



Practice

Teachers & Staffing

Working with Teaching Assistants

A good practice guide

Headteachers & Teachers

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FOREWORD

Recent research and inspection findings confirm the tremendous contribution well-managed and well-trained teaching assistants can make in driving up standards in schools. The Government is therefore implementing a £350 million programme to increase and improve the support offered by teaching assistants to teachers and pupils. That programme includes:

- **additional recruitment** - increasing by 20,000 the number of FTE teaching assistants working in primary and secondary schools in England by 2002
- **effective training** - with the recent publication of high-quality induction training materials for newly recruited teaching assistants, and the availability of Standards Fund monies to support higher-level training for more experienced assistants
- **greater clarity over role and qualifications pathways** - to be set out in the forthcoming national framework published by the Local Government National Training Organisation.

This publication represents another piece in the jigsaw. The recruitment and initial training of teaching assistants will only add value if assistants are then deployed effectively by teachers and managers inside schools. This guide documents practical ways in which many schools are working to make better use of the skills of their teaching assistants. These are schools who know how much value teaching assistants can add to the learning process.

Their experience confirms that the greater involvement of trained teaching assistants in the learning process in no way detracts from teachers' own unique professional skills and distinct responsibilities. In fact, it reinforces the teacher's role. It is the teacher whose curriculum and lesson planning and day-to-day direction set the framework within which assistants and other adults work. But I believe best practice in teaching is evolving, partly in response to the increasing contribution of quality support staff. Good teachers are now choosing to enrich their own direct contact with pupils with the skilled direction of the growing number of support staff at their disposal.

I hope you find this guide useful in your schools. It may contain ideas you hadn't considered or suggest ways of implementing ideas you've been pondering for some time. Many of the points in it may prove applicable to your own circumstances. Most of all, I hope that you find it of practical value, supporting your efforts to build learning teams that help pupils realise their potential.

Estelle Morris

Estelle Morris

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PART ONE: THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ASSISTANT	7
Understanding the role of the teaching assistant	7
Aspects of good teaching assistant practice in the school	9
PART TWO: SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ASSISTANT	15
1. Defining responsibilities clearly	15
2. Providing clear deployment within a flexible framework	20
3. Creating partnerships with teachers	24
4. Creating partnerships with other people involved in education	28
5. Creating partnership among teaching assistants	31
6. Reviewing performance and promoting development	34
PART THREE: CARRYING OUT AN AUDIT OF CURRENT PRACTICE	41
APPENDIX	51
Further reading	51
Acknowledgements	52

INTRODUCTION

'Our OFSTED report said that it was a good school but that it was coasting. It singled out the use of teaching assistants as an area of weakness. We decided to invest in training for our three teaching assistants. Some of the teachers had not seen the benefit of TAs, and thought they just sat and observed the class, maybe getting out the paintpots. Now they see that they are terribly useful in the class and can help with things like monitoring progress and assessment. They are asking me to employ more of them.'

Headteacher of primary school in Wiltshire

Scope

This guide is intended primarily for headteachers, deputy heads, and other teachers responsible for the employment of teaching assistants (TAs) or the line management of TAs. There should also be much in it that is of value to TAs themselves.

The guide's aim is to acknowledge the important role played by TAs in schools, and to demonstrate what they can achieve when creatively and effectively managed. It focuses on management and deployment, rather than issues of pedagogic practice. The latter are considered in the induction training materials recently published for new teaching assistants, with specific reference to literacy and numeracy support, and to behaviour management (for further details, see our website: www.dfes.gov.uk/teachingreforms/support).

Many of the examples are taken from primary schools. The principles they illustrate are, however, also broadly applicable to secondary schools. Nevertheless, it is not within the scope of this guide to encompass some of the specialist roles that TAs take on in secondary schools, or the subject specialisation that TAs sometimes adopt in response to the size and organisation of secondary schools. It is hoped to address these issues in a separate document later. Similarly, specific expertise required of TAs supporting the teaching of children for whom English is an additional language will be dealt with separately at a future date. The level at which all TAs normally work with pupils is covered here.

The guide also covers those TAs who are not appointed by the school, but who are directly employed by the LEA or by an Education Action Zone. The principles of good practice in deployment and management apply equally well when the LEA or EAZ has the management responsibilities for TAs.

Significantly, the document does not cover issues of career progression and pay scales for TAs.

The Government takes the view that pay and conditions for teaching assistants are best determined at local level. Many local authorities are now reviewing support staff pay in the light of the 1997 Single Status Agreement made by employers, representatives and staff unions. Work on new national occupational standards and a qualifications framework will be completed early next year. It should then be possible for employers of TAs (local authorities or schools) to compare their local arrangements with what is implied by the framework, satisfying themselves that those arrangements properly recognise different levels of responsibility and encourage development through training and the acquisition of relevant qualifications.

Use of this guide

While schools have much in common, each school also has its own character and needs, and managers must think through how to gain the best from deploying TAs according to their school's needs and plans. There is no universal formula for success. Nor is it possible to distinguish between the essential and the desirable. Rather, it is expected that schools will take the points of good practice that are given in Part Two below and assess their value according to their own particular circumstances.

It is hoped that the examples will encourage self-assessment in the way schools manage TAs according to those circumstances. Part Three contains a list of indicators and review questions which should help schools monitor the way they manage TAs by indicating what should be found if good practice exists. Similarly to the good practice points themselves, it is recommended that managers use these selectively, picking the ones that are relevant to their own situation. The indicators without the questions are also given at the end of the sections of Part Two to which they refer. Guidance on their use is given at the beginning of Part Three.

Terminology

The term 'teaching assistant' (TA) is the Government's preferred generic term of reference for all those in paid employment in support of teachers in primary, special and secondary schools. That includes those with a general role and others with specific responsibilities for a child, subject area or age group. The term captures the essential 'active ingredient' of their work; in particular, it acknowledges the contribution which well-trained and well-managed assistants can make to the teaching and learning process and to pupil achievement. Consultation responses have supported the use of this term and the value of a generic term to reduce the confusion of different titles denoting the same function.

For consistency, the term has been used in the quotations in this document, even if the speaker or writer used a different one. In addition, where names are given in the examples in this document, whether of adults or pupils, they have been changed in the interest of confidentiality.

Then in 1994 we started generic courses for teaching assistants. They were billed in the course handbook as for NTAs - non-teaching assistants - but we quickly dropped the 'non'. Their valuable role and their need for recognition were evident from the beginning.

Essex LEA

PART ONE: THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ASSISTANT

'Initially help is given with changing into PE kit, but more and more independence is encouraged. The TA makes a judgement about how long a task should take, allows the pupil to undertake this independently, and only intervenes when the pupil is running over time. Only tasks that remain impossible for the pupil to accomplish are carried out by the TA as a matter of routine. Judgements are being made throughout the PE lesson by the TA about how the equipment can be adapted, how the game can be adapted, and how the rules can be changed. It is unusual for pupils to have access directly and all the time to the TA; she is looking for ways to include the pupil to the full. Time for liaison with the teaching staff to try to plan for greater inclusion is a factor before, during and after the lessons.'

