

Multi-Academy Trust

Case Studies

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Caroline Chisholm School

Caroline Chisholm School, an all-through academy in Northampton, has used the Scholastic Reading Audit to reinvigorate its institutional approach to primary phase literacy after identifying a need to improve reading progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

When it was established in 2004, Caroline Chisholm was the first through 4-18 state school in the UK and now has over 1,800 students. One teacher who has been at the school since it opened is Emma Langridge. Having originally started as an Advanced Skills Teacher in Primary English, Emma went on to build the school's guided reading strategy and has subsequently qualified as a Lead Practitioner.

Emma explained that whilst the school is well above national average in reading at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, progress between the key stages is average. This was highlighted as a weakness by Ofsted in September 2017 and subsequently there was a need to review the school's approach to reading. "The Scholastic Reading Audit came along at exactly the right time," Emma said. "Colleagues were questioning whether guided reading was the best approach and, as a school, we were considering dropping it and replacing it with whole-class reading. That didn't feel right to me and I needed to find some independent evidence for maintaining the guided reading strategy."

The audit helps teachers to evaluate their school's reading performance across 12 types of reading – a simple 'red, amber, green' rating system highlights reading strengths and identifies areas for development. Having completed the audit in November 2017, Emma shared the report with her Headteacher. **"The audit was great – the report we received back mentioned whole-class reading but it also prompted different things around guided reading, especially new ideas around reciprocal reading and close reading,"** she said. "It explains what these are, how these can be implemented and subsequently their recommendations. The fact that an organisation with Scholastic's credibility outlined the best way forward with reading was hugely important. It gave me the evidence to make a case to our Head, at a time when many schools are moving away from guided reading."

Caroline Chisholm has worked with Scholastic for many years. The school ran Scholastic Book Fairs in 2016 and 2017, raising £700 and £850 respectively, and Emma was able to utilise this additional funding to sign up to Scholastic's Connectors programme. Connectors is a groundbreaking reciprocal reading series for peer-to-peer learning which sees children working in small independent groups of up to six, each taking turns to be the leader as they read and debate a book together. Clear prompts show the leader how to focus the discussion and work with their team to predict outcomes, clarify issues, ask questions and evaluate content. This collaborative approach, recommended by the Education Endowment Foundation, develops teamwork as well as speaking, listening, comprehension and evaluation skills. Formal classroom trials of Connectors show children's reading age leaping forward by an average of 9.1 months in just 12 weeks."

"The books arrived at the beginning of this term, we have delivered training to all staff, and this is now being launched in the classroom," Emma said. "Connectors claims to improve age-related reading ability by nine months and I'm sure this investment will help get us to where we need to be. We are strict on measurement and will continually evaluate it but we have also introduced other whole-school interventions, and some specifically for boys where progress is particularly an issue, as part of our strategy. The main argument on whole-class reading is that it will require less planning – however, reading must be given the same planning attention as English and Maths and it's important not to lose depth. At a time when we felt unsure about continuing guided reading, the Scholastic Reading Audit was great. It clarified valuable strategies to be used in guided reading and provided guidance on the areas we were falling short, such as the independent tasks. It was the springboard for us to revamp and embrace guided reading."

Emma praised the role of Scholastic in helping to address some of their most pressing school improvement challenges: "The book fairs have a good reputation and are a great way to make money for the school – without these, we wouldn't have been able to buy Connectors. I had not really explored Scholastic's resources or associated them with research prior to completing the audit, but both have been brilliant. Again, to have a respected body like Scholastic saying that guided reading is the right thing to do provided reassurance for me and helped me make my case for the continuation of this strategy."

Case study developed: January 2018



Kings Hill Primary School

Kings Hill Primary School in Kent is one of the first institutions to complete the Scholastic Reading Audit, created by literacy experts to review schools' current reading provision and then develop an action plan for moving forward.

Fully matched to National Curriculum expectations, the audit helps teachers to evaluate their school's reading performance across 12 types of reading – a simple 'red, amber, green' rating system highlights reading strengths and identifies areas for development. It also gives schools the opportunity to access Scholastic's online research hub which links best practice and other information to support the teaching of reading.

"The Scholastic Reading Audit itself took less than 30 minutes to complete online," said the School's Assistant Head and Literacy Lead, Charlotte Genç, who joined Kings Hill in 2004. "When I first heard about the audit, it seemed like an ideal platform to find out where our gaps are and how they can be plugged. The feedback was good, but it highlighted an opportunity to focus on our free readers and how we can push them on. It's an impressive tool and the follow-on report showed what we need to do next."

The data allows us to pinpoint particular children, and with a better set of data we can make more informed decisions on how to improve – our strengths and weaknesses. It also helps us get parents involved, understanding what they can do to directly improve their child's reading."

Charlotte subsequently met with Scholastic to discuss the most effective approaches for supporting free readers. The school is now using Reading Pro, which assesses students' reading ability and comprehension. It combines a reading assessment that computes students' Lexile measures – a valuable piece of information about either an individual's reading ability or the difficulty of a text – with a reading management programme that includes thousands of quizzes to assess independent reading.

