

Prior Pursglove College

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Josephine Nowacki HMI

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Type of provider: Sixth form college

Address: Church Walk
Guisborough
TS14 6BU

Telephone number: 01287 280 800

Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the fourth follow up re-inspection monitoring visit to Prior Pursglove College following publication of the inspection report in January 2014, which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Themes

How much progress has the college made in improving students' outcomes, including attendance and punctuality?

Since September, students have had two formal reviews of their progress. The college's monitoring and review process, known as Key Assessment Grades is now well established and increasingly effective at identifying students who are falling behind or at risk of underachieving, so that support can be put in place swiftly. The review process also measures how well the college is performing against national averages for sixth form colleges. The most recent, Key Assessment Grades 2, shows that on almost all key indicators including retention and achievement, students' outcomes are currently above target. The proportion of students remaining on their courses is 99.8% for A-level students and 99.2% for AS-level students; both are above the college's targets for the autumn term and significantly higher than at the same time last year. Achievement rates are improving and assessment data currently indicate that these are above the college's challenging targets. The proportion of high grades is also improving and current predictions suggest that this will be above target for A-level students but slightly below for AS students. Based on current college data, rates of progress have improved significantly in the majority of subject areas. Students on vocational programmes are making good progress against their expected targets, as are students on level 1 and level 2 courses and apprenticeship programmes.

The students' attendance rate is high but very slightly below the college's targets of 92.5% for A-level students and 94.5% for AS students. Students' punctuality is very good.

Significant improvement for students

How much progress has the college made in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in particular the way teachers support students in developing English and mathematics?

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve at a rapid rate. Teachers have worked extremely hard to improve their practice to ensure that all students achieve as well as they can, and this is reflected in the increasing rates

of progress and the marked improvement in the proportion of students remaining on their courses. Teachers have responded well to the high expectations set by governors and senior leaders. Teachers are very receptive about how to improve their practice further. The majority of teachers are increasingly adept at using probing questions to check students' learning and to develop deeper understanding of the subject. Data about students' abilities, especially in English and mathematics, are used with increasing effect to plan learning. In the majority of lessons teachers develop students' English skills, including their oracy, very well. Nearly all classrooms have 'word walls' displaying key subject terminology to which teachers and students refer frequently throughout lessons. Strategies to develop students' mathematical skills are less well embedded, but inspectors observed clear signs that teachers are making good efforts to instil the importance of these. For example, they encourage students to practise mental arithmetic by converting their own assignment marks into percentages.

The quality of written feedback, to help students understand how to improve their work, has improved notably in most subjects. Similarly, the quality of support for students who are falling behind, need extra help with their work, or are seeking greater challenge to ensure that they attain the grades of which they are capable, is now considerably better. Since the previous inspection, teachers have worked hard to create strong subject identities in their curriculum areas to stimulate discussion and encourage a love of learning among students. This is especially so in English, sport and the arts, where students are inspired by displays of very high quality.

The recently revised teaching, learning and assessment strategy underpins the improvements in this area. One component of the strategy is a transparent and rigorous approach to performance management, linking outcomes of individual observations to intensive support and training. The other component is a developmental approach that aims to improve teachers' practice further through peer observation, mutual support, greater self-reflection and sharing of best practice. Reports on teaching, learning and assessment are given priority in all meetings, including those of the governing body. Managers are acutely aware of where individual teaching performance needs to improve, and although this is now a very small amount, there is a clear determination to ensure that all teaching becomes good or better.

Significant improvement for students

How much progress is the college making in ensuring that self-assessment is rigorous, especially at course level, and that strengths and areas for improvement are identified accurately?

In response to the criticisms at the last inspection, governors have increased their scrutiny of the self-assessment process. A small working group of governors, set up to assess the rigour of self-assessment and to evaluate the quality of evidence underpinning the judgements, recommended that governors approve the college's

self-assessment report and the judgements made. At the most recent governing body meeting, individual governors asked appropriately challenging questions, demonstrating both an acute understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses, and of the importance of honest self-assessment in helping the college to reach its goal of being a good college. Governors show a determination that no areas of weaknesses, however small, will go unnoticed in the report. They now ensure that appropriately challenging targets are set to remedy any remaining areas of weaknesses, such as in computing, information and communication technology and design and technology. Governors check the progress towards these targets systematically.

Robust and comprehensive data from a range of sources are used to inform key strengths and areas for improvement in the self-assessment report. The college has sought much greater involvement of others, including external moderation from other colleges, to ensure that no stone is left unturned in identifying what the college does well and where it still needs to improve.

The self-assessment report for 2013/14 is an honest self-reflection of the college's position and this represents a significant improvement on the previous report that was over-generous in all aspects. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the governor working group, identified above, has noted the strengths in the revised self-assessment process, but has also identified further areas of development for 2014/15, including greater use of stakeholder feedback and better use of focus groups. This exemplifies very well college staff who have learnt from their experiences and who now have a relentless focus on improving provision for all of their students.

Significant improvement for students

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