UNIVERSAL UNITS
UNIT 1B
Leadership – working with Teaching Assistants (TAs)

This section focuses on effective support provided by TAs, on the roles that they fulfil and the management of that support.

Learning outcomes

Teachers will:
- be aware of the research evidence for the impact of additional support
- understand the features of effective support
- understand the importance of whole school policies and procedures for the effective use of additional support

ONLINE RESOURCES
The content and tasks throughout these PDFs are supported by online resources that are designed to facilitate and supplement your training experience.
Links to these are signposted where appropriate. The resources use graphics and interactive elements to:
- Highlight salient points
- Provide at-a-glance content summaries
- Introduce further points of interest
- Offer visual context
- Break down and clearly present the different stages and elements of processes, tasks, practices, and theories

The online resources offer great benefits, both for concurrent use alongside the PDFs, or as post-reading revision and planning aids.
Please note that the resources cannot be used in isolation without referencing the PDFs. Their purpose is to complement and support your training process, rather than lead it.
You should complete any learning or teaching tasks and additional reading detailed in this PDF to make full use of the Advanced training materials for autism; dyslexia; speech, language and communication; emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; moderate learning difficulties.
To find out more about the resources, how they work, and how they can enhance your training, visit the homepage at: www.education.gov.uk/lamb
The first resource for this unit can be found here:
www.education.gov.uk/lamb/mld/leadership-tas/intro

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Briefing

What the research tells us about supporting pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
Ofsted (2004)[1] found that, *Support by teaching assistants can be vital, but the organisation of it can mean that pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop their skills, understanding and independence.*

Some key issues about the way teaching assistants are used to support pupils with SEN and/or disabilities have been identified by research over recent years:

<u>Effects on pupils' progress</u>
Smith et al's literature review (2004)[2] found that teachers identified teaching assistants as having many positive effects on pupils' performance. Longitudinal research (mostly in primary schools) in the UK and the United States (Blatchford et al, 2004[3]; Gerber et al, 2001)[4] suggests, however, that the evidence for these positive effects on pupils' academic progress is limited. Typically, the research found that teachers valued the work of teaching assistants, and teaching assistants enjoyed their roles, predominantly working with groups of low-attaining pupils or supporting pupils with behaviour difficulties.

Ofsted (2006)[5] reported − after a survey of 74 schools in 17 local authorities − that teaching assistants provided valuable support and many were taking on difficult roles. However, they recognised that support from teaching assistants was not a substitute for focused, highly skilled teaching, and that pupils in mainstream schools, where teaching assistant support was the main type of SEN support, were less likely to make good academic progress than those who had access to specialist teaching.

Blatchford et al (2009)[6] found a consistent negative relationship between the amount of support a pupil received and the progress they made in English and mathematics, even after controlling for pupil characteristics like prior attainment and SEN. The more support pupils received, the less progress they made. Blatchford et Al identified the following features about the work of teaching assistants, which are likely to contribute to this finding:
  • as teaching assistant interaction with pupils increases, teacher interaction decreases
  • support is '**alternative**' not '**additional**' to the teacher
  • teaching assistants took responsibility for tasks away from pupil
  • teaching assistants prioritised the end product of task

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[1] Ofsted (2004) Special Educational Needs and Disability: Towards Inclusive Schools
[2] Smith, P, Whitby, K and Sharp, C (2004), The Employment and Deployment of Teaching Assistants, LGA research report 5/04, NFER, Slough
[3] Blatchford, P, Bassett, P, Brown, P, Martin, C, Russell, A, Webster, R and Haywood, N (2004), The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in School: Report on findings from a national questionnaire survey of schools, support staff and teachers, Institute of Education, University of London
[4] Gerber, S, Finn, J E, Achilles, C M and Boyd-Zacharias, J (2001), Teacher Aides and Students' Academic Achievement, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23(2)
[5] Ofsted (2006) Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?
[6] Blatchford et al (2009) Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project Institute of Education, University of London.