"We have a well-stocked library, but the challenge has been knowing which books work best for certain pupils and what free readers require," Charlotte said. "Key Stage 2 children needed particular support, in particular pushing greater depth and mastery in comprehension skills, and as part of Reading Pro we now know individual pupils' Lexile measures and have a better range of books to support progress. The data allows us to pinpoint particular children, and with a better set of data we can make more informed decisions on how to improve – our strengths and weaknesses. It also helps us get parents involved, understanding what they can do to directly improve their child's reading."

Graded 'Good' during an Ofsted inspection in July 2017, Kings Hill has worked with Scholastic for many years on a range of support initiatives. Charlotte said: "Scholastic is a respected brand, we utilise their services regularly, and our librarian has a great relationship with the company in terms of stock and resourcing book fairs. We find their representatives to be very knowledgeable and good to work with. Whilst we have achieved a lot, there are always small things to improve, and we look forward to continuing our relationship with Scholastic as we seek to provide very best education for our children."

Case study developed: October 2017



LEIGH
Academies Trust



Oaks Primary Academy

part of Leigh Academies Trust

Georgina Rawling is a Year 1 class teacher and English Lead at Oaks Primary Academy, part of Leigh Academies Trust. She is also an Improvement Officer at the Trust which encompasses 15,000 students aged 2–19 in 23 primary, secondary and special academies including one all-through and one grammar school.

Having joined Maidstone-based Oaks Primary from another school in the Trust in summer 2018, Georgina decided to audit the school's reading provision. "I needed to understand what we have, where we are at, and set up a baseline for progress – and, following a simple Google search, I came across the Scholastic Reading Audit which helps teachers to evaluate their school's reading performance across 12 types of reading," she said. "It is all online, so we were able to start straight away, and was very thorough. It sought different perspectives: staff, pupil and parent, and identified where can improve."

Having completed the audit in October 2018, Georgina met with Scholastic to discuss the findings and explore different intervention strategies. "Whilst our strengths were found to be in one-to-one and close reading, the follow-on report highlighted community and parental involvement in reading as areas for development," she said. "We talked through how certain approaches could help us to overcome these challenges."

There is nothing like the Scholastic Reading Audit out there – it is like gold dust. It allowed me to step outside of my school and Trust roles and be more strategic. The audit directly informed my subject improvement plan and reading is at the heart of our curriculum.

One outcome of the Scholastic Reading Audit was that Oaks Primary took the decision to sign up to the Connectors programme to support the reading strategy. Connectors is a reciprocal reading series for peer-to-peer learning which sees children working in small independent groups of up to six, each taking turns to be the leader as they read and debate a book together. Formal classroom trials of Connectors show children's reading age leaping forward by an average of 9.1 months in just 12 weeks. **"Children across the school are reading independently – that is the biggest difference already – they are not relying on adults, and so far outcomes are improving term-by-term,"** Georgina said.

This is quite an impact, given that Connectors was only introduced in November 2018. "The key to our success is sharing Scholastic Reading Audit with the staff and giving them the ownership to improve reading in their classrooms and getting feedback from them and the children along the way," Georgina explained. "We continually measure pupil voice as well as harder outcomes. Other schools from within the Trust have been invited to see how we are approaching reading – and sat in on training – and we will be going out to other schools in the Trust to do the Reading Audit too."

Reading is taught daily in a variety of ways, including individual reading, group reading and whole-class reading – and, whilst parental engagement remains the biggest challenge across all schools, there is "a strategy to bring them on the improvement path". Georgina added: "Our relationship with Scholastic is great – the team is very knowledgeable and know their products inside out and how they can help schools in their improvement strategies. We use Scholastic to boost our library stock and the book fairs are always very good too. We will complete the Reading Audit again in 2020 and re-evaluate."

Case study developed: July 2019



Whiteparish All Saints

Church of England Primary School

Whiteparish All Saints Church of England Primary School, an 'Outstanding' school based in Salisbury, has used the Scholastic Reading Audit – which helps teachers to evaluate their school's reading performance across 12 types of reading using a simple 'red, amber, green' rating system – to ensure that its approach to literacy remains at the forefront of innovation.

Headteacher Kate Heathcote was introduced to the audit in summer 2018 when it was the topic of discussion in an online school leadership forum. "Reading is a major strength of our school, which is reflected in our Key Stage SATs results over recent years, and time is set aside every day for children to develop their individual and group reading skills," Kate explained. "We are keen to promote both the enjoyment of books and to develop fluent readers from an early age, and have reading corners in all classrooms. However, with a new English lead taking up post in 2018-19, **the Scholastic Reading Audit presented the ideal opportunity to undertake some external, independent, benchmarking.**"

Kate said the online audit, which highlights a school's reading strengths and identifies areas for development, "reiterated where we thought we were and clarified what needed to be done". She added: "Whilst we initially did it to see if anything was significantly missing, as a result of the Scholastic Reading Audit we have done a lot more to improve again. For example, whilst we do lots of reading for pleasure, the audit showed we were not making the most of our library space, were not properly set up with little reading areas, and not geared up for engaging parents. The audit also introduced the principle of reciprocal reading, which we were not previously aware of. Scholastic subsequently delivered a staff meeting on this which was very good and colleagues are taking on board ideas around it."