Headteacher of a secondary school in Suffolk

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ASSISTANT

Since 1998 primary and secondary schools have experienced an unprecedented amount of reform to raise standards of pupil performance. Over the same period, schools have chosen to employ increasing numbers of TAs, to support the delivery of quality teaching and a modern curriculum. It is encouraging to note the ample evidence from research and inspection that many TAs are helping to raise standards in the classrooms in which they work. In this they are continuing the work that has been successfully carried out for a long time, especially by those assistants with the NNEB qualification and, more recently, by those who have successfully completed the Specialist Teaching Assistant (STA) and other qualifications.

OFSTED's *Review of Primary Education 1994-98* (1999) states:

'Well-trained teaching assistants are a key resource and are used very effectively in many primary schools.'

However, TAs can scarcely be expected automatically to produce good practice without guidance and sound training. Inspection and research findings underline the importance of good training and supportive management if TAs are to function effectively. OFSTED, for example, makes this clear in its report on the evaluation of the first year of the National Literacy Strategy:

'The use of other adults to support the Literacy Hour usually has a positive effect. This is particularly true where training has been provided for these adults and careful consideration has been given to their deployment.'

The essence of the successful deployment of TAs lies in understanding the nature of the support that they can provide. This can be divided into four strands:

- support for the pupil
- support for the teacher
- support for the curriculum
- support for the school.

Support for the pupil is support for *all* pupils with whom the TA comes into contact. Many TAs are employed with specific responsibilities to work with individual children with special educational needs. Others are given more general classroom responsibilities. However, even those who work mainly with one child will come into regular and close contact with other children; indeed, it is central to the whole principle of inclusion that a child who has physical or learning difficulties should be helped to work in the company of other children, and often in tandem with them.

Support for the teacher involves TAs in performing a number of routine tasks, such as escorting groups of young children to work areas outside the classroom. However, as experience of the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has shown, it is now common and desirable for teachers also to allocate TAs tasks that were once more often done by the teacher. TAs are, for example, sometimes engaged in important aspects of assessing pupils' literacy and numeracy performance, and in supporting group work assigned by the class teacher. In this a number of TAs are following the lead of nursery nurses who have for some time brought their understanding of child development to bear on work in observation and assessment.

The development of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has seen a significant growth in involvement in these areas of the **curriculum** by TAs in primary schools. TAs are often required to work across other parts of the curriculum, and support teaching in subjects such as physical education and information and communications technology (ICT).

Lastly, as **support for their school**, TAs are not just part of the staff, but are part of a team, and as such their remit includes translating school policies into practice and furthering the ethos of the school.

These four forms of support provided by the TA are not separate but interdependent, and at any time a TA may well be involved in an activity in which two or more forms of support are being given.

But these four strands of support are only one part of the story. They can be regarded as the support provided *by* the TA. At the same time the school has a responsibility to support the TA in fulfilling the expectations of the role. This is the support provided *for* the TA. This obligation calls for consideration both of the way TAs are managed and of their professional development needs: management support should enable them to perform the job to the best of their abilities, and they should be encouraged to develop their skills and potential.

Clearly, this view of two-way support requires the close cooperation of class teachers with whom TAs work, as well as of heads and other managers.

The pupils received very good support from experienced teaching assistants who are guided appropriately by class teachers. The teaching assistants give the pupils regular periods of individual help and on other occasions work with groups of pupils in classrooms. This very good provision makes a significant impact on the pupils' attainment and progress.

Report by HMI on a primary school in Devon, 1999

ASPECTS OF GOOD TEACHING ASSISTANT PRACTICE IN THE SCHOOL

In considering the management of any member of staff, as soon as one looks at the question of how to enable them to function effectively the question must be asked, what is it that one wants them to be effective at?

It is no more possible to draw a complete picture of the model TA than it is to do one for the model headteacher. Again, schools will have their own requirements of TAs according to their differing situations. But just as principles of good school management and headship have been identified, so with teaching assistants, aspects of the role in practice can be identified for imitation, adaptation or inspiration where appropriate.

A recent survey of the management of TAs in schools defined what makes good practice in the work of TAs by saying that effective practice:

- 'fosters the **participation** of pupils in the social and academic processes of a school
- seeks to enable pupils to become more **independent learners**
- helps to **raise standards** of achievement for all pupils.'

(Centre for Educational Needs, University of Manchester, *The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistants*, DfEE, 1999)

1. Fostering the participation of pupils in the social and academic practices of a school

This form of support for pupils is seen in:

1. Supervising and assisting small groups of pupils in activities set by teachers

Activities are set by teachers, ideally in consultation with assistants. Often the TAs' greatest contribution to children's learning is made when they are working with groups of children under the management of the teacher. This form of work can be especially helpful to children with special educational needs (SEN) or for whom English is an additional language (EAL). They are thus able to benefit from the attention of a sensitive adult, without being stigmatised as 'different' because of frequent separation from their peers for individual tuition.

2. Developing pupils' social skills

Supporting children in groups who might otherwise have been separated from other children for individual attention promotes the inclusion of those children in mainstream work.

3. Implementing behaviour management policies

In accordance with guidance provided by the teacher, a TA can provide valuable backup to him or her in dealing with disruptive or potentially disruptive behaviour from pupils.

4. Spotting early signs of bullying and disruptive behaviour

As an extra adult, an alert TA can be in a position to head off disruptive behaviour before it happens.

Some children find it easy to confide in a TA, seeing the TA as 'the listening ear', and it is therefore the TA who may be alerted to instances of bullying.

5. Helping the inclusion of all children

TAs can do much to help promote the inclusion of children into their school, and support individual children who for one reason or another find it difficult to form friendships and good relationships with others. They can, for example, help foster the inclusion of children with EAL by having time and expertise to help them with language.

6. Keeping children on task

Often the input of an attentive adult will prevent pupils' minds wandering off their work, which can happen when they are in a large group with only one adult. This attention supports the pupils in helping them become better learners.

2. Seeking to enable pupils to become more independent learners

It is well known that children learn better if their efforts are appreciated and they feel valued. As they gain in confidence they will become more independent. TAs can help pupils develop independence in their learning in several ways:

1. Showing interest

TAs have an important role in helping raise the self-esteem of children by showing interest not only in their work but in what the children do outside the school.

2. Assisting individuals in educational tasks

The TA can foster independence by assisting the child to increase his or her knowledge, understanding and skills, especially those children with special needs who might otherwise find it difficult to perform the tasks requested of them at all.

However, this assistance needs to be balanced. Letting or, worse, encouraging a child to 'cling', even if the child has a statement and the TA has been employed specifically to work with him or her, is ultimately stultifying and demeaning for the pupil. It can also mean that the child gets insufficient input from the teacher.

The TA also needs to know when to stand back and enable the child to work with other pupils in a group.

3. Freeing up the teacher to work with groups

Where the teacher is satisfied that the TA is sufficiently confident and accomplished the TA can address the whole class for a time according to plans made in advance with the teacher. This enables the teacher to concentrate on pupils who need special attention, thereby ensuring that such pupils benefit from the direct input of the qualified teacher.

4. Working with outside agencies

TAs have a function working with outside consultants such as speech therapists and educational psychologists. For some pupils the input of these specialists is crucial, and the TA can play an important part both in liaison and in supporting their work.

5. Modelling good practice

TAs can provide good models for children both in behaviour and in learning. For example, reading to children for whom English is an additional language can provide a model of good English.

6. Assisting pupils with physical needs

Intervention when help is necessary in a tactful manner, and not at other times, enables pupils with physical disabilities to become more independent learners and to move towards independence as adults.

