

Case study: turning round a secondary school with intractable problems

Client: Futures Community College, Southend.

Organisation Profile: Unique secondary school with strong vocational training.

Client Overview: Located in a severely challenged area, Futures College is a pioneering institution: a secondary school allied with a vocational and work-based training provider. Delivering secondary education together with apprenticeships and other work-based learning to students from 11-19, Futures College also makes its specialised facilities available to nearby schools, and to school-leavers in need of training to raise their employability. Futures College has undergone a major transformation from its former existence as Thorpe Bay School, which had been categorised in Special Measures longer than any school in Britain before beginning a partnership with EdisonLearning in 2004.

The Challenge: Despite input from a number of agencies, Thorpe Bay had been in Special Measures for six years, three headteachers had left, the governing body had been dissolved, and the case had attracted the attention of central government. Local Authority attempts to close the school down had been defeated by determined public resistance, but the intractable under-performance continued. Fighting for its life, the

school sought a clear direction and a fresh start under a new headteacher, aided by a partnership with EdisonLearning in a joint contract with the DfES, the Local Authority and the governors, designed to bring a cohesive approach and focus to the improvement effort.

The EdisonLearning Solution: Instigating a wide-ranging and intensive two-year partnership programme tackling fundamental aspects of the school's operation, EdisonLearning worked with the headteacher and staff to address key priorities, beginning with the raising of expectations among staff, pupils and the wider community. EdisonLearning's team of advisers concentrated on leadership and assessment for learning, the learning environment and core learning skills, and student and family support. These vital pillars of the recovery programme complemented the input of the Local Authority into KS3 and the inclusion strategy. The team of EdisonLearning advisers provided training for the whole staff, groups of staff, and the leadership team, with coaching for individuals, using training days, after-school sessions and residential weekends.



A really productive partnership with EdisonLearning helped us establish an effective ethos with an emphasis on achievement and personal responsibility – an important building block in the construction of a cohesive and purposeful environment – Jean Alder, Headteacher, Futures College

Project Outcomes: After sixteen months' work with EdisonLearning, the school finally shed its Special Measures category. Twelve months later, it rose out of the Notice to Improve category. Exam and test results have shown consistent improvement since then, staff turnover has fallen dramatically, and the school continues to raise its profile in the community, providing opportunities for students in Southend that were not available before. With new buildings and specialised facilities due to open in 2010, EdisonLearning continues to provide help as Futures College moves into the next stages of its radical transformation.