The school has also commissioned two Scholastic learning resources on the back of the audit – Pie

Corbett's Reading Spine, which supports the teaching of comprehension, drama and writing, and Barrington Stoke fiction books. "The Reading Spine is being used by children in reception through to Year 6 and when pupils read each set of books they get a certificate – we can directly measure the impact of Pie Corbett's books by how many children take up this challenge," Kate said. "The Barrington Stoke books have hooked pupils in with reading material that interests and engages them, from football to mountain biking. They are also proving effective for learners with specific learning difficulties such as mild dyslexia – especially boy readers – and these children are first to 'bagsy' them. As a school, our issue with reading is mainly groups of boys in Year 6 and in Year 5. None of the Year 6 had been reading fluently previously but the impact of our investment is reflected in our SATs results this year. The work with Year 5 is about preparing them for Year 6."

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Now with over 10,000 books in the school, many purchased through Scholastic, Kate said the relationship had been "very beneficial": "My experience of Scholastic has been entirely positive and we have seen the outcomes of that. The Reading Audit was really useful and, because it included questions that we had not thought to ask ourselves and the quality of information coming back was so high, it proved to be a good self-evaluation piece that I have recommended to other schools in our cluster."

Case study developed: July 2019



Brentwood County High School

part of Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust

Brentwood County High School, a 1,400-pupil secondary school in Essex (and now part of Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust), is one of the first beneficiaries of Scholastic's new GCSE 9-1 Practice and Revision series. Dave Richardson, the School's Deputy Head, purchased the GCSE English Language & Literature and Mathematics revision guides, exam practice books and online revision planners for Year 10 and 11 pupils for utilisation from March 2017.

"We bought the resources at a time which really fitted well into Year 11, and the stage they were at in the school year," Dave said. "Previously we had struggled to find appropriate resources on these subjects because of the new GCSE exams coming in – and Scholastic's is by far the best I've seen. For the pupils it has helped them to structure their revision and manage it on a day-to-day basis. The link between the revision guide and exam practice book has been particularly welcome. It means they have one book that they can use to help them revise and, as it has a 'how to do it' section, exam questions and answers, everything they need is altogether. What they thought was especially clever is the resources 'knowing' the day of their exam, and then highlighting what they needed to do and when in the days and weeks leading up to it. That captured them there and then. The 'do it', 'nail it' and 'snap it' features in the margin of the books were all very popular."

The Scholastic resources go into far more detail than some of the other revision guides we have used and I've not seen any other resources that have an app linked to them. We would definitely recommend the resources to other schools. Everything you need to revise is in one place to enable students to work independently."

A free app accompanies the books, allowing students to plan and revise on the go with practice questions and step-by-step guidance. "Pupils work best through technology, so having the app linked into the book and especially their exam timetable is very powerful," Dave explained. "The app helps students plan out their revision easily and see how much content they need to revise. Being able to take screen shots and have a set of revision cards on their phones has been great. In our school we are big on technology and the students are used to learning online, so this complements our general ethos. Many pupils also expressed a view that the book itself supported them even more prominently the closer the exam got. We obviously don't know Year 11's GCSE results yet, but the resources were undoubtedly helpful and we will continue to roll them out to next year's cohort."

English Language & Literature and Mathematics teachers at the school have been equally impressed. "Colleagues have used the resources both as independent revision tools and also to set specific tasks to be done in lesson and as homework," Dave said. "This means staff can easily set independent revision and students can work through it by themselves without help. The Scholastic resources go into far more detail than some of the other revision guides we have used and I've not seen any other resources that have an app linked to them. We would definitely recommend the resources to other schools. Everything you need to revise is in one place to enable students to work independently."

For Brentwood County High School, it was their first experience of Scholastic products. "Scholastic was incredibly easy to deal with," Dave said. "In one day we had copies of each book to inspect – then, having decided to place a bulk order, we had 400 copies at the school just two days later. I will definitely explore the other GCSE 9-1 Practice and Revision subjects they have, including combined and single sciences."

Case study developed: July 2017



Billingborough Primary School

Billingborough Primary School, near Sleaford in south Lincolnshire, has been using Scholastic's comprehensive range of maths textbooks since November 2016 as part of a school-wide response to the new National Curriculum.

The school, rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in July 2012, aims to ensure that all pupils become fluent with the fundamentals of maths. This involves the frequent practice of a range of increasingly complex problems, developing children's conceptual understanding. Pupils are also supported to reason mathematically so they are equipped to manage the challenges that 'real life' maths will throw at them, and be able to solve problems by applying their skills learnt in lessons and breaking them down into small steps.

Billingborough commissioned the following Scholastic resources to support teachers and children with the new curriculum: National Curriculum Planning and Assessment Guides (Year 2-6); Curriculum Textbooks (Year 2-6); National Curriculum SATs Tests (Year 2-6); National Curriculum SATs Tests: Results Tracker; 100 Maths Lessons for the New Curriculum (Year 4-5); and 100 Practical Activities: National Curriculum Maths Practice Book (Year 3-6).

Frances Reeder, the school's maths co-ordinator and Year 5/6 teacher, said investment in additional learning resources was a priority for Billingborough. "The 2015-16 academic year was challenging for us in terms of maths progress and attainment so we needed to develop and

invest as a school to avoid further decline," she explained. "We were looking for resources that complement our teaching, and our style of teaching, rather than being too prescriptive. Those we can use and adapt without being too expensive, which we are always mindful of. In the past 12 months we have come on leaps and bounds, both in terms of our test scores and in the day-to-day impact we are seeking in the school."

