Effective use of Teaching Assistants: A Senior Leadership responsibility

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Inspiring Leadership Conference 2017
Workshop Aims

• To explore significant research on the impact and use of TAs and begin to apply key messages to strategic thinking.

• To reflect on current challenges to high impact deployment.

• To demystify what effective use of TAs looks like.

• To reflect on practical approaches to strategic TA deployment across a setting.
Current landscape

384,000 TAs in England

£18,000 per TA

#1 Pupil Premium spend

£5 billion per year

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The Telegraph
Teaching assistants blamed for poor results
INDEPENDENT
Children worse off with classroom assistants, report says

TES
Teaching assistants impair pupil performance

The Guardian
Teaching assistants don’t boost pupils’ progress, report finds
Pupils supported by teaching assistants do no better than those who are left alone

Schools battle to support special needs as teaching assistants lose jobs
Pupils are at risk of being turned away from mainstream schools as classroom support falls victim to budget cuts
What are the current barriers to TAs being consistently effective?
Communication:
Time to meet, to discuss plans, approaches and pupils’ needs

Information and strategies from interventions led by TAs rarely feature in regular lessons

Teaching Assistants’ subject knowledge and engagement with CPD

Lack of clarity surrounding TA role

TAs lacking in pedagogical understanding

Inconsistent approaches in practice by individual teachers and TAs

NONE OF THIS IS THE FAULT OF THE TAs
Inspectors must evaluate the use of and contribution made by teaching assistants. They should consider whether teaching assistants are clear about their role and knowledgeable about the pupils they support. They should also consider how well the school ensures that teaching assistants have enough knowledge of the subjects in which they provide support.

Lesley Cox, Ofsted National Lead for SEND, March 2017
Influential Research

**DEPLOYMENT**
What TAs are asked to do and how teachers manage this

**PREPAREDNESS**
Whether TAs are informed, able and trained for their role and how they work with teachers in preparation

**PRACTICE**
How TAs interact with pupils and support their learning

Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project (DISS)
Blatchford et al (2009)
“Addressing the current situation is a school leadership issue. School leaders must rigorously define the role of TAs and consider their contribution in relation to the drive for whole school improvement”
Seven Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE USE OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN EVERYDAY CLASSROOM CONTEXTS**

**I.** TAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low-attaining pupils. The evidence on TA deployment suggests schools have drifted into a situation in which TAs are often used as an informal instructional resource for pupils in most need. Although this has happened with the best of intentions, the evidence suggests that the status quo is no longer an action. School leaders should systematically review the roles of both teachers and TAs and take a wider view of how TAs can support learning and improve attainment throughout the school.

**II.** Use TAs to add value to what teachers do, not replace them. If TAs have a direct instructional role it is important they supplement, rather than replace, the teacher — the expectation should be that the needs of all pupils are addressed first and foremost, through high-quality classroom teaching.

Schools and TAs should work closely with teachers who struggle. Assuming the TA has as much time with the teacher as the teacher has with the pupil, this can only be achieved by removing the TA from a role where they are responsible for specific pupils for long periods. It may be more strategic to frame TAs as part of the classroom organisation.

Where TAs are working individually with low-attaining pupils the focus should be on gaining access to high-quality teaching, for example by delivering brief, intensive, structured interventions.

**III.** Use TAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning. New research has shown that improving the nature and quality of TAs’ talk to pupils can support the development of independent learning skills, which are associated with improved learning outcomes. TAs should, for example, be trained to avoid prioritising task completion and instead concentrate on helping pupils develop ownership of tasks.

**IV.** Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom. Schools should provide sufficient training for TA training and for teachers and TAs to meet out of class to enable the necessary lesson preparation and feedback.

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE USE OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN DELIVERING STRUCTURED INTERVENTIONS OUT OF CLASS**

**V.** Use TAs to deliver high-quality one-to-one and small group support using structured interventions. Research on TAs delivering targeted interventions in one-to-one or small group settings shows that consistent, sustained intervention can be very effective. TAs working in structured settings with high-quality support and training, when TAs are deployed in resource and receiving focused support, they can impact very positively on pupils’ learning outcomes.

**VI.** Adopt evidence-based interventions to support TAs in their small group and one-to-one instruction. Schools should use structured interventions with reliable evidence of effectiveness. There are presently only a handful of programmes in the UK for which there is a sound evidence base, and so schools are using programmes that are unproven. They should try to replicate some common elements of effective interventions:

- **Sessions are often quite brief (20–30min), occur regularly (3–5 times per week) and are sustained over a sustained period (3–20 weeks).**
- **Crucially, these positive effects are only observed when TAs work in structured settings with high-quality support and training.** When TAs are deployed in resource or resource and receiving focused support, they can impact very positively on pupils’ learning outcomes.

**VII.** Ensure explicit connections are made between learning from everyday classroom teaching and structured interventions. Interventions are often quite separate from classroom activities. Lack of time for teachers and TAs to make explicit connections between what pupils experience in and away from the classroom. The key is to ensure that learning in interventions is consistent with, and extends, work inside the classroom and that pupils understand the links between them. It should not be assumed that pupils can consistently identify and make sense of these links on their own.

