Notice to Improve. Condition 3 has therefore been updated to reflect these changes.

Other conditions have been added or amended to reflect the findings of Ofsted’s most recent monitoring report.

Following publication of the latest Ofsted inspection, DfE have assessed that Furness College should remain in intervention, as sustained improvement has not been demonstrated.

### **FE Commissioner support**

Furness College has received extensive support which includes enhancements to teaching and learning through targeted CPD, a thorough review of the Quality Improvement Plan, strengthened approaches to monitoring learner progress and improving retention, and access to National Leaders of Governance (NLG) support.

Furness College is planning to merge with Blackpool and the Fylde College by the end of the 2025/2026 academic year.

DfE may consider the college’s progress in meeting the conditions of 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, the relicensing of the Institute of Technology, and other competitive tendering processes for new provision.

## **Monitoring**

DfE will continue to closely monitor progress made towards meeting these conditions through regular meetings, led by the FEC team. We will work with you and wider agencies to secure the best outcome for learners.

In line with our published policy, we do not want colleges to remain in intervention for longer than is necessary and will continue to assess whether Furness College has made the necessary progress for this Ntl to be lifted.

## **Compliance**

If on re-inspection DfE considers that the college is still failing to make sustained improvement or is otherwise failing to meet the Ntl conditions, DfE may consider pursuing one or more of a range of options under 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 Ntl 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.

When the 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 also be required to 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 and the FE Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

**Karen Allen OBE**

Deputy Director | Regional Performance Directorate | Northern Division  
Skills Group

Cc: Scott Cubitt, Principal and CEO  
Ellen Thinnesen OBE, Further Education Commissioner, Department for Education  
Chief Executive, Westmorland & Furness Council  
Ofsted  
Office for Students

## Schedule 1: Ofsted quality

The DfE issued a Notice to Improve (Ntl) following Furness College being judged inadequate by Ofsted in the report published on 28 November 2024, which resulted in the college being placed in intervention.

The DfE is issuing a revised Ntl following the most recent Ofsted inspection report dated 10 February 2026 showing as 'needs attention' in thirteen of the fifteen evaluation areas with only two meeting the expected standard. The report published on 20 April 2026 lists the inspection gradings as follows:

Provider level			
Leadership and Governance	Inclusion	Contribution to skills needs	Safeguarding
Needs Attention	Needs Attention	Needs Attention	Met

	Provision-type level		
	Curriculum, teaching and training	Achievement	Participation & development apprenticeships
Education and training for young people	Needs Attention	Needs Attention	Needs Attention
Adult provision	Needs Attention	Needs Attention	Needs Attention
Apprenticeships	Needs Attention	Needs Attention	Expected standard
High Needs provision	Needs Attention	Needs Attention	Expected standard

## Previous inspection

The overall effectiveness at previous inspection on 28 November 2024	Inadequate
--	------------

This schedule sets out the additional funding conditions that apply as part of the intervention. We acknowledge the progress achieved to date in meeting certain conditions and implementing some of the recommendations. However, continued and demonstrable improvement remains essential to ensure full compliance.

## 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 monitoring meetings which will be led by the FE Commissioner's team. The frequency of these meetings will be confirmed by DfE.

In addition, in the event, that the college fails to make sufficient improvement and/or if there is downgrading at any inspection by Ofsted, DfE reserves the right to take further action if deemed necessary.

### **Specific conditions**

1. The college must continue to work with the Regional Performance Team (RPT) and the Further Education Commissioner (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 demonstrate sustained 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 RPT 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 RPT 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 RPT 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 RPT 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 RPT 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 RPT and FEC advisers, as scheduled by the RPT.
17. The college will receive a monitoring inspection from Ofsted. The college must invite the RPT to attend the feedback meeting. The RPT will consider the monitoring outcomes as evidence of progress being made and reserves the right to take further action if there is not sufficient improvement in grades at inspection.
18. When Ofsted notifies the college of its full re-inspection, the college must invite the RPT 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 RPT will also formally review this Ntl with the college, at least annually, to ensure it remains appropriate and current.

20. If, in the RPT'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 RPT 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). The policy now requires a college to demonstrate sustained improvement against the Single Improvement Plan and to have fully met the conditions of funding set out in the "Notice to Improve", and once this has been met, the college will be moved into PIMS.