

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **Prior Pursglove College**

**January 1995**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL**

*The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.*

*College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.*

### **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

*The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:*

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 12/95

## PRIOR PURSGLOVE COLLEGE

### NORTHERN REGION

Inspected March-October 1994

#### Summary

The reputation of Prior Pursglove College for providing academic programmes of study for 16-19 year old students in a caring environment is long established. The college responds to initiatives from the community and hosts local activities. Staff and governors have worked with great energy over the last five years to raise money for the Pursglove Centre, a building which is nearing completion. This will support links with the community still further. Phase two of the building programme addresses the college's need for more suitable teaching accommodation. Good relationships with local partner schools and a sound initial guidance and induction programme ensure a smooth transition from school to college. Students are increasingly recruited from outside the college's traditional area. They enjoy their studies and are well motivated. Examination results are good overall, but there are wide differences in levels of achievement between subjects. Although the marketing of college provision is becoming increasingly sophisticated, there is, as yet, little systematic market research. The governing body is supportive, committed to the college and its ethos. Managers are sensitive and responsive. They work well together as a team. Communications between staff are effective at an informal level. However, the college lacks policies and procedures for ensuring consistency of practice. Assurance and management of quality require particular attention. Accommodation problems are handled sensitively and energetically, despite inherited difficulties. However, some of the teaching accommodation is still unsuitable. The development of the college charter has not been seen as a priority for action.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

<b>Aspects of cross-college provision</b>		<b>Grade</b>
Responsiveness and range of provision		3
Governance and management		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3
Quality assurance		4
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	2

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science	2	Art and design	2
Mathematics and information technology	2		
Business	2	English, history and modern languages	3
		Other humanities	4

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	9
Governance and management	20
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	32
Teaching and the promotion of learning	43
Students' achievements	53
Quality assurance	59
Resources	70
Conclusions and issues	78
Figures	

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Prior Pursglove College was inspected during the period March to October 1994. In all, nine inspectors spent a total of 60 inspector days in the college. Inspectors visited 81 classes, examined samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, college managers, teaching and support staff, students, local employers, representatives of local schools, Teesside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), community representatives and parents/carers.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 Prior Pursglove College, whose charter was granted by Queen Elizabeth I in 1561, was founded by Robert Pursglove, Prior of Guisborough Priory, as Guisborough Grammar School, a school for the poor boys of the area. The school became voluntary controlled in 1958 under the North Riding of Yorkshire. With the establishment of the county of Cleveland in 1974, it came under the direction of Cleveland Local Education Authority (LEA). Since 1971, it has developed from a boys' (11-18) grammar school to a co-educational sixth form college. The college maintains links with its past through the foundation governors who have four nominees on the board of governors.

3 The college is on a compact site in the centre of Guisborough near the county boundary. The buildings include a grade II listed property, built in 1887, and major extensions built in the 1930s, 1960s and 1970s. Cleveland LEA's plans for further buildings to provide laboratory and general purpose classrooms were not implemented. Hence, the college inherited a disproportionate number of temporary classrooms at incorporation. The Pursglove Centre, which is nearing completion, will provide media and sports facilities. A further building programme is planned which will provide general purpose teaching areas.

4 Guisborough is an ancient market town on the edge of the North Yorkshire moors, 10 miles from Middlesbrough. It is in the Borough of Langbaugh which covers the south and east of the county of Cleveland. The unemployment rate in Langbaugh is 12.8 per cent. Socially and economically, east Cleveland covers a wide spectrum, from former ironstone mining villages and heavy industry which is now grossly depleted, to the residential and light industrial areas of Guisborough itself. Many people in Guisborough work outside Langbaugh.

5 The Prior Pursglove site also contains the Guisborough Centre of Askham Bryan Agricultural College, York, a specialist college for agriculture and horticulture. Together, they are the only providers of post-16 education in the town. The newly-established Cleveland Tertiary College, Redcar, also serves the east Cleveland area. There are six partner 11-16 schools, which provide 77 per cent of the full-time student intake, and the college is attracting an increasing number of students from a wider area including parts of North Yorkshire. In 1993, 27 per cent of the school

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leavers in the Redcar and Guisborough section of Langbaugh went into youth training and 57 per cent into further education. The college's enrolments for 1993-94, by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively. Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3.

6 The 13 subject areas the college offers are organised into four faculties: science and technology, mathematics and computing, communications, and humanities. Each subject area has a head of department: four of these are also chairmen of their faculty. The senior management team consists of the principal, three vice-principals and a finance/administration manager. They are supported by the four faculty chairmen. The pastoral side of the college is organised into three teams or 'thirds' of tutors, each headed by a senior tutor and a vice-principal. In September 1994, the college employed 53 full-time equivalent staff of whom 42 were teachers and 11 were support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is given in figure 4.

7 Despite the downward demographic trend in the locality, the college has grown steadily over the last five years. Full-time enrolments have risen from 520 in 1990 to 640 in 1994. Diversification into evening and part-time day provision, mainly for post-19 students, has produced a good response. Further expansion is planned in both areas.

8 In its mission statement, the college identifies its commitment to providing good quality education to meet the needs of the whole community in a caring environment which enables students to reach their full potential. It has high expectations of its students and aims to provide them with a wide selection of courses in a pleasant working environment and a friendly learning atmosphere.

### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

9 The college has a long tradition of providing General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses for the 16-19 age group in Guisborough and its surrounding area. It is responsive to the academic needs of this age group, providing 30 subjects at GCE A level, nine at advanced supplementary (AS) level and 21 subjects at GCSE. The college has a growing commitment to develop the range of provision and to attract a wider client group by introducing a greater vocational focus into the curriculum. Staff are increasingly aware of issues in further education and of the national training and education targets. The college is improving its marketing to adults. Target enrolments for 1994-95 have been exceeded by 5 per cent.

