

Prior Pursglove College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) 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 according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 104 college inspections

Student Achievements

Where data on student achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in three ways:

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

Summary

Prior Pursglove College

Northern Region

Inspected October 1999

Prior Pursglove College in Guisborough has a long history as an educational establishment. It merged recently with another sixth form college. Though relatively new to the process of self-assessment, the college produced a thorough and rigorous self-assessment report for inspection. Governors, managers, and department and cross-college teams assessed their own performance and produced reports that contributed to the college's overall self-assessment report. The corporation approved the final report. Lesson observations and surveys of students' opinions about the quality of provision also contributed to the report. Students' achievements data derived from merged ISR records from the previous colleges were found to be unreliable; inspectors based their judgements on pass rates and retention rates derived from verified college data. Inspectors agreed with most of the overall judgements in the self-assessment report. They concluded that the college understated the outstanding quality of its provision in computing and IT, and English.

The college offers a good range of academic courses and an increasing range of vocational courses to school-leavers and adults. Provision is made in seven of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Work in the largest two of those areas was inspected, amounting to 60% of the college's

provision. Aspects of cross-college provision were also inspected. Governors, managers and staff contribute successfully to the college's work. The merger was managed well. Strategic and operational planning are strong. Teaching in the areas inspected is effective. On many courses, retention rates and examination pass rates are good and improving; some are excellent. Students are attentive and hard working. They are set demanding performance targets and are supported well. Liaison with local schools is effective. Resource centres are good and provide easy access to high-quality IT for individual students. Accommodation has been improved and is well maintained. There is a clear, college-wide commitment to improvement. There are good opportunities for staff development. If the college is to improve its provision, it should: implement its staff appraisal arrangements; provide a better computerised information service to managers; improve the range of reports presented to governors; develop systems for managing all cross-college functions; increase the use of IT in teaching and learning; improve teaching of the pastoral curriculum; extend the systems for early detection of the learning support needs of students; establish a college-wide framework for quality assurance; establish performance standards in college support areas; monitor college performance against its charter commitments; and improve the occupancy rate of college accommodation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Sciences	2	Support for students	2
Computing and information technology	1	General resources	2
English	1	Quality assurance	3
History, government and politics, religious education and sociology	2	Governance	2
		Management	2

The College and its Mission

1 Prior Pursglove College, founded as a grammar school by Robert Pursglove, Prior of Guisborough Priory, was granted a charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1561. The college maintains links with its past through foundation governors who have four nominees on the board of governors. It has been a sixth form college since 1971. In August 1997, the college merged with South Park Sixth Form College based six miles away in Normanby near Middlesbrough. The merged college is one of the two main providers of post-16 education located in the borough of Redcar and Cleveland. The other is a tertiary college.

2 The college operates on the two sites of the formerly separate colleges. The Priory campus is in the centre of Guisborough, an ancient market town on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors. Its buildings include a grade II listed property, built in 1887; the Pursglove centre, completed in 1995 and accommodating media, computing and sports facilities and various other developments and temporary classrooms. The South Park campus consists of a single-storey, post-war building extensively refurbished in 1997.

3 The college recruits 89% of its full-time students from 13 partner 11 to 16 schools in the borough. It also recruits regularly from another 12 schools in surrounding areas. Within the wider recruitment area there are three tertiary colleges, a Roman Catholic sixth form college and the sixth form centre of a local comprehensive school. The unemployment rate in the borough is twice the national average. Socially and economically, the college's recruitment area covers a wide range, from former ironstone mining villages and declining heavy industry to relatively affluent residential areas and light industry. Some wards in the borough of Redcar and Cleveland have high levels of social deprivation. In 1998, approximately 57% of pupils of school-leaving age in the borough continued in full-time

education, compared with 68% nationally. In the same year, the proportion of school pupils gaining five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations at grade C or above was 39%, compared with the national rate of 46%.

4 The college provides courses in seven of the 10 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. It employs 71 teachers, 32 support staff, and five senior postholders in an executive consisting of two assistant principals, two vice-principals and the principal. The college directorate consists of the executive and five other senior managers. Ten departments oversee the curriculum, each with a manager and assistant manager, supported by cross-college co-ordinators. Five teams of personal tutors, each headed by a senior tutor, provide pastoral support for students.

5 In October 1999, the college had 1,201 full-time and 1,697 part-time students, of whom over 600, mainly post-19, students studied part-time courses on the two campuses. The college manages two leisure centres which are open to the wider community for leisure and recreational activities. A college company is developing management and business support provision for local small and medium-sized companies.

6 In its mission statement, the college gives a commitment to providing 'quality education to meet the needs of the community in a caring environment which enables students to reach their fullest potential'. The college aims to provide students with a 'wide selection of courses in a pleasant working environment and a friendly learning atmosphere'.