The Scholastic maths textbooks and guides are being used by different teachers in different ways. "The flexibility is their real value," Frances said. "Our Year 1 teacher takes ideas from the Year 2 books to create her own worksheets, and looks at what objectives need to be met after Year 1 to inform her own teaching. Our Year 3-4 teacher dips in and out of the textbooks for planning ideas and resources, and provide practice in certain areas. He particularly values the fact that the resources are interactive and editable. My fellow Year 5-6 teacher uses the resources far more extensively. Providing information pages for pupils to read and digest, a concept to discuss, completing activities and problems, or sometimes taking an idea from the book and adapting it. She really likes the problem-solving challenges and Brain Teaser/Brain Twister features alongside more straightforward questions, and the overall concept of learn, tips, talk, activities and problems for every topic."

Frances enthused that the Talk Maths feature of the resources was her personal favourite. **"The children like them - they complement our other activities on a day-to-day basis - and for staff they have been incredibly useful because the new curriculum just bamboozles teachers."**

Maths will continue to be an integral focus of Billingborough's school improvement plan. "Our focus in school has traditionally been on reading and writing and the new curriculum means we were always going to go through a period of adjustment," Frances said. "However, the Scholastic resources have helped us to grasp what is required for each year group as well as informing the whole-school approach. We've worked with Scholastic for many years and really value their personal and non-salesy approach."

Case study developed: October 2017

It's just brilliant – I love it, and it's perfect for the Year 5-6 mix. The textbooks and guides offer practice in all areas with links to 'real life' situations, information pages which act as a reference point for the children, and opportunities for us as teachers to either use the text for the lesson or adapt the ideas provided.



Bellefield CofE Primary & Nursery School

Bellefield CofE Primary & Nursery School in Trowbridge uses the award-winning PM reading programme throughout the school – beginning with ‘non-level’ books followed by gradual progression up to Level 30 and on to ‘free reader’ – and the impact of its reading intervention system has been praised by Ofsted.

Ellen Campbell, the school’s Literacy and Phonics Lead and Reception teacher, is responsible for co-ordination of guided, shared and independent reading programmes alongside the Reading Pal Co-ordinator. This includes working with teachers, teaching assistants and reading pals, who come in to the school voluntarily to support pupils who are struggling with reading progression.

“The real value of PM is that it brings comprehension in line with reading,” she explained. “It’s not about phonics per se, it is about how the children use their other skills. They need to be able to answer comprehension questions about what they have read and apply their phonics knowledge to certain words.”

Ellen, who joined the school in 2008, said that PM was at the forefront of their initiatives to develop successful readers. “The real value of PM is that it brings comprehension in line with reading,” she explained. “It’s not about phonics per se, it is about how the children use their other skills. They need to be able to answer comprehension questions about what they have read and apply their phonics knowledge to certain words. Generally we find that if a child is picking up phonics quickly in school and also getting home support they can fly through the levels. Our data on PM and reading pals shows the correlation

between these and pupil progression. Ofsted really liked our reading intervention system and overall approach to phonics tracking.”

The PM benchmarking kits are essential for use in schools to help teachers understand what levels their pupils are reading at, Ellen said. “Assessment packs are used by teachers, reading pals and teaching assistants – children need to get x % of words correct to progress to the next level – and if a child is reading well but has not got the comprehension then we know where to focus,” she revealed. “We have in-school targets – by the end of reception we expect children to be around a Level 6 on PM and by the end of Year 1 around a Level 15. We are seeing more children reading at higher levels at Year 1, and more free readers at Year 2, as a result of PM and the high-quality systematic phonics being taught daily in each class.”

At Bellefield, however, the school also supports children with a range of needs. “Some children come in with low vocabulary levels and we have a high proportion of English as an Additional Language (EAL) children, but for us it all clicks with PM because it’s so easy to use,” Ellen said. “You see some readers, especially EAL children, getting stuck in the late Level 20s on PM due to the new vocabulary in those books. We therefore also use Fast Forward, part of PM, to support older children. Once children get to Level 27/28 and can see they only need to progress through a few more levels to become a free reader then this is extremely motivating.”

Ellen praised the hard work of colleagues in the implementation of PM. “Our system works really well because we train our staff who work really hard at using it well – we couldn’t make it successful without their dedication,” she said. “We’re able to get our PGCE students involved because PM is so easy to use, training is not teacher heavy, and they also use our system.”

Case study developed: February 2017



Glenfrome Primary School

Glenfrome Primary School

part of 4 Learning Partnership

Claire Banham is a specialist reading teacher at Glenfrome Primary School, part of 4 Learning Partnership in Bristol. Having been a Year 1 and Year 2 class teacher for 14 years and returning to the profession after having children, Claire re-trained as a Reading Recovery teacher – an accredited school-based literacy programme for the lowest achieving pupils aged five and six that enables them to reach age-expected levels within 20 weeks.