- teaching assistant support was reactive and unplanned
- teaching assistants' explanations were sometimes inaccurate or confusing
- teaching assistants more frequently supplied pupils with answers.

Time 'on task' and its impact on learning

Howes (2003)[7] found that teaching assistants' support in class increased the amount of time pupils spend on task, but that this did not necessarily result in an increased rate of learning.

Ofsted's 2008[8] study of how well new teachers are prepared for teaching pupils with SEN and/or disabilities suggested that new teachers planned the assistants and other adults more effectively than they monitored its impact on pupils' learning.

Dependence

Research also shows that the presence of a teaching assistant can sometimes be seen as being overprotective and increasing pupils' dependence on adults. Gerschel (2005)[9] refers to the 'velcro model' − where a teaching assistant is always attached to a single pupil − and cautions against a culture, in which the pupil may become emotionally dependent on the teaching assistant, and less likely to be fully included in the class or to form relationships with other pupils.

At secondary level, teaching assistants have been seen as "co-learners; modelling how to learn; and less the authority figure than the teacher. However, some students could see interventions by teaching assistants as intrusive and unhelpful." (Calker et al, 2007)[10]

Teaching assistants' support appears to promote inclusion more effectively when it is directed towards a group of pupils rather than an individual (Lacey, 2001)[11].

The teacher's role

The presence of a teaching assistant may have an impact on how the teacher sees his/her own role with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Mencap (1999)[12]. For example, studied schools reputed to have good practice in SEN and inclusion, and found that, all too often, the teaching assistant was the pupil's main teacher, doing all the planning, with few opportunities to liaise with the class teacher.

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[7] Howes, A (2003), Teaching Reforms and the Impact of Paid Adult Support on Participation and Learning in Mainstream Schools, Support for Learning, 18(4)

[8] Ofsted (2008) How Well New Teachers are Prepared to Teach Pupils with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

[9] Gerschel, L (2005), The Special Educational Needs Coordinator's Role in Managing Teaching Assistants: The Greenwich Perspective, Support for Learning, 20

[10] Calker, W, Tiknaz, Y, Sage, R, Taylor, C, Tucker, S A, Tansey, R and Cooper, P W (2007), A Systematic Literature Review on the Perceptions of Ways in which Teaching Assistants Work to Support Pupils' Social and Academic Engagement in Secondary Classrooms (1988−2005), in Research Evidence in Education Library, London EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

[11] Lacey, P (2001), The Role of Learning Support Assistants in the Inclusive Learning of Pupils with Severe and Profound Learning Difficulties, Educational Review, 53

[12] Mencap, 1999, On a Wing and a Prayer, Mencap, London

Ofsted (2002)[13] found that the presence of teaching assistants can improve the quality of teaching, particularly *"where the teaching assistant is following a prescribed intervention or catch-up programme, for which they had received training and worked in close partnership with the teacher".* However, research for the Department for Children, Schools and Families on the deployment and impact of support staff (Blatchford et al, 2007)[14] found that 75 per cent of the teachers surveyed had received no training to help them work with support staff in classrooms, and most said they did not have allocated planning or feedback time with support staff. Further research, reported in 2009[15], highlighted the negative effect of substituting support staff for teachers on pupils' attainment and progress.

Task 1

In their 2006 report, Ofsted made the following recommendation:
Mainstream schools should:

- *"analyse critically their use and deployment of teaching assistants"*

- *"increase the amount of specialist teaching provided for a range of learning difficulties and disabilities within a broad and balanced curriculum, developing knowledge and skills relating to learning difficulties and disabilities across the school workforce".*

In the recommendations in their report, Blatchford et al, (2009 said:

- *"We suggest that pupils in most need should get more not less of a teacher's time"*

- *"Teachers should take responsibility for the lesson-by-lesson curriculum and pedagogical planning for all pupils in the class, including those pupils being supported by support staff".*

Undertake some research in your own school.