The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the week commencing 4 October 1999. Before this, inspectors evaluated the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college provided by other directorates

Context

of the FEFC. Data on students' achievements were derived from the individualised student record (ISR) for the three years 1996 to 1998 to inform the inspection. However, attempts to combine ISR data for the two separate colleges prior to the merger resulted in unreliable overall data. The college supplied its own data for one-year courses completing in 1997-98 and for nearly all courses completing in 1998-99. Inspectors checked the accuracy of these data against primary sources, for example, class registers and pass lists from examination bodies, and found the data to be generally accurate. In comparing the retention and examination pass rates of students, inspectors used benchmark data derived from sixth form colleges.

8 The inspection was carried out by a team of eight inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 37 days in the college. Inspectors observed 49 lessons and 10 tutorials. They examined samples of students' work and a wide range of college documents. Inspection team members held meetings with representatives of the Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and local education authority (LEA), students, college governors, managers and staff.

9 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons observed, 71% were judged to be good or outstanding and under 2% were rated less than satisfactory. This compares with the national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively. Inspectors observed a number of short duration group tutorials which were of generally poorer quality than the main lessons.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	10	19	9	0	0	38
GCSE	2	1	1	0	0	4
Other*	3	3	1	0	0	7
Tutorials	0	4	5	1	0	10
Total (No.)	15	27	16	1	0	59
Total (%)	25	46	27	2	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

*includes higher education access and foundation courses

10 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national averages for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Prior Pursglove College	14.6	92
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Sciences

Grade 2

11 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering general science, biology, human biology, chemistry and physics at GCSE level and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level). Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective teaching
- highly motivated students
- well-researched and presented written work
- good safety awareness and practice
- a wide range of specialist resources

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory science accommodation at South Park campus
- insufficient progression opportunities for some GCSE students

12 The college offers GCE A level courses in biology, chemistry and physics, GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses in human biology, and GCSE courses in single-award science, and human physiology and health. The narrow range of GCSE courses provides insufficient choice for students wishing to progress to advanced level. Staff are well managed and work effectively in subject teams. They have produced a wide range of course documents which they use effectively in managing the curriculum.

13 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the planning of lessons is good. All courses have detailed schemes of work that promote an appropriate balance between practical work and theory. Most teachers develop their lessons in an interesting and

logical way. College-designed webpages on science subjects are available on the college's computer network. Students use these pages frequently. Webpage items include departmental information, practical assignments and general data on science subjects. Teachers monitor students' work rigorously. They provide students with clear feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. Students are taught to perform practical work competently and safely. For example, in one lesson, with appropriate prompting from the teacher, students were able to identify the risks associated with the teacher's practical demonstration of the properties of acids and bases.

14 Students are enthusiastic about their studies. They arrive punctually and work diligently in lessons. They express their views clearly. As the self-assessment report recognises, students' written work is well researched, well presented and completed to appropriate standards. In practical lessons, students worked well and completed all the tasks they were given competently. Retention rates for GCE A level biology, chemistry and physics are close to the national averages. However, retention on GCSE courses was below the national average in 1997 and 1998. Examination pass rates for GCE A level chemistry are significantly above national averages. Results for students following courses leading to GCSE are better than the national averages.

15 There are science laboratories on each campus which are grouped together to create a distinctive curriculum identity. Good wall displays include regularly updated items of topical and scientific interest from newspapers and scientific journals. Other notices encourage students to watch science programmes on television and research material on the Internet. As the self-assessment report identifies, a considerable variety of well-maintained specialist equipment is available for practical work. Science accommodation at the Priory

Curriculum Areas

campus is clean and well maintained though a little crowded during practical lessons. The accommodation at the South Park campus is poorly lit and in need of refurbishment. Teachers are well qualified and confident. Relatively few part-time teachers are used and they are well integrated with subject teams. Technician support is good.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in sciences, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE sciences	2	Number of starters	*	*	90
		Retention (%)	*	*	83
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	*	*	169
		Retention (%)	*	*	82
		Achievement (%)	*	*	78
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	*	*	126
		Retention (%)	*	*	79
		Achievement (%)	*	*	88
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	*	*	99
		Retention (%)	*	*	77
		Achievement (%)	*	*	91

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*merged data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 1

16 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering full-time GCE A level courses in computing and information technology (IT), and part-time computer literacy and information technology subjects at foundation level, mainly for adults. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. One significant weakness had been addressed by the time of inspection.

Key strengths

- detailed schemes of work and lesson plans
- high-quality teaching
- excellent examination pass rates
- high-quality IT resources
- attentive and hard-working students

Weaknesses

- insufficient business experience of IT teachers

17 The department's wide range of courses is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with this judgement. Full-time courses mainly enrol 16 to 18 year old students but large numbers of adults study part-time introductory courses in computer literacy and information technology. Many adults progress to higher level qualifications such as the integrated business technology qualification at levels 2 and 3. The college also offers short courses on topics such as personal computer installation and maintenance, and Internet technologies. A 'new start' course attracts local women to the college to develop their IT skills with a view to gaining employment. One such woman secured a new job because of the skills developed in the college and then switched from a day to evening studies

in order to complete her studies. Course teams have regular formal meetings. The teachers maintain useful links with local firms through membership of the neighbourhood engineers scheme.

