STEP Academy Trust
Teaching and Learning Policy

Date of Policy: **July 2015**   **Review: July 2018**

Rationale

At the STEP Academy Trust we think of ourselves as a learning community and believe that any attempt to raise standards in each of our Academies must be focused on the classroom. Continued and sustained improvement is dependent upon improving the quality of teaching and learning that is taking place on a daily basis. Our expectation is that all pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of pupil achievement and skills for life.

To be read in conjunction with the following policies: Curriculum, Assessment, Marking and Presentation, EYFS, English, Maths, Science, Computing, Arts, PE, RE, MfL, SRE and relationships, RRS and Homework.

Aims

By adopting a STEP Way to teaching and learning across each Academy, we aim:
- to provide consistency of teaching and learning across every year group and class;
- to enable teachers and support staff to teach as effectively as possible;
- to share the non-negotiables of the National Curriculum's minimum age related expectations for specific year groups to help discuss individual's progress and levels of attainment;
- to enable children to learn as efficiently as possible;
- to foster a love of learning;
- to give children the skills and knowledge and promote the understanding they require to become confident, disciplined and effective lifelong learners;
- to provide an inclusive education for all children, where all STEP Academies work towards the IQM;
- to value and respect all cultures;
- to provide a safe and happy learning environment;
- to raise levels of achievement for all pupils, enabling them to achieve their personal best;
- to learn from each other, through the adoption of a collaborative, enquiry based approach to teaching and learning, where good practice is shared;
- to operate a "no shouting" policy. In the same way adults are expected to be calm when interacting with pupils, children are encouraged to communicate calmly with each other;
- to manage transitions quietly –pupils move around the school building quietly.

There is no single recipe for improving teaching and learning in each Academy or indeed across The STEP Academy Trust. However, this policy outlines some of the **key elements** which are crucial to raising standards in teaching and learning. It also sets out a **broad structure** for lessons, based on best practice and research linked to how we best learn.

The STEP Way: Key Elements and Principles of Effective Teaching and Learning

All lessons across our Academies should include the following key elements to ensure high quality teaching and learning. New teachers to our Trust will receive training to ensure they fully understand these elements and to enable them to embed these strategies in their everyday practice. The key elements and principles are all underpinned by excellent AfL (Assessment for Learning). Both formative and summative assessments play a key role in AFL. AfL is the process of identifying what the learner has or has not achieved in order to plan the next steps in the teaching or learning. It involves using assessment in the classroom to raise

children's achievement and is based on the idea that children will improve most if they understand the aim of their learning, where they are in relation to the aim and how they can achieve the aim.

Learning objectives are shared orally and displayed: all learning objectives are either typed on AfL proformas/marking sheets or written clearly in books. Learning objectives are skills based and not connected to the context of the lesson (eg: to be able to write complex sentences in my writing). Children are taught to recognise the difference between a task and its learning objective (separating what they have to do from what they will learn). When marking children's work, the main focus is on meeting the learning objectives. All pupils are clear about how they will achieve the learning objective through clear success criteria/steps to success and all children must know exactly what they are going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. Learning objectives are the same for all children. We want all our children to access the same learning and it is through the use of materials/apparatus that may differ from child to child.

To involve children fully in understanding learning outcomes, teachers will:
- Explain clearly the reasons for the lesson or activity in terms of the learning objectives/intentions.
- Move away from saying 'today we are doing'….and instead say 'by the end of today's lesson you will all know/be able to/understand….
- Make learning objectives specific, eg: use of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Use child-friendly language, there is little point in sharing learning objectives if pupils do not understand what you mean.
- Refer to them at the start of the lesson and during the lesson.
- Share the specific assessment criteria with children-verbally or written.
- Help children to understand what they have done well and what they need to develop. Looking at a range of other children's responses to the task set can help children understand how to use the assessment criteria to assess their own learning.
- Learning objectives are not always shared at the very start of the lesson, but at an appropriate time in the lesson once their interest and enthusiasm has been captured.

