



Guidance

Secondary education

Teachers & Staffing



Headteachers, Teachers,  
Governors, Support Staff  
and LEA co-ordinators

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## Working with Teaching Assistants in Secondary Schools



## Purpose of this video

The purpose of this video is to promote discussion about good practice in the management of teaching assistants (TAs). It is aimed at headteachers, governors, teachers and other school staff, including TAs. It shows how a variety of schools around the country have raised the profile, and developed the roles and responsibilities of their TAs. It emphasises the value of TAs in helping to raise standards of pupils' work and behaviour. And it shows that, irrespective of the type of school, effectively managed teaching assistants who are set clear objectives can play an important part in supporting teachers and schools to raise standards of pupil performance.

## Background note

The number of support staff working in schools is growing fast – in January 2002 there were over 216,000, an increase of 81,000 since 1997. So is the variety – business managers, teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors and learning mentors are just a few examples.

More and more schools have realised that investing in the training, management and monitoring of the work of their support staff has a significant impact on raising standards. This is consistent with the Government's plans for a remodelled school workforce, in which schools make use of a wider range of adults, each bringing their own skills and experience to enrich pupils' learning and to enable teachers to focus on those tasks where they can most add value.

In 2003-04 the Government will, through the Standards Fund, provide £268 million specifically for support staff salaries and £37.45 million for their training. Overall, schools will receive an additional £3 billion in revenue funding by 2005-06, after taking account of factors such as inflation, national insurance and pension contributions. This equates to over £350,000 for an average secondary school, and schools will be able to draw on this to increase the numbers of and training for support staff.

As well as viewing this video, the Department recommends that schools consider the points made in the recent report by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The report confirms that teaching assistants bring considerable benefits to the classroom.

The report noted some key issues for schools to consider:

- make sure that, as the amount of learning support provided by teaching assistants increases, there is no reduction in the administrative, practical and welfare support that they have traditionally provided;
- develop strategies for managing effectively the increased numbers of teaching assistants, including in relation to SEN support;
- monitor the patterns of teaching assistants' work throughout the school and review the efficiency and effectiveness of their development;
- establish systems of appraisal for teaching assistants;
- ensure that all teaching assistants have the knowledge and skills to work effectively with pupils;
- identify and disseminate good practice in working with teaching assistants;
- evaluate systematically the impact on pupils' achievement of support from teaching assistants.

## Structure and content of the video

The video draws upon interviews with a number of headteachers, SENCOs, teachers, teaching assistants and LEA staff to explore a range of issues relating to the management of teaching assistants in schools. The interviews have been edited and arranged under the following broad headings:

- The role of the teaching assistant
- Planning and Reviewing
- Training, Mentoring and Personal Development
- Performance Management Appraisal

## Questions for discussion

Some issues you may like to discuss after viewing the video are:

- What is done in our school to make sure that our TAs are well managed?
- What can we do to further develop the role of our TAs?  
For example:
  - Do we set time aside for TAs and teachers to plan and prepare work together, and to review how lessons went?
  - Do we provide clear and relevant feedback to our TAs so that they can strengthen their performance and develop their roles?
- What issues arise when teachers and TAs work together? How can we deal with these in order to improve learning in the classroom?

In order to help these discussions, a summary of some relevant case studies is set out in the remainder of this leaflet. Further case studies can be found at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingassistants>



## Further information

The DfES teaching assistant website at:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingassistants>

'Time for Standards', which includes the consultation document

'Developing the role of school support staff':

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling>

Teaching Assistants in primary schools, an evaluation by Ofsted:

2001/02: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

Employers Organisation (formally known as the LGNTO):

<http://www.lgnto.gov.uk>

Teacher Training Agency (TTA):

<http://www.canteach.gov.uk/home.htm>

The DfES thanks all those who took part in the filming of the video.

All Hallows Catholic High School & Technology College, Preston

Newark Orchard School, Newark

Swanshurst Secondary School, Birmingham

Winston Churchill School, Woking

Cath Poole, training and development officer, Lancashire LEA

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# Performance Management and Appraisal

The teaching assistants (TAs) at Newark Orchard School are managed by a TA Manager who in turn is appraised and mentored by the headteacher. The role of the TA Manager is to oversee performance management appraisal (PMA) and mentoring for the Senior TAs, TAs and Personal Care Assistants.

All staff members are scheduled for appraisal sessions during the year and are supported both formally in team meetings and informally through the Critical Friendship Group (set up to develop working partnerships). Before any PMA sessions take place, teachers are consulted for their views on how a member of staff is progressing and whether they consider there are any development issues.