18 The large teaching team includes many part-time teachers who are supported exceptionally well. All courses have comprehensive schemes of work and lesson plans that are reviewed annually. They are used effectively by all teachers to improve the links between theory and practice. In addition, high-quality self-study materials, assignments and marking schemes promote consistency in the quality of teaching and learning at both campuses. Two of the teachers responsible for developing general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) IT key skills have devised a six-week introductory programme that enables students to apply their skills earlier in their course.

19 There is much high-quality teaching. Inspectors judged all the lessons observed to be good or outstanding. All lessons have clear objectives linked to the schemes of work. They provide opportunities for students to build on their previous experience. Teachers use a wide range of teaching styles and succeed in developing and maintaining students' interest, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. They set demanding homework. For example, one assignment required students to find the 'best-value' personal computer that matched a clear operating specification. The teacher gave appropriate guidance which led students to review their lesson notes, read a specialist textbook, read computer magazines, visit computer shops, and search the Internet for more current information. If students miss any lessons they can download homework assignments and lecture notes provided by the department from any terminal on the college network. Students monitor and record their own progress in detail. Teachers keep detailed records of all students. They mark students'

Curriculum Areas

work meticulously and provide helpful written comments on how students can improve their performance. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report.

20 The self-assessment report draws appropriate attention to students' achievements on GCE A level courses and on short IT courses. For example, in 1997-98, retention in GCE A level computing was 82%, compared with the national average of 71%; the 83% pass rate was also above the national average. According to value-added analysis, students on GCE A level IT courses achieved almost half a grade higher than was predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Students on GCE A level courses undertake realistic projects such as identifying faults and specifying remedies to the problems faced by employers or purchasers of computers. They develop good interpersonal and time management skills. Students on short courses work at their own speed using good-quality commercial self-study materials. Many 16 to 18

year old students undertake valuable work experience in local companies. On completing their studies, most students progress to degree courses or employment.

21 The teachers are well qualified but few have recent relevant experience in industry. The college has difficulty in releasing staff to update their specialist and business IT skills and this is recognised in the self-assessment report. Students have easy access to a wide range of high-quality general and specialist IT and other resources. This includes a wide selection of books and videos on computing and IT. A good workshop at the South Park campus is provided for students to dismantle, find faults and rebuild computers as part of their course.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in computing and information technology, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations and Open College awarding bodies	1	Number of starters	*	*	322
		Retention (%)	*	*	80
		Achievement (%)	*	*	95
GCE A/AS level computing and IT	3	Number of starters	*	*	81
		Retention (%)	*	*	72
		Achievement (%)	*	*	90

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*merged data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 1

22 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering GCSE and GCE A level English literature and English language. The college understated the strengths of its provision in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective teaching and learning
- good retention rates
- high and improving pass rates
- effective curriculum leadership
- thorough and constructive marking of students' work

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of IT in teaching and learning

23 The curriculum is well managed which is a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. The department benefits from strong and effective leadership. There are regular team meetings at which staff set targets for improvement. Progress towards these targets is monitored and they are generally achieved. The college recruits well to its English courses. It offers courses in three GCE A level subjects, and runs an evening course for adults. The college's access to higher education course includes an English module. The English team contributes to the development of communication skills on GNVQ courses across the college. This key skill at level 2 has also been introduced for students studying GCSE English language. Students speak highly of the personal and academic support they receive from departmental staff.

24 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report about the variety of extra-curricular activities provided. Students benefit from an extensive programme of additional activities outside their normal work. For example, extra English is provided one lunchtime each week

and there are frequent visits to theatres. Groups of students have written and edited collections of their own poetry. A small group of students aiming to study English at university discussed Haikus they had written. They then enjoyed 'reforming' a poem, which had been presented in the style of a paragraph.

25 Most of the teaching in English is good or outstanding. Students are attentive and responsive, often contributing effectively to lessons. They are enthusiastic and frequently show a sophisticated understanding of lesson themes. For example, students on a GCSE lesson enjoyed converting a text into a film trailer. They identified a preferred cast of modern film stars who they believed could best cope with the complex demands of the main characters. Students are encouraged to undertake research outside their lessons. Many students of GCE A level English language undertake a major summer assignment in children's nurseries to research the acquisition of language. The department has acted on students' opinions about the quality of teaching. IT is rarely used to enhance teaching and learning. The marking of students' work is rigorous and supportive; errors are corrected and good-quality work is commended. Students' performance and progress is rigorously monitored.

26 Most achievement and retention rates on English courses are excellent and improving. The pass rate for GCE A level literature has been exceptional for the last two years at 98%. There has been a significant improvement in pass rates at the higher A to C grades in GCSE English in the last two years. The rate was almost 6% above the national average in 1998 and 1999. According to value-added data, the performance of students in GCE A level English literature is significantly better than would be predicted on the basis of GCSE results. Retention on all courses except GCE A level English language is above national averages, significantly so for GCE A level combined English language and literature.