For Claire this is her third school – all Reading Recovery schools – which has adopted the award-winning PM reading programme. “PM works so well because it is so finely levelled,” she explained. “Vocabulary is limited in the first book with simple repetition, then gradually this builds up slowly through the levels. There is not too much of a focus on phonics and the pace is just right. There are other schemes out there which try to level, but unless you write down all the vocabulary you are expected to know at each stage it’s very hard to fit that in to levels. We use text levels 1–30 until a child is a free reader.”

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The benchmark kits, which help teachers understand what levels their pupils are reading at, are particularly valuable. Claire said: “Benchmark kits are so finely graded that you can see the visual level moving up from 1–30. I give children

a sticker for moving up a level and there is a sense of pride in making progress. It’s also a good tool to show parents where their child is in terms of expectation. It’s great to see progress in book level week-by-week. **We use benchmark kits to track progress in school – we will undertake a formal assessment every other term using the benchmark kit, and use this as a guide to progress in attainment. The fine levels make that very straightforward.**”

In her role at Glenfrome, Claire works with Year 1 and Year 2 children as well as directly supporting literacy teachers and overseeing volunteers. This includes providing relevant interventions for the lowest achieving readers. “I spend a lot of time using PM as a Reading Recovery teacher,” she revealed. “I see four children every day, using PM fiction and non-fiction books, and assessing progress through the benchmark kit. With EAL pupils – who I spend a significant amount of time with – we use mainly fiction books which provide vocabulary with reach for EAL children. With EAL children, however, we will talk about the book a lot more. PM doesn’t tend to be too ambitious, and we find that phonetically it is decodable and provides just the right challenge for EAL pupils.”

Claire added that PM ultimately provides teachers with reassurance that every child can progress with reading. “The government has prioritised phonics-based learning – but there is a difference between phonics and reading real books,” she said. “Phonics doesn’t always make sense or mean anything. PM provides a good range of proper sentence books, and we invest additionally in phonics to support any gaps there. We are fortunate in that we have a very supportive head and there is a huge commitment to supporting children with lots of different needs.”

Case study developed: February 2017



Kirkhill Primary School

Kirkhill Primary School in Aberdeen has been using Scholastic's award-winning PM resources since August 2017 – and the UK's largest and most finely levelled reading programme has had an immediate impact on pupils and teachers.

"Last year our school improvement focus was on numeracy – this year it is literacy," said Kerry Reith, the school's Deputy Headteacher for Early Years. "Attainment has been down and we realised we needed a big investment in our resources aimed at developing successful readers. We are a forward-thinking school and PM has been our focus for improvement. Feedback over the first few months has been really positive – comprehension is up, reading enjoyment is up, and teachers visibly have a buzz about them too."

Kerry, who is part of the Kirkhill's literacy working party, explained why she commissioned PM. "We already had reading schemes underway in school but didn't want to go down the phonetics route," she explained. "We analysed what we had available and found gaps in some areas. We were then recommended by our librarian to Scholastic and the initial PM benchmarking exercise gave us some concrete evidence on what to do next. There was limited choice and flexibility in our book range, so we have purchased up to Gold level. Next year, subject to budget, we hope to invest in more."

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With over 1,000 books – beginning with 'non-level' books followed by gradual progression up to Level 30 and on to 'free reader' – Kirkhill teachers have been able to identify approaches which work for bespoke groups. "We particularly needed to look at our Year 3–5 strategy and PM provides three levels within each band which give the opportunity for targeted intervention at each level," Kerry said. "A major benefit is that the levels can be broken down to meet the needs of individual children. Generally, the PM books are age appropriate and generate high interest. Children especially like the traditional tales. They want to read and want to know what their next books are. **Across the board they are improving, enjoying reading and wanting to read on their own. We are also using the resources for reflective reading – using the story to discuss particular topics and questions too.**"

As a school with 25% EAL children, a high proportion of FSM children and a generally mixed demographic, PM's levels have also helped to break down barriers to attainment for traditionally underperforming groups. "As teachers we can see exactly where a child is at, their areas for development and next steps, which provides reassurance that every child can progress," Kerry revealed. "On a day-to-day basis some teachers are using PM themselves, others are deferring to a teacher we have employed specifically to work with children on their reading. It has been very easy to roll out."

Kerry also praised the Scholastic team for their assistance during initial set up: "We spent the summer sorting out the books and the teacher resources are there if we need them. Scholastic attended our first induction meeting for members of staff and benchmarking was well explained. We have focused on four colours and bought into all of them, we are really happy with the books, and plan to extend our use."

Case study developed: December 2017



Miller Primary School

Testimonial for Stephen Graham's PM CPD Workshop

I first met Stephen Graham at his "Creating a Balanced Reader and Writer" course which was run by Scholastic on the 11th October 2018. I was offered a place on this training course as my school had just purchased PM Benchmarking from Scholastic. We had both reading and writing on our School Improvement Plan and so this course attracted me as it could support our improvement as a school. I attended the course with my Scottish Attainment Challenge Leader of Learning and we were both inspired by what Stephen talked about. He was practical in his approach and his delivery was highly entertaining. We questioned our current learning and teaching of reading in light of Stephen's strong belief that different genres each have a specific layout which needs to be specifically taught to children so that they can interpret the text and create a particular text type. We returned to school and we shared what we had learned about creating a balanced reader and writer with the staff who were also interested in this idea. We realised that there was a lack of age appropriate reading materials for children who are older with lower abilities in reading and so we purchased Fast Forward texts from PM. We introduced the Fast Forward texts to specific children which increased their confidence, fluency and phrasing when reading as they were interested in the content of the texts. This had a positive impact on the reading levels of the children involved.

