

The STEPS Approach

Erith School

Erith School in the London Borough of Bexley adapted the principles of an initial version of what is now STEPS (Strategic Targets for Educational Progress and Success in Key Stage 3) to guide its own response to the end of levels.

Ben Morgan, Assistant Headteacher at Erith School, was tasked with creating an alternative assessment system to evaluate and monitor academic progress for Years 7-9. In September 2014 Ben began to seek out best practice in other schools and was introduced to Darrick Wood School which has now gone on to fully develop the STEPS model with Scholastic.

“In the minefield created by removing levels at Key Stage 3 schools were very much left to their own devices in terms of deciding what assessment models to use,” Ben explains. “I looked at many options and found the system being developed by Darrick Wood to be the most appropriate to our needs. I really liked it a lot. Not only did it give us a better model to pursue ourselves, I could see immediately that it would reduce teacher workload. The flexibility of Darrick Wood’s system ensured that we were able to tweak it to meet our school’s needs. We have gone on to produce similar grids for each subject, in a system that internally we call ‘Steps2Success’. We’ve gone from a much prescribed approach under levels to one that is more open-ended, which is what we wanted.”

As part of its own innovation, Erith School has developed a new assessment vision to support preparations for Key Stage 4. It includes enabling commitments to embed the skills required for Key Stage 3 success, clarity for pupils and parents, a focus on guidance, evidencing progress, and overall positivity in the language used. “Whether you use levels, grades or steps it is the same ladder we are trying to climb,” Ben says. “The difference is in moving the discussion from ‘How good are you at maths? 4B’ and ‘What would make you better? 4A’ to deeper knowledge and appreciation of the skills required to improve. In all subjects, students now know their strengths and areas for development and more importantly they know what it is they need to do to make further progress.”

Ben, supported by Director of Student Progress, Heather Viligiardi, launched the new assessment model in Years 7 and 8 in September 2015. From September Erith School will introduce a five-year flight path to support progress into Key Stage 4. “Staff, students and parents have found it easy to use and it has already helped to raise standards at Key Stage 3,” Ben reveals. “We’ve been able to get the breadth of each subject across to parents, carers and other stakeholders – it has provided substance that they are able to access.

- (a) The image below shows the parts of a plant. Write in the boxes the correct name for each part.
- One has been done for you.
- (b) The table below describes what function these parts perform. Write the correct number of each part of the plant in the boxes.

Number	What the part does
4	makes food
	produces pollen
	receives pollen
	attracts insects

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Ben Morgan

Assistant Headteacher
Erith School

Middle leaders are taking ownership of the reformed GCSE specifications and what we have to do to be successful at Key Stage 4. It will bring a much smoother transition. We will monitor and evidence progress, of course, and expect that further tweaking will be needed. But now teachers are very clear that by putting in a set of numbers at the start, middle and end of the year the whole thing is bigger than one assessment.”

For Ben, there is a confidence and reassurance that the school is heading in the right direction. “We’ve had visitors from other schools who have come in to look at our work in this area, and also our work around Progress 8 at Key Stage 4,” he says. “We are an improving school and our results at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 were noted by Ofsted in a recent visit. There is more work to do, of course, and we need to keep an eye on Key Stage 2 data as well as baseline data to inform the path for development. It’s a case of leaving no stone unturned. We are talking about our new system to Year 6 parents to make sure that even before pupils come into the school there is an understanding of our approach.”

However, Ben is continually looking for best practice in other schools to inform his own model. “It’s really good to see that development of Darrick Wood’s model with Scholastic – it’s a welcome innovation – and I am certainly keen to see what we can learn from it,” he adds.

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One has been done for you.



“It’s a case of leaving no stone unturned. We are talking about our new system to Year 6 parents to make sure that even before pupils come into the school there is an understanding of our approach.”

(b) The table below describes the function of each part of the human digestive system. Write the correct number of each part in the boxes.

Ben Morgan

Assistant Headteacher
Erith School

Number	What the part does
1	chews food
2	produces pepsin
3	receives pepsin
4	makes food useful
5	produces bile
6	receives bile
7	absorbs nutrients
8	attracts insects

Scholastic

starch

fat

protein

sugar

The diagram below shows part of the human digestive system.



What is the name of the part of the small intestine?

Which part?