

STEP Newsletter

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STEP Academy Trust is a growing community of academies that strive together for excellence in partnership to improve children's life chances. Like any good community, 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

STEP First Conference

STEP Academy Trust works very differently to most educational organisations. Although STEP currently consists of fourteen schools, serving very different communities, we operate as one team. We call this STEP First.

Recognising that we are all one team, in February we held our second STEP First Conference, which brought together over 700 staff, governors and trustees. A wonderful occasion, it was an opportunity to reinforce STEP's mission, vision and values as well as affirm the way we have chosen to work; articulated through the STEP



Compass. Indeed, throughout the day each point of the Compass was explored in greater depth starting with STEP First, our commitment to work as one. To illustrate the importance of teamwork, a unique and impressive musical composition was created using hollow tubes, or 'Boomwhackers'. Needless-to-say, a great deal of fun was had by all!

The day was rounded off with the words of Mia, one of our pupils at Gonville Academy: **"STEP is a community of schools that unite together to make one team."** An excellent way to close a very special event.

OFSTED Inspections at Applegarth, Tudor, Hawkes Farm, Breakwater and David Livingstone Academies

Since the previous edition of this newsletter, OFSTED has visited five of our STEP Academies. The following provides a brief summary of each:

APPLEGARTH ACADEMY (AA)

AA in New Addington, Croydon received a short, one day OFSTED inspection to determine whether the academy had maintained its Good quality of education. We were delighted, therefore, that the inspector concluded that AA had made significant progress towards Outstanding. As a result, OFSTED will return within the next two years to conduct a full two day inspection.

TUDOR ACADEMY (TDA)

A few days after AA's inspection, OFSTED visited TDA, also in New Addington, Croydon. Having brought together Wolsey Infants and Junior Schools only a matter of months earlier, it was a tremendous achievement that the new primary academy was judged Good in every area.

HAWKES FARM ACADEMY (HFA)

HFA in Hailsham was the first STEP partner in East Sussex to be visited by OFSTED this academic year. Previously rated Inadequate by OFSTED, the improvements over the past three years were recognised by the overall Good judgement. The inspection team, however, noted a number of Outstanding features including: leadership and management, behaviour, safety and welfare and early years.

BREAKWATER ACADEMY (BWA)

The second inspection in East Sussex, this time in Newhaven, involved BWA. Having previously never been rated anything other than Inadequate or Requires Improvement, the OFSTED judgement of Good in all areas was a remarkable achievement.

DAVID LIVINGSTONE ACADEMY (DLA)

DLA in Croydon, was the final OFSTED inspection of 2018-19. Two years earlier, the academy had received a disappointing Requires Improvement rating, a judgement which resulted in a number of significant changes; including the introduction of clearly defined Trust expectations – the STEP Standard. We were delighted that OFSTED recognised the transformation and graded the school Outstanding in all areas.

**Congratulations to our STEP teams at
AA, TDA, HFA, BWA and DLA.**

STEP UP

We all succeed together #support

In Focus – Deputy CEO

A regular feature, “In Focus”, examines the work of a key STEP service, team or individual. This edition of “In Focus” features Paul Glover, Deputy CEO.



Paul Glover began working for STEP Academy Trust seven years ago, initially leading Applegarth out of Special Measures to a Good OFSTED judgement within six months. This achievement illustrated his talent for leading schools through significant periods of change and rapid improvement. Since then, he has gone on to provide executive support for most of our STEP Academies, most recently supporting Heathfield Academy to achieve an Outstanding OFSTED judgement.

As Deputy CEO, Mr Glover has overall responsibility for STEP’s education strategy. Working with the Executive Team, it is his responsibility to ensure that:

- Academy leaders have designed and implemented a STEP Way which meets the needs of their local context;
- All our academies are moving towards the STEP Standard, our agreed Trust expectation;
- Bespoke support, which we call STEP Up, is provided as required.

Additionally, Mr Glover is a National Leader of Education and is often asked to provide support to other schools and multi academy trusts.

STEP WAY

We agree to do things like this #consistency

Establishing the STEP Way for each academy

The second point of our STEP Compass, STEP Way, aims to achieve consistency across our community of schools. However, far from trying to create a one size fits all approach, the STEP Way for each academy is shaped by what leaders believe is right for their academy. Whilst there is much common ground, for example all STEP Academies follow a mastery approach to the teaching of mathematics, academy leaders are trusted to decide what is right for their context. The caveat being that agreed approaches must deliver the STEP Standard – our shared expectations.

Our approach to developing the STEP Way reflects our Trust’s belief that strong leadership drives school improvement. Rather than design an outstanding curriculum model which leaders are expected to deliver, regardless of context, we aim to support and challenge STEP leaders to develop curricular models which meet the needs of their children.



STEP stands for
Striving Together
for Excellence in
Partnership

STEP AHEAD

We invest in our future #development

Recruiting, retaining and developing high quality staff

Recruiting, retaining and developing staff is a major priority for STEP Academy Trust. Clearly, for our children to reach their full potential, the adults that work with them have to be of very high quality.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a key element of STEP Ahead, the fourth point of our STEP Compass. Through the STEP Ahead Teaching School Alliance, a range of teaching and leadership qualifications are being delivered. As a result, we believe STEP's workforce is amongst the most well-trained in the education sector.

But it is our STEP First/one team ethos, that is having the biggest impact on recruitment and retention. Increasingly, STEP is seen as an organisation which can facilitate career development over many years. Indeed, there are lots of examples of staff who have worked in a number of our STEP Academies in a variety of roles. As such, our retention rates are extremely high and, in a climate where recruitment can be challenging, STEP is seen as an employer of choice.

STEP First also ensures continuity when there is the need to make leadership changes. Rather than advertise externally to replace leaders, as would be the case for most schools when a leader moves on, we are fortunate to be able to identify talented replacements from across STEP Academy Trust. Appointing proven STEP leaders who understand and can deliver the standards we expect, has been critical to the success of our organisation.

