

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 other's successes, as well as share their challenges. This bi-annual newsletter provides an update on the very latest developments across our Trust.



STEP FIRST
We are all one team

STEP welcomes our new partners

None of us could have imagined how much would change since the last edition of the STEP Newsletter. The global pandemic, COVID-19, has shaped the way we live, including how our children learn. Whilst it continues to be an extremely challenging time, we can be very proud of how our STEP Academies, supported by the Central Team, have responded. They have demonstrated over this unprecedented period, that by working together, as one team in partnership, we become more than the sum of our individual parts.

So, we are delighted that over the past few months our Trust has extended to incorporate four additional partners: Benedict Academy, Park Academy, Westbridge Academy and, most recently, Beddington Park Academy. Serving very different communities in Merton, Wandsworth and Sutton, we are pleased they are now benefitting from being part of the wider STEP community. As Mia, one of our pupils insightfully described STEP: "A community of schools uniting together to form one team".





STEP WAY
We agree to do things like this

Promoting equality and diversity



Every year, the Board of Trustees and the Executive Team review and agree organisational short, medium and long term aims. We call these the STEP Compass Priorities. Focused on the principles that underpin the Compass—unity, consistency, support, development and expectation— the priorities inform improvement planning processes across STEP, including academy improvement plans.

Although the scope of the STEP Compass is wide-ranging, two key priorities have been identified, linked to world events. The first, addressing the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, continues to dominate, both in terms of responding to the constantly changing situation, and also supporting those most affected to recover from its impact. The other, is to ensure that STEP effectively promotes equality and diversity at every layer of the organisation. For a Trust that is founded on principles of social justice, our anti-racist stance, and position on all other forms of discrimination, must be explicitly clear.

To achieve this, we are undertaking a comprehensive review of current practices. For example, we are aware that STEP's workforce is not always reflective of the diverse communities we serve. As such, we will be evaluating and developing ways to attract, identify, support and encourage a more diverse range of employees. The curriculum too will be a major focus for leadership teams across STEP Academy Trust – what we teach our children; including using a common language around diversity and equality.

Notwithstanding the current challenges we are all facing, we urge all stakeholders to engage with and support this important issue.





STEP UP
We all succeed together

In Focus – Business Advisor

A regular feature, “In Focus”, examines the work of a key STEP service, team or individual. This edition of “In Focus” features Mandi Hasdell, Business Advisor.



Amanda Hasdell – known to us as Mandi – joined STEP in September 2015 as an Administrative Officer at Wolsey Junior Academy. Very quickly Mandi established a reputation for friendly efficiency and worked with the then Business Manager to put in place systems and processes which have since benefitted other academies across STEP. Within a short time, an opportunity opened up for Mandi to become an Office Manager over two schools – the newly amalgamated Tudor (formerly Wolsey Infants and Juniors) and Applegarth. In this role, we again saw Mandi rise to the challenges of an expanded remit and further her reputation as an asset to Academy Leadership Teams.

From April 2020, Mandi was appointed as a Business Advisor and is now responsible for supporting Tudor and La Fontaine, both large three form entry academies. Commenting on her development within STEP, Mandi says: *“I am forever appreciative of the opportunities that working for STEP has given me. I have had the chance to see the importance of working within the Mission and Values of STEP in all my roles. I am looking forward to continuing to grow and develop professionally within STEP, making each day count.”*

STEP teacher receives prestigious award

Elizabeth Crowther, now in her third year at Breakwater Academy, joined STEP in September 2018 as a graduate trainee, going on to complete her Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year in July 2020. Based so far in KS2, Liz’s quietly exemplary practice has been recognised with the award of Lewes Area Primary School Teacher of Year, alongside Sussex NQT of the Year. Judges commented: *“When trainees or colleagues need to observe excellent teaching practice, they go to Liz’s classroom. She knows her children very well and continually tries new strategies to help them fully engage with their learning, such as Dual Coding – using mental images to aid learning – along with personalised support and interventions.”*



STEP stands for
Striving Together
for Excellence in
Partnership



STEP AHEAD
We invest in our future

STEP Ahead Teaching School Alliance having a massive impact within and beyond STEP

The STEP Ahead Teaching School Alliance (STEP Ahead TSA) is STEP Academy Trust's teaching school. The teaching school works both within and outside the Trust to improve the quality of education by focussing on training and developing our teachers. Led by Tom Garry, Head of STEP Ahead TSA, and supported by three experienced colleagues, the aim of the teaching school is to make our teachers as effective as possible so that the pupils who attend STEP Academies get the very best quality of education possible.



Over the last two years, STEP Ahead TSA has developed its own teacher training programme, in partnership with the University of Buckingham. This enables us to select and prioritise what it is we want our new teachers to learn in their training, ensuring that our trainees quickly develop an understanding and appreciation of the high expectations that STEP has for all its teachers, as well as the subject knowledge that they will need to teach effectively.

Additionally, this year the teaching school is delivering training for all our recently qualified teachers, ensuring that teachers early in their careers are supported to quickly develop in their effectiveness. Indeed, it is the intention of the STEP Ahead TSA to make our new teachers unusually effective early on, so that they can develop into the very highest quality teachers quickly as their careers progress. This training, in addition to our professional development for more experienced teachers and school leaders, ensures that our academies can continue to provide the world-class education that is the aim for all the pupils whom we serve in STEP Academies.

We are pleased too, that the STEP Ahead TSA is now having an even wider impact, working in partnership to help schools and trusts across the South East region to improve the quality of teaching.

For more information about STEP Academy Trust, visit:
www.stepacademytrust.org

<https://twitter.com/thesteptrust>