

## INFORMATION FOR MENTORS (PRIMARY SCHOOLS)

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The role of mentor is an important one. You will need to bear in mind that the TA you are working with may have little knowledge of the way schools are run today, and be quite unfamiliar with the terminology that you and your colleagues take for granted. You can give them a great deal of help in explaining these things and answering their questions. You will need to ensure that the TA settles well into school and that you deal with issues that they want to raise. You should also introduce them to the language associated with the National Curriculum and the Early Learning Goals.

At your first meeting establish a regular time and place to meet in order to cover the above points as they arise.

### **Helping the TA with the course**

For their pre-course preparation, and also during the course, the TA is asked to observe some lessons. Outlines are given at the end of the Course Programme, which should have been given to you with these notes. Please study it carefully. Details of what they are specifically asked to do are given in Information for Teaching Assistants, which was sent at the same time as this document. The TA will probably be regularly involved in these lessons anyway, but will still need to decide with you in advance which particular ones to make the subject of recorded observation. You should ensure that the teachers affected and the TA are comfortable with the arrangements, that TAs know what they are to observe in the lessons, and that you have covered protocols such as confidentiality, especially if the TA has to observe a class where she or he does not ordinarily work.

The TA is also asked to do a few other activities between the sessions of the course and after it, to reinforce what they have learned. These are also listed in the Course Programme. Your support will certainly be required for these.

The TAs will 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 to be shown in the training sessions, documents that are used in the course, and instructions for activities given for completion during and after the course. Details of the pre-course activities are being sent to the TAs in a separate letter.

An integral part of the training in the first session is to draw up or review the TA's job description. Please ensure that your TA brings a copy of theirs to this first session of the course.

Either you or a senior manager from your school should attend the first two and last two sessions of the course, which contain important guidance on the TA's job that you need to look at together. (Two sessions are a half day or an evening.) You may also wish to attend other sessions.

There are various documents that should either be given to the TA, or whose whereabouts should be identified so that the TA can find them. It is not intended that TAs make a detailed study of these documents either before or during the course. They merely need to know of their existence and be given an overview of the issues they address as they arise during the course:

- the School Prospectus
- the School Development Plan
- the staff structure with roles and responsibilities of the teachers, roles of senior staff, and the duties of support staff
- lists of members of the governing body, with the support staff governor identified
- basic school routines and procedures, such as those on registers, duties, marking, record-keeping, reports, parents' evenings, sanctions and legal obligations
- the school health and safety policy, together with that for child protection, including the identity of the 'designated person'
- the policies or code of conduct for staff, with particular reference to confidentiality
- the behaviour management policy
- relevant documentation for the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and any other appropriate curriculum areas
- any policies dealing with equal opportunities, curriculum access, cultural diversity, EAL and anti-discrimination
- the school's SEN policy and arrangements for working with IEPs, reviews and statemented children where appropriate
- arrangements for staff meetings, working parties and consultations as they relate to the TA
- policies on pay, discipline and grievance.

The TA should also be informed about the resources available in the school and introduced to the staff responsible for them: stock and curricular equipment including SEN and EAL resources; the school library/resource centre and ICT facilities; audio and video, and reprographic equipment. They should also be informed about resources available locally: curriculum development/Teachers' Centres, libraries, museums, field study centres, etc.

## Appraisal

Towards the end of the TA's first year (or sooner if school and TA so desire) there should be a formal appraisal of the TA's work. You or the senior teacher attending the first session (if a different person) are asked to help arrange this with the school's management and to assist the TA in preparing for it. Section 4 of the TA File covers this.

## Teachers

It is important that the teachers with whom the TA works are informed of the aims and outline content of the course, as they will then know what knowledge the TA has gained from the course. Your headteacher has been asked to pass on a copy of the statement below to all relevant teachers.

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