Curriculum Areas

27 The self-assessment report identified weaknesses in the organisation and availability of resources, and the quality of the teaching accommodation. Inspectors judged that the college had made significant progress in addressing these weaknesses. All classrooms are attractive and well decorated. There are stimulating displays of students' work. The department has improved the stock of books available to students. However, students rarely borrow books from the college's Priory resource centre. Only two CD-ROMs exist for students and they have not been used. Similarly, there has been no borrowing from the audio collection of Shakespeare's plays.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English language	2	Number of starters	*	*	145
		Retention (%)	*	*	82
		Achievement (%)	*	*	61
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	*	*	63
		Retention (%)	*	*	73
		Achievement (%)	*	*	89
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	*	*	50
		Retention (%)	*	*	84
		Achievement (%)	*	*	98
GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	*	*	85
		Retention (%)	*	*	88
		Achievement (%)	*	*	95

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*merged data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

History, Government and Politics, Religious Education and Sociology

Grade 2

28 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering GCE A level history, government and politics, religious education and sociology. The self-assessment report was thorough and detailed. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report though they placed a different emphasis on some of them.

Key strengths

- excellent pass rates in religious studies, and government and politics
- thorough marking of students' work and effective feedback on progress
- wide range of enrichment activities
- good retention rates

Weaknesses

- a lack of variety and challenge in some lessons
- few high grades in GCE A level sociology
- little use of IT in sociology and religious education

29 Courses in history, government and politics, religious studies and sociology are offered on both campuses. Sociology and history are also part of the adult and continuing education provision. Courses are managed effectively. Course team meetings are held regularly and are well minuted. If more than one person is involved, the work on a particular subject is co-ordinated by a volunteer. Teams consider student responses to questionnaires, moderators' reports and achievement data when assessing the quality of provision. They also monitor progress towards the achievement of targets set by the team. During professional development days, teams focus on issues highlighted in the review process.

30 Teaching in all the lessons inspected was satisfactory or better. Inspectors agreed with the college's claim that most lessons are well prepared. Schemes of work are generally comprehensive and detailed, though a few provide insufficient detail on the teaching methods to be used and the outcomes to be achieved by students. Most teachers adjust their style of teaching to take account of the topic being studied, and make good use of questioning to assess students' understanding.

31 Teachers of politics and sociology make excellent use of topical events and the students' own experiences. For example, a student described meeting a well-known environmental activist. The teacher used this description effectively to develop the students' understanding of why the concept of 'normal behaviour' varies with the context. In government and politics especially, students participate in a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, students visit the British and European parliaments. Students in history and religious education also attend outside lectures and make appropriate visits to archaeological digs. Teachers dominate some lessons, providing too few opportunities for students to contribute their views. Occasionally, too much time is spent by students copying notes from the chalkboard. Some teachers pay too little attention to the particular learning needs of individual students.

32 Teachers rigorously monitor students' attendance, performance and progress, and keep good records. Homework is set regularly and students' work is corrected thoroughly. Teachers explain the criteria for marking assignments and give constructive feedback to students according to those criteria, including correcting errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Work is returned to students within a week. The strengths of the assessment process are identified in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

33 Many students achieve high standards in their written work and contribute enthusiastically and knowledgeably in class. Examination pass rates in GCE A level government and politics and religious education are excellent and well above national averages over the last two years. Pass rates in GCE A level sociology and history subjects improved in 1999 and are now close to national averages. The self-assessment report noted the variation in examination pass rates but its judgement on retention rates was harsh. Overall, the retention rate is good and improving.

34 Teachers are well qualified in their specialist subjects. Specialist teaching resources are good. Classrooms have informative subject displays. Students are supplied with appropriate course texts. Additional resources are available in the department and in the learning resources centres. Inspectors did not entirely agree with the judgement in the

self-assessment report that IT is underused in the teaching of these subjects and that this is a weakness. Students have good access to IT, including the Internet, but little use is made of these resources in religious education and sociology. However, the good supply of specialist CD-ROMs, video and audio materials are used effectively in history and government and politics.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in history, government and politics, religious education and sociology, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCE AS combined	3	Number of starters	*	*	31
		Retention (%)	*	*	90
		Achievement (%)	*	*	57
GCE A level history	3	Number of starters	*	*	79
		Retention (%)	*	*	85
		Achievement (%)	*	*	87
GCE A level government and politics	3	Number of starters	*	*	28
		Retention (%)	*	*	82
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
GCE A level sociology	3	Number of starters	*	*	39
		Retention (%)	*	*	74
		Achievement (%)	*	*	90

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*merged data unreliable

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

35 Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. By the time of the inspection, action had been taken on many of the weaknesses but it was too early to judge their effectiveness.

Key strengths

- effective liaison with local schools
- detailed and thorough review of each student's progress
- good support for applications to higher education

Weaknesses

- ineffective pastoral tutorials
- lack of an overarching system for detecting learning support needs

36 As indicated in the self-assessment report, the college has good links with the majority of local 11 to 16 schools. The exception is a school which hopes to develop a sixth form. A particularly good feature is a three-day GCSE revision course offered to year 11 pupils. Those who attended the course felt that it had been a valuable experience that had improved their performance in examinations. Prospective adult students benefit from separate promotional events and a telephone helpline.

