



## The Role and Responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant



There are a wide range of job titles for support staff that work alongside teachers in classrooms including:

- Classroom Assistant
- Teaching Assistant
- Learning Support Assistant
- Special Needs Assistant
- Higher Learning Teaching Assistant
- Learning Mentor
- Non -Teaching Assistant

In general, the term Teaching Assistant is the most common phrase used by schools (and child care centres) when referring to the many support staff roles in schools and will be the term used mostly throughout this handbook.

The primary role of the Teaching Assistant is to enable access to the curriculum, to facilitate independent learning and to promote inclusion. Teaching Assistants generally carry out a variety of functions in support of teachers and what they do varies between classes, key stages and even schools. Some support individual pupils with special needs, others support the whole class or groups within the class, especially with literacy and numeracy. Teaching Assistants may also provide administrative support, technical support or be involved in pastoral care.

The role of the Teaching Assistant can be crucial to pupils achieving greater autonomy, higher academic standards, and greater social awareness and feel part of the whole school community. It is important to note that the teaching assistant's objective is to support the teacher and or other school staff in providing a quality education to pupils. They should not be left in sole charge of a class at any time.

All support staff should feel valued and part of a team approach, to meet the needs of the pupil/s in their care. Where possible support staff should be included in planning meetings and their training needs should be identified, especially when committing to a school long term.

# The Role and Responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant



## What skills/qualities are needed to become an effective Teaching Assistant?

Although there are a wide range of Teaching Assistant qualifications available it is not compulsory and great emphasis is placed on the skills, attributes and qualities a Teaching Assistant needs to be effective. These would include:

- An ability to get on with children and other adults – a sense of humour is an asset!
- Flexibility – things can happen unexpectedly in classrooms/schools and you need to be able to cope with the pace.
- Initiative – whilst you will be working under the guidance of a teacher there will be occasions when you need to make a decision and use your initiative.
- Patience and understanding – all children will occasionally try your patience and some children need constant understanding.
- Ability to cope with stress – schools are hectic places and you can expect to be involved in hundreds of interactions in a day, remember the teacher has the overall responsibility for the pupils, but you need a cool head and the ability to stay calm.
- A reasonable level of literacy and numeracy.
- ICT skills – not essential but increasingly important to support pupils' learning.
- Tact and sensitivity – when dealing with pupils, their parents or perhaps even the teacher that guides you.
- Being a team player – in a school you will be part of a large team who need to share ideas and information as well as accepting advice, you will need a good working relationship with the teacher and other TAs and be sensitive to their needs.

## Teaching Assistant responsibilities can be broken into four main areas:

- Supporting the Pupils
- Supporting the Teacher
- Supporting the School
- Supporting the Curriculum

# The Role and Responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant



## Supporting the Pupils

**In this capacity, support staff might be required to:**

- Attend to the pupils' personal needs, and implement related personal programmes, including social, health, physical, hygiene, first-aid and welfare matters.
- Supervise and support pupils ensuring their safety and access to learning.
- Establish good relationships with pupils, acting as a role model and being aware of and responding appropriately to individual needs.
- Promote the inclusion and acceptance of all pupils.
- Encourage pupils to interact with others and engage in activities led by the teacher.
- Encourage pupils to act independently as appropriate.
- Assist with the development and implementation of Individual Education/Behaviour Plans and Personal Care programmes.
- Set challenging and demanding expectations that promote self-esteem and independence.
- Provide feedback to pupils in relation to progress and achievement under guidance of the teacher.
- Support pupils consistently whilst recognising and responding to their individual needs.
- Promote independence and employ strategies to recognise and reward achievement of self-reliance.
- Assess the needs of pupils and use detailed knowledge and specialist skills to support pupils' learning.
- Receive and supervise pupils excluded from, or otherwise not working to, a normal timetable.
- Support provision for pupils with special needs.
- Develop 1:1 mentoring arrangements with pupils and provide support for distressed pupils.
- Promote the speedy/effective transfer of pupils across phases/integration of those who have been absent.
- Provide information and advice to enable pupils to make choices about their own learning/behaviour/attendance.
- Challenge and motivate pupils, promote and reinforce self-esteem.
- Using equipment as required maintaining pupils' needs and supporting their participation in learning tasks and activities.
- Assisting in ensuring that the length of time spent on tasks and activities is consistent with the individual pupils' needs.
- Assisting pupils to carry out schemes of work and programmes set by teaching staff.