Moreover, we were fortunate enough to secure a training day on 22nd March 2019 with Stephen in our school which motivated and engaged all my staff and Senior Leaders from other schools in the authority who attended. The focus of this training was on PM Benchmarking and creating a balanced reader. Stephen used children within the school as a demonstration group on how to benchmark which made it very relevant for everyone. The children felt at ease with him and he modelled how to

assess and then discussed what the findings were from the assessment in terms of future learning and teaching for the specific children.

Staff were up skilled in using PM Benchmarking, teaching reading in terms of genre specific features and they were motivated to use the strategies Stephen had talked about within their learning and teaching. We also explored this further as we developed our writing and reading policies as well as organising our reading resources to ensure that they were benchmarked. We also supplemented our reading resources to ensure we had a range of non-fiction texts.

Furthermore we discussed evidencing a balanced writer across the year and so we created a genre focus per term across the school and assessed writing using genre specific criteria for cold pieces of writing. At the end of the academic session, our cold piece results allowed teachers to assess children across a range of genres and this strengthened our professional judgement of whether children were truly balanced writers. We used this information and the benchmarks when deciding whether children were achieving the level at P1, P4 and P7.

As we are a Challenge Authority, we have a Challenge Leader of Learning who was trained by the Authority and focused on writing by taking targeted support groups. We also used some of our Pupil Equity Funding to train a teacher in Reading Recovery which was successful for targeted children. All of this coupled with our training in creating a balanced reader and writer helped to close the gap throughout the school as our reading results rose by 3% and our writing results rose by 10% compared with the previous year. We have further developed writing this session by introducing the PM Writing scheme and although it is early days, most children have been motivated by the resource.

Lorraine Booth, Head Teacher

Case Study Developed December 2019



West Lothian Council

West Lothian Council in Scotland, and its Education Service, is supporting schools to use the PM Writing programme as one of their key resources. PM, a complete learning, teaching and assessment package focusing on the writing process through the primary phase, is one of the Council's tools to promote literacy as part of its robust strategy to raise attainment for all.

Having first come across the programme in September 2018, Literacy and English Pedagogy Officer Marion Cochrane is using PM Writing as a framework to teach the literacy of different genres. "I was listening to a presentation by literacy expert Stephen Graham who said that 93% of secondary school learners' writing is non-fiction – I knew that this number was high, but not that high," Marion said. "This caused me to reflect on the styles of writing we were teaching in our primary schools in terms of writing across a wider range of genres. Our objective is to close the gaps and improve attainment in writing, and PM met a lot of our requirements. It provides a range of literacy genres and a bespoke format for teachers, which means that even those not particularly skilled in teaching literacy can easily deliver it."

Marion, who was formerly Deputy Headteacher at Knightsridge Primary School in Livingston, highlighted the "robust approach" that she is taking across West Lothian. "I have used PM as a useful resource within the authority, creating core writing targets based on genres, which sit alongside our West Lothian literacy progression pathways," she said. "My role includes supporting schools to raise attainment in writing and encouraging them to promote writing across the four contexts for learning throughout the year – therefore schools will be teaching different genres across the curriculum. This pedagogy sits very well with the 'Developing the Young Workforce'

agenda. It is clear that employers are looking for school-leavers to be able to write in a range of specific genres and PM writing supports learners to develop these skills."

The programme provides instruction in writing, incorporating shared, guided and independent writing and independent reading. In addition to hundreds of finely graded texts, the PM Writing collection provides teacher support through exemplar texts, teacher and student resource books, and student assessment and activity pages. PM Writing has already helped Marion's former primary school win the 'Raising Attainment in Literacy Award' at the Scottish Education Awards 2019, a success which saw Knightsridge's use of different text types highlighted by the judges. There have already been a number of benefits in using the programme in many schools across West Lothian, she said:

"PM Writing exposes learners to a wide range of vocabulary. It extends general knowledge and is very popular, particularly with boys, who enjoy the structure of the writing and clearly are able to make links with the purpose of their writing.

"Pupil voice tells us that these learners are much happier, have a richer experience, and are very quickly able to articulate the specific genre markers required in each text type."

Marion is delighted with schools' response to the PM Writing programme. **"It is proving very successful and a key element in supporting us to raise attainment in literacy across the region."**

Case study developed: July 2019



Acle Academy

part of The Wensum Trust

Acle Academy, part of the Norfolk-based Wensum Trust of five schools specialising in early years to sixth form, has used STEPS as part of its overall solution to Key Stage 3 assessment following the end of well-established levels.

Jimmy Day, Acting Assistant Headteacher and Data Manager, recalled the key challenges in moving to a post-levels solution. “Firstly, we had to get teachers to move on from the security of levels,” he said. “Then it has been about finding consistency between departments and developing a way of measuring progress that helps with the Progress 8 measure at the end of Year 11. Despite the abolishment of levels, staff, governors, parents and students all seem to want to know what ‘level’ they are working at.”