37 The main enrolment period is well organised. Most, but not all, students judged the induction programme, which introduces them to the college and their courses to have been successful. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that arrangements to help students change courses after enrolment are thorough and well understood by the students. Most course change takes place soon after the start of the teaching year following consultation with all the relevant teachers, and with tutors and parents.

38 The college has an effective personal review system. Personal tutors meet each tutee several times each term. The meetings are informed by twice-termly progress reports from each subject teacher. The college rigorously tracks students' attendance. Explanations for absence and any other concerns are discussed at the personal reviews. The system ensures that tutors have an up-to-date and informal view of each student's attitude and progress. Personal tutors meet fortnightly with a senior tutor to discuss their caseload. These meetings assure consistency in the personal review process. A more detailed and rigorous review of each student's academic progress takes place at longer intervals. Subject teachers convert the current performance of each student into a grade, compare this with expected performance, and determine a target grade for performance over the review period. Teacher and student establish an action plan to achieve the agreed performance. The targets and actions for the subjects studied are drawn together by the personal tutor in an overall progress report for each student. The process motivates students to perform well. A similar system is used in reviewing the progress of adult students. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report, that these detailed and thorough arrangements to review each student's personal and academic progress constitute a strength.

39 In 1998-99, tutor groups met three times a week to deal with urgent individual student and college matters. Students were also required to attend taught tutorials on matters such as careers and study skills. The self-assessment report acknowledges that neither process was entirely successful, partly because the attendance of some students was poor. The arrangements have been changed for 1999-2000. Tutor groups now meet once each week for a short period, led by a personal tutor who is one of the student's teachers. This has already improved communication between staff and students. Tutors teach a common pastoral

Cross-college Provision

syllabus to their group. However, the tutorials observed during the inspection were less successful overall than lessons in specialist subjects.

40 The college relies on a number of mechanisms to identify students' learning difficulties. Appropriate support has been provided, for example, for students with dyslexia, hearing impairment and sight problems such as scotopic sensitivity syndrome. Help is sometimes provided by outside agencies. A series of workshops to support students with language difficulties is held after the autumn half term. Teachers in some subject areas use assessments early in the academic year to predict likely difficulties, and most offer extra support in the form of workshops or 'drop-in' surgeries. However, there is no overarching system for the early detection of difficulties.

41 The college provides a caring atmosphere in which students feel confident about approaching staff with academic or personal problems. Students know that they can speak directly to a senior tutor at the student services unit on either campus. Senior tutors recognise the limits of their professional expertise and draw on a range of external agencies to support their work, for example professional counsellors and the local department of social services.

42 The arrangements for guiding and helping advanced level students with applications to higher education courses are good, as indicated in the self-assessment report. In the first year of advanced level courses there are visits to universities and a higher education information meeting for parents. During the induction fortnight four sessions are used to advise second-year students about completing their application forms and personal statements. Good relationships exist with the local careers service, which provides an adviser in the college one day each week. Advanced level students who choose not to progress to higher education have individual interviews with a senior tutor during second-year induction, and are encouraged to attend an interview with the

careers adviser. All GNVQ advanced students benefit from an externally-accredited period of work experience. Over 100 GCE A level students also took up work experience places last year.

43 Each campus has a student council. The formal position is that members should be elected but in practice most are volunteers. The councils organise social and charity events. Each council provides an observer on the corporation, but this arrangement is not successful in disseminating information about corporation business to the student body or taking views from the students to the corporation. The college requires all full-time students to select courses in at least four of the five timetable slots available each week. This provides opportunities for the broadening and enrichment of their curriculum, for example, in IT or sports leadership. Students can also take part in a range of sports and societies organised by interested groups. Their participation and achievement is not monitored or included in the personal review system.

General Resources

Grade 2

44 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, though they judged that a few strengths and weakness were overstated. Some weaknesses had been rectified before inspection.

Key strengths

- good-quality resource centres on both campuses
- prudent investment in resources
- cost-effective improvements to accommodation

Weaknesses

- low utilisation of some accommodation
- insufficient IT provision for whole-class teaching

Cross-college Provision

45 The college has made significant improvements to its buildings on both campuses recently. It has a clear programme to improve specialist areas in need of refurbishment. Most accommodation is in good decorative order. Social areas are suitably furnished and well used. Inspectors agreed with the college's claim that classrooms and staff rooms are generally well equipped. An adequate stock of audiovisual equipment is readily available to support teaching and learning.

46 Expenditure on maintenance is well planned and monitored. The use of the college's own maintenance team has led to speedy and cost-effective responses to requests for improvements. Inspectors agreed with the college's claim that it has an effective system of refurbishment that gives priority to teaching and learning and creating a healthy and safe environment. Pavements and designated walkways have been developed to improve safety for pedestrians at the Priory campus. Access for students with restricted mobility is good at the South Park campus. Whilst access has been improved for these students on the Priory campus, not every room is accessible. However, arrangements are made to ensure that wheelchair users can take part in all courses. The accommodation at the South Park campus is considerably under-utilised. A high proportion of classrooms on the Priory campus consists of temporary classrooms that are generally of good quality but expensive to operate and maintain.