- How many teaching assistants are employed in your school?
- Do these teaching assistants routinely support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities?
- How many specialist teachers for pupils with special educational needs are employed in your school?

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[13] Ofsted, 2002, Teaching Assistants in Primary Schools: An evaluation of the quality and impact of their work
[14] Blatchford, P, Bassett, P, Brown, P, Martin, C, Russell, A and Webster, R (2007), Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools: Report on findings from the second national questionnaire survey of schools, support staff and teachers (strand 1, wave 2 − 2006), Institute of Education, University of London
[15] DCSF (2009) *Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project* Blatchford et al

Using the findings of your research, how might your school begin to critically analyse the impact of using teaching assistants and specialist teachers to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities?

Task 2

Now use what you have read to complete the table below

Notes about the research	
Research on additional support in class	The research suggests that :
Why is careful deployment of teaching assistants in class important?	
What helps?	

Task 3

Undertake an audit of whole school practice in terms of the effective use of teaching assistants using the audit document in Appendix 1.

You will need to talk to the following people to complete the audit:
- members of the leadership team
- the SENCO
- a sample of teachers
- a sample of teaching assistants

Arrange a meeting with the senior leadership team to share the outcomes of your audit and the areas you have identified for further action.

Briefing

The features of effective support for pupils with SEN and disabilities
Effective support from teaching assistants:
- is built on mutual understanding of their roles and responsibilities
- is based on an understanding of individual pupils' needs
- aims to build pupils' independence, not encourage dependence
- is targeted at building pupils' self-confidence by enabling them to succeed and providing feedback/praise
- aims to increase pupils' inclusion in the peer group
- aids the teacher by providing observation and feedback on particular pupils' progress, and
- is delivered by teaching assistants who :
  - have good subject knowledge and knowledge of SEN/disabilities
  - know the overall objectives for the lesson and the sequence of lessons
  - know what the pupil(s) they are supporting should be learning, and
  - know their own role in helping pupils to achieve their planned learning outcomes

Effective additional adult support is:
- aimed at increasing pupils' inclusion in the learning of the peer group (and should not result in isolating them further);
- common practice within the class where the teacher and TAs commonly work with a small group of pupils as part of lesson design;
- discreet so that pupils are not overwhelmed or embarrassed;
- selective – used at particular times for specific purposes within the lesson,
- linked to learning and withdrawn for some of the time;
- focused on maximising pupils' independence through engaging them and building confidence;
- planned wherever possible – the teacher and additional adult will at least have shared planning or discussed the lesson and their roles beforehand;
- informed – delivered by adults who understand the pupils' individual needs, know pupils' targets, the learning objectives and learning outcomes expected, and how to help the pupils achieve them;
- skilled – trained adults who have a good understanding of the subject and teaching and learning strategies employed;
- alert to the class teacher's agreed 'ground rules' (e.g. for talk in the classroom);
  - able to contribute towards the assessment for learning of particular pupils through observation and feedback to the teacher and pupil;
  - not about encouraging a dependency culture (as in 'I'm waiting for my helper').

Roles for additional adults supporting lessons
Additional adults in the classroom are not required to spend the entire lesson 'glued to the sides' of identified pupils. In fact, this runs counter to the need to encourage pupils to support each other within the inclusive classroom and to be as independent with their learning as possible. Once acquired, 'learned helplessness' is very difficult to overcome and can be a very real barrier. Additional adults have a wider role and range of responsibility and should be viewed by the pupils as equally skilled as the teacher. A skilled teaching assistant will be able to 'step into a teacher's shoes' if a classroom incident requires this.

Before the lesson
- Going through any text extracts in advance of the lesson.
- Rehearsing skills, sequences, prompts that will be called upon during the lesson.

During the lesson
At the front
- Working collaboratively as a 'double act' with the teacher.
- Jointly modelling speaking and listening pair tasks.
- Scribing on the board or flipchart.
- Setting timer on interactive whiteboard.
- Signing.

