



The Role of a Teaching Assistant

The role of Teaching Assistants in schools has developed considerably and quickly in recent times. It is a role, which is continuing to evolve and it is not easy to provide a straightforward description as working practices for Teaching Assistants do vary across different schools. Nevertheless, these frequently asked questions should serve as a useful outline to anyone who wishes to understand more about what the role of Teaching Assistant involves.

Why are different titles used to describe support staff who are employed to work under the direction of a teacher to support children's learning?

Different schools may have different titles to describe the role:

- Learning support Assistant (LSA)
- Classroom Assistant
- Curriculum Assistant
- Teaching Assistant

The DfES uses the term **Teaching Assistant**. The differing titles may reflect a different emphasis of the role in particular schools. If you are applying for a job with any of the titles listed above you can expect the school to provide a job description which will outline your responsibilities.

What does the role of Teaching Assistant involve?

As already mentioned the emphasis of the role can vary from school to school. However, there are National Training Standards for Teaching Assistants, which summarise the key areas of responsibility:

- Support classroom management and assist with general administration
- Help manage pupil behaviour.
- Support pupils' health, safety and emotional/ social development.
- Establish relationships with learners.
- Help pupils to access the curriculum.
- Support the development and effectiveness of work teams.
- Work with other professionals
- Liaise effectively with parents.

This is not a definitive statement of the roles undertaken by Teaching Assistant but it does give an overview of what can be expected of a TA.

For a more detailed summary see www.lgnto.gov.uk

What sort of tasks do Teaching Assistants undertake in schools?

The essence of the job is supporting children to learn under the guidance of a teacher. The sort of tasks will vary from school to school and even from teacher to teacher depending upon the needs of individual pupils and /or classes. The tasks could therefore include:

- Supporting small groups in the classroom – especially literacy and numeracy
- Working with individuals or small groups outside the classroom when appropriate
- Preparing and modifying learning materials
- Supporting individuals to keep attention on the lesson – monitoring behaviour to help keep them “on task”.

In addition all Teaching Assistants need to:

- Encourage acceptance and inclusion of all children in the class.
- Promote the self-esteem of learners and contribute to a positive classroom environment.
- Act as a good role model by the way they interact with the pupils.

(Ealing LEA)

Teaching Assistant Tracking

The role of the teaching assistant is increasingly changing. The tracking day is an opportunity to see how they work and what impact they have on the teaching and learning environment.

As a student teacher you will need to provide evidence of your work in this area against the following standards;

Q5, Q19, Q20, Q25a, Q32, Q33

(Warwick Partnership)

During the day I would like you to ask them some questions ready for discussion during the review.

- What lead you to becoming a TA?
- What are the main aspects of your job?
- What types of special educational needs do you work with?
- How are pupils' needs identified?
- What do you see as the most important part of your role?
- What is the most rewarding aspect of your role?
- What is the most challenging aspect of your role?
- How can teachers work with teaching assistants more effectively?

During the observation, where possible, note the different approaches that the teaching assistant takes with pupils. For example, do they work closely with a pupil for the whole lesson or do they set up a task then withdraw to work with others.

How do the teachers interact with the teaching assistants? Do teaching staff give explicit instructions to the teaching assistants or are they required to work independently?

Where possible do not to just sit at the back of the class but be with the teaching assistant.