

Towards 2014 – Preparing for Change

Guidance Sheet 4 (July 2014)

Working Effectively with Teaching Assistants

The Issue:

The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project (2009), Blatchford P et al, London: DCSF

This project found that those pupils who received most support from TAs made less progress over a year compared with similar pupils who received little or no support.

The authors make it clear that this result is not the fault of TAs, but relates to the organisational and structural factors within which they work. The effectiveness of TAs cannot exceed the quality of their deployment and preparation.

The study showed that these pupils spend a significant proportion of their time in school away from the classroom, their teacher and their classmates. TA support was replacing opportunities for the pupils to interact with their teacher and their peers.

Three key areas were identified for improving practice:

- School and classroom organisation
- TAs interactions with pupils
- Lesson preparation

The School Inspection Handbook, Ofsted (September 2013) p37:

Inspectors must evaluate the use of, and contribution made by, teaching assistants.

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice: 0-25 years (June 2014)

6.49 All teachers and support staff who work with the pupil should be made aware of their needs, the outcomes sought, the support provided and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required.

6.52 The class or subject teacher should remain responsible for working with the child on a daily basis. Where the interventions involve group or one-to-one teaching away from the main class or subject teacher, they should still retain responsibility for the pupil. They should work closely with any teaching assistants or specialist staff involved, to plan and assess the impact of support and interventions and how they can be linked to classroom teaching.

Guidance:

School and Classroom Organisation:

- Carry out an audit of TA deployment and practices. This would provide a useful starting point for a review of practice.
- Following consultation with staff, compile a policy which clearly establishes the scope and boundaries of the TA role
- There is an agreed role for the TA while the teacher is teaching the class.
- The TA should not always be deployed to support the SEN group. The teacher should also work with this group of pupils on a regular basis.
- Schools should invest in training for their TAs, for example Supporting Teaching and Learning Level 2 & 3, Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status.
- TAs should be encouraged to develop expertise in an area of SEN (eg Speech, Language and Communication, Autism, Dyslexia) and/or in delivery of a specific intervention programme (eg Toe by Toe, Nessy)

TAs Interactions with pupils:

- TAs should be trained in questioning techniques, how to open up talk/discussion and how to prompt pupils rather than supply answers.
- TAs should teach pupils the strategies that they need to become independent learners

Lesson preparation:

- Teachers and TAs have a time to plan together.
- Teacher's planning gives clear guidance to the TA and is given well in advance of the lesson.
- There is an agreed procedure for TAs to feedback to teachers.
- TAs have time to prepare resources, intervention sessions etc.