10 Vocational provision within the college is in the early stages of development. A General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) at advanced level in business studies was introduced in 1994 and is taught in partnership with Askham Bryan Agricultural College. Attempts to

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introduce GNVQs in other areas, such as art and design and science, have not succeeded in recruiting enough students to form economically viable groups. The college is building on the existing expertise of its staff and its informal links with the town to develop provision for adults and the community. Last year was the first time that evening courses were offered and 100 students were recruited. This year enrolments have increased to 131. Part-time day enrolments, which include adults joining GCE A level courses, have increased from 15 to 24. The expansion is being monitored to ensure that the growth is effectively managed.

11 Relationships with the six partner schools are positive and continuing to improve. The college is forging links with schools which were previously outside its traditional recruitment area. Targets for increasing the proportion of students coming from these schools are based on the objectives outlined in the college's strategic plan.

12 A number of local universities have been approached over possible franchise arrangements, but, as yet, these approaches have not produced tangible outcomes. A proposed GNVQ in art and design, franchised from the local college of art and design, failed to recruit sufficiently, as did a proposed access course for entry to higher education to be run jointly with a college of further education. The college plans to offer its own access course in 1995.

13 Members of the community speak positively of the college and its reputation for academic success. They appreciate its supportive approach to students. Students are encouraged to respond to requests for assistance from the community through a wide range of voluntary activities with the elderly and disabled. The college's educational and recreational facilities are made available for community use. Guisborough drama group stage their productions in the college and many local societies use the college for their meetings and events. The use of the college will be further strengthened when the Pursglove Centre is operational.

14 The neighbourhood engineering initiative run by the Engineering Council has been welcomed by staff. Meetings are held termly. Local employers have assisted in the design of some GNVQ assignments and come into college to give support to students with practice interviews. Students' visits to companies have developed from this link and a number of successful projects have emerged, such as the participation with local schools in the design and building of a hovercraft.

15 The strategic plan states that the college will investigate the local market for full-cost course work. However, little progress has been made and previous initiatives have not developed. For example, a successful initiative offering European languages to local businesses which was developed two years ago is no longer run.

16 The only example of the use of accreditation of prior learning is in the use of art portfolios. Staff are aware that they need to develop this area to support the college's movement into the GNVQ and adult markets.

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17 The college plans to develop a coherent marketing policy and structure. Market research relies on informal feedback from partner schools and patterns of enrolment. There is little contact with Teesside TEC for the exchange of data about client needs, and few marketing activities have been undertaken to identify possible gaps in the market. Publicity materials need to be produced to a higher standard.

18 Equal opportunities issues do not have a high priority. A rudimentary draft policy was approved by the senior staff in February 1994, building on an initiative from the training and vocational education initiative four years ago. Staff received a copy for consultation immediately prior to the inspection, and the policy has yet to go to the board of governors and the student council. There are no strategies or targets for its implementation. Activities have been confined to enabling female students to visit local companies as part of the 'Take Our Daughters to Work' programme, and a gender analysis of departments which was undertaken for the inspection. There has been no study of the local minority ethnic groups and other groups in the area which are under represented in further education. The college does not have a policy on access, despite its stated aim to give the widest possible access to individuals who wish to benefit from the college.

19 The college took a positive decision after consultation with local church leaders that a weekly act of collective worship for its student body would be counter-productive to the Christian ethos of the college. It supports more informal arrangements for students through events such as 'Friday Live', a college-based discussion group, and presentations from visiting speakers who have a range of religious backgrounds. The college does not meet its statutory requirements under the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992 to provide a weekly act of collective worship.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

20 Students, staff and governors at Prior Pursglove College work well together as an orderly community with a shared set of values and a sense of purpose. Much has been done to strengthen the college's decision-making and management processes. Managers are thoughtful and sound in the leadership they provide and management is seen by staff and students as open and responsive. Some areas still need improvement: the college committees lack terms of reference; the processes for monitoring and review are inadequate; and the pace of implementation is slow.

21 The college's corporate board has been carefully selected: a good spread of interests and strong links with the local community are represented. Seven of the 18 members are independent, bringing with them expertise in higher education, banking, personnel and the legal profession. Four foundation governors are nominees of the Prior Pursglove Foundation. Two places are reserved for parents on a four-yearly cycle to ensure that each cohort of students has its interests represented. Overall, about half the board are parents of current or former students. There is also membership from the local TEC, the student body and the staff. All



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three vice-principals attend governing body meetings, one as a co-opted member.

22 Much of the work of the board is carried out through its committees. Issues causing concern or in need of further consideration are referred to the relevant committee. In addition to the standard committees there is also a buildings and estate committee and an academic and strategic planning group. The roles and responsibilities of the committees are not defined through established terms of reference. Meetings are generally well attended although some take place infrequently; for example, the planning committee had met only twice in the 19 months since incorporation. Formal meetings are minuted and there were also some informal unminuted meetings.

23 The corporate board sees its role as non-executive. It aims to provide overall direction and support to the college, as required, while safeguarding its particular character and reputation. Members enjoy a close working relationship with college management and confidently entrust operational matters to them. Some governors do not feel that they have contributed as much as they might to developing long-term strategies for the college. In the past, governors have not worked with the college to review its performance against the aims of the strategic plan. Staff would welcome closer contact with governors to enable more sharing of priorities and expertise. There is no formal induction or training programme for the governors, but the board has discussed its own performance informally.

24 The college's approach to strategic planning is continuing to strengthen and evolve. The current strategic plan is well structured and thorough, although the operational statements require greater precision. A planning cycle has now been established. Unlike the first strategic plan, which was largely produced by the senior staff group, the current plan builds on department and faculty plans, which feed through to the overall plan, using a standard format. Plans have been discussed across the college, which has acted as a means of communicating good practice between the departments. The process for reviewing and monitoring the plan needs to be strengthened: targets are not always specific. There are no milestones to measure progress and resource needs are not specified. It is not clear what role the staff and governors are to play in monitoring performance and in ensuring that the college meets its strategic and operational aims.

25 The college lacks a coherent approach to policies. The policies which do exist vary considerably in age, format and effectiveness. Many college policies have yet to be presented to the governors. Policies which restrict themselves to reflecting good intentions or reporting current practice require further development. There are areas within the college where there are no policies to offer guidance and structure, for example on learning support and its quality. The health and safety policy is comprehensive, outlining procedures, processes and responsibilities;

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however, it has not been fully implemented, monitored or reviewed. Staff are not aware of the policies which do exist. They could provide few examples of areas where policies have had an impact on practice.

