

STEP Newsletter

EDITION 10

JULY 2018

STEP Academy Trust is a growing family of academies that strive together for excellence in partnership to improve children's life chances. Like any good family, STEP Academies celebrate each others' successes, as well as sharing their challenges. This bi-annual newsletter provides an update on the very latest developments across our Trust.



STEP FIRST We are all one team #unity

TURNHAM PRIMARY FOUNDATION SCHOOL

In July 2017, we were approached by the governing body of Turnham Primary Foundation School to provide support for the Autumn Term. Our Deputy CEO, Paul Glover, and Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CFOO) Ben March, both began supporting the leadership team to rapidly improve the school's teaching and learning and operational functions. Following this, the school requested a further two terms of support and our Head of Leadership and Development, John Halliwell, was seconded as Executive Headteacher. It quickly became clear that Turnham shared STEP's values and ethos and that it was mutually beneficial to be working together in a more formal and longer term manner. The governors therefore proposed that Turnham should join STEP Academy Trust and consultation with stakeholders took place throughout the last half term.



We are now working with the DfE to finalise the plans for Turnham to become the 15th member of our STEP family and are hopeful that this process will be completed in readiness for September 2018.



WOLSEY INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOL TO MERGE

Wolsey Infant and Nursery School joined us on 1st September and shares the same site as Wolsey Junior Academy, which has been part of our Trust since 2013. A joint leadership team was established to facilitate close collaboration, with Headteacher Claire Majumdar leading across both schools. We are pleased to say that, following consultation with parents, carers, the community and other stakeholders, on 25th April the DfE gave permission for the schools to formally amalgamate to form one primary academy. This will take effect from 1st September 2018 and the new name will be 'Tudor Academy' making reference to Thomas Wolsey, a prominent figure from the Tudor historical period.

IN FOCUS – TEACHING AND LEARNING LEAD: MATHEMATICS

A regular feature, “In Focus” examines the work of a key STEP service, team or individual. This edition of “In Focus” features Tom Garry, STEP’s Teaching and Learning Lead for Mathematics.

Since joining STEP in 2015, Tom has worked as a teacher, a middle and senior leader, and, most recently, a member of the Teaching and Learning Team. His role involves both school-level leadership at Angel Oak as well as the Trust-wide leadership of mathematics.



Tom’s current work includes designing progression documents to support the STEP Standard for mathematics, trialling incremental coaching to develop teachers’ pedagogy, and organising STEP’s NQT training programme. In his spare time, Tom enjoys reading and photography, and he is currently working towards a Master’s at King’s College, London.

STEP WAY

We agree to do things like this
#consistency

Navigating the financial challenges facing the education sector

The Public Sector has faced funding pressures for some years and over the past 12-18 months the impact of this has been felt within the education sector. As it is highly likely that budget pressures will continue, it is reasonable to ask ‘*What is STEP’s approach to financial management?*’, ‘*How may the funding pressures impact on the education of children within the Trust?*’ and ‘*What can we all do to help?*’.

WHAT IS STEP’S APPROACH TO FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT?

The Mission of STEP Academy Trust states, in part, that the Trust was established “...to improve the life chances of all children...”. So that the Mission is more than words and instead can be delivered,



STEP has developed a highly effective and well regarded business operating model. At the heart of this model is a determination to direct as much resource as possible towards Teaching and Learning. Our financial statements (available on the STEP website) evidence that this has been achieved over the past three years, and our budget projections show this pattern continuing.

For the business model to work, all staff within STEP appreciate that we are “One Team” and as such we agree to operate in a consistent manner. As a result, our Trust can maximise economies of scale across a range of services and goods with savings re-invested in Teaching and Learning. This approach has also enabled STEP to not just save money but also avoid costs. For example, staff retention has remained very high and therefore recruitment costs have been lower than typical.

HOW MIGHT THE FUNDING PRESSURES IMPACT ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITHIN THE TRUST?

All decisions within STEP are rooted in keeping children – their safety, security and education – at the heart of everything. Whilst this can be expected within a school environment, it does mean that constant focus on prioritisation of resource is needed. As a result, at times difficult decisions need to be made, for example, when an academy needs to undergo a staffing restructure. We are acutely aware of how upsetting this situation can be, however the critical question is not just one of finance but rather what is in the best interests of the children? The track record of the Trust provides assurance that when difficult decisions like this are made, the positive impacts are apparent within a very short space of time.

WHAT CAN WE ALL DO TO HELP?

STEP has found that it is often best to tackle situations as a team, and head on. To this end all staff within our Trust are focused on using resources in the best way possible. This includes

utilising any staffing capacity for defined projects, such as the re-decoration of Phoenix, to avoid additional cost. Where possible, the Trust uses innovative timetabling so that resources – tablets, iPads and mini-buses—are shared across locations. Additionally, and again as evidenced in the Trust’s financial statements, where an academy has a budget pressure the academy is supported by others within our STEP family.

All of us can assist by being involved in initiatives that will positively impact STEP and that are in harmony with the Mission, Vision and Values of the Trust. This includes being careful in our use of resources and fully supporting the PTA, sharing positive views about the Trust on social media, which may support pupil recruitment, as well as contributing towards school trips and paying for school meals and clubs in advance. By so doing, the Trust will continue to see the benefit of using the STEP Compass to navigate the financial challenges facing the education sector.

STEP UP

We all succeed together

#support

Executive Leadership Model

The approach to school improvement which STEP has taken, has been adapted in line with the number of schools within our Trust as STEP has grown. When the Trust consisted of Gonville, David Livingstone and Applegarth Academies, school improvement was mainly delivered through the substantive Headteacher of each school. When Wolsey Junior Academy joined in 2013, the role of the Executive Head was used to share experience and proven models of improvement. The model of an academy having an Executive Head continued at both Angel Oak and then in some of our academies across East Sussex.

At the same time, the Executive Management Team (EMT) has grown to now be able to offer a range of school improvement support. The EMT currently consists of the CEO, DCEO, CFOO, Head of Teaching and Learning, Head of Leadership Development and Head of Standards.



STEP stands for Striving Together for Excellence in Partnership

STEP AHEAD

We invest in our future #development

STEP Trustee Development Day

On Wednesday 6 June, STEP Trustees took part in a development session which focused on roles and responsibilities, particularly the demarcation between executive and non-executive. Facilitated by Louise Thomson from ICSA, The Governance Institute, Trustees had an interesting session and it was felt that this would assist in how the Board will work together as a successful team. Jonathan Duff, Deputy RSC, also gave a presentation to Trustees on the educational landscape and challenges facing MATs followed by a Q&A session which was most informative.

Perhaps the highlight of the session was a presentation by a group of Year 5 children from Angel Oak Academy which demonstrated how reading is taught in our Academies. Led by Tom Cornell, Year 5 Class Teacher and narrated by Cathie Hewitt, Headteacher, the children read, annotated and looked into the meaning of a complex piece of text. Our thanks to all who participated.



STEP STANDARD

We strive together for excellence in partnership #expectation

Unveiling the STEP Standard

In September, we launched a revised compass design, which emphasises the new 'STEP Standard'. The STEP Standard is not a point of the Compass, but instead defines what success looks like in all areas across the Trust. The purpose is to make it clear what we are trying to achieve, so that we can ensure all efforts are directed towards making this happen. Standards have been established for a number of areas, covering reading to catering.

