

Introduction

STEPS can be many things to many stakeholders but its principle is to provide a framework with which schools can work to develop their own programme; one that means something to their students, their staff and their individual environment. It is a ready-to-implement, fully-functioning system.

The sections of this guide will give you much more detail about the context for the development of STEPS and how it works. Its popularity is in no small part due to the simplicity of its structure, but the flexibility and adaptability of the STEPS system has also captured the imagination of many senior leadership teams.

Intrinsically, STEPS has both skill-based and knowledge-orientated hierarchical attainment points to allow subject teachers to record and monitor achievement and progress over a variable timescale. Both an overall score and a specific set of attainment points can be recorded and reported to the full range of stakeholders; different audiences requiring a different focus to the detail. Parents have loved the simplicity of a quick check via the 'Step Point Score' (see page 13), but have commented upon the detail and information with which they can assess with their son or daughter the ways in which to improve and move forward.

Teachers are now relishing the advantages that such a focussed approach can afford and, as they have learned the system, have come to really value its structure. Many have commented upon 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 students are finding more difficult and/or which teachers are finding more difficult to deliver. The level of detail has helped to raise an early warning to individual students, as well as teaching groups who are seemingly making unusual rates of progress. It has allowed them to put in place support for students and/or groups and in some cases additional training for staff.

Senior leadership teams are now starting to come to terms with the variety of approaches and differences between subjects in a way that they were rarely able to before. Once again it has provided an extra level of focus in line-management discussions and a degree of detail in accountability for each subject.

The programme allows key stakeholders to predict students' likely attainment and progress throughout KS3. It also allows stakeholders to see how 'GCSE-ready' students are at the end of Year 9, giving an early indication of expected outcome.

The following pages detail some of the other components that can be found in the box, before the guide continues to explain the STEPS grids in more detail and how to implement the system in your school.