# The Role and Responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant



## Supporting the Teacher

**As a support to the Teacher, a Teaching Assistant should:**

Prepare the classroom as directed for lessons, clear away afterwards and assist with displays of pupils work.

- Be aware of pupil problems/progress/achievements and report to the teacher as agreed.
- Undertake pupil record keeping as requested.
- Support the teacher in managing pupil behaviour, reporting difficulties as appropriate.
- Gather/report information from/to parents/carers as directed.
- Provide clerical/administrative support e.g. photocopying, typing, filing, collecting money etc.
- Create and maintain a purposeful, orderly and supportive environment, in accordance with lesson plans.
- Use strategies, in liaison with the teacher, to support pupils to achieve learning goals.
- Assist with the planning of learning activities.
- Monitor pupils responses to learning activities and accurately record achievement/progress as directed.
- Provide detailed and regular feedback to teachers on pupils achievement, progress, problems etc.
- Promote good pupil behaviour, dealing promptly with conflict and incidents in line with established policy and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Establish constructive relationships with parents/carers.
- Work with the teacher in lesson planning, evaluating and adjusting lessons/work plans as appropriate.
- Monitor and evaluate pupils responses to learning activities through observation and recording of achievement against pre-determined learning objectives.
- Provide objective and accurate feedback and reports as required on pupil achievement, progress and other matters, ensuring the availability of appropriate evidence.
- Be responsible for keeping and updating records as agreed with the teacher, contributing to reviews of systems/records as requested.
- Promote positive values, attitudes and good pupil behaviour, dealing promptly with conflict and incidents in line with established policy and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Work within an established discipline policy to anticipate and manage behaviour constructively, promoting self-control and independence.
- Liaise with feeder schools and other relevant bodies to gather pupil information.
- Support pupils access to learning using appropriate strategies, resources etc.
- Work with other staff in planning, evaluating and adjusting learning activities as appropriate.

# The Role and Responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant



- Assist in the development and implementation of appropriate behaviour management strategies.
- Assist in the development, implementation and monitoring of systems relating to attendance and integration.
- Assisting in the preparation and reproduction of learning materials.
- Assisting in the deployment of equipment and resources and making them ready for use and in organising the teaching environment.
- Overseeing the care and cleanliness of the teaching environment, equipment, apparatus and materials.
- Raising awareness of teaching staff to the strengths and problems of individual pupils.
- Liaising with the SENCO and teaching staff, to identify the needs of the pupils.
- Assisting in the preparation and review of IEPs.

## Supporting the School

### In supporting the school, a Teaching Assistant should:

- Be aware of and comply with policies and procedures relating to child protection, health, safety, security, confidentiality and data protection, reporting all concerns to an appropriate person.
- Be aware of and support difference and ensure all pupils have equal access to opportunities to learn and develop.
- Appreciate and support the role of other professionals.
- Attend relevant meetings as required.
- Participate in training and other learning activities and performance development as required.
- Assist with the supervision of pupils out of lesson times, including before and after school and at lunchtimes.
- Accompany teaching staff and pupils on visits, trips and out of school activities as required.
- Recognise own strengths and areas of expertise and use these to advise and support others.
- Provide appropriate guidance and supervision and assist in the training and development of staff as appropriate.
- Deliver learning activities to pupils within agreed system of supervision, adjusting activities according to pupil responses/needs.
- Deliver local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, KS3, early years and make effective use of opportunities provided by other learning activities to support the development of pupils skills.
- Use ICT effectively to support learning activities and develop pupils competence and independence in its use.