We have a child with special educational needs who is given two and half hours SEN support in class per week, together with half an hour out of the class with the TA. Over the year the pupil has become much more independent in his learning, and as he has become independent we have found that he is more likely to come to the TA with specific questions.

Headteacher in Sussex

Darren had been a school refuser. He was not at all interested in reading. I just got to know him well by talking to him. I got to understand what his sense of humour was. I could then identify books that he might enjoy reading. Eventually his learning improved to the point that at the end of Key Stage 2 he did well in the SATs.

TA in a primary school in Sussex

3. Help to raise standards of achievement of all pupils

All the points listed in the above two categories contribute towards this goal by directly supporting pupils who need additional help. There are also certain aspects of the TAs' role in which they are assisting in the education of all the children in the class. Moreover, even when working with individual pupils they are assisting the others, as they are thereby free to progress at their own pace.

1. Being involved at whole-class level

TAs can alternate intervening with particular pupils and being a general resource for the whole class. Assistants who are fully engaged with the aims, content, strategies and intended outcomes for a lesson are likely to be more effective than those who are required only to concentrate on individual pupils and their learning plans.

2. Helping implement lesson plans

A TA who is briefed as to what is planned for a lesson is in a stronger position to help the teacher realise its aims.

3. Making possible more ambitious learning activities

Teachers have commented that the availability of an extra pair of hands, eyes and ears makes it possible to provide and supervise a greater number of practical lesson activities, such as crafts, learning games and outdoor games and projects.

4. Providing support for the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies

Many TAs now take an active part in supporting the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics as a result of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

5. Providing feedback to teachers

As a member of a team, a TA is in a good position to observe pupil performance, and to provide the teacher with valuable thoughts on what works for pupils, what obstacles to learning they encounter, and the effectiveness of classroom processes and organisation.

6. Preparing classroom materials

Getting materials ready for the lesson, preparing worksheets, preparing books and setting up equipment all help free up teaching time to the benefit of all the class.

The year 2 science theme for the term was Light and Dark. Our concern was that the more able pupils were not getting opportunities to extend their scientific skills.

Using our medium-term plan the TA and I planned the unit together. We discussed learning objectives and the progression of skills in Science ST1, and she was given the responsibility for working with a group of the six most able children each week. Her focus was to be on developing their predicting, fair-testing and recording skills.

At the end of the first week the group confidently explained what they had done and why. By the end of the second week we were able to extend their work further. While I focused on recording and how to use a simple table, the TA supported her group in trying to explain what they had found out. She encouraged the children to look back through their book, which contained Year 1 work, to find the correct vocabulary.

The children were subsequently able to provide simple conclusions and give reasons, thus working towards level 3.

Primary teacher in Suffolk

PART TWO: SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ASSISTANT

1. DEFINING RESPONSIBILITIES CLEARLY

'Part of our project was to update and restructure the job description. The format and contents were put together by TAs, brought to class teams, and then the whole staff for discussion. The headteacher then used the TA suggested headings and contents to draw up a new general job description. Following this each TA had the opportunity to "personalise" their job description by adding additional responsibilities, skills and duties, making it more individual and also to distinguish roles.'

Primary school in Salford

To perform well you need to know what it is you are supposed to be doing. Clarity is therefore needed in the deployment of any member of staff. Because the role of the TA has been evolving, and as it varies according to the school and the experience and qualifications of the TA, the task may well require more thought than it does for other members of staff whose role is better established. It may also require more monitoring and follow-up.

Before advertising and filling a post the following aspects need to be considered: the school's policy, appointment criteria, the job description and induction for the successful candidate. Of these the third one, the job description, has a continuing role as it can serve as the basis for regular appraisal after an agreed period of employment.

1. School policy

Overall school policies are vital to the development of practice in relation to the work of TAs. Such policies can either foster or limit the development of effective ways of working. Schools whose policies consider the contributions of TAs have a clear view of their function.

Some schools have chosen to include TAs when formulating a performance management policy, and include their TAs' needs in the staff development plan. A well-balanced plan will also address the needs of teachers and managers in understanding their own role in managing TAs.

2. Appointment

Assistants are sometimes appointed in primary schools from among volunteer parent helpers. Thus there is a good opportunity here to observe volunteers at work with children before making an appointment. Trial periods, if in accordance with the school's employment policy, can be implemented in other cases.

A probationary period has been found to be valuable in some schools. It enables the school to assess whether the person is suited for the job, it gives the employee the chance to assess whether the job is right for them, it establishes the principle that the employee is expected to take time to settle into the job, and it provides an assessment point at the end where both employee and manager can look at what support the employee might need to perform more effectively.

3. Contract

Some TAs are employed on temporary contracts, often because they have specific duties with a pupil with SEN, and if the pupil leaves the school the post disappears. TAs employed by schools on permanent contracts are more likely to feel part of the team, to identify with the school, and have a greater commitment to developing their role.

As well as covering the standard terms of hours of work, place of work, rates of pay, holidays and other benefits, contracts should state what functions outside the classroom, such as attendance at meetings, are also paid for, or whether time off in lieu is granted for non-classroom activities undertaken at the school's request.

4. Job description

Clear and accurate job descriptions should be every employee's right. For TAs they should describe the job they will do, and not be based on outdated impressions of the TA's role. The job description is more likely to reflect what the TA does if she or he is consulted when it is drawn up. In schools where there is a strong sense of teamwork the teachers who work with the TA are aware of what is in the description, and may even have taken part in the process of drawing it up.

Where a TA has specific responsibilities for an individual child or children, the job description should be clear on the degree to which the TA will also be involved in supporting the teaching of the other pupils in the class.

National Occupational Standards, to be published early in 2001, will provide a framework schools can use to draw up job descriptions. The well-written job description is the basis for subsequent appraisal of the TA, and should be reviewed and if necessary amended at such times. A model for a job description, adapted from one used in an LEA in north-west England, is included in this section.

5. Induction

All TAs report the value of being given induction into the school and its practices as soon as they start work. This applies especially to those TAs who have not been involved in formal education, apart possibly from vicariously as parents, for many years since their own school days.

More formal induction training is most useful when the TA has been in post for a few weeks, by which time they will have a basic grounding in how the school works and a perspective of how the knowledge they will acquire will be applied.

6. Communication

Parents, especially those of children with SEN, should be informed of the school's policy on employing TAs, and the governors and parents affected should know who the individual TAs are and what their responsibilities are. New appointments should be reported to the governors and the parents of pupils in the relevant class.

As part of the SEN team, we believe that the role of the teaching assistant should be as follows:

The teaching assistant should endeavour to promote the inclusion of all children. The TA will work closely with those identified on the SEN register and with statements of SEN to: ...

To support the teacher through: ...

To support the SENCO through: ...

To support the school through: ...

As part of the SEN team, we believe that the class teacher should support the teaching assistant through: ...

As part of the SEN team, we believe that the SENCO should support the teaching assistant through: ...

From a policy statement from a junior school in outer London

Framework for a job description

Job title: TEACHING ASSISTANT

Grade:

School: (employer and location):

Responsible to: (line manager)

Liases with: (class teacher)

Main purpose of job:

.....
.....

Duties and responsibilities:

Support for pupils:

.....
.....

Support for the teacher(s):

.....
.....