Success Criteria/Steps to Success (SC/S2S): the recipe to successful criteria will link directly to the learning objective. It is displayed for the children to follow/typed on the AfL proforma or created with the children during the lesson; often the most successful approach when the children are actively involved in producing them. This can be achieved at the start of a unit of work or during it, after the children have gained skills and knowledge. Always refer back to the learning objectives and SC/S2S by encouraging pupils to reflect on what they have learned and what has helped them to learn.

- Children use the SC/S2S to self-assess their own or to peer-assess their partner's work.
- Children are reminded of the SC/S2S criteria during the lesson – often children's work is used to illustrate the SC/S2S criteria in action during mini plenaries.
- All learners are challenged appropriately.
- SC/S2S should be visible in planning.

Use prompts like: (see **Appendix 1**)
- *What did you do today that you found most helpful when you were learning?*
- *What did you do today that you found less helpful?*
- *If you had to do the task again, how would you do it?*
- *If you had to give one piece of advice to someone tackling the same task tomorrow, what would it be?*
- *Something I can do now that I couldn't do before the lesson is….*
- *At the start of the lesson, I didn't know….*

Planning: individual lessons should be carefully prepared with all required materials and resources to hand before the lesson begins, ensuring a prompt start. Visual aids should be prepared and clearly displayed to aid the learning process. A teacher's planning is their most important tool. Consistently high standards of teaching can only be achieved if teachers are properly planned and prepared. Teachers plan on a weekly basis using agreed curriculums and planning proformas. As lessons are completed, teachers evaluate whether the learning objectives have been achieved, this can be annotated on the planning. To ensure consistency and quality, teachers' planning is carefully monitored. It is the class teacher's responsibility to ensure plans are made available to teachers and teacher assistants covering release.

Planning matches teaching to the different learning needs of the children (ie through differentiation or through the Mastery programme, etc). Teachers may differentiate the curriculum by: task, pace, outcome, time, teacher/adult support and will make it clear in the planning, how different groups are catered for through differentiation, for example by highlighting in a different colour, SEN, EAL, HA, LA G&T or through the planning proforma, etc.

A marking slip/AfI proforma is stuck into the children's work at the start of each lesson, by the child when they are ready (they need to be trained as soon as possible in KS1!), containing the objective, teacher comment area, child comment/next step area and opportunity for self/peer-assessment and evaluation against their personal target. Children should always be given opportunities for responding to a teachers marking (see Marking and Presentation policy).

Feedback and Effective Marking (see Marking and Presentation Policy) is embedded in everyday practice and is used to inform teaching and learning. Children benefit from opportunities for formal feedback through group and plenary sessions. Feedback enables children to understand their strengths and weaknesses demonstrated in their work. Marking or oral feedback explains what the next steps should be and if effective, children will make excellent achievements by building on previous learning.

Giving feedback involves:
- Oral- making time to talk to children and teaching them to be reflective about the learning objective and about their work and responses.
- Self/Peer-marking- children will be encouraged to see for themselves what they need to do to improve and discuss it with an adult/partner or work it out independently.
- All pupils are clear about how they need to improve.

Marking is linked to the learning objective, reflects learning expectations and identifies, next step prompts and/or challenges to develop children's thinking further. Pupils are given regular time to address developmental areas raised in marking.

Pupil Self/Peer-Assessment opportunities and evaluation may be evident in planning or may be used during lessons when relevant. Once children understand how to assess their current knowledge and the gaps in it, they will have a clearer idea of how they can help themselves (and their peers) to progress. Children can look at examples of other children's work that does and does not meet the assessment criteria as this can help them to understand what was required from a task and to assess the next steps they might need to take and therefore set new targets. It is often helpful if the work is from children they do not know or work the teacher has made up. Self-assessment phrases are on display in all classrooms (**Appendix 1**).

Using effective questioning means challenging children to deepen their thinking. Teachers take time to plan effective questions which go beyond straight recall with strategies such as:
- Giving a range of answers for discussion.
- Turning the question into a statement.
- Finding opposites, why does one work/one doesn't?

