



KING HENRY  
SCHOOL



## King Henry School

part of Odyssey Trust for Education

Erith School in the London Borough of Bexley (subsequently renamed King Henry School, part of Odyssey Trust for Education) – adapted the principles of an initial version of what is now STEPS to guide its own response to the end of well-established Key Stage 3 Attainment 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 gone on to 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 explained. “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 said. “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, along with help from Heather Viligiardi, the Director of Student Progress, launched the new assessment model in Years 7 and 8 in September 2015. From September 2016 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 revealed. “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. 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,” Ben said. “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 added.

*Case study developed: July 2016*