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**CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

- **Interventions**
- **Bridge**

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Recommendation IV

Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom.

‘Schools should provide sufficient time…for teachers and TAs to meet out of class to enable the necessary lesson preparation and feedback.’

EEF Guidance Report: Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants (Jonathan Sharples, Rob Webster, Peter Blatchford 2015)
“There is an assumption you should just know. You come into a classroom, you listen to the 20 minutes of teaching, and from that – if you didn’t know, you should know now. And then you’re to feed it to the children. It’s scary”.

Maximising the Impact of TAs, p81
**TIP**

*Co-create* protocols so *all staff* know where, when, why, what and what NOT to do.
TA ‘Readiness’
Harnessing the whole picture: Practice

Source: Sutton Trust/EEF’s *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*
Recommendation III

Use TAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning.

New research has shown that improving the nature and quality of TAs’ talk to pupils can support the development of independent learning skills, which are associated with improved learning outcomes.

Education Endowment Foundation Guidance Report: Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants (Jonathan Sharples, Rob Webster, Peter Blatchford 2015)
Task Immersion vs Task Completion

„Spoon feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon“

E. M. Forster
1879-1970
Scaffolding, not ‘help’
Scaffolding Framework

The Teaching Assistant’s Guide to Effective Interaction
Paula Bosanquet, Julie Radford and Rob Webster

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When teachers are asked, which part of the lesson is the most challenging for the deployment of TAs?

Co-create TA Deployment guidance for different parts of the lesson to ensure high quality teaching and learning and clarity of role.
## The TA/teacher agreement

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| **During the lesson introduction** | • Check that learning objectives are written in books  
• Refocus students  
• Ensure that planner and other equipment are out; note if homework is missing |
| **During whole-class work**   | • Act as talk partner for ___________ and ___________ so that they can rehearse their ideas and thinking aloud  
• Encourage responses from ___________  
• Emphasise key vocabulary – record key words in bank for ___________  
• Model or role-play activities with the teacher  
• Rephrase information  
• Scan the room and notice when students need rather than ask for help  
• Access arrangements: scribe for ___________ and read for ___________  
• Use questioning to ensure that students have understood instructions as to what they are to do, what they will learn and what outcome is expected  
• Check they are using success criteria  
• Correct spelling errors in pink/red ink |
| **In group work**             | • Use questioning to ensure that students have understood instructions as to what they are to do, what they will learn and what outcome is expected of them by the end of the group session  
• Explain roles, prompt and give time checks  
• Note issues, mistakes, misconceptions and difficulties so that the teacher can address these in the plenary or in future lessons  
• Rehearse reflection on learning so that the students can present their ideas in plenary sessions |
| **In plenary sessions**       | • Prompt and help students explain strategies and reasoning to reflect on their learning  
• Monitor responses of ___________; note difficulties |
| **At the end of the lesson**  | • Clarify with students what the next steps in their learning will be  
• Ensure that students have homework in planners and are clear about any follow-up required |
| **After the lesson**          | • Provide feedback to subject teachers as appropriate |

Elizabeth Burns  
St. James’ High School, Barnet
Guidelines for TA deployment at different points in any lesson. Liaison time to support preparedness.

High levels of TA productivity and professional initiative before/within/after lessons.

Learners are engaged and involved in dialogue about learning, careful TA deployment facilitates independence and resilience.

All members of staff adding value to the learning experiences for all learners.
‘Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.’

(p99)
Strategic Overview

- Are there prompts to TA deployment on whole school planning proformas?
- Do teachers share their planning/SoW? Do TAs read it? If so, when?
- Are TAs involved in data and assessment?
- Do teachers and TAs know what good collaboration in class looks like?
- Do TAs know what whole school priorities are?
- How are TAs matched to classes/pupils?
- Are skill sets audited?
- Do TAs have performance appraisals and observations?
- Does your school have a TA Policy to create a standardised approach?
Four Themes:

1. Personal and Professional Conduct
2. Knowledge and Understanding
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Working with Other

How might the standards be used to support the professionalisation of the TA role?
If school leaders explicitly set out a vision for role and purpose of TAs, and properly prepare and support them, we believe they can make a significant contribution to the way pupils learn and achieve.

Rob Webster
• [www.maximisingTAs.co.uk/resources.php](www.maximisingTAs.co.uk/resources.php) Making Best Use of TAs: A self assessment guide, TA policy template and action planning template, visioning exercise, online staff survey and lots more!
• Education Endowment Foundation: Sutton Trust Teaching and Learning Toolkit 2011/2014
• [Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project (DISS)](Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project (DISS))
• Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants Project (EDTA)
• Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants: Guidance for School Leaders and Teachers - Webster, R, Russell, A. and Blatchford, P
• The Teaching Assistant’s Guide To Effective Interaction: How to Maximise Your Impact - Bosanquet, P., Radford. J. and Webster, R.
• Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants (June 2016)