- Giving the answer and asking how it was arrived at.
- Asking the question from an opposing standing.
- Using questions to find out what children know, understand and can do in order to target teaching more effectively.
- Analysing children's responses in order to find out what they know, understand and can do.
- Using children's questions to assess understanding.

Bloom's Taxonomy
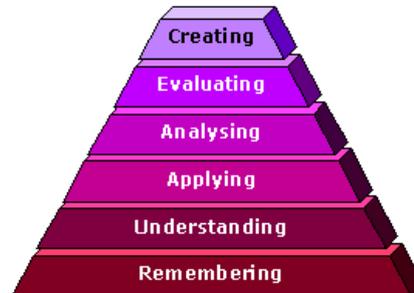
Triggering the brain: the brain will tend to notice things if it has been primed to look for them. For example, you could begin a lesson by saying: *'Today when I am reading, I want you to listen out for some really powerful adjectives that you can use in your own writing later on '* or *'For homework tonight, I am going to be asking you to write down the functions of the different parts of a plant – you will find out what they are in today's lesson', etc.* See **Appendix 2** regarding questioning types relating to Blooms Taxonomy.

Modelling, a key aspect of teaching should be clear and specific modelling of the task that children are required to do. Teachers and support staff, provide high quality models to guide and inspire children and regularly use good models to analyse which can generate the S2S/SC. These are then a tool to guide children through their own piece of work

Active Learning: pupils are actively engaged during all parts of the lesson – teachers take into account children's concentration span and ensure pupils are not sitting passively for long periods. In STEP Academies, we encourage the use of *'My Turn/Your Turn'.* Opportunities to *Think/Pair/Share* and discussions with a *Talk Partner* are regular features in all lessons. Pupils are trained to use appropriate body language when engaged in discussion with a partner. Mini whiteboards are used for short bursts of activity, to develop understanding and to ensure children are active and engaged during the lesson. Visual learning, including using kinaesthetic materials and auditory input are all used creatively as a way to enhance learning.

Active listening: to ensure active listening, particularly on the carpet (perhaps after a discussion or activity) the active listening signal is used. This is non-verbal (ie: clapping a rhythm or chanting). The children 'show' the adult they are ready (for example, thumb on chest).

Lesson Structure

STEP Academies have different approaches to teaching, but teaching where pedagogy is sound and where there is accepted good practice. The structure of a lesson can differ within each class and the structure should differ for each lesson, if appropriate and this could be dependent on AfL approaches. The following are examples of sound pedagogy, taken from within all our Academies.

- **Creating an appropriate working atmosphere:** pupils need to be in an appropriate state to learn. STEP Academy classrooms are stimulating, engaging, reassuring and organised; teachers and support staff are fully prepared for lessons, ensuring resources are prepared and on tables in advance of lessons; adults may need to sensitively engage with a pupil who is not 'ready to learn'.

- **Linking the lesson to prior learning:** reviewing the previous lesson. Eg: *'Think about the three most important things you learnt in the last lesson – now tell your partner….. In two minutes, I am going to ask you what you learnt last lesson. You may talk to your partner if you wish…..Today's lesson is about the water cycle. Jot down on your whiteboards what you already know and work in pairs'.*

- **Providing an overview:** the brain is more likely to absorb details when it can place them within a wider context. This is often referred to as *'providing the big picture first'.* Eg: Maths and English Learning Walls should display relevant materials, such as WAGOLLS (*what a good one looks like*) that the children can use to improve their independence. IPC displays in all classes include a topic map to enable pupils to see the 'bigger picture'. Pupils add their own questions and answers to the learning map (as the unit develops) and are encouraged to carry out their own independent research at home.

- **Sharing learning objectives with pupils**: pupils must know exactly what they are going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. For learning objectives to be shared effectively (see above).

- **Pupils should receive new information:** we provide our children with new information or skills. Although we want all pupils to understand the information as they encounter it, new information can delivered in many ways:
  - ✓ Exposition;
  - ✓ Audio, visual aids – e.g. video clips or a song;
  - ✓ Diagrams, pictures etc;
  - ✓ Whiteboard Books;
  - ✓ ICT – CD roms, Internet, iPads;
  - ✓ Demonstration;
  - ✓ Modelling;
  - ✓ Books.

