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26 January 2016

Mr Mick Fletcher
Policy Consortium
9 Villiers Street
Hertford
SG13 7BW

Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Sent by email to: ian@nashandjones.co.uk

Our ref: 346027

Dear Mr Fletcher

Thank you for your letter of 22 January regarding my recent speech to CentreForum.

In my speech I set out my ambitions for England's education system and how they can be achieved, including a much stronger focus on vocational training.

I stand by my remarks, referenced in your letter, and am happy to clarify them. When I said that "*educational provision, for the many children who do not succeed at 16, or who would prefer an alternative to higher education, is inadequate at best and non-existent at worst*", I was not proposing that all FE provision was inadequate. As you rightly state, the majority of GFE colleges and independent training providers in England are judged by Ofsted to be good or better. This is highlighted in my most recent Annual Report.

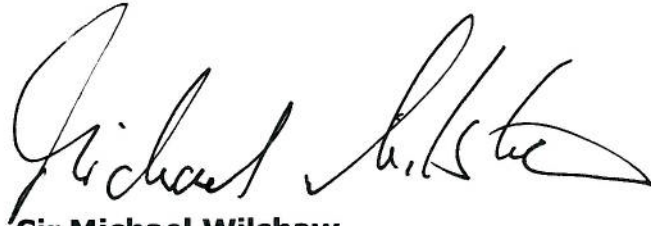
However, for *many* young people across the country, the provision available to them at a post-16 level is poor. The Annual Report also highlights the concerns I have for the sector, not least that in 2014/15 the rate of improvement among FE and skills providers stalled, and in the case of GFE colleges standards actually declined (from 79 per cent rated good or better in 2013/14 to 77 per cent in 2014/15). Inspections from this term show that little progress is being made in turning this decline around.

During my time as Chief Inspector I have witnessed first-hand some excellent FE provision. However, this doesn't controvert my fundamental message that, like secondary schools, the FE sector as a whole needs to improve. I am ambitious for the future of FE, not least the need to improve our apprenticeship provision and ensure that vocational education stands shoulder-to-shoulder with academic routes.

The fact that currently only five per cent of young people enter an apprenticeship at 16 is incredibly disappointing and something I want to see rectified.

Ofsted will continue to champion and disseminate the good practice it sees in the FE sector in the hope that, together, we can ensure all young people receive the high standard of education and training they deserve.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Michael Wilshaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Sir Michael Wilshaw