



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."

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