

## INFORMATION FOR HEADTEACHERS (PRIMARY SCHOOLS)

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These notes outline how you and your school can make the most of the induction training for your TA(s).

The training will be delivered over four individual days or up to eight separate sessions. You will get the dates and arrangements from your LEA.

You need to appoint a mentor for your newly recruited TA, and arrange that either they or a senior teacher from your staff attend at least the first two and last two training sessions. They may wish to attend others as well. (Two sessions are a half day or an evening.)

The mentor should be a senior teacher, deputy head, SENCO, or an experienced TA. Part of the mentor's function is to provide the TA with a whole-school perspective. Details of what the mentor is to do are contained in the Information for Mentors, which is enclosed in the pack with this document. Please pass this on to the mentor.

Please also give Information for Teaching Assistants to the TA. This contains important information that the TA needs well in advance of the first session of the training.

The TA will also be given a file or course book called the 'TA File' at the first session of the course. This contains some important back-up documents, copies of some of the overhead transparencies from the training sessions, documents that are used in the course, and details of the activities that they are asked to do.

Your TA will also receive in the TA File materials on supporting pupils for whom English is an additional language. If the TA is to attend the EAL module, then you will need to consider whether a separate mentor is required for that part of the course (see pages 2-3 for more information).

There are three copies of the Course Programme included with these notes. Please keep one for yourself and give the others to the mentor and the TA.

## Course activities

Before and during the course the TA:

- has activities to do which involve observing lessons and children. Mostly these are to be done as a part of the TA's normal programme of work
- is asked to become familiar with certain school documents with the help of the mentor (these are listed in Information for Mentors)
- has some short background documents to read
- is asked to consider their job description, in conjunction with the mentor.

Details of activities that need to be done before the course are given in Information for Teaching Assistants, which you are asked to give them. This also contains other important information for the TA. The activities that are to be done between the sessions of the course are in the TA File.

The TA also has a couple of activities to do after the course that reinforce what has been learned. A programme for the whole course, including the activities, is given separately.

## The role of the mentor

Regular dialogues between the mentor and the TA will be needed before, during and after the course so that the mentor can:

- provide personal and professional support
- facilitate classroom observational work
- explain any issues that might arise out of the programme
- help the TA to an understanding of the principles behind the care and education of pupils
- discuss the expected standards of the school in achievement, behaviour and the attitudes of pupils and staff
- explain the school's approach to differentiation, pupil involvement, and written and oral work
- provide details of other people the TA may have professional contacts with, such as parents, governors and outside agencies.

Some of the course activities may require the help of the mentor, such as organising observation in a class in which the TA is not normally involved.

The mentor or the senior teacher (if this is the person who attends the first and last sessions of the course) will be asked to help with appraisal for the TA at a later date, if not already involved as the TA's line manager.

## **Working with teachers**

It is important that the teachers with whom the TAs work are familiar with the aims and outline of the course. We have not produced a separate document for them, but it would be valuable if you could copy the course programme and the text below on 'What should TAs know...' to the teachers with whom the participating TAs work, or circulate this document around them. You might find it useful to set aside part of an INSET day for discussion of the issues this raises.

## **EAL module**

An additional module on the role of TAs in supporting pupils for whom English is an additional language is being offered by some LEAs. All TAs will find the course documents for the EAL module in their TA File when they receive it at the first session of the induction training. If they are not attending this module, TAs may still find the information in the EAL section of the TA File of interest.

As with the rest of the course, the EAL module requires the support of a mentor. The last part of the module requires the TA to perform various activities over two terms as a part of their normal duties in school. The input of a mentor is vital for the TA to be able to reflect on and learn from these activities. As the mentor needs to be experienced in supporting the learning of pupils for whom English is an additional language, it may be necessary to appoint a special mentor, such as an EMA teacher or the EMA co-ordinator, for this module.

For this reason there is a separate set of notes for mentors for EAL in this pack, which you should pass on to whoever will mentor the TA for EAL. It contains a pre-course activity which you or the mentor ought to encourage the TA to complete and bring along to the EAL session of the training.

The training session for the EAL module is not shown in the Course Programme. Your LEA will give you the information about when it is to be delivered.

## Working with TAs

A guide to the effective management and deployment of TAs has been published. *Working with Teaching Assistants: A good practice guide* is intended for headteachers, deputy heads and the line managers of TAs, and can be obtained free of charge from DfES Publications (ref: DfES 0148/2000). This document is referred to extensively in the Role and Context module.

An accompanying video shows how a variety of schools around the country have raised the profile, and developed the roles and responsibilities, of their TAs. Copies of the video can be ordered by calling the DfES publication line on 0845 60 222 60, quoting DfES reference number 0114/2003.

### **What should TAs know and be able to do as a result of their induction training?**

The programme addresses four interdependent aspects of TA support – i.e. for the pupil, the teacher, the curriculum and the school. TAs who have successfully completed this induction training will:

- have a good understanding of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and be able to support pupils who need in-class help, in any subject, with literacy and numeracy skills
- have a sound grasp of aspects of special educational needs (SEN) that exist in most primary schools. They will understand the principles of inclusion, be capable of assisting SENCOs and teachers – for example, with pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) – and be able to contribute to records of pupils' progress
- understand the principles of managing pupils' behaviour and how to contribute to the school's policy for achieving good standards of behaviour
- be aware of important health and safety matters of which all schools have to take account. They will, for example, be aware of child protection legislation and the responsibility to report any matters of concern, urgently, to the appropriate member of staff
- have a general understanding of important reforms in education that relate to their role. For example, they will be informed about the National Curriculum and its assessment
- be aware of the value of a job description in developing their role and of the purposes of appraisal in the management of their performance.

## Some useful reading

Author/ Source	Title	Publisher	Pub. date	Original intended audience	Nature of publication
Aplin, R.	<i>Assisting Numeracy</i>	Beam	1998	TAs, but also useful for teachers	A handbook for classroom assistants
Balshaw, M.	<i>Help in the Classroom</i>	David Fulton Publishers	1999	Managers, SENCOs or SDMs	Book: some review, some activities. A practical guide to making the most of TAs
Balshaw, M., Farrell, P.	<i>Teaching Assistants: Practical strategies for effective classroom support</i>	David Fulton Publishers	2002	Schools and LEAs	How to review and develop strategies for effective work with TAs
Farrell, P., Balshaw, M., Polat, F	<i>The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistants</i>	DfEE research report RR161	1999	Managers and policy makers	Spiral bound research report
Fox, G.	<i>A handbook for Learning Support Assistants</i>	David Fulton Publishers	1998	Assistants	Book giving background and strategies to support children
Lorenz, S.	<i>Effective In-Class Support</i>	David Fulton Publishers	1998	Managers and SENCOs	Book on meeting individual needs at primary secondary and special schools and role of assistants
Mencap	<i>On a Wing and a Prayer</i>	Mencap	1999	Managers and policy makers	Booklet, particularly referring to supporting children with severe disabilities
Watkinson, A.	<i>Assisting Learning and Supporting Teaching: a practical guide for the teaching assistant in the classroom</i>	David Fulton Publishers	2002	Assistants	Book for TAs working in a general capacity in schools, supporting pupils, teachers and the curriculum