## The Role and Responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant



- Select and prepare resources necessary to lead learning activities, taking account of pupils interests and language and cultural backgrounds.
- Advise on appropriate deployment and use of specialist aid/resources/equipment.
- Contribute to the overall ethos/work/aims of the school.
- Establish constructive relationships and communicate with other agencies/professionals, in liaison with the teacher, to support achievement and progress of pupils.
- Take the initiative as appropriate to develop appropriate multi-agency approaches to supporting pupils.
- Assisting in maintaining a safe environment for pupils.
- Assisting in the supervision of pupils during the day and in the playground/school grounds as required.
- Assisting in ensuring that pupils adhere to the behaviour policy of the school and providing feedback to teaching staff and senior colleagues on the effectiveness of strategies used.
- Liaising with parents and other parties as required.
- Participation in meetings to review pupil progress and reporting to the meeting as required on your involvement with the pupil.
- Assisting in the planning and direction of the work of other Teaching Assistants.
- Under the direction of teaching staff, overseeing lunchtime supervision, monitoring the quality of lunchtime support.
- Assisting in carrying out whole school responsibilities i.e. minibus, Health & Safety.



### Supporting the Curriculum

**To support the curriculum, a Teaching Assistant should:**

- Support pupils to understand instructions.
- Support pupils in respect of local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, KS3, early years, as directed by the teacher.
- Support the use of ICT in learning activities and develop pupils competence and independence in its use.
- Prepare and maintain equipment/resources as directed by the teacher and assist pupils in their use.
- Undertake structured and agreed learning activities/teaching programmes, adjusting activities according to pupil responses.
- Undertake programmes linked to local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, KS3, early years, recording achievement and progress and feeding back to the teacher.
- Implement agreed learning activities/teaching programmes, adjusting activities according to pupil responses/needs.
- Determine the need for, prepare and maintain general and specialist equipment and resources.
- Select and prepare resources necessary to lead learning activities, taking account of pupils' interests and language and cultural backgrounds.
- Be aware of and appreciate a range of activities, courses, organisations and individuals to provide support for pupils to broaden and enrich their learning.
- Assisting in the preparation of work and other activities for pupils in accordance with objectives set by teaching staff.
- Under guidance and direction of teaching staff, planning and delivering activities.

## Working in the classroom



### Behaviour Management

Part of your role as a Teaching Assistant will be promoting the school's policies regarding pupil behaviour by consistently and effectively implementing agreed behaviour strategies as directed by the class teacher. You will help pupils follow the school rules and also work towards specific goals and expectations as prescribed by the class teacher including individual, group or class targets.

**You can promote positive behaviour and so help to prevent or reduce disruptive behaviour by:**

- learning and using pupils names
- using effective communication skills and encouraging the use of these in pupils
- identifying pupils needs and interests to help develop effective learning activities
- helping to organise a stimulating working environment to encourage learning
- having well prepared learning materials
- encourage pupils to take appropriate responsibilities
- helping to encourage parental involvement

### Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE)

**PSHE can be defined as the planned provision in schools to encourage and support the personal and social development of all pupils. PSHE helps pupils to:**

- develop and maintain positive self esteem
- develop self-reliance
- take responsibility for their own actions
- have confidence in themselves and others
- make and keep meaningful and rewarding relationships
- be aware of their own feelings and those of others
- consider and respect the differences of other people
- be active participants as citizens of a democratic society
- develop and sustain healthy lifestyles
- keep safe and maintain the safety of others



**As a Teaching Assistant, you can play a key role in the PSHE of your pupils by:**

- providing freedom for pupils to become independent
- being patient and providing time for pupils to do things for themselves
- listening calmly and attentively to pupils
- taking an interest in pupils drawings, paintings, stories and other activities
- letting pupils talk to you about their worries or problems
- be honest and open about fears
- developing and maintaining basic hygiene skills (washing hands, blowing noses, etc.)
- encouraging respect for own and others' health and hygiene needs
- being consistent with limits and boundaries
- asking pupils for their ideas and opinions and listening to those with respect and interest
- being a positive role model
- encouraging positive social play

# Professional Practice



## Team work

As a Teaching Assistant your role will involve working with a wide range of teaching and non-teaching staff in a school. You will need to know and understand the different roles of the team members in your school and the process of decision making within the team:

**The team will include all the following:**

- Other Teaching Assistants
- Class or subject teachers
- Headteacher
- Deputy headteacher
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)
- Specialist teachers i.e. hearing impaired or ESL teachers
- Parent helpers or volunteers
- Students on placement from college/university

**Teamwork is essential when working closely and regularly with other people over a long time. To be an effective part of the team you should ensure that you are aware of:**

- the organisational structure of your school
- your role and responsibilities within the team
- the roles and responsibilities of other team members
- how to contribute to effective team practice
- how to participate in team meetings
- key school policies including equal opportunities, health and safety, child protection, confidentiality
- your role and responsibilities in relation to these policies

## Dress Code

All staff working in schools should ensure that they are dressed smartly and professionally. Although as a Teaching Assistant you are not required to wear formal clothes such as a suit or shirt and tie, you should ensure that you are dressed appropriately.