Support for the school:

.....
.....

Support with the curriculum:

.....
.....

Arrangements for appraisal of performance

.....
.....

I think being involved in the restructuring of our job descriptions was a very valuable exercise. It clearly shows when put down on paper just how flexible and hardworking we are. Not only for ourselves, but also for outsiders and people looking at support work as a career.

Putting together my personal profile was good. It has given me confidence in my own abilities and I have something to show and be proud of. It helps show the direction my training and career are going in, e.g. strengths, weaknesses.

TA in a primary school in Salford

Indicator 1: Schools have clear policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of TAs

2. PROVIDING CLEAR DEPLOYMENT WITHIN A FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK

'You need a layer of management for the TAs. You wouldn't dream of putting together a team of ten teachers without having someone to manage them.'

Headteacher of a primary school in Sussex

The deployment of TAs varies between schools and LEAs, with a further dimension provided by EAZs and other forms of organisation. Commonly, schools and LEAs have different balances between the generic and specialised roles of the TAs they employ, often with different requirements of them from TA to TA within the same school. This flexibility is a source of strength as it means that TAs can be deployed where they will be of most benefit.

However, the variations in deployment mean that management can be complex and needs to be carefully considered. The clarity that was identified in the previous section as an essential feature of the employment of TAs needs to be continued in their deployment. Schools report greater job effectiveness and greater job satisfaction where the management of TAs is active (without being intrusive), rather than TAs just being 'left to get on with it' in class.

In schools where TAs are employed effectively the management has been seen to address the following issues.

1. Providing clear line management

Messages from different sources can be contradictory and confusing. The TA's line manager is not necessarily the class teacher with whom they work most, but they nevertheless always take direction from the teacher. Where the teacher and manager are not the same person, the boundaries between them need to be clear. It should also be ensured that the roles and the practical responsibilities of those involved in managing TAs are understood both by the people themselves and the TAs they manage.

2. Finding the most appropriate line manager

Depending on the size of the school and the way responsibilities are shared, the line manager of the TA is often the headteacher, deputy, or head of year or department. However, where the TAs concentrate on working with children with SEN the SENCO is sometimes the most appropriate line manager. Moreover, some schools have found that a highly experienced TA can contribute effectively to the management of other TAs.

Some LEAs that employ TAs directly have devolved line management to the schools, as far as is consistent with statutory requirements. This generally makes assistants feel more settled and secure and avoids giving conflicting messages.

3. Examining where the TA should work

Attaching a TA to a particular class or pupil is not always the best way to employ them. TAs can be stimulated by working with different classes in a year group or Key Stage.

The situation with regards to each individual TA needs to be assessed in conjunction with the next point.

4. Ensuring continuity of work

While a certain amount of moving about between classes is stimulating for TAs, too much can prevent them getting properly engaged with any group and can be demotivating, resulting in inadequate support for pupils.

5. Facilitating teamwork in class

Some teachers are not used to sharing their classroom with other adults. They may restrict TAs to performing routine tasks, hence allowing them to provide only a low grade of support to the teacher. This reaction can be understood in light of the fact that it is only recently that teacher training has begun to address the management by teachers of other adults in the classroom. The management function here lies in ensuring that the TA's role and responsibilities as spelled out in the job description are accepted and understood by both parties. Written guidance and some training in the management of a TA are likely to benefit teachers not used to working with TAs.

Conversely the balance can be skewed in the opposite direction when an insecure newly qualified teacher is put in a class where there is a highly experienced and confident TA. Managers need to be sensitive to possible tensions in such situations.

Facilitating teamwork extends to practical issues such as the physical arrangement of the classroom and ensuring that wherever possible the TA has the space that they need to perform their job.

6. Giving the TA the wider picture

Information about the current attainments of the pupils in their class and the teacher's aims for them is essential to give a TA the chance to perform to their best ability in supporting both the teacher and pupils. This information includes:

- what the school's and class teacher's expectations are in terms of pupils' progress
- the standards of behaviour expected and what the pupils are expected to learn in a given class
- how many pupils with special needs to whom the TA is assigned fit in.

7. Giving the TA specific information

TAs allocated to work with specified pupils should be given relevant information on the needs and attainments of those pupils and on the special educational provision being made for them. This includes the details of the statement of special educational needs, if there is one.

8. Explaining the groundrules of the school on confidentiality

Information received on children and observations made in classrooms need to be handled sensitively, and are often to be shared only with particular members of staff. This applies particularly, but not exclusively, with respect to children with special needs. Schools have groundrules or protocols on confidentiality which need to be given and explained to TAs.

9. Reviewing the TA-pupil link

TAs assigned to particular children sometimes move up the school with the child. Similarly, some TAs move up the school with a class. The needs of TA and/or pupil have to be balanced with the needs and resources of the school, bearing in mind that the pupil should not develop dependence on the TA. How appropriate this attachment is can only be gauged in conversation with the TA, the pupil and the teacher.

10. Using special skills

Where TAs have special skills in addition to those identified as immediately relevant to the appointment, these can be put to good use in the classroom. For example, a fluent French speaker might be used to introduce primary school children to a second language, a TA may play the piano in assemblies, a keen gardener may help pupils organise an environmental area.

We employ eight TAs, two of whom are bilingual. Thirty-five per cent of our pupils have English as an additional language. The bilingual assistants go into Reception and Key Stage 1 so that we can tackle difficulties with English early. The bilingual assistants also form a bridge to the community. Their work is priceless, absolutely vital at times.

Headteacher of a primary school in Peterborough

One of the TA's routine tasks was to help the children get ready for a PE session. She noticed that several children had difficulty tying their shoes. At the end of the session she helped those children by quickly tying their shoes so that they could make a prompt start to the next lesson. During the lunch break, however, she drew the group together to teach them how to tie shoe laces, using a 'big shoe' with thick laces on which to practise. The experience of putting the 'big shoe' on little feet and tying the 'fat' lace brought more than a few giggles. Discussion about how to tie a shoe reinforced the children's understanding of terms such as 'left' and 'right', and ranged over different ways of fastening shoes, including Velcro, buckles, buttons and elastic.

The active exploitation of opportunities to increase the children's knowledge, skills and understanding was a notable feature of the approach of this TA. During the PE session itself, for example, she sought and created opportunities to enlarge the children's vocabulary and reinforce their understanding of positional language such as: left, right, centre, high, higher and highest.

OFSTED report on a primary school in Liverpool, referring to a Reception class

Indicator 2.1: Managers' and teachers' management strategies provide clear guidance as to how TAs should work in their classrooms

Indicator 2.2: The expertise, skills and knowledge of TAs is used flexibly to foster the learning of pupils

3. CREATING PARTNERSHIPS WITH TEACHERS

'Every morning we discuss the day's work and what she would like me to do. There's no confusion. You have to know what she wants you to do and what she wants you to get from the children. I'm always talking with Susan... You have to be prepared to accept a bit of constructive criticism without getting upset.'

TA in a primary school in Medway

By definition, support for the teacher is at the heart of the role of the teaching assistant. If a TA is not able to function well in this respect, then their ability to support pupils, curriculum and school is severely impaired. It is a key management responsibility in employing TAs to ensure that this relationship works well, that the respective responsibilities are well defined and understood by both parties, and that there is the mutual respect and trust that enable both to fulfil their roles fully.