26 College managers work well together as a team, ensuring the effective day-to-day running of the college. Staff and students regard managers as accessible and responsive. Management practice within the college has been strengthened by introducing more frequent meetings. The senior management group meets for an hour twice a week, with one meeting allocated to strategic issues and the other to operational ones. In addition, there is a senior staff meeting fortnightly, bringing together the three senior tutors, the four faculty chairmen, the staff governor, and the senior management team. There is a full staff meeting every fortnight; support staff attend as required and there is a weekly meeting for clerical staff. The lines of communication and responsibility are clearly understood: staff feel able to contribute to the decision-making processes in the college.

27 About half the college's full-time teaching staff are designated heads of department or carry more senior responsibility. The 13 subject departments range in size from one member of staff to five and are grouped into four faculties. The faculty chairmen are also heads of departments. The faculty structure was introduced to overcome the isolation which might result from the number of small departments and staff recognise the value of the faculties as a means of achieving more effective communication. The method of designating the chair of each faculty varies: in three faculties, the position is now permanently held by one head of department, but in the fourth faculty the position rotates annually between two heads of department. The faculty chairman is less a manager than a co-ordinator and administrator. Many management functions such as planning, reviewing and budgeting still take place at departmental level and this impedes the implementation of some cross-college initiatives. The college should consider whether there is opportunity for more effective allocation of management responsibilities.

28 A range of cross-college responsibilities has been established to help the college meet new demands. Staff participation in developments is encouraged by involving them in subcommittees and working groups established to address specific issues. A lack of firm guidance from management has meant that good intentions do not always lead to action. A number of initiatives have not been followed through to their conclusions. Meetings of faculties and departments are not recorded systematically so that there is a loss of clarity and difficulty in identifying the necessary focus for ensuring action. Good practice developed in one area of the college is not always transferred to others. Initiatives taken by individuals lose their impetus when that person is no longer available. Examples of this include the young enterprise scheme and the 'mediatheque', a unit designed to support foreign language development.

29 Managers have shown sensitivity in their handling of staffing issues. Despite reductions in staffing which have been made in order to remain

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within budget, staff morale is generally good. The college has made imaginative use of a range of different strategies to achieve the flexibility it needs to meet its curriculum commitments. Staff from a local school are employed on fractional contracts. The proportion of part-time to full-time staff is 20 per cent which is high for a sixth form college. A register of potential part-time staff is kept. External consultants and contractors are used, for example, to develop the college's accommodation strategy, to support the personnel functions, to provide catering services and to develop and audit the health and safety policy. A staff handbook exists in draft only. Job descriptions are in place for support staff but not for teaching staff.

30 The general approach to finance is sound and prudent: the college has turned a small deficit inherited at incorporation into a planned surplus. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £17.96 compared with a median for sixth form colleges of £19.81. This reflects the level of funding which the college received from Cleveland LEA prior to incorporation: the college was historically funded at a lower level than other sixth form colleges in the authority. Summaries of income and expenditure for 1993-94 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Budget allocations are made to appropriate cost centres such as departments and cross-college areas of activity. The departments receive funding according to historical allocations. Staff feel confident that allocations are fair although they may not all understand the basis on which they are calculated. A contingency fund is retained centrally for innovations.

31 The quality and support provided by the college's management information systems is adequate. It meets management and staff requirements, though in general it responds to staff requests rather than systematically supplying information. Monthly financial reports are provided to heads of department in their capacity as budget holders. Work is under way on suitable formats for the reports to ensure that they are easy to understand. The student module is regularly updated as students move through the stages of application and enrolment: staff are positive about its value and use it to supply lists of groups and trends in option choices at school. The college is taking part in the FEFC's pilot on individual student records.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

32 The college ethos of support and care results in friendly relationships between staff and students. Liaison with partner schools is effective: there are both personal and formal contacts at a variety of levels.

33 While they are still at school, prospective students for Prior Pursglove College receive useful information to help them choose appropriate courses, subjects and options. Senior college staff attend meetings at the schools and give talks to teachers, students and parents. The college hosts open evenings for prospective students and their parents. Information on the college and its courses is provided in a variety of formats. Each partner

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school has a designated member of the college staff to act as a first point of contact and to help build up a good working relationship between school and college.

34 Interviews for prospective students are undertaken at the school. They take place over short periods so as to minimise disruption. Students talk positively about the process and the clarity of the information they receive. They are guided to apply to the college by the schools themselves. In effect the schools operate an informal selection process, and less able school pupils are not seen by the college staff. Prospective students are invited to a preview day at the college in the summer: this offers them an early chance to meet their course tutor and to gain experience of a range of different lessons within and beyond their selected programme of study. A second interview takes place after the publication of examination results.

35 The process of managing applications and enrolments is sound: all applications are entered on a central database which is updated at each contact. Students bring their records of achievement with them to their interview and further work begins on these at the first tutorial. The programme of induction is well planned and documented. One day is set aside to introduce students to the college, followed by specific subject and course inductions organised differently by each department in the following weeks. The college does not evaluate the programme but students generally spoke about it with appreciation.

36 The academic support which students receive is constructive: students feel able to approach individual subject teachers as need arises. Students are offered the opportunity to change their subject choices if they wish. Many of the more able students are encouraged to study four GCE A levels initially as a method of finding out which three subjects they would ultimately prefer to follow. This practice allows students to try subjects which they might not have considered otherwise.

37 Attendance at classes is monitored, although each department organises this process differently. Concerns over student absence are passed to tutorial group tutors. The college requires attendance at a minimum of 80 per cent of sessions in each half term. Any students who do not meet this requirement are interviewed by their tutor. Statistical analysis of attendance is kept at departmental level and communicated to the senior tutors. There is no analysis of attendance rates across subjects or across the college as a whole.

