



Frequently asked questions

Following our recent announcement that the Governing Bodies from both Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College have agreed in principle to conduct a comprehensive consultation around a proposal to merge, we wanted to provide you with answers to some of our most frequently asked questions.

If you have any further queries which arise over the coming weeks, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our consultation process aims to be as transparent, meticulous and detailed as possible, to ensure everyone is informed, and given their chance to have their say, about key developments.

What is a merger?

A merger is the combining of two organisations. In this case, the voluntary combining of two sixth form colleges, enabling us to withstand further cuts in this age of austerity. It is the coming together of two entities, which we believe will be stronger together.

Why are these two colleges merging?

Consideration has been given at a strategic level for some time to innovative solutions to enable both colleges to achieve their strategic goals whilst making efficiencies.

Both colleges are similar in that they are inclusive, independent sixth form colleges, providing high-quality, supportive provision to young people and adults. Both share a vision in working to become 'Outstanding' – a judgement by students, parents and local communities, as well as Ofsted. This step is a logical extension of the work undertaken to already achieve this.

Furthermore, in recent years, pressure on the public purse has meant that further education institutions have had to think more creatively about how they provide the very best service at the best value for money. This proactive, forward-thinking approach gives both colleges the opportunity to strengthen and secure their position as leading further education providers and positively shape the future of 16-19 education in the region.

What is a consultation?

A consultation is the action of formally discussing a proposal with key audiences. We would like to receive feedback on our proposal by those it will affect. We will be approaching and seeking opinions from staff, students, parents, prospective students and 'friends' of the colleges, to gather a wide a range of views as possible.

Consultation provides a two-way flow of information and opinion, and will be used as an opportunity by both colleges to understand the views from different groups about our ideas.

What form will the consultation take?

Consultations take many forms. We want to gather as much information and opinion as possible, and to this end we will be holding briefings with staff, Student Council meetings, forums with parents, future students and the local community and meetings with key stakeholders. Proposed meetings, relevant documentation and regular updates will all be available on our consultation portal on each college website.

How will this affect students?

The aim of this proposal is, whether you live in Redcar and Cleveland or Stockton-on-Tees, your progression route to your local sixth form college will be unchanged.

In many ways, it will be 'business as usual' for students. A proposed structural change will only provide positive effects; enhancing their education for the better. It will allow students to choose from an impressive range of subjects at a local sixth form college which is determined to provide the highest standards of teaching and learning. Students will also be able to take part in joint trips and visits and benefit from state-of-the-art technology which perhaps would not have been viable with just one college.

Sixth form college education will continue in both boroughs. There is no requirement for students to travel across the two centres.

We will, of course, give students every opportunity to share their views on our proposal during the consultation period in the autumn term, because we want this venture to benefit them.

How will this affect the colleges' partners?

Both colleges enjoy extensive partnership links with schools, colleges, universities and local industry.

Prior Pursglove College has a strong collaborative relationship with all schools and colleges in Redcar and Cleveland through the Schools and Colleges Improvement Partnership (SCIP). The college is a partner in the Redcar-based Trust 4 Learning, which encompasses primary and secondary schools, post-16 providers and a number of local and regional employers. Prior also works with employers and educational institutions through the Career Ready and STEM initiatives and is a sponsor for Freeborough Academy in East Cleveland. The college works with Redcar and Cleveland College to enable students in the borough to access a range of A-level and vocational courses which can provide study paths for success leading to higher education and employment.

Stockton Sixth Form College enjoys positive working links with local partner schools, colleges, universities, training providers and employers. The college is proud of the role it plays in raising aspirations locally and, as such, senior leaders are active members on the Governing Bodies of two local 11-16 academies, one of which the college co-sponsors. The college is represented on the local authority's 14-19 Partnership group, Local Schools Forum and Safeguarding Board and the college site also provides a base for the Council's 'Education Centre', housing outstanding teacher training and continuous professional development opportunities. Both colleges are part of the sixth form college network NorVIC.

Working through these important partnerships helps us to ensure we can meet the needs of industry, our local authorities and current and future students. We aim to continue to develop and improve relationships with our many partners and believe a merged college will help us achieve more with further effective use of our resources, specifically:

- Providing a quality, responsive service to employers in our region
- Providing greater opportunities for contribution to, and partnership with, local industry, to meet their needs for a skilled workforce
- Working closely together to support and develop innovation within Tees Valley industry
- Developing potential for further working with key parties, such as our local authorities.

How will this affect the community?

By remaining as two centres with two distinct identities, we hope to minimise any effect on the local community. We do, of course, welcome feedback on the proposal from local residents and community groups and look forward to working closely with our local communities to gather their views.

What is the proposed name of the merged college?

The proposed name of the merged college is Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth Form College, however, we intend to retain the names Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College for each centre.

What is the timeline?

Both colleges have agreed to conduct a consultation around a proposal to merge. This consultation will take place in the autumn term, beginning on 17th September 2015. The outcome and final decision is subject to the consultation. Updates and developments with respect to a timescale will be communicated throughout.

How can I have my say?

We want to hear your views. The consultation period will give you, as a staff member, student, parent, prospective parent or local resident, the opportunity to meet with us to share your thoughts. Alternatively, if you would like to get in touch sooner, please email us on the addresses below. You will receive a response within 5 working days.

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