47 The college has established a resource centre on each campus. These centres have been carefully designed to provide an appropriate environment for learning. The resources include library facilities, quiet areas for study and high-quality IT. The centres are well managed and there are clear plans to develop their use and effectiveness. Students have access to a well-catalogued range of multimedia resources and the Internet to aid their research. Academic departments hold considerable bookstocks that are not identified

in the central catalogue. Lack of liaison regarding these books leads to duplication and inefficiency. Students using the resource centres are not able to draw on the full resources of the college and some students have difficulty finding the books they need, a weakness recognised by the college in its self-assessment report.

48 The college has given priority to increasing the use of IT to support teaching and learning. It has invested heavily in IT and now has 100 up-to-date, networked computers and suitable software applications. These are installed in six specialist teaching rooms and in the resource centres. There is some disparity in the availability of computers between the two campuses. The facilities are heavily booked in advance. Most individual students can get access to the IT resources when they need them, but teachers find it difficult to get access for a whole class.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

49 Inspectors generally agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the full involvement of staff in self-assessment
- effective monitoring of students' achievements
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of staff appraisal
- lack of performance standards in support areas
- inadequate monitoring of charter commitments

Cross-college Provision

50 Since the merger, the college has developed several procedures to assure the quality of its provision. It has strengthened its quality improvement planning processes, introduced self-assessment, and evaluated the quality of teaching and learning through the observation of lessons. A quality group has been reformed to speed the development and implementation of new quality improvement procedures. These procedures include a quality-planning calendar, development of the value-added system, and further refinement of the questionnaires used to establish students' opinions about the college's provision. Inspectors agreed with the statement in the self-assessment report that there is a college-wide commitment to continuous improvement.

51 The college has linked its reporting on academic improvement to its operational planning cycle. In 1998-99, for the first time, annual curriculum reports provided the basis for the development of curriculum self-assessment reports. The actions required to address weaknesses identified in curriculum reports and self-assessment reports are included in the operational plan for each department. Senior managers, responsible for quality and the curriculum, monitor progress on these plans twice yearly. The actions have led to improvements in academic performance and in students' facilities. However, some reports lack rigour and the overall process is at an early stage of development. Target-setting is not well established. The process does not include all non-academic areas of the college's operation where standards have generally not yet been developed. This weakness was recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

52 Attendance data are systematically collected to detect trends in attendance patterns. Departments analyse data on students' achievements and compare them with national benchmarks to determine how students and subject teams are performing. Such analyses suggest that students' achievements have

declined slightly over the last three years, according to the average points score per GCE A level candidate in performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. At the heart of the college's academic quality improvement strategy is its analysis of value-added data provided to senior managers. The college acknowledges that some subject teams need to adopt a more rigorous approach to this analysis.

53 The college produced its first full self-assessment report in preparing for inspection. Staff have a good understanding of self-assessment. Each department and cross-college area produced a report that contributed to the college's overall self-assessment report. Each college team was given the opportunity to discuss the overall report with senior managers and to recommend changes. The college's validation committee evaluated the self-assessment report before it was considered and approved by the corporation. The college programme of lesson observations provided evidence for the self-assessment report about the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers told inspectors that the observation of lessons, and the subsequent discussion of the findings at team meetings, gave them an opportunity to share good practice. Lesson observations were not evaluated college-wide or compared with national figures published in successive chief inspector's annual reports. Students' opinions of the quality of provision are regularly sought through questionnaires. The results from these surveys were also used in the self-assessment, but the rigour with which the responses to questions were analysed and acted upon varied across the college. Little feedback is sought from sources other than students.

54 Staff development is linked to college strategic priorities and operational plans, and is available to all staff. For example, current training programmes support the college's developments of IT in teaching and learning. In addition, there are five professional

Cross-college Provision

development days for in-service training. Staff development is evaluated effectively; outcomes are disseminated by individual staff and by department. All staff spoke positively about their staff development experiences. The college does not have an appraisal system for staff. A pilot scheme has been undertaken but full implementation has been delayed. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report.

