



Prior Pursglove College  
Stockton Sixth Form College  
**Consultation Document**



# Executive summary

Sixth form colleges have long been recognised as successful and high performing institutions in the post-16 sector. London Economics concluded that 'students in sixth form colleges are more likely to achieve higher levels of attainment than their peers in non-selective maintained school sixth forms and academy sixth forms'<sup>1</sup>.

Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College are independent and successful sixth form colleges, serving their respective communities in the boroughs of Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees. They achieve strong results at all levels and are subsequently ranked as two of the best colleges in the region for securing students' next step to university, apprenticeships and employment. Both colleges are rated 'Good' by Ofsted. Stockton Sixth Form College was last inspected in March 2014 whilst Prior Pursglove College was inspected in March 2015.

Both colleges are rightly valued as assets to their communities. They share a vision to provide high quality learning across a wide range of subjects in a caring and inclusive environment. The two colleges have worked together informally for the last two years with great success and have a number of shared support services.

With pressure on public sector funding in recent years, education providers such as sixth form colleges have experienced a year-on-year decrease in the level of funding for each post-16 student. Both colleges have successfully managed the impact of these cuts; however it is clear that this pressure on funding will continue and post-16 providers are therefore being encouraged to look for innovative and forward-thinking solutions to achieve the highest possible standards whilst making efficiencies<sup>2</sup>.

Governors at the two colleges now believe that it is right to consult on a proposal to merge with the aim of protecting high quality and broad ranging provision at both the Guisborough and Stockton centres.

<sup>1</sup>'Assessing value for money in Sixth Form Education', London Economics' Final Report for the Sixth Form Colleges' Association

<sup>2</sup>'Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions', Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and Department for Education, 20th July 2015

# About Prior Pursglove College

The campus of Prior Pursglove Sixth Form College has housed educational provision since 1561. The site has benefitted from multi-million pound investment in recent years with extensive developments to student services and student social facilities, as well as the building of a £1.5m dedicated arts and media centre, a state-of-the-art gym and provision of outstanding science laboratories and study areas.

Prior offers a wide range of courses to suit students of all levels and abilities. The majority of its 1200 students take Level 3 programmes with subjects offered at A-level and BTEC. Many of the programmes are centred on meeting regional skills needs in areas such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), health and social care, creative technologies, business and accounting.

The college plays a key role in shaping local and regional policies on economic development. As such, Prior offers Foundation Learning and Pathways programmes at Level 1 and 2 for 16-18 year olds, around 60% of whom are recruited from the NEET (not in education, employment or training) cohort. It also offers traineeships and apprenticeships, supporting the government's wider agenda of skills development and employability for young people. The college also runs part-time adult provision for around 500 19+ students each year.



Prior Pursglove College

# About Stockton Sixth Form College

Stockton Sixth Form College has built a strong reputation for academic achievement over many years and, as the only specialist sixth form college in Stockton-on-Tees, has over 40 years' experience delivering A-level, BTEC and GCSE qualifications to students aged 16-19 from across the region.

The college has a diverse and friendly environment with around 700 students. Over £6m has been invested in recent years to transform students' teaching, learning and social spaces, including the provision of state-of-the-art Science laboratories, a modern Art studio, vibrant Learning Link centre and contemporary dining and common room areas.

It is the college's focus on developing all-round individuals that enables students to successfully secure their next step. The college offers a prestigious high flyers programme which includes a unique scholarship opportunity for those who achieve a place to study at Oxbridge.

The college has a strong partnership with Stockton Borough Council and recently extended its work to offer short courses at Level 1 and Level 2 which enable young people across the borough to gain additional qualifications, access work experience opportunities and boost employability. Working together with the local authority, this programme has enabled the college to support an increasing number of young people from the locality's NEET cohort to re-engage with education in the last twelve months.



# The proposal

Over the last two years, Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College have been working in partnership with great success. We have introduced joint support staff managers in key areas, such as Finance, Data and Marketing, and more recent partnership work is enabling us to develop a shared IT network and cloud-based system.

Both colleges have a common purpose to provide an outstanding educational experience to all students. Current working is showing just how much can be achieved with a collaborative approach, allowing us to strengthen provision for students even further by enhancing quality and broadening the range of opportunities and experiences on offer.

Both colleges are determined to retain and strengthen sixth form college provision in their respective boroughs, and, as such, have been actively exploring opportunities to work together further to sustain efficiency and effectiveness for the longer term. To this end, a comprehensive consultation around this proposal will start on Thursday 17th September 2015.