The mentor always observes the mentee in a classroom situation and will have a set agenda for the follow-up meeting where targets are mutually agreed and reviewed. Observations have always been seen as a supportive measure. The agenda for mentoring meetings includes comments on observation, training issues and time available for reflecting on issues relevant to staff, school and children. Feedback within these meetings is valued and acted upon. All sessions are recorded and signed by the participants.

This scheme of review has become an effective way of appraising, mentoring and supporting staff within school. However, as with all appraisal systems, Newark continue to review and seek to improve the practice and process. Staff are clear that the prime purpose is to improve the quality of experience that youngsters have in school, to support the school's mission statement of 'Individual Growth for Individual People'. They have an important role and responsibility to work to this end.

# Training, Mentoring and Personal Development

**King Edward VII School** appointed a learning resource assistant (LRA) for the science faculty. Her presence had a profound effect upon the development of the science intranet. She was trained alongside teachers on the uses of ICT for learning and she now leads several major initiatives. She also co-runs the school laptop club.

She is viewed as a key member of the science team and the school's experience of her working with a team of teachers demonstrated the potential of LRAs. The school has now appointed one to each of its faculties. The role of LRAs with each faculty is: 50% creating online learning resources; 25% working with students, making use of the resources in class and in computer clubs, including breaks and lunchtimes; and 25% relieving teachers of administrative tasks. They meet weekly as a team under the guidance of a member of the ICT teaching staff, who works closely with two assistant headteachers, the director of learning and assessment, the Training Manager and the Leader of ICT development.



# Planning and Reviewing

At **All Hallows Catholic High School & Technology College** the introduction of teaching assistants (TAs) was carefully planned as part of the 'School Development Strategy'. It was essential that the school developed a supportive and motivating line management structure. The direct line manager is an assistant headteacher (AH), which was seen as important in giving the TA programme a high profile. The AH has the responsibility of negotiating the roles and responsibilities of the TA with curriculum coordinators, establishing new ways of working and negotiating the TA's timetable. It was regarded as critical that planning time was built into this to allow meetings with teachers, as well as a weekly meeting with the AH.

The weekly meeting allows the AH the opportunity to develop a rapport with the TAs and to identify what is working well and where problems arise. The approach is one of development and problem solving. This is followed up each term with a more structured 'performance management' meeting where the professional development of the TA is the key. The focus is on the processes of working with teachers in the classroom.

Long-term planning meetings at **Swanshurst Secondary School** cover issues such as how the TA will be introduced into the classroom and where the TA will work. The meetings provide an opportunity to discuss what level of support is to be given to the pupils and how the TA should intervene with behaviour issues. Once the class scene has been set, the teacher will then run through the Scheme of Work. The TA will then take this away to identify and feed back any specific problem areas and suitable resources that could be accessed.

Short-term planning happens on a weekly basis. The teacher and TA meet at an agreed time, which could be after the lesson or immediately before the next one, to discuss specific planning issues. The school lets their teachers and TAs manage the planning of this time together. Meetings often take place in the Learning Resource base, where materials are ready to hand and where the assistant is best at ease.

Long- and short-term planning has strengthened the relationship between teachers and TAs and helps the TAs to be confident about being in the classroom and understanding their role. This in turn leads to a smoother lesson taking place and to the TA being supported in their role. Teachers also value the specific information that TAs can give about the needs of individual students.

# The role of the teaching assistant

Great Yarmouth (VA) High School took the decision to re-think how they deployed and developed their support staff and assigned staff to each faculty with their jobs detailed by the head of each department. These range from small group work to whole class support, preparing materials and resources and assisting with straightforward marking. Three support staff manage the school's pupil discipline system and look after two rooms – the 'remove' room where pupils are sent for up to three hours and where the support staff provide appropriate and differentiated work, and the 'isolation' room where a small group of pupils can spend extended periods of time following normal schemes of work under the supervision of the support team. This team also help with parenting skills and have established a large support team which aims to offer both curricular and therapeutic support.

The outcome has helped to take pressure of pastoral work off the teachers and they have been able to focus their time on raising standards for pupils and making a real contribution to reaching school and local targets. Other benefits include pupils accessing education, better application to learning by pupils, a very positive atmosphere, and high staff morale.

Some support staff at Great Yarmouth (VA) High School have achieved qualified teacher status as a result of the support and developmental opportunities provided by the school.



Copies of this video can be obtained from:

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