55 The college reviews its charter annually, seeking the views of the student council on both campuses as part of the review. The college has produced separate sections of the charter for full-time and part-time students in response to student evaluations. Students are made aware of the charter commitments during their induction to the college. The college charter sets out the entitlements of students, parents, employers and the community. However, the college does not formally monitor or report to the governors on the achievement of its charter commitments. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

Governance

Grade 2

56 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the strengths and weakness identified in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective contribution to setting the college's strategic direction
- adoption of best practice by key committees
- conscientious scrutiny of the college's financial performance
- thorough self-assessment of governance
- involvement of governors in college life

Weaknesses

- lack of reports to governors on key issues
- late implementation of appraisal for senior postholders

57 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

58 The corporation has a membership of 20 including four foundation governors. There are currently six vacancies including two for foundation governors. The corporation decided not to fill any of the vacancies while awaiting changes to the instrument and articles of government. The corporation meets each term. As the self-assessment report notes, the corporation receives effective support from an experienced clerk. Agendas and minutes are produced to a good standard and usually circulated to members well in advance of corporation meetings. The corporation has eight committees covering: finance; audit; personnel; remuneration; health and safety; standards and strategy; search; and building and estates. All have terms of reference that have been reviewed recently and approved by the corporation. The audit committee has responded to the requirements of Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice* in a positive and timely manner. The availability of the register and minutes is not openly advertised and minutes are not held in the college library. They are available on request from the clerk. There is no written policy to determine which agenda items should be considered confidential.

59 A code of conduct has been adopted which incorporates the seven principles of public life established by the Nolan committee. Standing orders covering the operation of the corporation and its committees have been amended recently to take account of the requirements of the revised instrument and articles of governance. The corporation has instituted a code of practice on 'whistleblowing'. The college has a register of interests that is completed well by governors and senior postholders annually.

Cross-college Provision

60 Governors have a clear view of the mission of the college. They are closely involved in setting the college's strategic direction. They attend strategic development events with college managers annually. These events focus on the progress made against the previous year's operating plans and set the main objectives for the following year. The achievement of these objectives is then reviewed twice each year. As the self-assessment report indicates, there is insufficient attention paid to monitoring the performance of the college against clear targets for enrolment, retention and achievement. The standards and strategy committee has been established with a clear remit for this work. The implementation of an appraisal system for senior postholders has been slow. Governors have recently approved a system that will be piloted through appraisal of the principal. Health and safety matters are discussed at the corporation's health and safety committee, which then reports to the full corporation. One of the governors commits substantial amounts of time to helping the college with health and safety matters. Formal reports on quality assurance and equality of opportunity are not routinely brought to the corporation's attention.

61 Four governors, the vice-principal (curriculum), and the clerk to the corporation formed a working group to consider the self-assessment report on governance. They wrote the first draft of the report. Senior managers, the standards and strategy committee, and the corporation considered this report. This process was effective. It was the first time that governors had formally assessed themselves or determined their training needs. This self-assessment process will now be carried out annually. The lack of training for governors was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. This has been partly addressed through a recent training needs analysis and the establishment of a formal training schedule. There are insufficient targets and performance indicators to help governors evaluate their work systematically. Informal

systems are in place that encourage governors to meet with staff. These work well. There is also a formal, documented system for linking governors to aspects of the college's work. Named individual governors have a responsibility to keep in contact with the arts and humanities, mathematics and science, student services, health and safety, learning media and lifelong learning sections. These are effective in some areas but not in others.

62 The finance committee receives monthly management reports and monitors the college's financial position closely. Although the corporation has approved an interim budget for 1999-2000 and an interim recovery plan, they have yet to prepare and approve a final version of these documents. Governors review financial information relating to the college company, commercial activities and collaborative provision. Governors have yet to receive regular reports on the non-financial aspects of collaborative provision.

Management

Grade 2

63 Inspectors and auditors generally agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Some of the weaknesses had been addressed by the time of inspection.

Key strengths

- open and consultative management style
- well-managed merger
- strong links between strategic and operational planning
- effective links with outside agencies

Weaknesses

- information needs of middle managers not fully met
- inadequate arrangements for managing and monitoring some cross-college functions

Cross-college Provision

64 Following the merger in 1997, the current management structure was introduced and the mission of the college was reaffirmed and broadened. Governors, managers and staff have a demonstrable commitment to the mission. The difficulties of merging two institutions and rationalising staffing was managed well and handled sensitively. These strengths were recognised in the self-assessment report. The high reputation of the pre-merger colleges in the community has been generally maintained.

65 Senior managers have an open and consultative style. They are approachable and this encourages staff to contribute to the development of the college. As the self-assessment report indicates, lines of communication are generally effective. The directorate is the decision-making body and has a strategic management role. The executive meets at least once each month to consider confidential items that the directorate is unable to deal with. Advice and guidance is given to the directorate from three other major committees: the academic; finance and support; and student services committees. Many committees and working groups have been established to ensure that there is full consultation. Members of these groups meet frequently and work well together. Team spirit is good. The business of most meetings is carefully recorded through minutes that indicate those responsible for actions and timescales. Recently there has been a review resulting in the removal of one major committee.

66 The 1997 to 2000 strategic plan dates from the time of the merger and has not been updated. There are strong links between this plan and the annual operating plans of departments. These plans are of variable quality but substantially fulfil the needs of the college. The directorate carries out a full and thorough review of the achievement of each year's strategic objectives. Cross-college functions do not produce operating plans but use a variety of approaches to manage their work each year. The monitoring of these

activities in relation to the strategic plan is less well organised than for the academic departments. Key skills are not recorded or accredited in a systematic way nor is there a well-established overarching framework for assuring quality. The corporation has only approved two college-wide policies. Appropriate committees and effective guidelines support the health and safety policy. There is an appropriate equal opportunities policy but no formal systems for ensuring its implementation. The college complies with its statutory duty with regard to collective worship. Christian groups meet every week on each campus.