“However, we really liked the baseline assessments. We have implemented these into our own system and now have effective baseline assessments for all subjects in years 7–9. This has given us a great starting point from which to work from.”

The academy sought to overcome these challenges by sharing best practice, attending conferences and data workshops but, most importantly says Jimmy, “using our initiative” in the development of a new system for tracking assessment and pupil progress in Years 7–9. “Two aspects of our system are particularly worthy of focus at this stage,” he said. “The use of mastery statements – we had a lot of issues with buy-in from staff to begin with but seem to be getting there now. The other is assessing against learning objectives – this is working to some degree but it currently takes a lot of time.”

Jimmy was first introduced to STEPS last summer but “as we got wind of it too late and were already setting a system up” the academy has not used it in its entirety. “However, we really liked the baseline assessments,” he said. “We have implemented these into our own system and now have effective baseline assessments for all subjects in years 7–9. This has given us a great starting point from which to work from.”

Acle Academy has now set its sights on further developing, monitoring and evaluating its system. “We would like to make things quicker and more streamlined – that’s our priority,” Jimmy said. “We are happy with the progress we have made to date, and the STEPS baseline assessments have been an important addition.”

Case study developed: January 2017



DARRICK WOOD SCHOOL

AN ACADEMY AND TEACHING SCHOOL

Darrick Wood School

Darrick Wood School in Orpington, Kent is the 'birthplace' of what is now STEPS, published by Scholastic.

Following the end of well-established Key Stage 3 Attainment Levels in September 2014, Darrick Wood sought to develop its own new assessment and progress monitoring, tracking and reporting programme for Years 7–9.

The project was led by Assistant Headteacher Martin Smith, in conjunction with a team of specialists at Darrick Wood, which holds both Teaching School status and the World Class School Quality Mark. "When we started this work there was a mixture of excitement and concern amongst those of us involved," Martin admitted. "Excitement because it presented a genuine opportunity to devise an entirely new system from scratch, one that fulfil the objectives and ethos of our school, but concern because we were going into the unknown in terms of creating additional workload on top of everything else we do as teachers. Then the excitement really took over and now I believe we have a system that works not just for our school but is flexible enough to be adapted to all schools."

The cornerstone of STEPS is a simple grid for each subject and a progressive set of attainment targets that present challenge at all levels of ability throughout KS3. The grids are broken down into a template of nine 'steps' across four, five or six different subject strands. This level of detail means pupils can make fine levels of progress and teachers can create incremental, personalised targets based on assessment in KS3. 'Expected' progress is the equivalent to movement of one whole step in each year of KS3.

Martin explained: "At the beginning of the first term in Year 7, all pupils undertake initial baseline testing in the form of a written test or practical assessment, depending on the subject in question. This subject-specific training gives every pupil an entry point into each strand. Through ongoing formative assessment the pupils' progression can then be measured over the course of KS3. Constant exposure to the 'big picture' is achieved by promoting the use of STEPS in class and more widely to parents."

An initial pilot began in September 2015 for Year 7 pupils and, at a presentation to parents in January, Martin said the positive

feedback was overwhelming. "STEPS provides a very simple overview of where a pupil is at and what they need to do to improve," Martin said. **"Parents have loved the simplicity of a quick check via the 'Step Point' score but also the level of detail that is there if they want to see it.** They have realised the potential of having several ready-made targets and have appreciated the level of detail in each 'Step Grid' that the breakdown of a whole key stages provides them."

Teachers, too, have seen significant benefits already. "Colleagues are really relishing the advantages that such a focused approach can afford and, as they have learnt the system, have really come to value its structure," Martin revealed. **"Many have commented on the new found focus to parental meetings and the guidance and support it gives them during the report writing process.** Subject leaders have started to analyse the results from each data collection window to identify strands of their subject which the pupils are finding more difficult and/or which teachers are finding more difficult to deliver."

It had also increased support for pupils, Martin said. **"The level of detail has helped to raise an early warning to individual pupils, as well as teaching groups who are seemingly making unusual rates of progress.** It has allowed them to put in place support for pupils and/or groups and in some cases additional training for teachers."

Now, with backing from Scholastic, schools are able to purchase STEPS for their school. "What schools are looking for is confidence that any new system will not disappear overnight," Martin said. "As teachers, we don't want to be changing systems again in five years' time – we are looking for security, and STEPS provides that. **We have shown that our system is effective – it measures progress and assessment simultaneously, and creates easily understandable data and a structure for teaching.** It also ultimately saves time. There is initial work to be done in getting to grips with the system, that is only normal, but once that time investment has been made the return is huge. Finally, it is completely flexible and adaptable, so schools can attune STEPS for their purposes."

STEPS utilises the frameworks and assessment focuses already created by subject leaders since the introduction of Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) and the National Strategies. It is compatible with SIMS and uses FFT Aspire and Cognitive Abilities Tests/MidYIS data to help triangulate baseline data for each student.

Case study developed: July 2016



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



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



THE
KING JOHN
SCHOOL



ZENITH
MULTI ACADEMY
TRUST

The King John School

part of Zenith Multi-Academy Trust

The King John School in Benfleet, Essex – and part of Zenith Multi-Academy Trust – has been using STEPS to assist with its overall strategic response to ‘life after levels’ at Key Stage 3.