Both colleges pride themselves on ease of access for local students and central to the proposal is the continuation of sixth form college education on both sites, in both boroughs, as currently. 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.

It is proposed that the merged college will be established on 17th January 2016. All students of Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth Form College will complete their studies as expected whilst prospective students will be given the opportunity to enrol at a high quality local sixth form college centre with a continuing wide range of subjects. It is expected that students will not notice the change in organisational structure.

Our shared vision will be delivered by the voluntary combining of two high quality sixth form colleges, which we believe will be stronger together. This proposal will allow us to invest in, and provide financial stability for, viable, sustainable and high quality education in both Guisborough and Stockton.

Representation on the new Governing Body will be based on a skills analysis and will take account of knowledge of the two existing colleges. It is anticipated that the new Governing Body will include equal numbers of Governors from the current Governing Bodies of Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College.



# Benefits of the proposal

## Benefits to students

This proposal is seen as an opportunity which will benefit all stakeholders, especially current and future students. We firmly believe there are current and long-term advantages that would be realised through this proposal and are confident there will be a shared determination by both centres to provide excellence in learning. In summary, we aim to:

- Preserve viable, sustainable and high quality sixth form college education as locally as possible across the areas currently served by the two colleges
- Offer a wider choice of curriculum subjects than would be the case if we continue as two stand-alone colleges
- Invest in state-of-the-art technology and build upon the significant investment both colleges have benefitted from in recent years
- Further improve teaching by comparing and drawing on the experience of staff at the two centres and the sharing of best practice
- Enable students to take part in joint enrichment activities and trips and visits.

The aim of this proposal is that, whether you live in Redcar and Cleveland or Stockton-on-Tees, your route to progress from school to your local sixth form college will be unchanged. It is our intention to achieve two centres of high quality which can continue to serve local students from each respective borough and meet students' changing needs and aspirations. Students can continue to be based at the centre they choose with all teaching taking place at that location.

## Benefits to partners, employers and our communities

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.

## Benefits to the merged college

Both colleges have made cost reductions and efficiency improvements in response to reductions in levels of funding. The pressure on funding is expected to continue; for the Tees Valley, the number of students aged 16-18 in 2021 is projected to be 8% lower than in 2015<sup>9</sup>. There are limits to how much more can be achieved as stand-alone colleges through efficiency improvements and, in common with many other colleges, Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College have been looking at ways of how we might work together in order to achieve greater value for money.

Current collaboration between the two colleges has demonstrated that efficiencies can be made with support services. A merged college would allow us to build on and extract more value from shared resources. For example, it would allow us to avoid duplication in areas such as administration, liaison with external parties, planning (including curriculum development) and management. This will increase the percentage of funding which can be allocated directly to enhancing the quality of teaching, maintaining a broad curriculum provision, investing in new technology and extending the range of enrichment activities that we can offer.

This proposal will create a financially robust college which can be more efficient and effective than the current two separate colleges. We believe increased efficiency derived from this proposal will improve the financial stability and security of both the Guisborough and Stockton centres and ensure viable and sustainable high quality provision for the long term.

<sup>9</sup>ONS 2012 Population Projections.

# How the proposal will be achieved

The merged college would be achieved by the dissolution of Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College and the creation of Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth Form College. All property, rights and liabilities of Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College will, following merger, be owned by or the responsibility of Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth Form College. (NB: Prior Pursglove College uses land and buildings which are owned by a charitable Foundation. This land and associated buildings will not legally transfer to Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth Form College but will continue to be utilised by the new college.)

The combined learner numbers for the college is estimated as follows.