67 Responsibilities have been allocated to senior managers in a way that minimises duplication of effort. The directors have an extensive range of duties. The number of directors of curriculum has been reduced from two to one. Teachers' workloads are well monitored and controlled. For example, a number of variables such as the travelling time between campuses and differing class sizes are taken into account in the management of teachers' timetables. A variety of approaches are used to plan the work of cross-college teams and to try to ensure equity in workloads of team members. The college is at an early stage in determining the information needs of managers. The computerised management information system does not meet current needs. Some staff are not confident about the accuracy of reports produced. There has been a substantial investment in a new system but it has yet to become operational.

68 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Monthly management accounts are closely scrutinised by the directorate. Budget holders are provided with timely reports of actual and committed expenditure. The college inherited a deficit following the merger in 1996-97 that was largely removed by the end of 1997-98. The college identified that its financial position would deteriorate in 1998-99 and beyond.

Cross-college Provision

Rather than produce a three-year financial forecast for 1999 to 2002, the college was asked by the FEFC to prepare a recovery plan. This is due to be finalised by the end of 1999. The college's financial forecasting proved over-pessimistic. It increased enrolments and income, and has now identified a slight surplus. Financial regulations have been revised recently to take account of national good practice guidelines. The reports from internal auditors do not indicate any significant internal control weaknesses.

69 Inspectors agreed with the view expressed in the self-assessment report that there are productive working relationships with other educational providers. The college has strong links with the LEA and with Tees Valley TEC. These have resulted in effective partnerships. For example, the college is represented on the Tees Valley and the Redcar and Cleveland Strategic Lifelong Learning Partnerships. Discussions with the nearest tertiary college in Redcar on possible rationalisation of provision continue. However, there are some tensions between the two colleges. The community is drawn into the college through the adult and continuing education provision and their use of the college's sport and leisure facilities. Training courses are being developed for local businesses through a college company, Pursglove Associates. For example, training programmes on year 2000 computer compliance have been run to meet a need identified in a TEC survey.

Conclusions

70 The college's arrangements for self-assessment are robust and self-critical. The college has made significant progress in developing self-assessment following the merger. It produced its first self-assessment report in preparing for inspection, drawing on departmental and cross-college self-assessment reports produced the previous year. The self-assessment report was thorough yet concise,

judgements were clearly expressed and supported by evaluative evidence. The self-assessment report contained clear action plans with targets for improvement and named persons responsible for their achievement. The report helped inspectors in preparing for and undertaking the inspection. The college validation committee evaluated the self-assessment report before approval by the corporation. Inspectors agreed with the college's overall judgements on all cross-college areas and on two curriculum areas. They concluded that the college understated the quality of provision in two curriculum areas.

71 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (October 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	71
19-24 years	5
25+ years	24
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (October 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	19
Level 2 (intermediate)	11
Level 3 (advanced)	70
Level 4/5 (higher)	0
Non-schedule 2	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (October 1999)

	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	495	236	25
Agriculture	6	7	1
Business	85	130	7
Hotel and catering	27	0	1
Health and community care	25	1,002	36
Art and design	98	29	4
Humanities	465	293	26
Total	1,201	1,697	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 11% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (October 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	68	1	5	74
Supporting direct learning contact	11	0	1	12
Other support	21	1	0	22
Total	100	2	6	108

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997*	1998**	1999
Income	£2,342,000	£4,121,000	£3,828,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.96	£17.34	£16.96
Payroll as a proportion of income	74%	62%	68%
Achievement of funding target	126%	98%	100%
Diversity of income	8%	7%	10%
Operating surplus	£33,000	-£48,000	-£33,000

Sources: Income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

ALF - Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Payroll - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Achievement of funding target - Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

*Prior Pursglove College data before merger

**Prior Pursglove College data after merger

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	159	260	*	84	165	*
	Retention (%)	96	91	*	77	62	*
	Achievement (%)	93	97	*	81	100	*
2	Number of starters	1,002	963	*	158	173	*
	Retention (%)	80	79	*	82	70	*
	Achievement (%)	95	97	*	68	92	*
3	Number of starters	2,276	2,473	*	65	86	*
	Retention (%)	85	77	*	78	71	*
	Achievement (%)	87	84	*	73	72	*
4 or 5	Number of starters	1	0	*	0	0	*
	Retention (%)	0	n/a	*	n/a	n/a	*
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	*	n/a	n/a	*
Short courses	Number of starters	93	80	*	13	46	*
	Retention (%)	89	90	*	100	96	*
	Achievement (%)	92	98	*	46	100	*
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	27	43	*	36	39	*
	Retention (%)	67	86	*	72	90	*
	Achievement (%)	23	85	*	62	86	*

Source: ISR

*data not available due to late college returns to the FEFC

n/a not applicable

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