



# Prior Pursglove College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

Better  
education  
and care

## Inspection report

Audience Post sixteen	Published 9 December 2005	Provider reference 130575
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## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Prior Pursglove College
Type of college:	Sixth form
Principal:	Stephen Whitehead
Address of college:	Church Walk Guisborough Cleveland TS14 6BU
Telephone number:	01287 280 800
Fax number:	01287 280 280
Chair of governors:	Ian Alexander
Unique reference number:	130575
Name of the lead inspector:	Glad Capewell HMI
Dates of inspection:	17 – 21 October 2005

## Background of the organisation

1. The college was founded by Robert Pursglove, Prior of Guisborough Priory as a grammar school for poor boys. It has been a co-educational college since 1971. The college merged with South Park Sixth Form College in 1997, eventually consolidating the provision on to the Guisborough campus. All post-16 provision in the borough of Redcar and Cleveland is now provided at Prior Pursglove College, at a tertiary college in Redcar and at the outreach centre of an agricultural college, based in York, which shares the Guisborough campus.
2. Redcar and Cleveland is an area with high levels of deprivation and unemployment. The college recruits from a wide range of socio-economic settings, including former mining, depleted industrial and affluent residential areas. Around 90% of learners aged 16 to 18 are recruited from the borough's 11 secondary schools, where overall the achievement of 5 or more grades A\*-C is just below the national average. The remainder of learners in this age group come from a large number of schools outside the borough.
3. In 2004-05, the college recruited 1,470 learners aged 16 to 19, mainly full-time and following level 3 courses. Large numbers of these learners combine vocational and general academic courses. Around 600 adults, mainly part-time, are enrolled on evening courses. The number of adult learners has risen by approximately 50% since 2003. The college has recently introduced a Skills for Life programme and 'learndirect' centre. Of the learners on roll in 2004, 59% were female and 96% were of white ethnic origin.
4. The college's mission statement is: *We aim to be a centre of excellence which provides caring and supported learning for those who can benefit from progressing their studies within the welcoming environment of an inclusive sixth form college.*

## Scope of the inspection

5. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
  - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
  - achievements and standards
  - quality of provision
  - leadership and management

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: grade 2

*Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.*

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

6. Achievements and standards are good. The college sets challenging targets for improvement in learners' achievements and meets most of them. Pass rates at level 3 are high and most learners make the progress expected of them. The standard of learners' work is good. Retention rates at level 2 and the value added scores on a minority of advanced level courses are low.
7. The standard of teaching and learning is good. The college has evaluated teaching and learning accurately and has taken effective steps to secure improvement. Assessment of learners' work and progress is effective. Additional learning support is helpful to learners, but the process of identifying those who need it lacks rigour.
8. The provision at level 3 and for the local community is good. It is well matched to learners' needs. Learners enjoy the many enrichment activities available to them. The college works in close partnership with schools to develop its provision. Its approach to social and educational inclusion is good. Key skills provision does not currently secure satisfactory outcomes.
9. Learners receive good support to help them to achieve, and to stay safe and healthy. There is good advice and guidance at points of transition. Systems for supporting adult learners are well developed. The reasons for learners leaving college early are not investigated systematically.
10. Leadership and management are good. Leaders promote high standards, monitor performance and deal with weaknesses. The self-assessment process is thorough. The college enjoys a good reputation in the local community. Resources are efficiently managed and the college provides good value for money. Plans for improving retention at level 2 and the reviews of some departmental plans are not fully effective.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

11. Leaders and managers have used the self assessment process effectively to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and have acted appropriately to secure improvements in many aspects of the college's work. The college's plans and performance have the continued confidence of the local LSC. Its carefully managed resources are sufficient to underpin ambitious improvement plans.
12. Quality assurance is good. The college has a good record of meeting challenging targets for learners' achievements. The college's assessment of teaching and learning is accurate. Quality assurance processes have been

used effectively to tackle weaknesses. While overall the college uses data well to analyse achievements, in a few instances their use lacks rigour. Quality assurance processes have not yet had sufficient impact on retention rates at level 2 and on the value added scores in a minority of subjects.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

13. The college's approach to the promotion of improvement in areas identified as weaknesses in the last inspection has been good: teaching and learning methods have been a strong focus for improvement; sharing of good practice is more widespread; monitoring and promotion of equal opportunities are now good; and pass and retention rates on vocational courses have risen steadily and are now above national averages. The college's provision is good in all key aspects. Learners' achievements and the standard of their work show steady improvements. The college has responded well to new initiatives and to the developing needs of the local community. It has recognised that there is scope for further improvement in the proportion of high grades in some subjects and in the retention rates on some courses.