It is obvious that successful partnerships produce effective practice. A TA who is well informed and confident will enhance the work of pupils, help them stay on task, enable the teacher to set more ambitious learning tasks, provide more speaking, reading and writing opportunities for pupils, and make useful contributions to lesson plans and pupil assessment.

Although there is an element of personal chemistry in any relationship, the way the relationship is managed can determine the degree of success. The teacher will always and rightly be the senior partner in the relationship, and retain, at all times, responsibility for what is taught and for the conduct of the pupils. However, all the evidence shows that the team of teacher and TA works at its highest level when the TA is informed by the teacher of the plans and intentions for the lesson and is consulted over their execution.

1. Differentiating the roles of teacher and TA

Both teacher and TA need to be aware of their different functions. The teacher plans lessons and directs learning. The TA provides support to the teacher and through this to pupils and to the teaching of the curriculum. The TA works under the direction of the teacher, whether in the whole class or on their own with a small group of pupils or an individual.

2. Ensuring TA participation in planning

'Dedicated planning time is essential if support is to be effective' (Stephanie Lorenz, *Effective In-Class Support*). Good planning and preparation of work in accordance with clear objectives are essential conditions for success in teamworking generally. It follows that TAs should be involved by teachers in their planning and preparation of the work. In respect of short-term planning this involves a few minutes a day to inform the TA in advance of the lesson plans, preferably entailing both explanation by the teacher of his or her plans and conversation between the teacher and the TA about the TA's contribution. Medium-term plans will generally require a longer conversation, probably of around half an hour, between the teacher and the TA once a term or more.

The virtuous circle of 'plan, prepare, do and review' will be familiar to many teachers. It is for schools to ensure that TAs are fully a part of all aspects of that sequence.

3. Creating a climate that encourages high-quality TA input

The effective TA functions with confidence and feels able to exercise their own judgement. This comes with time and grows in part from a mutually supportive relationship with a teacher where the direction given by the teacher has been absorbed and does not need to be constantly explicit.

4. Developing feedback mechanisms

Good teamwork enables TAs to contribute fully to the information held on pupils, including the nature of the difficulties that hamper pupils' progress. Where TAs are managed well, the teachers recognise and take full advantage of the detailed knowledge that TAs may gain of individual pupils.

Feedback to the teacher by the TA after group or individual work contributes to the teacher's assessment of the relevant pupils and provides information that is valuable in planning their future work.

5. Dealing with behaviour management issues under teacher guidance

Individual teachers will have their own approaches to dealing with particular behavioural difficulties, within the context of the school's behaviour management policy. The TA needs to be familiar with these approaches so that conflicting messages are not given to pupils. This includes the TA's knowing the limits of tolerance the teacher will apply to individual pupils.

6. Ensuring TAs are informed of the learning needs and any behavioural difficulties of children with SEN

TAs responsible for children with special educational needs should be made fully aware of those needs and what they entail if they are to be able to deal with them confidently and help give the pupils access to the curriculum.

7. Including TAs in IEP reviews

Because they often spend more time with some pupils than the teacher does, assistants working with children with special educational needs may well have important contributions to make to their individual educational plans. Inclusion of the TA in this work also signals recognition of the value of the support they provide.

8. Inviting TAs to staff meetings

Inviting TAs to staff meetings gives a strong message that the school's approach is inclusive and they are valued as members of the teaching team. However, there is a resource implication in inviting all TAs to attend all staff meetings, so some schools have a policy that TAs have an open invitation to attend when they want to, and are specifically asked to attend when there are issues to be discussed which are of relevance to them.

9. Including TAs in the staffroom

Giving TAs equal access to the staffroom is a clear indicator that they are a part of the school team, just as not extending this access is inevitably a strong sign of differentiation and exclusion.

10. Including TAs in written communications

An important public acknowledgement of the value of a school's TAs is provided by listing them in the prospectus and staff lists sent to parents, encouraging governors to include their names in the Annual Report to Parents, and circulating correspondence to them by name.

11. Recognising the legal responsibilities of TAs

Health and Safety, Child Protection and other forms of legislation bear on the day-to-day work of a school. TAs need to be informed of the provisions of the legislative framework around schools, and be kept up to date with changes, particularly on those issues that directly affect their own work with pupils.

12. Encouraging reviews of the classroom relationship

From time to time the TA and the class teachers with whom they work regularly will need to discuss how well their working relationships are advancing the pupils' learning. This discussion could include practical issues such as how the classroom is organised physically so as to help them best fulfil their roles.

During these meetings I find out everything I need to know about the lesson I am supporting before it begins and it is here where I begin to think about how I can support the teacher and make relevant contributions. I may want to familiarise myself with a book we will be reading or begin to prepare the resources needed. She may tell me of specific plans she has made to introduce or reinforce the children's learning. A short meeting after the lessons gives us the opportunity to discuss achievements and problems, not only with children's progress but also concerning the resources and support methods we have used. Keeping this communication going is the lifeline for my work in school and I have learned so much from it.

TA from a primary school in Suffolk

My mentor suggested that I produce a 'Report-Back' sheet to make brief notes about individual children and the value of the game. I completed this sheet on subsequent occasions and found it useful in a number of ways. Firstly, it forced me to observe *each* child in the group as an individual and note any problems that they encountered. Secondly, by writing notes I remembered more detail and was therefore able to report back constructively. Thirdly, the class teachers were able to see who benefited more from the games and what literacy skills they had developed. Fourthly, as time to report back is limited this written form ensured that the observations I made were passed on to the relevant teachers. I now feel that I make a valuable contribution towards the assessment of children.

Teacher from an infant school in Surrey

Indicator 3.1: TAs work cooperatively with teachers to support the learning and participation of pupils

Indicator 3.2: Teachers and TAs learn together to improve the quality of their work

4. CREATING PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN EDUCATION

'An important part of the job of the TA is to try to get a good relationship with the family of a statemented child. I have had a good relationship with Charlene's mother, and every morning we meet just to pass on information.'

TA in Devon

The effective TA does not contribute to the functioning of a school merely between the start and end of lessons, but is a part of a network of relationships with the school at its centre. The relationships may be pupil-support based, such as in working with external specialists, or may be a form of support for the school, as in communicating with parents.

Mostly these are relationships that develop over time, and the TA's contribution to them will become more positive and active as she or he is encouraged to become more confident in the fulfilment of their role.

1. Working with outside agencies

The education of a pupil with special educational needs in many cases draws on a major input from an outside specialist, such as a speech therapist or an educational psychologist. The educational team thus is threefold: teacher, specialist and TA. It is important to the welfare of the pupil that the connections between these three are smooth and that there are no inconsistencies or wasted initiatives because of poor communication.

TAs therefore need to be involved, under the guidance of their teachers, with the specialists. This involvement can range from helping with the administrative arrangements to assisting the pupils perform tasks set by the specialist. For example, a speech therapist may prescribe a programme of exercises for the pupil to do between his or her own sessions, and this will often be undertaken by the TA under a reporting-back arrangement with the teacher.

Proper planning is necessary to ensure that the TA has all the necessary information on the current and proposed actions of the external support services for the child.

2. Regular meetings with SENCOs

Schools with a large number of TAs who are working with children with SEN may ask the SENCO to act as the TAs' line manager (see section 2). Other schools have found that regular meetings, generally weekly, are greatly helpful to the SENCO and the TAs.