38 Tutor groups are composed of students from different years and subjects. The three senior tutors have meetings with the tutors in their 'thirds' to discuss tutorial arrangements but these are not used to identify an appropriate pastoral programme. Tutorials are limited to registration and reading of the daily bulletins. There is no structured programme of support or pastoral development for the students. The well-structured approach to completing records of achievement is an exception to this. Both staff and students have positive attitudes towards records of

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achievement. There is no qualified counsellor, and there are no recognised procedures for referring students to other agencies.

39 Students have good opportunities for extra-curricular activities such as sport, music and theatre visits. The college has its own swing band which gives frequent concerts in the surrounding area. Events are organised by the student council which is also involved in worthwhile fund raising. The student gatherings called by the principal are intended to be compulsory. However, students do not value these occasions and many do not attend them.

40 Students have a high regard for the college resource centre, and particularly appreciate the opportunity to purchase stationery at competitive prices. The centre contains a compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database facility, and careers and reference materials. Audio and video equipment and computers are also available and there is a quiet room for revision which the students value. There are two smaller resource centres within the faculties of science and humanities. The college has yet to evaluate their use. There are no workshops to support learning and some students report that their requests for additional assistance in communications skills have not been met. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not systematically identified. There is no screening or assessment of learning requirements on entry to the college but where students are found to be in need of support this is offered sympathetically on an individual basis. Hearing-impaired students and those with dyslexia have been given personal support. The college recognises that it needs to make progress in identifying those in need of additional learning support and in developing appropriate provision for them.

41 Work placements form part of the course requirements for GNVQ business studies. Their use in the rest of the college has not been developed. Although individual staff encourage their students to undertake some work experience, there is no monitoring to identify the students involved and no evaluation of the experience of those who engage in work experience. Many students organise their own placements. Log books and questionnaires on work experience have been used effectively in small-scale pilots but these have yet to be evaluated. Staff design and administer student questionnaires but are not always confident about analysing the resulting documentation.

42 The careers guidance which students receive focuses mainly on progress to higher education. Students wishing to move into other fields of study or to employment receive much less effective careers support. The local careers service offers a structured appointment and guidance programme which is operating in the college for the first time this year. Students are encouraged to set targets for their personal and academic development. In their second year, students have access to a programme which includes completing curricula vitae and attending practice interviews but many felt this was available too late to be fully useful.

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Further guidance and support is offered after the publication of the examination results when the principal and vice-principals are available for consultation.

### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

43 Of 81 teaching sessions observed, 64 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. In only six classes were the strengths outweighed by the weaknesses. The grades awarded to the sessions are shown below:

#### **Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		9	32	20	4	0	65
GCSE		1	7	1	1	0	10
GNVQ		1	1	1	0	0	3
Other		1	0	1	1	0	3
Total		12	40	23	6	0	81

44 Relationships between staff and students are good. Students enjoy their learning, support the college and the teaching staff, and speak warmly of the rapport they enjoy with their teachers. They work hard, particularly at examination time. Practical work is carried out safely and competently. Overall, the classroom management is good and students are well behaved. Revision for examinations is well structured.

45 Staff show a sound knowledge of their subjects and are confident in their delivery. They work hard to ensure that students understand their tasks and that learning is being achieved. A variety of teaching methods was evident in the better lessons. In art, individual and group work were combined well. In computing and information technology the class work was challenging and students also received learning materials which enabled them to organise their own work more effectively. In geography classes, students were encouraged to work in groups and there was often a lively buzz of conversation relating to the task. In most subjects, the dominant style of teaching was one in which the teacher addressed the whole class for most of the lesson or combined this with questions which encouraged students to participate. For example, many of the lessons in English and history followed a well-structured question and answer format. Generally, teachers developed topics logically and information was provided at a pace which maintained students' attention and interest. Students were good listeners. The notes which they took in class varied in quality: in science they were detailed and accurate; in humanities, they were often less well organised.

46 In some of the weaker sessions, the abstract nature of the questions posed by teachers and the lack of variety in methods of learning led to some students losing their concentration and interest. Science students

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were expected to listen for long periods of time and were insufficiently involved in their work. Although there was some paired and group work in English and history, students were not given enough opportunity to think for themselves or to discuss issues with their fellow students. On some occasions in computing, students were confused by the rapid delivery interspersed with requests for questions and answers while they were copying from the board: they had little time to assimilate information or to respond.

47 Most teachers gave little attention to the different levels of ability of students in their classes. In humanities, for example, there were few lessons in which students were set tasks which enabled them to work at rates reflecting their ability levels: some able students felt that they did not know what they had to do to improve further while less able students failed to receive the help they required. Additional support in mathematics is available for students taking physics, biology and psychology.

48 The college is working to improve information technology support for all students. It is taking steps to ensure that all students have the opportunity to take a short course in information technology. Those following the GNVQ advanced course in business are given specific support in the development of their information technology skills and many students have the opportunity to wordprocess their work. Students can borrow lap-top computers on request. In some areas of work, students are often confused and frustrated by the computer equipment which is provided. In art, for example, the computer-aided design computer is not compatible with other equipment in the department.

49 The aims and objectives of GCE A level and RSA Examinations Board (RSA) programmes in computing and information technology are comprehensive and clear. Students are aware of them and able to challenge them. In art, students clearly understand the aims of their courses. Humanities students indicated that they would find it useful to have a course outline so that they could read ahead and understand the context of new work more easily: although the subject syllabus is displayed in every classroom, they received few written details of the topics to be studied. Modern languages classes are well prepared and courses have a clear structure, though the details of these are not always shared with the students.

50 There is a lack of uniformity between departments and faculties in the way they co-ordinate and produce schemes of work and session plans. Standard pro formas exist for recording schemes of work but these are not uniformly maintained. In English and history, most staff do not keep session plans, and the programmes of study for the term and the year are recorded briefly. All the part-time staff in the department of modern languages produce schemes of work and session plans. There is little evidence of in-depth professional discussion between colleagues in the humanities area. Consequently, the potential benefits of joint planning and a joint approach to teaching strategies are missed.

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51 Staff maintain appropriate standards of assessment, but the marking of students' work varies in quality between subjects. In science and business studies, students' work is checked regularly, marked conscientiously and returned promptly. The assessed work allows students to identify the standard they have reached and there is often the opportunity, subsequently, for classroom discussion. In modern languages, some of the written comments on students' work are helpful and informative; others less so. In humanities, the quality of marking is mediocre: teachers' comments are often vague and fail to indicate to students how they could improve their performance.

