School Placement Task

Working with Teaching Assistants

Teachers’ Standards addressed:

TS2: Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils
• Be accountable for pupils’ attainment, progress and outcomes

TS5: Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils

TS8: Fulfil wider professional responsibilities
• Develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support
• Deploy support staff effectively

Learning outcomes

You will:
• understand the importance of collaborating and communicating with Teaching Assistants who work with pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
• understand how good collaboration and communication can improve the learning of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
• understand the role and responsibilities of teaching assistants and the issues around managing them
• understand the importance of promoting pupils’ independence
• be aware of the research evidence for the impact of additional support
Roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants

Introduction

With your own classes, you have overall responsibility for the pupils and for the deployment and management of any additional adults who work with you. A significant part of this, in relation to supporting pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, is likely to be the development of your work with teaching assistants. Teaching assistants should not be expected to plan differentiated activities for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities on their own – teachers are responsible for this.

Read the following information about research on support from additional adults in class.

Supporting pupils with SEN and/or disabilities

Ofsted (2004) found that, “Support by teaching assistants can be vital, but the organisation of it can mean that pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop their skill, understanding and independence.”

Some key issues about the way teaching assistants are used to support pupils with SEN and/or disabilities have been identified by research over recent years.

Effects on pupils’ progress

Smith et al’s literature review (2004) found that teachers identified teaching assistants as having many positive effects on pupils’ performance. Longitudinal research (mostly in primary schools) in the UK and the United States (Blatchford et al, 2004; Gerber et al, 2001) suggests, however, that the evidence for these positive effects on pupils’ academic progress is limited. Typically, the research found that teachers valued the work of teaching assistants, and teaching assistants enjoyed their roles, predominantly working with groups of low-attaining pupils or supporting pupils with behaviour difficulties.

Ofsted (2006) reported – after a survey of 74 schools in 17 local authorities – that teaching assistants provided valuable support and many were taking on difficult roles. However, they recognised that support from teaching assistants was not a substitute for focused, highly skilled teaching, and that pupils in mainstream schools, where teaching assistant support was the main type of SEN support, were less likely to make good academic progress than those who had access to specialist teaching.

Time ‘on task’ and its impact on learning

Howes (2003) found that teaching assistants’ support in class increased the amount of time pupils spend on task, but that this did not necessarily result in an increased rate of learning.

Ofsted’s 2008 study of how well new teachers are prepared for teaching pupils with SEN and/or disabilities suggested that new teachers planned the work of teaching assistants and other adults more effectively than they monitored its impact on pupils’ learning.

Dependence

Research also shows that the presence of a teaching assistant can sometimes be seen as being overprotective and increasing pupils’ dependence on adults. Gerschel (2005) refers to the ‘velcro model’ – where a teaching assistant is always attached to a single pupil – and cautions against a culture in which the pupil may become emotionally dependent on the teaching assistant, and less likely to be fully included in the class or to form relationships with other pupils.
At secondary level, teaching assistants have been seen as “co-learners; modelling how to learn; and less the authority figure than the teacher. However, some students could see interventions by teaching assistants as intrusive and unhelpful.” (Calker et al, 2007)

Teaching assistants’ support appears to promote inclusion more effectively when it is directed towards a group of pupils rather than an individual (Lacey, 2001).

The teacher’s role

The presence of a teaching assistant may have an impact on how the teacher sees their own role with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Mencap (1999), for example, studied schools reputed to have good practice in SEN and inclusion, and found that, all too often, the teaching assistant was the pupil’s main teacher, doing all the planning, with few opportunities to liaise with the class teacher.

Ofsted (2002) found that the presence of teaching assistants can improve the quality of teaching, particularly “where the teaching assistant is following a prescribed intervention or catch-up programme, for which they had received training and worked in close partnership with the teacher”. However, research for the Department for Children, Schools and Families on the deployment and impact of support staff (Blatchford et al, 2007) found that 75 per cent of the teachers surveyed had received no training to help them work with support staff in classrooms, and most said they did not have allocated planning or feedback time with support staff. A further report from the research, in 2009, highlighted the negative effect of substituting support staff for teachers on pupils’ attainment and progress.

