



Part of the Acorn Group



“Connecting Steps allows us to recognise and celebrate all of our students’ achievements, particularly those who make only small amounts of progress towards mastering a particular skill.”

Jo Johnson Headteacher at Heath Farm School

Heath Farm School provides a broad and balanced curriculum tailored to each individual child in a personalised way. It is a positive force in re-engaging young people in their academic, sporting and vocational learning. Pupils move on to college courses, apprenticeships and jobs, confident they can lead happy and meaningful adult lives. Heath Farm’s individual and unique approach ensures each person achieves their best. It is this holistic approach that led to them choosing B Squared’s assessment software, Connecting Steps and its evidence of learning management software Evisense to showcase its pupils’ accomplishments.

Demonstrating ‘whole student’ progress in a SEMH setting

Heath Farm School is an independent, co-educational, day school for up to 85 pupils from 5-18 years old who have not been able to sustain mainstream education: pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and a range of additional learning difficulties including Autism, ASD, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ODD, Attachment Disorder and issues which require CAMHS involvement. Heath Farm looked for an assessment framework to suit its pupils who show progress in very small increments.

Identifying the need for change

In her role as Headteacher, Jo Johnson recognised that the school’s previous assessment system did not have enough of a detailed breakdown for its pupils. She wanted a framework to demonstrate even the smallest increments of progression to all involved stakeholders including carers, parents, therapists and social workers.

“We moved from our previous assessment system because it was still using the old National Curriculum levels and didn’t give enough detail. Its criteria for achievement was either, ‘met’, ‘not met’ or ‘partly met’ but we wanted to be able to show progress for pupils who had made steps towards ‘partly meeting’ the criteria, therefore we required a broader range and much more detail. Using Connecting Steps means even the smallest increment of progress can be recognised,” says Jo.

What makes Connecting Steps different from other assessment frameworks?

Connecting Steps works differently to other assessment systems. Instead of teachers giving a level at the end of the year, it is designed to be used throughout the year. Teachers record the small steps of progress that pupils make and use these steps to build a bigger picture of each pupil’s learning and achievements. It works in a non-linear way, meaning that one area of development does not need to be complete to start assessing another.

“Our pupils often have ‘spiky’ profiles, meaning that in some areas they can exceed, whilst in others they fall below age-related expectations – we chose Connecting Steps because we needed our assessment to work in a non-linear fashion to reflect this,” says Jo.

Making assessment easier



Simplifying reporting for senior leaders

As in many schools, the staff at Heath Farm School have historically spent hours creating Excel documents to assess and interrogate data to make informed decisions.

“The Connecting Steps Analysis Module (CSAM) makes life dramatically easier. Data can be graphically presented in different ways using reports, making all the information more accessible. CSAM has cut down my workload in terms of data analysis and helped me to make bold strategic decisions. It enabled us to identify that KS3 pupils were making outstanding progress within the statistic strand of maths. We introduced GCSE statistics to KS4 and pupils are making huge progress,” says Jo.

At their last inspection, Ofsted identified one of Heath Farm School’s further improvements as - enabling teachers to participate in the analysis of pupils’ performance information so that they gain a greater understanding of how this can be used to improve their teaching. *“I used CSAM to address this guidance from Ofsted to enable teachers to create Progress Intervention Plans,”* says Jo.

Managing evidence of learning

At Heath Farm School, carers and parents are encouraged to become part of the school community, contributing to its life and development. This encourages them to develop respect for themselves and self confidence to strive to achieve high standards in every aspect of their lives.

Jo says, *“In addition to using the assessment framework for academic progress, we needed a way to record our pupils’ social and emotional progress. We have found that this is best documented with B Squared’s Evisense platform using video/photo/audio evidence to support teachers’ judgements and link evidence directly to Connecting Steps assessment points - saving teachers’ time and clearly demonstrating pupil progress.*

Evisense fits our holistic approach on increasing parental engagement and promoting transparent communication between carers, parents, therapists and social workers. I think it’s excellent both as a moderation tool and for capturing social and emotional progress, as well as our pupils’ academic achievements. It will be great to use during EHCP reviews, PEPs and LAC reviews to demonstrate how far the student has come in a way that everyone involved can clearly understand,” says Jo.

Going forward

Heath Farm continues to make a difference for its pupils who move on to life after school with the necessary skills to equip them for the world of work or further education, able to make a positive contribution to society.

Jo says, *“I am very confident in the changes we have made to our assessment. I feel that B Squared really understands what is needed in a SEMH setting. I would highly recommend its Connecting Steps software for both mainstream and special settings. It is a rigorous assessment system that informs planning and supports senior leaders to make informed curriculum decisions.*

The B Squared team are always ready to listen to ideas and suggestions in order to make the product work as well as possible for us now and for the future, and the technical support is excellent.”

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school is judged Outstanding by Ofsted and at its last inspection, Ofsted observed that leaders effectively track the progress that pupils make in a wide range of subjects.

To find out how B Squared can help your school
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