3. A channel of communication with parents

A TA can provide a useful intermediary for a parent who is diffident about taking up an issue with a teacher. TAs are sometimes closer to parents than teachers, as they may themselves come from the immediate community and may be, or might have been, themselves parents of pupils in the school. Some parents may therefore consider them more approachable than teachers.

The situation may need to be handled carefully, and new TAs in particular will benefit from guidance from the school in how to handle these situations, especially those where the parent is being critical of a teacher or school policy.

Parents of children with SEN need to be informed of the programme provided for their child. This is not merely as a courtesy but also to enable parents to reinforce the programme at home. Often the TA will be well placed to provide this communication and to refer information back to the teacher.

4. A channel of communication with ethnic minority communities

Bilingual TAs can provide necessary communication with parents for whom English is an additional language. TAs who share a language with them are not only able to talk to them in that language but can help overcome misunderstandings due to cultural differences.

Bilingual TAs have also formed important two-way links with community leaders from ethnic minority groups.

5. Inviting TAs to participate in school functions

Including TAs as a matter of course in invitations to participate in school functions, such as plays and concerts, reinforces the feeling that they are an important part of the school staff, and also encourages parents to see them as such.

This case involved twin boys with extremely impulsive behaviour. They would unthinkingly try to gain attention and dominate their friends. As a result of the concern expressed by the school the twins were provided with a statement of special educational needs. They were each allocated a specialist teacher and a full-time teaching assistant. The full assessment process diagnosed the twins as each having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

The specialist teacher carried out a detailed Behaviour Assessment with the assistance of the TA. Under the supervision of the specialist teacher the TA took a key role in undertaking the behavioural assessment, completing observation schedules, contributing to classroom observations, and providing detailed reports on factors which maintained and controlled the twins' behaviour in various school settings.

Using this information an intervention programme was drafted. Under the supervision of the specialist teacher it was run on a day-to-day process by the TA. It was agreed that the TA would provide thinking lessons to help deal with the twins' impulsiveness. As part of this the TA would provide clear guidelines and boundaries regarding their behaviour, providing them with means for getting teacher help and attention in an appropriate manner. Teachers were asked to comment positively on the boys' ability to meet the targets set and the TA would inform the parent of progress and provide agreed acknowledgement of achievements. The TA provided in-class support for literacy and numeracy and also liaised with teachers in the provision of differentiated work for the boys.

A crucial element in the programme was the coordination of a consistent response from teachers to the twins' behaviour. The TA played a crucial role in this respect, liaising between staff and providing a channel of communication between them in managing the boys' difficulties.

The twins received TA support throughout the rest of their school careers and there were no further serious behavioural incidents. Both boys were entered for and received seven GCSEs, and are now at college studying engineering.

Inner-city secondary school

Indicator 4: TAs develop effective working partnerships with people involved in education

5. CREATING PARTNERSHIP AMONG TEACHING ASSISTANTS

'The TAs meet before school to check for notices, and at breaktimes and lunchtimes for refreshments and sharing of information with the SENCO and each other. These informal meetings have been influential in changing working practice.'

Secondary school in Suffolk

The working hours of TAs are such that they are more likely to feel isolated than other staff unless positive steps are taken to provide means of communication between them. Most TAs do not work full time, and some only work a few hours a week. Many work in just one class or with one pupil. TAs in this position may find that they have few opportunities to meet with other TAs in their school and hence are not able to share concerns and ideas.

Even where these opportunities are provided, TAs, like teachers, can improve their skills and insight by being able to share experiences and good practice with assistants from other schools.

1. Holding regular in-school meetings of TAs

Informal opportunities to meet and share experiences can be rare for TAs, so often more formal arrangements are necessary. Regular weekly meetings need not be time-consuming. These can be combined with meetings held by the TAs' line manager or the SENCO (if a different person), but if so there should be time allocated for the TAs' own agendas.

Such meetings can keep the TAs up to date with the issues that teachers are also discussing at staff meetings, with provision for the contribution of the TAs to be fed back into the staff meeting by a TA. This can provide a valuable element of TA support for the school.

2. Encouraging sharing of information about individual pupils

The support TAs provide for the pupils in their care is constrained if they are not able to share information with other TAs involved with the same children. (This should always be done according to the school's groundrules on confidentiality.) Where more than one TA is working with a particular child or children, a regular channel of communication needs to be established, especially where the TAs are not regularly in school at the same time. This will, for example, occur where one TA works mornings and the other afternoons. A communications book or file is generally more productive in keeping pupils' responses under review and is less likely to be overlooked than notes left on a bit of paper. In such instances there need to be occasional meetings between the TAs at mutually convenient times so that they can expand on the written communication. If the child has an IEP both TAs should, if possible, be involved in the review.

3. Encouraging sharing of information about the school

An effective way of preventing a new TA feeling isolated is to arrange for existing TAs to contribute to their induction. This also acknowledges to those TAs that they have valuable information and understanding. Experienced TAs can make highly suitable mentors to new TAs.

4. Information about support groups

In some LEAs TAs have formed authority-wide groups so that TAs from different schools can discuss any problems they have or pass on useful ideas. TAs need to be informed about any such groups by the school management.

5. Liaison with staff governors

Since September 1999 all schools have had a staff governor on their governing body. This person is a representative of the TAs as well as of other support staff in the school. Obviously, all TAs should be aware who the person is and what their role is, know what issues are relevant to governors, and be encouraged to see their governor as a person with whom they can raise appropriate concerns.

TAs are themselves eligible to stand for election as staff governor. In many schools they already provide governors with direct information 'from the inside' on the work of TAs, as well as performing governors' duties in full.

All the TAs meet once a week with the SENCO (their line manager), for half an hour. The teachers do not interrupt the meeting or ask an assistant to help out with some duty during it.

The regular meetings came about to raise the status of TAs with general duties, as before that only those with special responsibilities for children with SEN used to meet regularly. The meetings are modelled on the staff meetings, and discuss the same issues. Draft policies are submitted to the TAs at the same time as they go to the teachers. Either the SENCO or one of the TAs may attend the staff meeting to feed in the TAs' ideas.

Primary school in Sussex

Alison is head of learning support. She line manages a team of seven teaching assistants who support individual children with SEN. The emphasis is on the team approach. They meet regularly after school, and six times a term these meetings are training sessions addressing issues raised by the TAs themselves. They have a comprehensive appraisal system, following the format for the teachers in the school. They are part of the SDP and attend all school INSET days. They take part in the formulation of IEPs, with complete involvement in the review meetings with parents. They help at homework clubs and support lunchtime groups for the pupils. They are seen as key workers in supporting special needs. The school follows the principles of Investors in People in incorporating the TAs as full members of the staff team.

Secondary school in Essex

Indicator 5: TAs meet with other TAs for purposes of planning, problem solving and staff development

6. REVIEWING PERFORMANCE AND PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT

'We trained a number of Teaching Assistants to deliver numeracy sessions as part of our whole-school Numeracy Project. The schemes were so successful that pupils have been able to move through them at a fast pace and to come out of all support sessions having appropriate basic skills to cope with the mainstream curriculum. OFSTED noted our success at taking pupils off the Special Needs Register following planned intervention.'