- **Short periods of exposition**: pupils have limited concentration spans. A widely used and useful rule of thumb is that concentration spans will be about two minutes in excess of a chronological age. Significantly more learning will take place when new information is transferred and explained in three bursts of ten minutes, punctuated by activities (such as modelling, regular closed questioning), than in one thirty minute session. This will keep pupils alert and provide instant feedback as to whether they have heard correctly and have understood. Asking too many open questions during an explanation can easily take a lesson off on inappropriate tangents.

- **Pupils make sense of information; processing; understanding**: developing understanding; demonstrating understanding; assessing understanding.

- **Quality of interactions:** the frequency and nature of interactions between adult and pupils is highly significant. We develop understanding by: using open ended questions; providing wait time- pupils need time to think through their answers before replying; providing thinking time by giving an advance warning, such as 'In *two minutes I am going to ask you….'.* These responses could be explored in pairs or groups. Pupils could then respond with *'We think that...'.* Extending and deepening understanding by asking follow up questions such as *'What made you think that?'*

- **Review information and plan next steps:** for example, is not necessarily confined to the end of the lesson. Successful teachers weave review through the entire lesson and know that SC/S2S are only successful when repeated and referred to throughout the lesson.
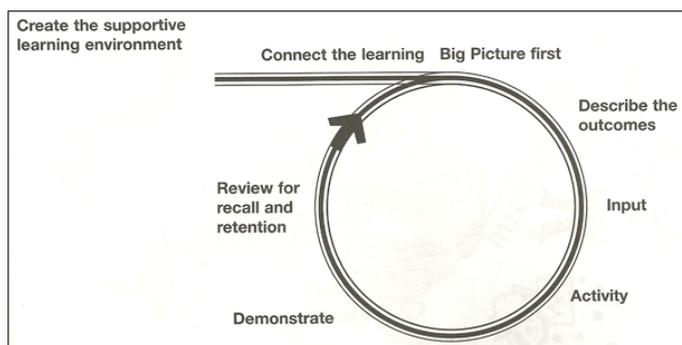
ICT is used to enhance learning wherever possible. Although ICT is nearly always used at the start of lessons to engage children and at the end to consolidate learning, it is also used during the lesson as an aid to learning. ***The use of computing is highly visible and effective in all teaching and learning contexts across each Academy and teachers are continually searching for ways to use technology as a learning tool.***

Support Staff: in all STEP Academies, our support staff are clearly directed to support learning so our children can be effectively targeted and progress maximised. All learning support staff are fully engaged with pupils at all times, during the carpet sessions and during table times. They should sit next to the pupil/pupils they are working with, quietly engaging them, explaining the task or using other resources to maximise progress, eg: a number line to facilitate learning. Our teachers and teaching assistant work as a team and the onus is on the teacher to prepare activities for the teaching assistant to do with the children.

Learning support staff should not photocopy work, sharpen pencils or stick work in books during learning time. The time for this could be during assemblies, or at the end of morning sessions or afternoon sessions.. A teaching assistant's involvement should be communicated before the start of the lesson and/or planning shared. Teachers make it clear in their plans how they would like their TAs to support during every stage of the lesson and the plan at all times should be shared. For example teachers could make this clear by highlighting the TA support in another colour. TAs should be clear about who they are supporting and why and are involved in assessing pupil's understanding, recording observations (annotate on their planning) and feeding back assessments to the teacher, when appropriate. These are STEP non-negotiables.

Classroom environment and resources
All children have a right to work in a tidy, well-organised classroom. The classroom is organised to facilitate learning and the development of independence. This often requires flexibility in the organisation of furniture. Fully inclusive classroom environments can both support and enrich the learning of all children. As well as being vibrant and welcoming, the classroom environment can be a learning tool, a way of engaging children and building the class community. It can create a sense of ownership and be used to support and promote learning as well as celebrating children's work. With careful thought and planning, an effective classroom environment is used as an interactive resource supporting teaching, learning and assessment.