From the sidelines
- Using an observation checklist linked to criteria, targets for participation, or assessment of progress.
- Using visual prompts as reminders of work or behaviour.
- Note mistakes and misconceptions.

Sitting alongside
- Helping pupils to use equipment, learning resources or visual/tactile aids.
- Accessing the lesson: checking that provided equipment facilitates the pupils'
- learning; scribing on individual whiteboard; rehearsing language; clarifying
- concepts.
- Reinforcing teaching concepts and drawing attention to relevant features.

See online resource: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/mld/leadership-tas/roles

Task 3

Arrange to observe a lesson in which a teaching assistant/learning support assistant is deployed to support a pupil or pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

Make notes on how effective the additional support is and identify examples of good practice and areas which are in need of development.

Feed back the outcomes of your observation to the teacher and the teaching assistant.

APPENDIX 1: Effective Use of Teaching/Support Assistants: Whole School Review

Key Area	Think About	Where are you now?	Action to improve practice
Leadership and Management	• Are Leadership Teams/Senior Management Teams aware of the research relating to effective use of TAs and improved pupil outcomes? • Are Leadership Teams/Senior Management Teams prepared to support a change process in this area?		
Whole School	• Are all teachers/support staff aware of the research relating to the effective use of TAs and improved pupil outcomes? • Are all teachers/support staff aware of the need to change practice? • Do all teachers/support staff understand that change is non-negotiable?		
Allocation of Resources for the support of pupils with SEN/Additional Needs	• Is there a clear and transparent process to identify where resources for additional TA support are coming from within the whole school budget? • Is there a clear and transparent process which identifies those pupils who must be targeted for additional support?		
The use of 'specialist teachers'.	• What model for additional support has the school adopted? • All TA support? • A mixture of specialist teacher and TA support?		

	• Does the school have a clear criteria for the allocation of TAs and Specialist Teachers? • In the light of research should the school review its use of additional support to ensure that those pupils with more significant and complex needs receive specialist teacher support rather than TA support?		

Key Area	Think About	Where are you now?	Action to improve practice
Policy on additional support	• Is there a clear and transparent whole school policy which clarifies: • The roles and responsibilities of all those involved: teachers/TAs/SENCO/INCO/ Specialist Teachers? • That all additional support has clear, assessable expected outcomes? • That pupils' independence is an important element of expected outcomes? • That all additional support is time limited and subject to regular review of effectiveness and pupil progress. • That having access to additional support involves a commitment to shared planning and assessment? • That lack of commitment to shared planning and assessment will result in the withdrawal of additional support?		
Inclusion/Withdrawal	• Does the school have a clear rationale, based on research and pupil need for their model of providing support for pupils with SEN?		

	- Does the school have a clear mechanism for monitoring the balance between inclusion and withdrawal for groups of pupils and individual pupils? - Does the school act on the findings of the above monitoring programme?		

Key Area	Think About	Where are you now?	Action to improve practice
Performance Management	• Does the school have a performance management system for TAs? • Is it effective? ▪ Does it focus on pupil progress and achievement in terms of outcomes? ▪ Does it focus on what pupils do or on what TAs do to improve pupil outcomes? ▪ Do Job Descriptions need to be revised in the light of research and a performance management system?		
Monitoring and Evaluation of Practice	• Is there a regular programme of monitoring of the quality of TA practice? • Does the programme include opportunities for feedback and target setting to improve practice? • Does the monitoring programme include a time-limited support programme when continuing issues are identified?		
Continuing Professional Development	• Does the school have a clear CPD model for TAs addressing core skills/understanding and specialist skills/understanding? • Are CPD priorities for TAs linked to whole school needs and the school development plan? • Are CPD priorities for TAs linked to Performance Management for TAs. • Is there a clear, strategic CPD plan, identifying priority areas and identifying how the school will address these priority areas in a variety of ways?		

	• Does the school need to consider a long-term plan to develop 'specialisms' within the TA team? • Has the school addressed the need for CPD for teachers relating to the effective use and management of TAs?		