52 Records of student progress in computing and information technology are comprehensive: students are encouraged to contribute their own self assessment in order to improve their personal performance. For example, at their own request they now enter assessment and evaluation responses on a standard wordprocessor template, thus using information technology in the development of their records of achievement. Records of achievement are also in use in business studies. The GNVQ tutorial review sheet highlights academic progress and the development of core skills and records students' short-term learning targets. Some GCE A level students have the opportunity to set their own learning targets in consultation with their tutors. However, students' records of progress at A level are basic, lack detail and fail to identify weaknesses and/or areas for development. In some instances, all records are retained by the teacher.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

53 In 1993, the college's GCE A level pass rate, including general studies, was 78 per cent compared with an average of 80 per cent for sixth form colleges nationally. In 1994, the pass rate was 80 per cent. In 1993, the average points score for candidates entering for two or more GCE A levels was 15.2 (where A=10, E=2) making it the leading college in the northern region, ranking 28th among all colleges in the sector.

54 In 1994, pass rates well above the national average for sixth form colleges were achieved in biology (92 per cent), art and design (97 per cent) and economics (100 per cent). Results in general studies have risen over the three years from a pass rate of 67 per cent in 1992, to 69 per cent in 1993, to 80 per cent in 1994. Below average pass rates were recorded in geography (53 per cent), German (83 per cent), mathematics (80 per cent) and English language (75 per cent). Fluctuations have occurred in business studies: in 1993 the results were above the national average (87 per cent, compared with the national average of 83 per cent) but in 1994 they fell to 76 per cent. Improvements have been achieved this year in chemistry and computer studies but less satisfactory results have occurred in German, mathematics and physics. In some subjects, students achieve well at the higher grades: for example in 1994, 43 per cent of history students achieved a grade A or B.



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55 In 1993, the overall GCSE pass rate at grades A-C was 68 per cent compared with the national average for sixth form colleges of 50 per cent. Grade A-C passes were achieved by 69 per cent of students in geography, health studies and environmental studies, by 75 per cent in French and by 100 per cent in German and Spanish. Poorer results included English (24 per cent compared with 55 per cent nationally), biology (15 per cent) and business studies in which none of the 16 taking the examination in 1992 and 1993 achieved above a D grade.

56 Counter to national trends, the college is increasing its range of available AS levels. Information technology and art and design are available for the first time this year. The number of students taking AS courses is low, but pass rates are good. In 1991, 76 per cent of students achieved pass grades. In 1992, there was a pass rate of 95 per cent and in 1993, the pass rate was 83 per cent compared with the national average for sixth form colleges of 72 per cent. In vocational courses in typewriting and computer literacy, 57 per cent of the students achieved a distinction in 1993.

57 The college retention rate of 96 per cent is high and represents an increase over previous years. The number of students who complete their courses compares favourably with the national average of 88 per cent stated in *Unfinished Business*, published by the Audit Commission and the Office for Standards in Education, 1993.

58 The college monitors the destinations of its students. Most students come to the college hoping to proceed to further and higher education and many achieve this aim. In English and history, 20 per cent of students take the subject as some part of their future course of study. The proportion of students progressing to higher education has declined from 51 per cent in 1992 to 47 per cent in 1993, which is below the national progression rate for sixth form colleges. Students, particularly those from rural areas, have low expectations of entering higher education. An increasing number progress to further education: 20 students took places in further education in 1992 and 86 in 1993. In 1993, 4 per cent of students entered employment directly from the college.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

59 The college does not have a policy on quality assurance and there are no overall procedures or systems for ensuring that the quality of provision is maintained or enhanced. The strategic plan makes no reference to the need to develop a strategy for quality or for establishing over-arching college standards. The only reference to quality is the position statement produced for the inspection. Although systems for maintaining quality operate in departments, these lack uniformity. The information which is collected is not collated centrally and there is no requirement for regular reports on quality issues at subject and/or course level. The college position statement concentrates on assertions of the quality of its students, staff, curriculum, accommodation, communication, achievement and

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management, but no evidence is provided to support these assertions.

60 A quality group, established in February 1994, has met twice. It is composed of representatives of the faculties, the cross-college functions and support staff. No further meetings are scheduled. It lacks specific terms of reference. The members perceive their role to be the identification and dissemination of good practice to colleagues, while maintaining the freedom of action and individuality of the different departments. The group lacks clear leadership and an operating framework. Members appreciate the developmental nature of the process. However, their lack of experience in dealing with quality issues has made it difficult for them to focus on relevant issues and to take appropriate action.

61 Most staff are aware of examination results, enrolment, retention and destination statistics. Specific targets for the numbers to be recruited from partner schools, for adult recruitment and for college-wide retention rates have been established in the strategic plan. Other targets are general and no strategy is proposed for their realisation. At a college level, the subject examination results are analysed using the Cleveland Research and Intelligence Unit data. The college analyses candidates' examination performance and compares results between subjects. Departmental course results are discussed in an annual review meeting between the individual head of department, the principal and the vice-principal and outcomes are disseminated to the departments. The extent to which departments collect and use data varies between the departments: for example, it is weak in science, stronger in art and design. Business studies have acted constructively upon the moderator's reports for the GNVQ in business.

62 Although individual departments, such as mathematics, art and biology, evaluate their courses, the approaches and formats differ. There is no requirement for a formal report. Individual departments are using questionnaires to elicit student feedback but there is no consistent college-wide approach and no formal procedures for collecting this information. Cross-college areas such as the resource centre and the independent suppliers of refectory services also evaluate provision in their own ways. Parents are requested to complete a comments form which they receive with the student report: responses are deposited on the individual student's file but there is no attempt to collate the information centrally. A system is being developed to elicit student concerns and comments in writing. At present, there is no procedure to ensure that action occurs in response to issues raised by students and no method of informing students and staff about the actions which have been taken.