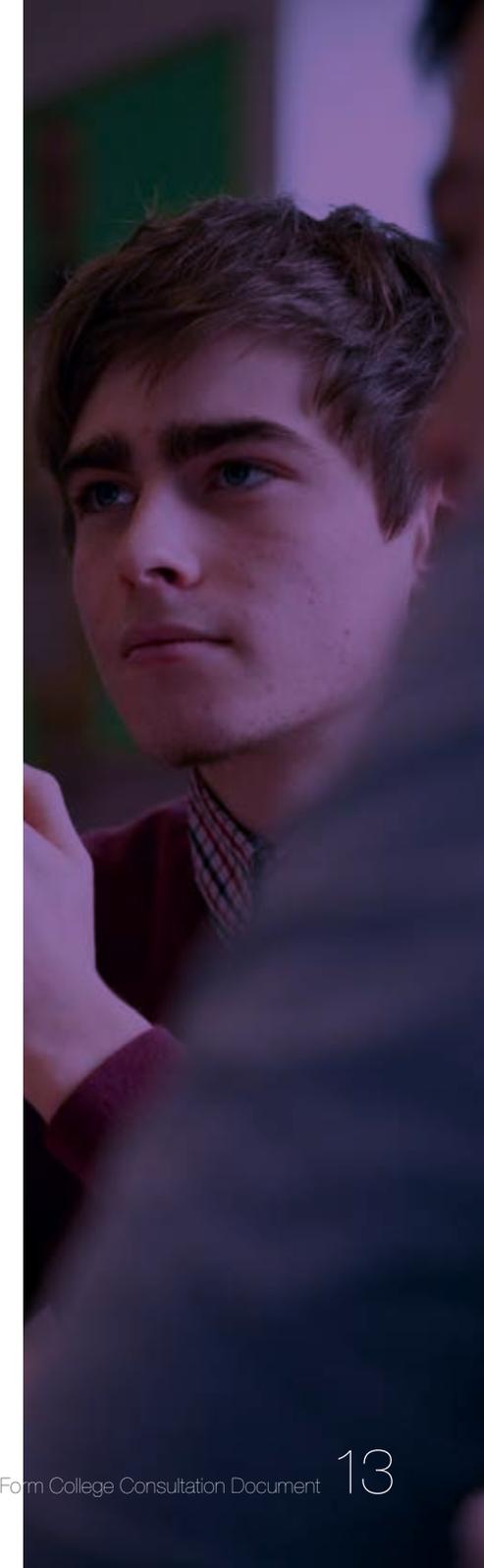
	Prior Pursglove	Stockton Sixth Form	Combined College
16-19 learners	1200	700	1900
Apprentices	30	0	30
Adult learners	500	0	500
Total	1730	700	2430
Percentage of total enrolment number aged 16-19			78%



# Area reviews

On 20th July 2015, government ministers published a paper entitled 'Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions'. This included the announcement that the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and the Department for Education will facilitate a national programme of area-based reviews to evaluate post-16 provision in every area. It is expected that the reviews will assist a move towards fewer, often larger, more resilient and efficient providers.

At the time this paper was published, leaders and Governors at Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College had resolved to progress further detailed work on this proposal over the summer holiday period with a view to consult early in the autumn term. Following the announcement on 20th July, both colleges approached the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for their advice. Following discussions between Peter Mucklow, the Sixth Form College Commissioner, and David Collins, the FE Commissioner, the EFA advised both Governing Bodies to proceed with the plan to consult.





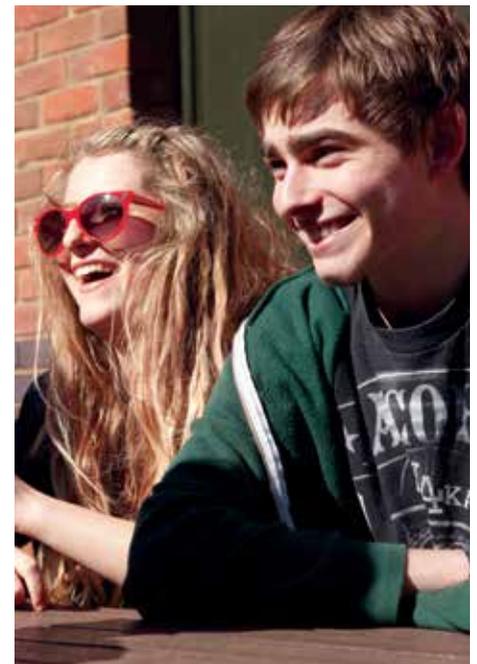
## Next steps

Governors at Prior Pursglove College and Stockton Sixth Form College have agreed to consult on a proposal to merge the two colleges with the aim of protecting high quality and broad ranging provision at both the Guisborough and Stockton centres.

A period of one month is being allowed for representations on this proposal starting from Thursday 17th September 2015, the day of publication of this proposal. Accordingly, please provide your responses to the proposal by Thursday 15th October 2015. Your response may be made by post or email to either of the addresses shown overleaf.

Please accept our grateful thanks in anticipation of your reply. We value your view on our proposal set out in this document. We will carefully consider the responses to the consultation exercise and take account of views expressed in any representations received.

We will publish a summary of the consultation and its outcome within one month and make the summary available free of charge to any person who requests it.





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