



Department
for Education

Department for Education
2 St Pauls Place
Sheffield

www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

16 April 2026

David Earnshaw
Boston College
Skirbeck Road
Boston
Lincolnshire
PE21 6JF

Dear David

Financial Notice to Improve: Financial Health and Financial management and other controls

This letter and its schedule constitute a Financial Notice to Improve (FNtl) 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 additional conditions of funding that Boston College is required to comply with 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).

Schedule 1 attached sets out the action required under this Notice to Improve (Ntl).

Referral to the FE Commissioner

This Ntl aligns with DfE's published [College oversight policy](#). It also brings Boston College into scope for referral to the FE Commissioner (FEC) 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 FEC'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 FEC'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 competitive tendering processes for provision.

Monitoring

DfE will continue to closely monitor progress made towards meeting these conditions through regular meetings, led by the Regional Performance 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 assess when Boston College has made the necessary progress for this Ntl to be lifted.

Compliance

Compliance, in respect of the additional conditions of funding set out in this Ntl, is improvement in achieving all targets in the Single Improvement Plan.

If Boston College does not comply with the additional conditions within the specified 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 Boston College receives a letter from DfE indicating that the additional conditions have been met.

Publication

DfE publishes all Ntl's on GOV.UK.

When the DfE places a college into intervention and issues a Ntl, the FEC 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 it 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, Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA), Office for Students and the FE Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Jones
Interim Deputy Director
Further Education Regional Performance Directorate

Cc: Lynette Leith OBE, Principal & CEO, Boston College
Ellen Thinnesen OBE, Further Education Commissioner, Department for Education
Chief Executive, Lincolnshire County Council
Interim Strategic Lead for Employment and Skills, GLCCA
Ofsted
Office for Students

Schedule 1: Financial Health and Financial management and other controls

The DfE is issuing a Notice to Improve as a consequence of Boston College being in intervention for financial health related to serious cashflow pressures and for financial management and other controls relating to failing to adhere to a legal or regulatory requirement.

This schedule sets out the additional funding conditions that apply as part of the intervention.

Monitoring and Progress

All conditions will be reviewed at monitoring meetings which will be led by the Regional Performance team, supported by the FE Commissioner's team. The frequency of these meetings will be confirmed by DfE.

Specific conditions

1. The college to work with the FEC and her 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 FEC or her team by the agreed deadline/s so the assessment can be made.
2. The college governors and leadership team must work with the FEC's team to develop a Single Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP must set out the priorities and actions needed to improve the college's cash position and financial health and address all areas for improvement identified in FEC's recommendations and the Ntl. The college must share a draft SIP within two weeks of the FEC assessment visit with the DfE's Regional Performance Team and the FEC's team who will 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 college Governing Body no later than one week after DfE's Regional Performance Team and FEC advisers' comments have been received by the college. The FEC adviser will provide a SIP template to use.
4. 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.
5. 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 cost savings to ensure a sustainable financial position for 2025/26 and 2026/27, 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
6. The FEC team will monitor progress against the SIP and other related plans to ensure that sufficient progress is being made and that agreed milestones are being met.
 7. The College's new Accounting Officer (CEO) raised the seriousness of the college's financial position with the DfE, and, together with the Governing Body, should continue to progress the work currently underway to address the immediate cashflow pressures, including the implementation of an in-year cost-saving plan that has already been developed.
 8. The college should continue to seek support from the FEC through the DfE intensive support programmes. This may include engagement by the Accounting Officer (CEO) with a National Leader of Further Education. In addition, the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors should also engage with National Leaders of Governance for Further Education.
 9. The college must attend regular meetings which will be led by DfE. Attendees should include, as a minimum, the Accounting Officer (CEO) 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. The college will be expected to provide information to demonstrate proper oversight and timely implementation of the plan. DfE will determine the regularity of and arrange these meetings.
 10. The college should continue to undertake a regular review of potential cash flow requirements and is required to supply DfE with monthly management accounts including a 13-month rolling cashflow forecast, reconciled to your bank, by the end of the third week of the following month to which they relate.
 11. 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.
 12. 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.
 13. 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.

14. DfE will determine when the college has made sufficient progress for the Ntl to be lifted. This will be based on assurance of the college's long term financial stability and sound financial governance, as evidenced through cash flow forecasts, the Finance Record and / or CFFR. In addition, the college will need to ensure that all recommendations from FEC visits have been addressed and that actions and milestones within the SIP have been met.
15. When the college complies with the actions within the timescales set out DfE will lift the Ntl and usually place the college into PIMS and confirm this in writing.