Key strengths of the college

#### *Strengths*

- many good and excellent pass rates at level 3 for learners aged 16-18
- good standard of teaching and learning
- effective systems for monitoring learners' progress
- good range of level 3 and enrichment provision
- well-established and effective links with partner schools
- good support for learners
- good leadership
- effective quality assurance arrangements leading to improved outcomes
- very good management of resources

Areas for improvement

#### *The college should address:*

- low retention rates on level 2 courses
- low value added scores on a minority of GCE A-level courses
- lack of rigour in the arrangements to identify additional learning needs
- unsatisfactory arrangements for the development of key skills
- lack of effective procedures for following up early leavers
- examples of weak reviews of departmental plans

## Main findings

### Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

14. The college's self assessment of achievement and standards is mainly accurate. Self-assessment and target-setting have been used effectively to secure clear improvements in 2005. At level 2 and on GCE AS courses the ambition for high retention rates has not been fully achieved.
15. Learners' achievements and standards are good and showed considerable improvement in 2005. Pass rates on most courses for learners aged 16 to 18 are high with many courses achieving 100% pass rates. In 2005, pass rates were higher than the national average on GCE AS courses and at the high national average on GCE A-level courses. Success rates on short courses have been high for the last four years. At levels 2 and 3, overall success rates improved in 2005 to be at least in line with the national average for similar colleges. Retention and pass rates on full-time vocational courses rose significantly to ten percentage points above the national average. Learners of minority ethnic heritage achieve well. On GCSE courses learners meet and often exceed their target grades.
16. Value added results show steady improvement. Most learners in 2005 achieved at least their expected grades. However, the overall value added score on GCE A-level courses is slightly below that expected and show that some more able learners in a minority of subjects do not achieve the grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE scores. There are some outstanding high grade achievements, for example, on GCE AS and A-level further mathematics, GCE AS drama, and GCSE English. The proportion of high grades on a few GCE A-level courses, for example in media and ICT, is low and declining. At level 1, where there are few enrolments, success rates are low. Key skills pass rates are also low. For adult learners, success rates at level 3 are high, but they are low and declining on level 1 and short courses.
17. In 2005, retention rates on level 3 courses improved significantly to meet the national average from their low levels in 2004. Retention rates at level 2 are rising but have been below the national average for three years. A few courses have declining retention rates. For example, on GCE AS chemistry and community sports leadership courses, retention rates have steadily declined for three years to significantly below the national average.
18. The standard of learners' coursework is good. Learners attain well in lessons and enjoy their studies. They develop good cultural awareness and social skills from the wider college experience. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the standard of learners' work in fine art subjects is outstanding. Punctuality is good and attendance rates are in line with the national average for similar colleges at 86%. In 2003/04 around 70% of



learners progressed to higher education (HE), which is a good achievement for a college which takes a large number of learners from families with no tradition of continuing in HE.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

19. The last inspection judged that teaching and learning were well managed. This strength has been maintained. Inspectors agreed with the college's self assessment that a high proportion of teaching is good or better. The views of inspectors about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning concurred with those of senior managers.
20. Teachers prepare well for their lessons and make good use of the resources available to them. In the better lessons learners are engaged, enjoy their work and are motivated to learn. A wide variety of teaching methods are used and learners of all abilities are challenged to do their best and achieve well. In one particularly effective English lesson, the teacher used video clips of different directors' interpretations of Othello to challenge learners' perceptions of Shakespeare's intentions. Well-prepared written tasks helped learners to increase their understanding of the play and of the means by which dramatic effect is gained.
21. In some subjects the college has made good progress on developing materials for the intranet, although the use of e-learning in observed lessons was not widespread. There was also insufficient development of key skills. None of the teaching observed was unsatisfactory although in a minority of lessons teachers spent too much time talking or there were too few checks on learning. In a few lessons, learners spent too much time copying from the board.
22. Assessment of learners' work is good and teachers provide detailed comments on how learners can improve their work. Teachers give freely of their time outside lessons and learners benefit from this individual help. The setting of targets and monitoring of learners' progress against them is good. Learners know the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. The college makes regular and appropriate contact with parents. Arrangements for initial assessment to identify additional learning support needs for learners aged 16 to 18 lack rigour.
23. The range of provision is good. The college provides a wide range of GCE AS and A-level courses. While level 2 provision has broadened, recruitment to these courses remains low. College programmes are well promoted. The close collaboration of the college with schools and other post-16 providers has enabled it to respond to learners' needs effectively. Learners are successful in their studies and the majority progress to HE. Links with industry and employers are satisfactory.