63 The strategic plan states that all staff should have the benefit of staff development and staff are appreciative of their easy access to development activities. The college allocated 0.3 per cent of the college budget to staff development in 1993-94 and this has been increased for the current academic year. The provision of internal courses and a system under which colleagues cover for each others' absence during staff development activities enable economic use to be made of the allocation.

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64 Staff-development activities are available equally to full-time, part-time and support staff. In addition, all college staff attend statutory professional development days for in-service training. Some courses have been specially designed to meet general needs; for example a programme of development in information technology. Within the last year, 92 per cent of teaching staff and 83 per cent of support staff have attended at least half a day of development activity. The training needs of maintenance and caretaking staff have also been identified. All have taken appropriate training in electrical testing and updating on the regulations for the control of substances harmful to health.

65 The staff-development policy statement dates back to 1990. Although it has been revised since incorporation, it has not been greatly altered. There are no procedures in place to ensure the development of a strategy for identifying and setting priorities to meet the needs of the staff and of the college as a whole. Identification of needs is undertaken at departmental level and individuals largely take the initiative in deciding which events to attend. Evaluation is informal. There are no specific systems to ensure that it takes place. The perception of senior management is that activities meet the needs of staff but this conclusion is based on informal evidence. Appropriate documentation is lacking. The college has investigated the possibility of securing Investors in People accreditation but as yet no decision has been reached.

66 Induction for new and part-time staff is handled informally at departmental level; there is no formal programme. However, part-time staff are invited to a lunch-time briefing at the beginning of the year where they are able to meet senior staff. Part-time staff appreciate this opportunity and feel supported and welcomed into their departmental teams.

67 The staff appraisal programme began when the college was still with Cleveland Education Authority and a third of the staff have had some form of training for appraisal. However, the programme of training was allowed to lapse and staff now need updating before appraisal can move forward effectively. The college aims to complete the appraisal of all teaching staff by June 1997 but appropriate documentation has still to be developed. Support staff will be included in the programme following the signing of new contracts.

68 At the time of the inspection, the college's student charter was not yet in its final form. It had not been to the governors for their consideration nor had it been submitted to the FEFC by the required deadline. A small task group was identified by senior management in January 1994 and charged with producing the draft charter for submission to the governing body. A decision was made by the task group to produce a summary document which builds on existing practice rather than to develop a comprehensive charter document. The first draft was produced in June 1994 and members of the college student council consulted on its format and content. Some amendments were suggested by the council which are

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in the process of being incorporated into the draft. In its current draft form the charter is very brief and the statements within it provide limited challenge to the college. Many of the supporting documents for the charter are yet to be identified and produced. Some sessions have taken place to raise staff awareness about the charter but staff have had little involvement in the development process. The general student body have no knowledge of the charter. The pace of development has been leisurely. The college should address the issues of effective consultation and production of the charter as matters of priority.

69 The college's quality self-assessment report was generated after consultation with middle managers, including faculty chairs and senior tutors. The format adopted followed the guidelines given in FEFC Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and the analysis was organised in terms of strengths and weaknesses. The college claimed over-optimistic grades for cross-college provision, and some of the judgements in the reports were naive.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

70 The college has a committed and well-motivated staff. They show concern for their students and support for each other. Staff morale is good and many staff devote time to support students in extra-curricular activities. Support staff are valued members of the college and provide a flexible and effective range of services. Some technicians also help with general college repairs. A joint consultative committee representing staff was established at the time of incorporation and this provides an official communication channel between staff and management. Staff turnover has been low.

71 Staff are well qualified to teach the existing curriculum. In a few areas, there is a need to develop relevant professional qualifications and vocational skills to meet the requirements of a growing vocational programme. Few teachers have industrial or commercial experience. College management is encouraging further professional development and increasing the use of part-time lecturers with relevant experience. College figures indicate an increase in the ratio of students to staff from 13:1 in 1993-94 to 15.6:1 in 1994-95.

### **Equipment/learning Resources**

72 The work of students and staff is adequately supported by a good range of equipment for teaching and learning. All departments have their own supplies of teaching aids and students are supplied with modern text books. Each department has access to its own consumables budget. Arrangements are in place to check stock regularly and to ensure necessary replacements. The resources centre has a good stock of 9,450 books and additional reference materials and periodicals.

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73 The college has recently improved its information technology facilities. The ratio of students to computers is 10.7:1. Computers are used in a variety of ways through workshops and specialist subject areas. There are networked computers in a room adjacent to the learning resources centre. These are also networked to a suite of computers upstairs. A good stock of 230 videos for reference use and CD-ROM applications are available. The 'mediatheque' houses a satellite system with video recorders, television, and language videos to support modern languages. It is a valuable facility, which has a potential for closer integration into the work of the college.

74 A college-wide survey of equipment has recently been completed and a maintenance programme has begun. There is no systematic replacement strategy. Not all staff are sufficiently experienced to enable them to make full use of the equipment to which they have access.

### **Accommodation**

75 Prior Pursglove College is located on a pleasant historical site. The public areas are clean and well maintained. The college suffers from a number of inherited problems such as a lack of maintenance, difficulties with flat roofs and poor wheelchair access. The listed buildings provide a particular challenge. A third of the teaching space is in demountable buildings which create problems of access for wheelchair users, have inadequate heating systems and are expensive to maintain. Some recent extensions and improvements have been well managed, especially in the cafeteria and concourse areas which are bright and attractive. Some spaces in the old building are too small for the activities which take place in them.

76 Estate management is at an early stage of development but there has been generally sound management of a difficult situation. A database for planning essential work is being developed. The recently-published accommodation strategy was developed by an outside contractor. A long-term strategy is in place for major building work which predates incorporation, although policy is still unclear for the older buildings such as the grade II listed buildings.

77 The new Pursglove Centre is nearing completion and will provide a sports hall, media and drama facilities and a large lecture theatre. This will enhance the image of the site and represents a significant increase in appropriate accommodation to assist progress with the new vocational curriculum. Finance has been raised by energetic fund raising efforts over several years. At present, there is little new teaching space but the agreed second phase of the building project should address this problem and provide increased access for students with mobility problems.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

78 The college delivers its curriculum in a supportive environment reflecting its Christian ethos and the close community in which it is located.