### Equal Opportunities

It is important to show sensitivity to the needs of all children. All pupils need to feel valued and accepted by others especially if they might feel different from the rest of the class as a result of a disability/ learning difficulty or because of their race/culture.

As a Teaching Assistant you must have a positive attitude and be able to learn how to maximise all pupils potential. Pupils special educational needs should be considered within the context of their overall development – learning difficulties as part of their intellectual development. In addition to this, you will be expected to notice, challenge and report any racist, sexist or derogatory remarks made by pupils towards other children.

### Health and Safety

As a Teaching Assistant, you must know and understand the school's health and safety policy including who is responsible for health and safety as well as the procedures for reporting any concerns or problems to the appropriate person.

**In your daily role you should also be aware of:**

- location of safety equipment in different learning areas
- position of fire exits, extinguishers, blanket, first-aid boxes, your role during fire drills, what to do in case of fire or other emergencies and escape routes
- local and national requirements regarding health, hygiene, safety and supervision in school

One of your responsibilities may be to ensure all equipment and surfaces in the classroom are safe, hygienic and usable.

### Child Protection

**Teaching Assistants that have contact with individual pupils on a day to day basis have an essential role to play in detecting indicators of possible abuse and neglect such as:**

- outward signs of physical abuse
- uncharacteristic behaviour patterns
- failure to develop in the expected ways

If you have concerns that a pupil at your school may be experiencing possible abuse, neglect or bullying then you must report these concerns to the relevant person. It is then the school's responsibility to refer any concerns to the appropriate agency, usually the social services department.

## Professional Practice



**As a Teaching Assistant, you will need to be aware of:**

- possible signs of abuse, neglect and bullying
- who you should report your concerns to
- the school's child protection policy and procedures
- the school anti bullying policy
- school policy on use of restraint
- procedures to be followed if a member of staff is abused

Remember that school staff are permitted to 'use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils under certain circumstances'. Teaching Personnel advise that as a Teaching Assistant you should follow a no contact policy at all times unless you have received approved training on physical restraint or if you specifically instructed by a senior member of school staff.

Some special schools or pupil referral units may need Teaching Assistants to assist with physical restraint more often than in a mainstream school. If this is the case, you should discuss the school policies and procedures on restraint in detail with your line manager.

### General Guidelines for Lone Working

- Dress appropriately for the environment
- Respect personal space
- Be aware of body language both of self and others
- Be prepared and avoid unnecessary risks
- Trust your intuition
- Look confident and project an air of control
- Maintain a professional relationship with carers
- Be aware of personal stress levels and the effect of health and fatigue on decision-making
- Take assertive action when danger threatens – shout for help or using a personal alarm
- Do not divulge personal information such as your private address and phone number to any child
- Do not agree to keep in confidence anything you are told. If you think a child or carer may want to make a disclosure, warn them that you will be duty bound to pass on any information. In the event of a disclosure, please contact the Client organisation immediately and follow Teaching Personnel's Safeguarding policy.



### First Aid

Staff working with pupils in schools must use their best efforts to maintain the safety and welfare of pupils at their school and these actions should be in line with that of a responsible parent especially in emergencies. There is no legal obligation to give first aid but staff can volunteer to take on first aid responsibilities and must receive the relevant training to undertake these duties correctly.

As a Teaching Assistant, you should familiarise yourself with the first aid arrangements that apply in your areas of work including the location of first aid equipment and facilities and the location of the nominated first aider. If a child does need attention, you should not personally administer first aid unless you are trained to do so – send a responsible pupil to fetch the nominated first-aider for that area of the school.