



## Ridgewood School

Ridgewood School in Doncaster has adopted STEPS to drive its own system for assessment and tracking pupil progress in Years 7–9.

Leadership Coach Bethanie Goodliff explained that the “strategic platform” provided by STEPS was invaluable as the school got to grips with life after levels: “Firstly, we’ve used the STEPS baseline assessments for Years 7, 8 and 9 since September 2016. In some cases heads of department have adapted these assessments for their own purposes and the value of STEPS in this case has undoubtedly been its flexibility and adaptability. We have used these tests alongside CAT and Key Stage 2 scaled scores to allow pupils to demonstrate their full range of ability and this is working well.”

Bethanie said that work around introducing STEPS in Key Stage 3 classrooms was also well underway. “As senior leaders we are recommending STEPS as a framework rather than something that must be followed in its entirety,” she revealed. “Teachers are now using it in that way, and finding that it can be flexible unlike a GCSE specification. They are using STEPS to support their planning in lessons without necessarily seeing that it is about, for instance, delivery of a particular strand. Parents are aware that we are using STEPS to set targets for Years 7, 8 and 9 – they understand this is all linked to progress against the baseline assessments with, for example, half a step of progress between assessment points usually demonstrating that the student has a motivated attitude to learning. Students have also proved extremely flexible and adaptable in their thinking.”

Following the end of Key Stage 3 attainment levels, Bethanie admitted that there had been a “huge degree of uncertainty on what to do next”. She added: “Until STEPS came along we continued to run with levels. The main challenge we were faced with was comparing like for like, and across all subjects. We also lost something which says clearly to parents where their child is and where they are aiming for. STEPS brings clarity across all subjects and a common language for staff to use. However, the baseline assessments are key. Previously we had useful information from primaries in English, Maths and Science but with creative subjects like Art and Music we didn’t know where pupils were when they walked through the door. We’re fortunate in that we have a whole week of primary transition here but modelling in creative subjects was very difficult and we often amended our baseline targets after initial teacher assessment. Consequently we didn’t have an effective way of giving all pupils a chance to be measured when they came in. We have that now with STEPS.”

The objective for Ridgewood School now is to “ensure that assessment is meaningful and accurate”, Bethanie said. “We will continue to use STEPS and make sure that parents understand the system. This is so important because there are so many changes going on right now, including GCSE 1–9. And we will aim to be consistent in our teaching. We will introduce more training, especially around how STEPS can be used in classroom scenarios. Overall, as a basis for Key Stage 3 assessment, we are really pleased with it. We’ve realised that it is much more flexible than we thought. What is also useful is the co-planning sessions we have introduced, with departmental leaders planning schemes of work using STEPS. We will continue to learn and adapt as we go forward.”

*Case study developed: January 2017*