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Particular strengths of the college are:

- students who enjoy their studies and are well motivated
- generally good examination results
- staff and managers who demonstrate a strong sense of purpose, a commitment to learning and to the well-being of the students
- open channels of communication
- well-qualified teaching and support staff
- a capable and committed corporate board with a broad range of experience and links with the local community
- sound liaison with local schools which has resulted in strong relationships with them and their staff
- sensitive and energetic handling of accommodation issues despite inherited problems.

79 If the college is to build upon existing strengths it should address the following issues:

- the lack of effective policies to guide the college and ensure increased consistency of practice
- the over-reliance on informal and disparate processes and procedures
- the strengthening of procedures for monitoring and review
- inconsistencies between subjects in students' examination performance
- an inadequate pastoral programme
- the lack of effective systems for identifying and supporting students who require learning support
- some unsuitable accommodation, including buildings which have inadequate access for students who use wheelchairs
- consultation on, and production of, a college charter.

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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

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  - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

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  - 3 Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

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  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (September 1994)

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  - 5 Income (1993-94)

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  - 6 Expenditure (1993-94)

**Note:** the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

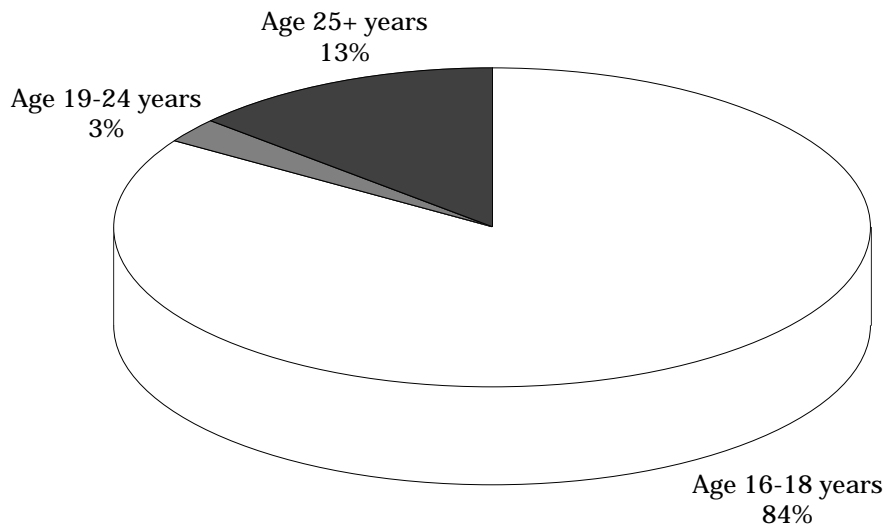
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**Figure 1**

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**Prior Pursglove College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)**

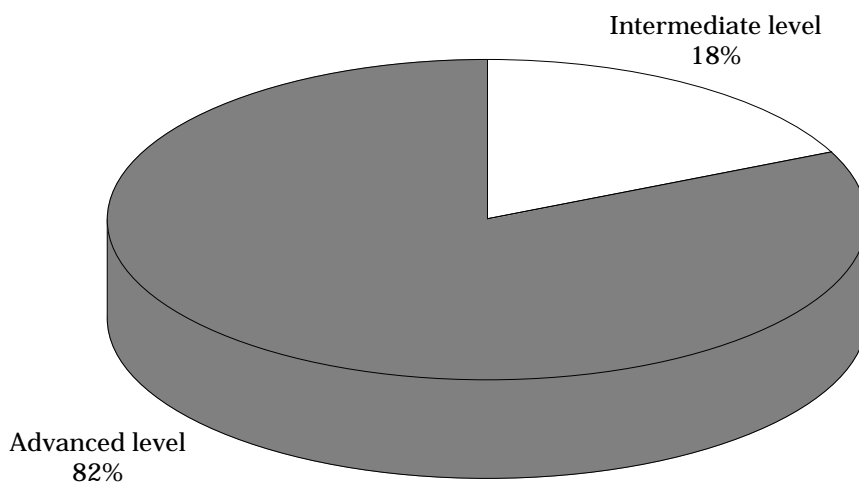


Enrolments: 780

**Figure 2**

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**Prior Pursglove College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)**



