



Department
for Education

Department for Education
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3 September 2026

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

By email only: [REDACTED]

Dear Veronica

Mary Ward Settlement - Notice to Improve: Financial Health

This letter and its schedules constitute a **revised notice to improve (Ntl)** under the [DfE education and skills agreements and accountability agreements: 2026 to 2027](#) and in line with the Department for Education's (DfE) published [college oversight, improvement and intervention policy](#).

Schedule 1 below sets out the reason that Mary Ward Settlement (MWS) is in intervention and the additional conditions of funding that MWS is required to comply with in order that the Department can continue to fund the institution. These conditions are additional to those in your funding/accountability agreement.

This Ntl revises the previous one issued on 4 April 2025. The main change to the schedule in this Ntl is that the institution will now be subject to Supervised Status due to concerns and challenges in governance and leadership. MWS remains in intervention as a result of serious cashflow pressures and the consequential provision of emergency funding from the Department.

The Department may consider this Ntl when determining any eligibility for growth funding and it may also affect the institution's ability to be successful in tendering for other funds, and other competitive processes for new provision.

Referral to the FE Commissioner

In line with Department's college oversight, improvement, and intervention policy, the Ntl issued on 4 April 2025 referred MWS to the Further Education Commissioner (FEC) for an assessment of the institution. The FEC team looked at the capacity and capability of its leadership and management and its board of trustees to bring about the required changes and improvements. One of the recommendations of the FEC intervention report was for MWS to have an FEC-led structure and prospects appraisal, which has been completed.

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 assess when MWS has made the necessary progress for this Ntl to be lifted.

Compliance

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

Publication

DfE publishes all NtIs on GOV.UK.

When the DfE places a college in 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 the Ntl 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, Newham Council, Greater London Authority and the FE Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Ford
Deputy Director, HE and FE Improvement and Intervention Division

Cc: Sue Craggs, interim CEO - Mary Ward Settlement
Ofsted [REDACTED]
Laura Eden, Corporate Director of Children and Young People, Newham Council
Christopher Wright, Greater London Authority
Ellen Thinnesen, FE Commissioner

Schedule 1: Financial Health

The DfE is issuing a Notice to Improve as a consequence of MWS being in intervention for financial health related to serious cashflow pressures and the consequential provision of emergency funding.

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

Timescales

The additional conditions outlined within this schedule must be addressed.

Monitoring and Progress

All conditions will continue 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.

Specific conditions

1. As a supervised college the college will be subject to enhanced supervision.
The FEC team will effect this oversight. This supervision includes, but is not limited to:

- attending board and strategy events, and other committee meetings as deemed appropriate.
- receiving agendas and all board papers, both confidential and non-confidential.

The FEC and her regional deputy lead should be consulted upon:

- the appointment of any senior staff
- the appointment of governors
- significant financial transactions in excess of £25k (reported on a rolling 2-month forward look) including any new, amended or terminated lender arrangements
- significant asset disposals or developments and the use of any capital receipts from those disposals
- any plans for structural change
- any decision which would have material impact upon the college

2. MWS must continue to attend regular meetings which will be led by the FE Commissioner and team. Attendees should include, as a minimum, the Accounting Officer and the Chair or other trustees to represent the governing body. The meetings will focus on the college's progression against the milestones in the agreed Single Improvement Plan (SIP). MWS will continue to be expected to provide information to demonstrate proper oversight and timely implementation of the plan including updates on the progression of a structural solution. The FEC's team will determine the regularity of, and arrange these meetings, and your first point of contact is [REDACTED].

3. MWS 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 of Governors should also engage with National Leaders of Governance for Further Education.
6. This Ntl may be revised and updated after the date of issue to reflect progress and/or any change in circumstances. The DfE will formally review this Ntl with you, at least annually, to ensure it remains appropriate and current.
7. 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.
8. The FEC will determine when the college has made sufficient progress for the Ntl to be lifted. The oversight policy 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 usually be moved into PIMS.