The STEP Academy Trust believes that a well organised and stimulating environment has a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and therefore supports raising standards and enables pupils to develop independence as learners. The environment is the outcome of the vision of each Academy, however, there should be a clarification of the common expectations in each Academy to ensure we provide consistency for all pupils in supporting, whilst challenging pupils to give their very best and develop a shared sense of what high standards look like.

Teachers and support staff should ensure:
- The resources in each area are organised, eg: according to curriculum subject and are clearly labelled.
- Good quality writing implements/resources are available for use at all times, and are accessible.
- Book corners are comfortable and attractive.
- Labels and posters, wherever possible, reflect the language diversity in the school.
- In Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes, areas for imaginative play change regularly, to give opportunities for a range of play and role-play.
- In EYFS and Year 1, the outside area is planned for and used as an extension of the classroom.
- Children have access to drinking water.
- Displays in the classroom as well as in the corridors are an important means of valuing the work children produce and are changed regularly. In line with AfL procedures, all classrooms have 'working' working walls, reflecting current units, updated regularly, so our children can use them as a tool to help achieve the learning objectives.

Learning Processes

Children enter school at different stages of development. Children learn in different ways and at different rates of progress. In the course of learning children develop their skills through a variety of processes. These include:

- Investigation
- Experimentation
- Listening
- Observation
- Set groups
- Co-operative learning

- Talking, discussion, group work
- Asking questions
- Practical exploration and role play
- Research and discovery
- Debates and presentations
- Imagining

- Repetition
- Problem-solving
- Making choices and decision-making
- Use of ICT

Co-operative learning refers to a method in which children work in small, mixed ability learning teams. The children in each team are responsible not only for learning the material themselves but also for helping their team learn, together. Before co-operative learning can be implemented positive teamwork behaviours/ standards (behaviour for learning) need to be to taught and reinforced. Classes should be able to list these standards (can be written in form of a behaviour or learning charter for each class: RRS) and explain what they look like/sound like/feel like in action.

Co-operative Learning Standards

Clear management signals are designed to minimise the time spent on behaviour management to maximise the time spent on learning. EG: to stop the class and get everyone's attention, the zero noise signal is used. This is non-verbal (for example a raising of the hand, chant or clapping a rhythm). The expectation for pupils is that once they see/hear the signal, they finish the work at hand, remain quiet and look at the speaker/teacher.

Record-keeping and Assessment: regular summative and formative assessments establish the level of children's attainment and track their progress. These assessments are used to inform future planning. Record-keeping and assessment procedures are defined in the Assessment Policy and Marking and Presentation Policy. Assessments are recorded in systems such as SIMs or OTrack and progress is analysed regularly by class teachers, phase leaders and the assessment leader.

Equal Opportunities: in accordance with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, all children at The STEP Academy Trust must be given full access to the National Curriculum. Staff will endeavour to help all children to reach their full potential irrespective of race, gender, age or ability. All staff should be aware of the major religious festivals and seek opportunities to include these in planning. Children often take part in these festivals with their families and we aim to be sensitive and supportive to these celebrations and encourage

those children to share their experiences with the other children. We seek to participate in events that reflect our school's cultural diversity (for instance BHM) and include this in planning as appropriate.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Children's written work is monitored against the Marking and Presentation Policy regularly. Feed back to teachers and targets are set.
- Subject leaders and SLT sample children's work across each Academy to ensure consistency.
- The Head Teacher observes NQTs teach approximately three times a year, alongside their NQT mentor/leader.
- Performance management team leaders observe all teachers/support staff as part of the PM process.
- Subject leaders observe teaching to identify strengths and areas for development in their subject.
- Demonstration lessons and peer observations are arranged where appropriate.

Lesson Observations: as part of the performance management process, teachers and support staff are observed teaching during lessons, at three times during the year and more often if required. Written and verbal feedback is given. STEP Academies believe that in order to continue to raise standards in the school, teaching across each Academy needs to be good or better, overtime. For the criteria to determine what good or better teaching looks like, please refer to the Ofsted Handbook.