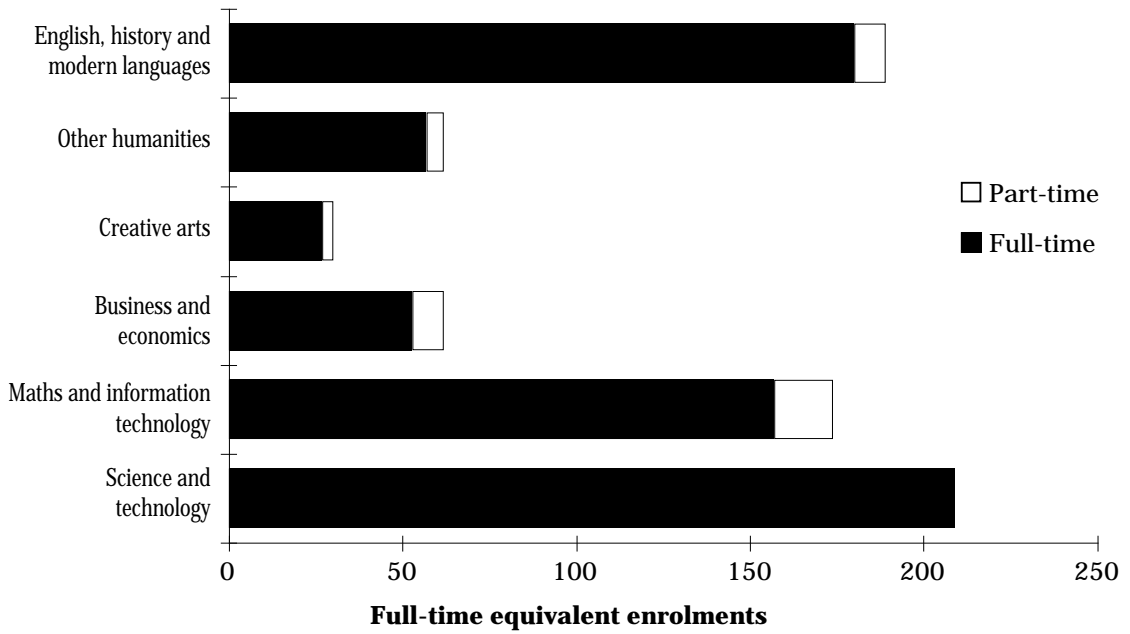
Enrolments: 780



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**Figure 3**

**Prior Pursglove College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)**

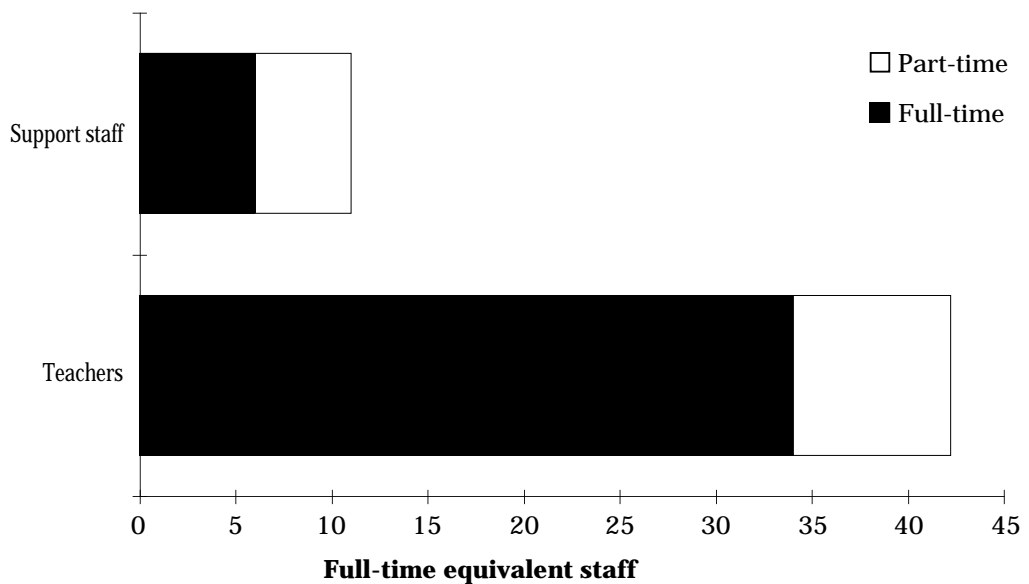


Full-time equivalent enrolments: 683

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**Figure 4**

**Prior Pursglove College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (September 1994)**



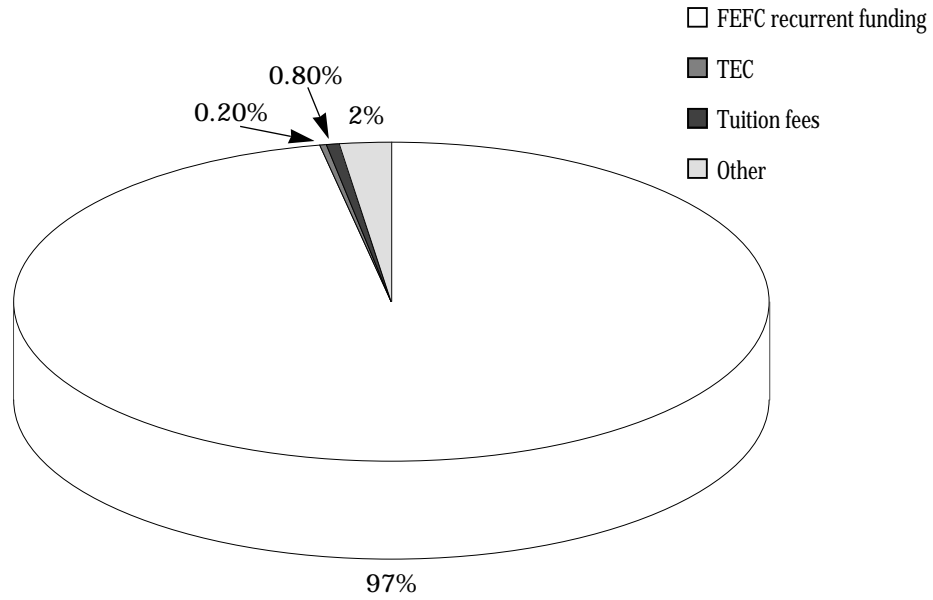
Full-time equivalent staff: 53

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**Figure 5**

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**Prior Pursglove College: income (1993-94)**



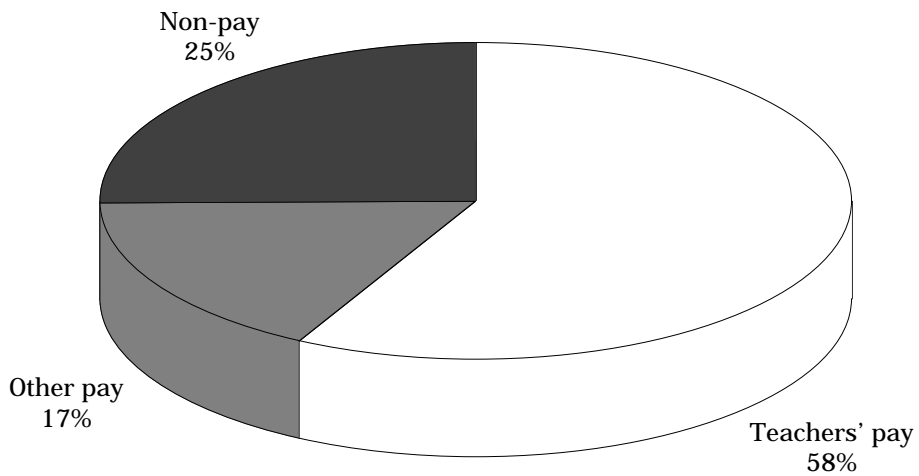
Income: £2,359,498

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**Figure 6**

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**Prior Pursglove College: expenditure (1993-94)**



Expenditure: £2,212,126

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