

Prior Pursglove College

First re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

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Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to Prior Pursglove following publication of the inspection report on 14 February 2014 which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Themes

The effectiveness of steps taken to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection

The effectiveness of the college's strategy to improve success rates

- The college has moved swiftly to improve success rates for this summer and beyond. Senior and faculty managers monitor students' performance rigorously using data that incorporate minimum target grades (MTGs). All students taking advanced-level courses have a MTG for each subject based on their prior attainment at GCSE; formal review of these takes place five times per year. The most recent review takes into account the outcomes of the mock examinations that students sat at the end of February and compares current assessment grades against previous assessments and the students' target grades. Data from the trial examinations indicate that many more AS-level students are achieving well and staying to complete their courses than at a similar period last year. However, the proportion of A-level students predicted to pass their examinations remains well below both the college target and the current national average for similar colleges; the college is acutely aware of the need to rectify this as swiftly as possible. Students identified at risk of failing or performing below their target grade are offered an extensive programme of support. The support provided for students is a combination of specialist subject support, study skills, time management and examination skills and will include extra classes during the Easter holidays; the college is providing buses to enable as many students as possible to attend. The college has drawn on its own staff for this support, but has also recruited a range of specialists to give students the best possible chance of passing their exams.
- Managers analyse data at overall college level, by subject, class and by teacher. This has increased in rigour since the inspection in December, especially as the new management structure has had a chance to embed and accurate college data are more widely available. Managers use data increasingly to hold individual teachers to account for students' performance. Teachers readily accept the challenges presented by tighter monitoring. However, not all teachers use information on students routinely in the planning and assessment of teaching and learning.

- The college recognised that the advice and guidance given to students at enrolment, along with generous entry criteria, while well intentioned, often resulted in students enrolling onto courses that were inappropriate for them, especially in science and mathematics. In September 2013, the college revised the entry criteria for certain courses and also the advice and guidance given at enrolment to enable more students to achieve the grades of which they are capable. It was too soon to judge the impact of these actions at the inspection in December 2013 and it is still too soon to judge the full impact. However, current data indicate improved retention on AS courses compared with a similar period last year.
- Further changes to existing practices, including better transition arrangements from AS to A level, planned for 2014/15, should benefit students.

Priorities for improvement

- For the remainder of the academic year continue to work intensely with current A-level students to identify and implement strategies to increase their chances of success in summer 2014. Ensure that all students at risk of underachieving attend the support available. Monitor the progress of students receiving the support even more closely in order to evaluate the impact and to ensure that all students benefit from the most appropriate level of support.
- Identify high-achieving students and provide challenging support to enable them to achieve high grades in their forthcoming examinations.
- Implement quality assurance mechanisms so that managers can assess the quality of the support currently provided across the college. Ensure that teachers challenge all students to achieve the best they can in and out of lessons.
- Complete regular work audits to check the quality of assessment.
- Monitor and follow up poor attendance and punctuality rigorously.

Steps taken to increase the proportion of good and better teaching to ensure that all students make at least good progress

- The college has implemented a range of strategies to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Shortly after the inspection an external consultant provided training on teaching and learning at the college. Stretch and challenge were the key focuses of the training and the college has examples of where teachers have changed their practice as a result of this training. Soon after the inspection, college

managers carried out learning walks in order to identify good practice and general areas for improvement, such as questioning techniques, for all teachers to work on in their lessons. Senior managers have drawn up a detailed plan for a revised and stronger approach to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the college. While the plan covers all the areas where improvements are required, it lacks precise measurable short- and longer-term targets, particularly in underperforming areas. Managers do not make sufficient use of quantifiable data to enable clear evaluation of whether actions have been successful. The action plan for improving the quality of teaching and learning shows that the college is making effective use of other regional colleges who have received a good or better grade for the quality of their teaching and learning.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that all teachers use information about students, for example from initial assessment and from stretch targets, when planning learning and assessment.
- Identify where good and better practice in teaching, learning and assessment exists within the college and devise ways to share this among all staff.
- Promote high levels of challenge in all lessons and learning activities so that all students make at least good progress and reach their potential.
- Ensure that teachers help support the development of students' English and mathematical skills in lessons and monitor this rigorously through lesson observations.
- Ensure that teachers set meaningful work for students to extend their learning outside of lessons. Check that this is marked accurately with detailed comments to help students improve their work.
- Improve the capacity and confidence of teachers to make the most of naturally occurring opportunities to raise awareness of equality and understanding of diversity. Monitor this through lesson observations.

The rigour of steps taken to improve quality assurance arrangements including the robustness of the post-inspection action plan

- Senior managers have taken prompt action to strengthen quality assurance arrangements. Plans are in place to introduce greater rigour in self-assessment and central to this is the provision of accurate data, which are readily available. Managers at all levels now use data routinely to evaluate performance in different areas and are encouraging teachers to do the same. Discussions with faculty heads indicate that they are adept in evaluating data in order to set actions for improvement. However, it is too soon to assess the full impact of this increasingly rigorous use of data to inform self-assessment.
- The post-inspection action plan covers all key areas for improvement and is detailed. However, actions lack precision and targets are not clearly measurable,

making it difficult to evaluate whether actions taken have led to improvement. The plan lacks short-term or interim targets to assess whether the college is on track to make the necessary progress as quickly as possible.

- A more detailed operational plan underpins the post-inspection action plan; it is too soon to assess how this will have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Priorities for improvement

- Implement a system of teaching and learning observation that takes more account of wider indicators, including students' outcomes and value-added data, so that both best practice and underperformance are identified clearly. Strengthen performance management arrangements so that managers and teachers are held accountable for students' outcomes. For teachers, link performance management more closely to the outcomes of lesson observations and other performance indicators.
- Amend and simplify the post-inspection action plan to include short-term targets. Make better use of data to set measurable outcomes so that the governors, managers and teachers can evaluate the impact of actions more effectively and adjust plans where improvement is not rapid enough.
- Monitor performance rigorously at every level, including through the use of data, so governors, managers and teachers can identify and remedy any underperformance quickly.
- Encourage a culture of honest and accurate self-assessment at every level so that it underpins the college's determination to ensure that all current and future students achieve and progress as well as they can.

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