24. Adequate procedures are in place for child protection and staff have been trained to identify the risks and to comply with the legislation. The college provision contributes well to the learners' capacity to stay safe. The health and safety policy is very well implemented and monitored.
25. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good: an effective provision for learners aged 14 to 16 is offered in collaboration with two partner schools; and there are discrete and successful community education programmes with a strong focus on learners' literacy and numeracy needs. The college is responsive to national and regional initiatives.
26. Learners value and participate in the many enrichment activities available to them. Learners' contribution to college life is well promoted through the student council. Good opportunities for work experience include work placements in Europe. Learners take part in numerous charity events which enhance their contact with and appreciation of the wider community, and develop their enterprise skills. Provision in key skills is not yet securing satisfactory outcomes for learners; however there is clear evidence of improvement in portfolio completion this year.
27. Both full- and part-time learners receive good guidance and support. There is extensive pre-enrolment advice and guidance for adults and for learners aged 16 to 18. Good links with local schools and supportive induction provide effective transition from school to college. All adult learners are initially assessed to determine their literacy, numeracy and specific learning needs, for which they receive effective support. The support provided for learners with sensory impairments and basic skill needs is good. The learning support for learners aged 16 to 18 is sometimes delayed.
28. Tutorial programmes for full-time learners are appropriate and effectively monitored and reviewed, although the college has correctly identified that the quality of group tutorials is inconsistent. Full-time learners receive good personal and subject support through frequent individual progress reviews. Effective careers education and guidance includes interviews with Connexions advisers. All learners have good access to a range of welfare, finance and health support services, but there is inadequate access to counselling support. Despite persistently poor retention rates on a few courses, there are no systematic, effective procedures for investigating reasons for early leaving.
29. The college takes good steps to achieve a healthy environment for its learners. Learners have good access to health guidance through the tutorial programme, the annual health promotion day and weekly access to a sexual health clinic. Growing numbers of learners are becoming involved in sports and fitness activities through the enrichment programme.

## Leadership and management

Good: grade 2

30. Leadership and management are good. The principal and governors lead the college very well. The well-developed strategic plan leads to comprehensive institutional development and operational plans. Achievement of the actions in the college operational plans is reviewed regularly. In some departments the formal review of the effectiveness of some actions is weak and does not give a clear picture of progress. There is a good level of accountability at all managerial levels and good communications throughout the college. The physical resources, including the building stock, are very good, well maintained and managed. Recruitment, selection and utilisation of staff are also well managed.
31. The well-established quality assurance system results in a thorough self-assessment report, which has been used effectively to identify actions needed to secure improved performance. There has been consistent improvement in learners' achievements, which are good overall. Governors are well informed about the achievements of learners and about standards in departments. The college makes very good use of data to monitor its own performance although learner achievement data is not yet available on-line for middle managers. Actions to improve retention rates on level 2 courses have not been sufficiently successful. The proportion of high grades on GCE A level courses and value added scores have improved over the last three years but the college correctly identifies that these figures should be better in some subjects. There are some examples in the self-assessment report of over-generous evaluations of students' achievements.
32. The college has effective policies on equality and diversity. There has been much effective work to help staff to promote a positive, anti-discriminatory environment. The statutory requirements of the amended Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act are met. Access for those with physical disability is good. The college site is a safe and secure environment for learners and staff. The financial position is strong, having improved from a weak position four years ago. The average class size in lessons observed was high at 16.7. Resources are efficiently utilised. The college gives good value for money.

## Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age.

2001 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	01/02	21	14	60	-45	77	62	51	11
	02/03	14	29	60	-32	60	52	55	-4
	03/04	89	36	67	-31	89	49	57	-8
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	0		69		0			
	02/03	0		66		0			
	03/04	0		70		0			
NVQs	01/02	0				0			
	02/03	0				0			
	03/04	0				0			
Other	01/02	21	14	58	-44	77	62	52	11
	02/03	14	29	59	-31	60	52	55	-4
	03/04	89	36	66	-30	89	49	58	-8

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream Level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age.

2001 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	01/02	447	71	67	4	91	67	50	17
	02/03	628	56	70	-14	118	60	52	9
	03/04	514	70	74	-4	77	56	55	1
GCSEs	01/02	296	72	72	-1	55	60	56	4
	02/03	385	71	74	-3	54	50	58	-8
	03/04	410	73	77	-4	40	50	62	-12
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	35	51	67	-16	1	100		
	02/03	80	50	68	-18	0			
	03/04	50	64	73	-9	1	100		
NVQs	01/02	0		53		0		50	
	02/03	0		61		0		54	
	03/04	0		61		0		58	
Other	01/02	116	73	49	25	35	77	48	29
	02/03	163	21	58	-36	64	69	49	20
	03/04	54	54	68	-14	36	61	52	10

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age.  
2001 to 2004, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	01/02	3,344	77	78	0	103	55	52	3
	02/03	3,724	81	79	2	91	67	57	10
	03/04	4,061	78	80	-2	99	68	56	11
AVA2 levels	01/02	1,114	89	88	2	12	75	70	5
	02/03	1,147	92	89	3	5	60	73	
	03/04	1,373	93	91	2	24	71	75	-4
AS levels	01/02	2,050	73	74	-1	42	43	50	-7
	02/03	2,311	77	75	2	39	59	55	4
	03/04	2,354	73	76	-3	32	59	52	7
GNVQs and precursors	01/02	122	52	54	-1	2	100		
	02/03	177	72	63	9	11	55		
	03/04	271	62	68	-7	7	57		
NVQs	01/02	0				0		48	
	02-03	0				0		46	
	03/04	0				0		48	
Other	01/02	58	45	44	1	47	60	49	11
	02/03	89	55	63	-7	36	81	55	26
	03/04	63	25	63	-38	36	75	52	23