Ofsted (2013) found that where schools spent the Pupil Premium funding successfully to improve achievement, they shared some common characteristics. These schools “made sure that support staff, particularly teaching assistants, were highly trained and understood their role on helping pupils to achieve.”

Most recently, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Guidance Report (2015) included seven recommendations to maximise the impact of teaching assistants (TAs) in primary and secondary schools, based on the best available research evidence.

The recommendations are arranged in three sections:

• Recommendations on the use of TAs in everyday classroom contexts
• Recommendations on TAs delivering structured interventions out of class
• Recommendations on linking learning from work led by teachers and TAs.

(developed and updated from aspects of TDA Self-study task 16)

Working with Teaching Assistants
Tasks to develop your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants

Before undertaking any of these tasks discuss them first with your class teacher/student support teacher for this placement. Identify any adaptations necessary to make them appropriate for the context and to benefit the school through the collection and/or analysis of data.

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<td>Arrange a discussion with one or more teaching assistants in the school. Base the discussion on a series of open ended questions which will enable you to find out about their roles and responsibilities. Find out about the different ways in which teaching assistants in the school communicate and collaborate with teachers.</td>
<td>Develop understanding of the roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants and appreciate the need for effective communication and collaboration (TS8)</td>
<td>Record your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of TAs and HLTAs, and different and effective ways to communicate and collaborate with TAs and HLTAs.</td>
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<td>Observe individual and groups of pupils with SEN(D) being supported by TAs in the classroom.</td>
<td>Develop understanding of how to deploy support staff effectively (TS8)</td>
<td>Record some examples of effective support (see Effective Support below) and identify some ways in which you can develop the quality of your own practice in using TA support in your school placements.</td>
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<td>Gather evidence of different ways in which TAs are being deployed within the school and ways in which their knowledge, skills, experience and interests are used to support pupils’ learning.</td>
<td>Develop understanding of how to deploy support staff effectively, making the most of their qualifications, skills, experience and interests (TS8).</td>
<td>Present your evidence in a way which will enable you to share examples of good practice in the ways that TAs are deployed. NB. Your placement school may like you to collate some evidence to showcase examples of good practice.</td>
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You will need to take your evidence to your School B tutorial on Monday 13 February. It will also be used in a PD session on 22 February.

Please place your evidence in Section D of your PDPF.
Effective support

Remember, effective support from teaching assistants:

- is built on mutual understanding of their roles and responsibilities
- is based on an understanding of individual pupil’s needs
- aims to build pupils’ independence, not encourage dependence
- is targeted at building pupils’ self-confidence by enabling them to succeed and providing feedback/praise
- aims to increase pupils’ inclusion in the peer group
- aids the teacher by providing observation and feedback on particular pupils’ progress, and
- is delivered by teaching assistants who:
  - have good subject knowledge and knowledge of SEN/disabilities
  - know the overall objectives for the lesson and the sequence of lessons
  - know what the pupil(s) they are supporting should be learning
  - know their own role in helping pupils to achieve their planned learning outcomes
Resources and references

Useful resources


Ofsted (2010) Workforce reform in schools: has it made a difference?


References


Howes, A. Teaching Reforms and the Impact of Paid Adult Support on Participation and Learning in Mainstream Schools, Support for Learning, 18(4) 2003, pages 147–153


Ofsted (2004) *Special Educational Needs and Disability: Towards inclusive schools*


Ofsted (2008) *How Well New Teachers are Prepared to Teach Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities.*

Ofsted (2013) The Pupil Premium *How schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement.* Available online at: [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/pupil-premium](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/pupil-premium)


All websites accessed January 2017.