Headteacher of an inner-city secondary school

TAs are entitled to feel that they can develop in their jobs and get better at what they are doing. Some TAs wish to reach the point where they can move on into teacher training, an ambition which the Government is taking steps to encourage. But the majority that do not have such ambitions still have developmental needs that the good employer will address. It is also clearly in the interests of the school if its TAs are able to increase their expertise and their job satisfaction.

This development will only come about if the school regularly reviews the TAs' performance and is prepared to commit to necessary training. Although different TAs will inevitably exhibit different levels of competence at the start of employment, all the skills of an effective TA can be taught.

National Occupational Standards for TAs and a Training Qualifications Framework will both be issued in 2001. These will assist school managers in assessing the development of TAs and identifying their training needs. Schools will benefit most from them if they already have good management procedures in place.

1. Undertaking regular appraisal

Appraisal - or professional review - is a formal opportunity for TAs to discuss their performance and professional needs with their line manager. Appraisal is meant to be a dialogue, with the person appraised and the appraiser both contributing freely. Many TAs will not be familiar with the process, and it may need to be made clear in advance that an appraisal is not some form of one-way report delivered by the manager. The appraisal should clearly acknowledge what the TA does well, and provide an opportunity for the person appraised to raise any problems or concerns that they may have about the way their job is developing or what they are expected to do.

To be effective appraisals have to be carried out at regular intervals, at least annually, and the period of time before the next appraisal agreed at the end of each one.

An innovative practice from one school that has been found to remove any possible apprehension about appraisal is have TAs appraise each other as a preliminary to the appraisal with the manager. This takes the form of one TA observing the work of another in class, then discussing together what was seen, guided by an appraisal form. This activity also enables TAs to share ideas and good practice.

2. Revisiting the job description

As has been said earlier (Section 1) the job description is a key document in defining the support the TA gives to the teachers and the curriculum, and the support the school gives to the TA. As a TA develops professionally, so their job will change, their role will need reassessing and the job description will need to be reframed. Appraisal is the logical time for this.

3. Assessing the training needs of a TA

Evidently, the prior experience and qualifications of TAs vary considerably, and therefore their training needs do as well. The requirements of any one TA are determined by four factors: (1) their experience and expertise (for example, Nursery Nurses have had considerable job-specific training before they start), (2) the pupils they work with, (3) the need to consider immediate versus longer-term requirements, and (4) the priorities of the School Development Plan. The assessment should involve the TA, with special reference to ascertaining what they want to gain from training.

The types of training TAs have themselves regularly indicated they want are heavily competency-based: skills in supporting the teaching of literacy, skills in supporting the teaching of numeracy, behaviour management, curriculum-content knowledge, supporting specific special needs, working with teaching staff, involving parents, study skills, ICT and other curriculum-specific skills.

4. Providing induction

Induction should start even before the TA's first day in school (with a map and guidance on what to wear, etc). School-based induction is necessary to give the TA the basics of the job they are expected to perform and the context within which they will work, especially those with no prior experience or formal qualifications. After a few weeks the TA will be in a position to benefit from attendance at a structured induction course. (See also Section 1.)

5. The use of mentors

As well as receiving guidance from class teachers, TAs have reported benefiting from having a mentor in the form of a senior teacher or manager, or an experienced TA.

This is not a provision that is restricted to new TAs. Many TA training courses offered by LEAs in conjunction with FE colleges require the trainee to have a mentor in their schools.

6. Examining different forms of training

Some of the most effective training is rooted strongly in what happens in the classroom, with colleagues learning from each other during their work. Such benefits stem from good working relationships. To what degree this is happening will be apparent from regular monitoring by managers of the TA's contribution to the effectiveness of classroom practice. Where it is not happening managers need to look at the relationship between the teacher and the TA.

Research indicates that some of the most effective training courses for TAs are those based in schools as part of the schools' INSET programme.

However, it is not always feasible to teach skills, especially those to do with specific special needs, in schools. In addition, achieving advanced qualifications, like the City and Guilds, BTEC, CLANSA, NVQs or the Specialist Teaching Assistant Course (STAC), involve attendance at external sessions. Attending carefully chosen external courses can have a strongly positive impact on TAs by both conferring status and enabling them to share good practice with TAs from other schools.

Many LEAs offer their own training courses, both for TAs employed directly by themselves and for TAs recruited by their schools. Much of this is skills-based.

7. Undertaking joint training

The benefits of training are boosted when, for some aspects at least, TAs and those who manage them undertake training together. This helps reinforce teamwork, and addresses the problem of some teachers' lack of training in working with other adults. Joint training also enhances staff awareness of the improved skills that the training gives the TAs, and hence how these can be used in the school.

8. Encouraging sharing of what is learned

It is not always necessary to send several TAs on one course on specialised training as the results can be shared when the attender returns. Teachers can join in this sharing.

9. A professional development portfolio

A portfolio of attainments, needs and training undertaken provides a basis for assessing what further training is needed. It also provides a concrete record of the progress made by a TA, and can enhance their self-esteem. (A starter for such a portfolio is provided in the *Teaching Assistant File* sent to schools with TAs attending the new induction programme prepared by the DfEE.)

10. Finding finance

Schools that value their TAs regard Standards Fund training money as being available for the benefit of all staff, including TAs.

11. Evaluating training

As with other staff, getting the views of assistants on the training they have undertaken, whether on-site or external, can lead to the improvement of that training. It is also a part of the assessment of whether the training was appropriate to the TA and of their future training needs.

The headteacher attached great importance to the training needs of TAs and encouraged them to take up opportunities for self-development. They spoke very highly of the certificate for TAs being run by a local university. Mishal is currently following the course and said that it was 'invaluable'. The benefits had been evident - greater confidence, increased knowledge and skills. The head said that the course had enabled Mishal to have a greater insight into the learning process, to empathise with the children, and to share their perceptions. Mishal felt that it had professionalised her role, made her question the approaches to learning and support, and had provided her with enhanced skills to take on more responsibilities.

Secondary school in Birmingham

Then we started generic courses for teaching assistants. We tried a half-day course in each of our six areas as a trial. We were inundated and had to run 14 sessions before the end of the year. At the end of our first term, analysing 107 evaluations, all were very complimentary, and 40 particularly mentioned the importance of sharing their experiences. For many it was the first time out of school. Some mentioned the importance of being valued and gaining confidence.

One school sent five assistants one afternoon, and they were still talking in the car park when the rest of us went home. They went back to school, feeling valued, important and enthusiastic for their job. That school went on to gain liP status. The school trained its own staff at staff meetings and the head encouraged the TAs to form their own support group in the neighbourhood. The school had an excellent OFSTED report, which singled out the work of the assistants.

LEA adviser on a school in Essex

Indicator 6: TAs are supported in relation to their induction, mentoring and development needs

Framework for an appraisal

Job title: TEACHING ASSISTANT

Grade:

Name:

Appraiser:

Date of meeting:

Current job

Key areas/priorities:

(Attach job description)

Achievements in the job since last appraisal in relation to:

Support for pupils:

Support for the teacher(s):

Support for the school:

Support with the curriculum:

Areas that need development in relation to:

Support for pupils:

Support for the teacher(s):

Support for the school:

Support with the curriculum:

Targets for period before next appraisal

Career aspirations and possibilities

Action to be taken (e.g. training, changes in duties, strategies for achieving targets) including timescales where appropriate

	by whom	by when

Changes required to job description, if necessary

Month of next appraisal:

Signature of appraiser Signature of appraisee Signature of head

Dates

Adapted from a primary school in Sussex

PART THREE: CARRYING OUT AN AUDIT OF CURRENT PRACTICE

The indicators that follow fit within the overall framework outlined in the text of this guide, which sets out a range of effective practices in managing and supporting TAs. These indicators state what would be expected where such practices are followed. They should be used in relation to both Parts One and Two, but particularly with Part Two, where issues are outlined in detail.

