

Advisers' audit report	
School	Leigh City Technology College. Kent
Date of visit:	26 <sup>th</sup> April 2006
Advisers	David Potter
Evidence base	<p>OfSTED inspection report (1/01); PANDA (2005); Prospectus. Discussions with Principal, Deputy and Vice-Principals; acting chair of governors.</p> <p><b><i>NB: it was not possible on this occasion to talk to students since the school had been forced to close for the day because it had no water.</i></b></p>
<p><b>Main Findings</b></p> <p><b><i>This report is an update of the Pre-Feasibility Audit report of May 2004. Most of the text of the earlier report still applies and is repeated. Contextual data, and test/exam results have been brought up to date, and the recommendations section has been replaced by judgements concerning the College's capacity to federate with a weak school(s).</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The visit also contributed data to the summary paper on the distinctive strengths of CTCs, prepared for the 11<sup>th</sup> May seminar.</i></b></p> <p>The College is a powerful, confident and successful institution which has improved steadily since its inception and which has the capacity to go on improving. The College thrives on innovation and is using the transition to academy status to achieve more of its ambitions and to raise standards still higher.</p> <p>The College is led by an inspirational Principal who has established a culture of rigorous self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Strengths and weaknesses are well known through rigorous monitoring, and strong actions have been taken to improve weaker areas (see Standards, below). Senior leaders, and key members of the middle management team, constitute a skilled, high-quality team which shares the vision and high expectations of the Principal.</p> <p>A striking feature of the pre-feasibility audit visit was the support given by students to the values and ethos of the College. Students of all ages spoke of pride in their College; both the providers and the recipients spoke warmly of the support offered to younger and vulnerable students, and all described a safe environment which celebrates success and encourages learning and achievement. The students were knowledgeable about the curriculum - its rationale, recent changes and why they had been made, and about assessment. Their only criticisms were about the limitations placed on further development by the site and buildings. As well as describing the ethos accurately, students' behaviour embodied that ethos - their courtesy to visitors and to each other in particular.</p> <p>Academic achievement, attendance, behaviour, attitudes to school, policies and systems are all well above average in quality. The curriculum is innovative: the long lessons promote a variety of learning methods, and the off-timetable events, such as</p>	

the problem-solving fortnight for Year 12, provide excitement and enrichment.

The College is calm and purposeful. Its links with other educational institutions, especially primary schools and higher education, are extensive and of very high quality; the College has the capacity to extend such links still further, for example by taking over a secondary school in difficulties.

The site is very difficult to manage and places limitations on further development. Its split site across a main road and its multitude of small-to-medium-sized buildings constitute an inflexible resource. The full potential of ICT and of innovative teaching methods cannot be realised on the current site. At the time of the second visit, the agreement to bring the College on to one site with some purpose-built new buildings had just been signed.

#### **Context:**

- a large school (nearly 1400) rising steadily over 8 years
- there is a preponderance of boys (about 60:40)
- attainment on entry is around average: the school has a shorter head and tail and a bigger peak in the middle ability, than average,
- a low percentage (5%) is entitled to fsm (falling steadily) cf national average of 15 – 16%
- a below-average proportion of students (13%) on the SEN register (national average 15.3%), with an average proportion of students with statements (2.5% cf nat av 2.5%)
- low levels of pupil mobility
- a low % of EAL speakers (1.4%, nat av'ge 8.9%)

#### **Standards**

##### **KS3 results**

- SATs tests are taken at the end of Y8, and hence the apparently below-average progress (value added) for pupils from KS2, is deceptive, having taken place over only 2 years
- results have fluctuated in recent years, but are in line with the national average (taken a year early)
- results in maths have caught up with those in the other two subjects

##### **GCSE results**

- higher-grade results are above the national average but have fallen back from 77% in 2003 to 59% in 2005. This decline is the result of changed marking rules between GNVQ and vocational GCSE courses, and is the subject of vigorous complaint by the school to QCA
- nonetheless, contextual value added is high, placing the school in the top 10% of schools
- the proportion achieving five graded results is high, while that leaving without qualifications is negligible
- targets for 2006 are very high, the College having resolved the issue around its vocational courses. Already-banked results show that around 80% of Y11 already have 5 or more high-grade passes. The school expects this to rise to 90% when all results are in
- results are especially strong in some subjects, especially arts (art, drama, ELit, PE) and IT; modern languages results have improved from the first visit, but are still below those of most other subjects
- the proportion achieving A\*/A is low (and so is proportion of the intake of well-above-average ability).

	2002 School	2002 <i>National</i>	2003 School	2003 <i>National</i>	2004 School	2004 <i>National</i>	2005 School	2005 <i>National</i>
5+ A* - C	77	49.9	77	52	63	52	59	52
Incl En & Ma					44		32	
5+ A* - G	97	90.9	94	91	94	89	97	89
1+ A* - G	100	96	99	96				

### **Attendance**

- at over 94.4% (national average 91.7), with only 0.2% unauthorised absence (1.1%), attendance has remained well above average for several years.

### **Attitudes and behaviour**

- inspection reports show, and the audit site tour in May '04 reinforced, that students' attitudes to school and to their work are very positive. They are on task in lessons, and the transitions between lessons are brisk, contributing to the sense of intensity and energy so typical of CTCs. As the number of lessons per day has reduced to 4, learning time has increased
- as the Main Findings section above states, students are very knowledgeable about the College, and support and embody its values. For instance, in discussions in May '04, many spoke about the reduction in the number, and consequent increase in the length, of lessons; they could explain the rationale behind these changes and how they had improved learning.

### **Teaching and learning**

- inspection reports indicate that teaching is almost invariably at least satisfactory, and that a critical mass of good/very good teaching has been achieved. Since teaching is consistent, learning is rapid
- senior staff have been willing to confront low performance through regimes of close monitoring and support;
- to ensure consistency, expectations of teachers have been made clear and there has for some time been a systematic programme to monitor teaching
- as a result of the high levels of demand, support and monitoring, teaching quality has gone on rising;
- teaching and learning were not formally observed during the visit. However, during a tour of the site, the College was very calm and purposeful; students were on task in classes. There were few students out of lessons. The changeovers between lessons were, as far as could be ascertained, rapid and orderly.

### **Leadership**

The list of innovations and improvements under each of the previous sections testifies to the vision and skill of the Principal and his leadership group. The improvements to curriculum, teaching and standards described in the 2001 inspection report have been continued and show clearly the effectiveness of College leadership and management over a sustained period.

Particularly impressive are:

- the pace of change and sustained improvement over a long period

- the willingness to tackle low performance
- the open discourse about quality, practice and improvement
- the ambition to go on improving
- the positive, can-do approach throughout the College
- the business-like approach to management
- clarity of aim and simplicity of approach.

The Principal and his senior colleagues have recognised that the central feature of leadership that brings about improvement is changing staff attitudes.

#### **Capacity to support other schools**

- Leigh CTC's capacity is considerable
- the College has links with over 60 other schools. About half of these links are supportive in their nature; the others are training and consultative networks
- senior staff already undertake advisory work in weak schools, providing support in leadership, curriculum and ICT in particular
- the College has submitted plans to local LEA(s) to take over secondary schools in deep difficulty, but has to date had those plans rejected
- the College sees its outreach, support and partnership work as ways of building its own capacity (especially the size and strength of its leadership team) as well as that of its partners.