Governors' Role: it is the Governors' role to monitor and review the policy and its practice through:

- Regular visits to oversee the delivery of their scheduled subject.
- Reporting to the Head Teacher and teachers.
- Reporting to the Standards/Curriculum Committee.
- Receiving reports from the Head Teacher and/or teacher governors.
- Attending INSET.
- Receiving reports from the Business Manager, in particular Health and Safety.
- Promoting and ensuring equal opportunities in relation to race, gender, class and belief.
- Promoting and ensuring the practice of giving value and respect for all cultures and faiths.

Parents/Carers Role: parents/carers are encouraged to support their children's learning by:

- Ensuring that their child comes to school feeling confident and positive.
- Ensuring that their child arrives at school punctually and regularly.
- Sharing with the teacher any issues that their child is experiencing, at a mutually convenient time.
- Supporting their child by attending open evenings and other meetings.
- Supporting their child and class teacher by being actively involved in the operation of any SEN processes.
- Ensuring that all contact addresses and telephone numbers are up to date and correct.
- Ensuring that their child arrives at school wearing the correct uniform and bringing the correct PE kit.
- Agreeing to fulfil their responsibilities as defined in the Home School Agreement.
- Agreeing to, and supporting, the school's Homework Policy.
- Responding to letters sent home from school.
- Informing the school of reasons for their child's absence.
- Supporting extra-curricular activities, such as visitors to school, concerts, visits and fairs.

Community Role: the community is invited to support the school by:

- Contributing to activities, such as assemblies, artistic events, specialist outings, and clubs.
- Presenting themselves as positive role models to be emulated.
- Guiding pupils' behaviour as they play around the school, and being positive role models.
- Organising activities and events throughout the year to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Supporting school events.

I have learnt today that…

The word _____ was used today. It means…

Something I can do now that I couldn't do before the lesson is…

I feel more confident about…

I need to improve on my…

At the start of the lesson, I didn't know…

I now understand that…

I can now explain to somebody else…

The thing I most enjoyed about today's lesson was… This is because…

APPENDIX 2: Blooms Taxonomy Questions

Blooms Taxonomy
Knowledge
What happened after...?; How many...?; Who was it that...?
Can you name the...?; Describe what happened at...?; Who spoke to...?
Can you tell why...?; Find the meaning of...?; What is...?; Which is true or false...?
Comprehension
Can you write in your own words...?; Can you write a brief outline...?
What do you think could have happened next...?; Who do you think...?
What was the main idea...?; Who was the key character...?
Can you distinguish between...?; What differences exist between...?
Can you provide an example of what you mean...?; Can you provide a definition for...?
Application
Do you know another instance where...?; Could this have happened in...?
Can you group by characteristics such as...?; What factors would you change if...?
Can you apply the method used to some experience of your own...?
What questions would you ask of...?; From the information given, can you develop a set of instructions about...?; Would this information be useful if you had a ...?
Analysis
Which events could have happened...?; If ... happened, what might the ending have been?
How was this similar to...?; What was the underlying theme of...?
What do you see as other possible outcomes?; Why did ... changes occur?
Can you compare you're ... with that presented in...?
Can you explain what must have happened when...?
How is ... similar to...?; What are some of the problems of...?
Can you distinguish between...?; What were some of the motives behind...?
What was the turning point in the game?; What was the problem with...?
Synthesis
Can you design a ... to...?; Why not compose a song about...?
Can you see a possible solution to...?; If you had access to all resources how would you deal with...?; Why don't you devise your own way to deal with...?
What would happen if...?; How many ways can you...?
Can you create new and unusual uses for...? Can you develop a proposal which would..
Can you write a new recipe for a tasty dish?
Evaluation
Is there a better solution to...?; Judge the value of...; Can you defend your position about...?
Do you think ... is a good or a bad thing?; How would you have handled...?
What changes to ... would you recommend?; Do you believe?; Are you a ... person?
How would you feel if...?; How effective are...?; What do you think about...?

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