Each indicator is followed by questions which are designed for testing whether the indicator applies in practice. The indicators and questions are intended for the purposes of review and development. As such they present a framework to help school managers consider their current practice and identify appropriate starting points for development. It is intended that schools select from the total framework according to their own agendas.

These indicators have been tested in a number of schools, where they have helped to focus on where improvement was needed and thus develop improvement targets. In each case all the indicators and questions were considered in relation to their own context by a small team of two to six coordinators containing at least one TA and a senior member of the school's teaching staff. This method may be applied as appropriate elsewhere.

Although the questions can be answered in each case by a simple yes or no, it is recommended that they are treated as 'to what extent?' questions. This implies a range of possible responses that can then be discussed by staff groups or coordinating teams. Each question might, therefore, be marked to indicate 'mainly', 'to some extent', 'rarely' or 'need more information'. The lists of questions are not exhaustive or untouchable; users should feel free to amend or extend them to suit the needs of their particular school. (It is hoped to publish guidance on how to apply the indicators later.)

Indicator 1: Schools have clear policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of TAs

See Part Two, Section 1

Please add comments as you go along

	Mainly	To Some Extent	Rarely	Need More Information
Does the school provide appropriate job descriptions for TAs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the school involve TAs in drawing up the job descriptions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the job descriptions reflect a balance of TAs' responsibilities: support to teachers, the curriculum, pupils and the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs given time within their contracts for preparation, meetings, other administrative tasks and training?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the school's staff development plan inclusive of TAs' staff development needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs' training achievements recognised in the responsibilities they are given?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the school's staff development plan target the needs of teachers and managers in understanding their role in managing TAs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Indicator 2.1: Managers' and teachers' management strategies provide clear guidance as to how TAs should work in their classrooms

See Part One and Part Two, Section 2

Please add comments as you go along

	Mainly	To Some Extent	Rarely	Need More Information
Does the school make clear the responsibilities of the relevant managers - i.e. heads, deputies, SENCOs, etc - for TAs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are teachers familiar with the job descriptions of TAs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do teaching approaches and planning take account of the presence of TAs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do teachers use strategies and classroom organisation that ensure that TAs have appropriate space within the classroom for carrying out their tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the contributions of TAs encourage pupil independence in classrooms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do teachers' management strategies ensure that the presence of TAs foster pupil-pupil interactions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During whole-class teaching do teachers ensure that TAs work in ways that encourage pupils to remain engaged with all important aspects of the lesson?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do teachers manage their teaching so that all pupils receive direct teacher attention, when they are working individually or in small groups, as well as input from TAs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where TAs are expected to work in different areas of the school is this coordinated by the senior staff involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs aware of the need for confidentiality in relation to information about individual pupils?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Indicator 2.2: The expertise, skills and knowledge of TAs is used flexibly to foster the learning of pupils

See Part One and Part Two, Section 2

Please add comments as you go along

	Mainly	To Some Extent	Rarely	Need More Information
Are TAs' previous experiences and skills used to support curriculum access and flexible approaches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs encouraged to offer feedback to the teacher on classroom arrangements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is care taken to make sure that TAs are actively encouraged to work in curriculum areas or faculties in which they feel confident and interested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the particular curricular knowledge of TAs recognised and used?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do behaviour management approaches take account of the contributions of TAs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs contribute to record keeping and collecting evidence of pupils' progress for formal assessments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs encouraged to use their knowledge of pupils' views about their need for support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Indicator 3.1: TAs work cooperatively with teachers to support the learning and participation of pupils

See Part Two, Section 3

Please add comments as you go along

	Mainly	To Some Extent	Rarely	Need More Information
Do TAs understand the purpose of lesson activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs share in long- and medium-term planning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do planning processes ensure that TAs know what to do to achieve curriculum continuity and full participation for pupils?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs involved in the planning of specific lessons where teachers and TAs share the classroom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs involved in flexible decision-making about plans during lessons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs and teachers have arrangements that encourage them to offer one another constructive feedback?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs and teachers plan in ways that demonstrate to pupils their commitment to teamwork?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there agreed plans for TAs to respond to individual pupils' needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs clear about the emotional and/or learning requirements of pupils who have special educational needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs responsible for providing support to pupils with disabilities work in ways that foster their participation in class activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Indicator 3.2: Teachers and TAs learn together to improve the quality of their work

See Part Two, Section 3

Please add comments as you go along

	Mainly	To Some Extent	Rarely	Need More Information
Are teachers and TAs committed to the idea of working together to improve the quality of their joint practice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do teachers and TAs reflect and talk together on a regular basis about their own learning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the partnerships between TAs and teachers foster mutual confidence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do teachers use TA perspectives to better understand how their joint work can be strengthened?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do all teachers and TAs meet together regularly in order to improve the quality of their partnerships (e.g., in year teams, departmental or faculty teams, and the whole school team)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Indicator 4: TAs develop effective working partnerships with people involved in education

See Part Two, Section 4

Please add comments as you go along

	Mainly	To Some Extent	Rarely	Need More Information
Do TAs liaise with the SENCO/learning support coordinator on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs have good working relationships with professionals from outside the school, such as educational psychologists, LEA support staff, therapists and other personnel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the management of the school make efforts to ensure that the governors are drawn into an understanding of the TAs' work, through written information, meetings and classroom observation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the management of the school make efforts to ensure that the parents in the school are drawn into an understanding of the TAs' work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the work of bi-lingual TAs enhance communication with ethnic minority communities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs make contributions to the wider life of the school based on their wider interests?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs attend school functions and social events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Indicator 5: TAs meet with other TAs for purposes of planning, problem solving and staff development

See Part Two, Section 5

Please add comments as you go along

	Mainly	To Some Extent	Rarely	Need More Information
Do TAs with specific curriculum responsibilities, such as literacy/numeracy support, EAL and learning support, liaise on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs meet with other TAs in the school for mutual support and the development of self-esteem?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do TAs assist in the induction procedures for newly appointed TAs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the school ensure that TAs have suitable meeting facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is information provided about external support groups consisting of TAs and other professionals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Indicator 6: TAs are supported in relation to their induction, mentoring and development needs

See Part Two, Section 6

Please add comments as you go along

	Mainly	To Some Extent	Rarely	Need More Information
Are TAs provided with a school induction programme?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are job descriptions reviewed with TAs on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs encouraged to complete a professional achievement and development portfolio?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs appraised as a means of developing their contributions and accountabilities in the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are TAs given staff development opportunities in relation to career progression?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the school and the LEA ensure that TAs in small schools are kept fully up to date with opportunities for training and with information about the role of the TA?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the school structure responsibilities for TAs to reflect their qualifications, experience and training?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are mentors nominated and provided by the school when TAs attend external training courses?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there clear means of identifying appropriate and relevant external training courses to support TAs' further development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

FURTHER READING

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