The school’s new methods for assessment and tracking pupil progress in Years 7 and 8 have been in operation since September 2016, and Assistant Headteacher Nic Spearman said the “flexibility” of STEPS had helped to inform their new system. “We bought the STEPS box last summer and have used this to assist in forming our own learning ladders which are at the heart of our system,” she explained. “Some subjects are using the STEPS baseline tests and others have taken the core principles and amended them for their own purposes. For PE, drama and languages it’s really helped with our ideas around strands. For geography it’s been useful for performance. The flexibility has been great.”

Nic said the launch of the school’s overall system for assessment and progress monitoring, tracking and reporting at Key Stage 3 at the start of the 2016-17 academic year had been the culmination of two years’ work: “We spent the first six months reviewing our curriculum as we recognised there was an opportunity to do something really exciting to transform Key Stage 3. We wanted to make sure that we met each subject’s needs at Key Stage 3, whilst also catering for the complexity between Key Stage 2 and 4. Through the Benfleet Teaching School Alliance we worked with primary colleagues to create a high-level transition programme, and developed a best-practice grading system which mirrors the 9-1 Key Stage 4 grading system. We wanted our Key Stage 3 system to be challenging yet inspire creativity, and improve

depth of learning. We ran pilot schemes in different departments and they opened our pupils’ eyes to being able to do a lot more than they thought.”

Since the system was rolled out in September 2016 initial feedback has been encouraging. “A mirrored 9-1 at Key Stage 3 is the right thing for our pupils and will enable children with all abilities to demonstrate progress,” Nic said. “For higher ability pupils it will challenge them further and in more depth. For lower ability pupils it will help them to move away from sitting on the same grade, which can be very de-motivating. **Parental feedback has been very positive. The consensus is that parents know where their child is and what they need to do to progress, that the Key Stage 3 grade talks to the GCSE, and that they can identify where their child will be at the end through the expected attainment pathways.**”

Nic and colleagues have been able to discuss what is working with other primary and secondary schools through the Benfleet Teaching School Alliance. “We’ve set up a Key Stage 3 working group where we are able to share best practice, interesting developments, and generally challenge each other,” she revealed. “From our own perspective we’ve already run assessment points for Year 7 and Year 8 and we will continue to pursue opportunities to develop our system. However, looking ahead, we first need to let the system settle, identify any tweaks, and not change it or be too reactive. We have been given a real pedagogical opportunity to develop a curriculum and assessment programme which seeks depth of knowledge and skill development to best suit our learners. We wanted autonomy in our curriculum and assessments but you need to balance free reign and consistency in approach to create a purposeful curriculum structure.”

Case study developed: January 2017



Trinity Catholic College

part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust

Trinity Catholic College in Middlesbrough has used the baseline assessments provided by STEPS to fill a significant gap in the creation of an alternative assessment system to evaluate and monitor academic progress for Years 7–9.

The college was formed in September 2009 following an amalgamation of two of the area's long-established schools; Newlands FCJ Specialist Maths and Computing School and St David's Roman Catholic Technology College. In November 2015 it converted to an academy with 10 Catholic primary partner schools to form St Hilda's Multi-Academy Trust (before later becoming part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust). Nick Mitchinson, the college's Assistant Head for Data, Assessment and Reporting, has led the organisation's overall response to 'life after levels'.

"I received a STEPS leaflet last summer and was immediately drawn to the system's baseline testing linked to Key Stage 4 grades," Nick said. "This benchmark, which we didn't have previously, comes to us through these baseline tests that can be linked to Key Stage 2 and CAT scores. Around 85% of our pupils come from other primary schools within our MAT so the STEPS baseline provides consistency across the piece. It links perfectly to the flight paths we use which are extending, secure, developing and foundation. Ideally pupils can now move up the flight path, but they certainly don't move down."

Prior to the additional introduction of STEPS, the college had already made good progress in developing its own

system. "Our work on assessing progress at Key Stage 3 started out prior to the formal removal of levels," Nick recalled. "We looked at expected and above expected progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4, while still using Key Stage 3 levels as a guide for 'stepping stones', but always had in mind flight paths for children on GCSEs. Key Stage 3 levels had become too granular – it was simpler for pupils and parents to say if a child was secure or insecure rather than at a 5A or 5B – but we needed a more holistic measure of progress. We have Key Stage 3 levels in the background, so staff can use these as a guide, but we don't report these to pupils or parents. The flight paths provide different objectives, which the pupils fully understand."

Nick explained that the STEPS baseline tests have "now given us a clear direction on what groups of pupils are expected to learn". He added: **"We are happy and content with where we are – the system is working for us. We are able to demonstrate progress for the pupils, which is absolutely key. The baselines mean we are doing the same thing for pupils in all subjects so we are able to accurately track their progress."**

An "outstanding relationship" with Scholastic made the addition of STEPS even easier to accommodate, Nick said. "We use Scholastic to buy books for our library and I've always found them to be very friendly and open. STEPS as a classroom resource is a hugely welcome innovation. For me, the most important part of STEPS is the curriculum tests. They show what primary school pupils have been learning and we can therefore demonstrate progress against that, rather than the granular examples of Key Stage 3 levels."

Case study developed: January 2017