Reassessing the Deployment and Impact of Teaching Assistants

The aim of reviewing the organisation of TAs should be to ensure that they ‘add value’ to the classroom without replacing pupils’ entitlement to time with a teacher. A key question for any school leader is how TAs can be most effectively deployed – what is the purpose of their role and what impact will their work achieve?

- Should TAs’ responsibilities lie in non-teaching roles (e.g. ensuring access for pupils with physical/sensory impairments or enabling lessons to run smoothly by limiting disruptive behaviour)?
- Or, should they be asked to deliver interventions and differentiate teacher’s tasks and instructions?

A good starting point – the value of an audit

An audit of current practice in your school will help:

- leaders to gauge what works well and identify what requires change to maximise the impact of TAs
- define the boundaries of the TA role and work towards a shared understanding of these
- leaders work with teachers to develop alternative ways of deploying TAs in their lessons
- leaders and teachers evaluate the impact of any new strategies used.

The audit tool in Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants

A key audit finding is likely to be that pupils who are low attaining and/or with SEN spend a high percentage of their time with TAs. Increased time spent with a TA reduces the amount of interaction these pupils have with their teacher, their peers and the mainstream curriculum.

Effecting a change to avoid this can be achieved in the following ways:

- The TA ‘roves’ the classroom, monitoring work and behaviour and supporting individuals where necessary. The teacher works and interacts with a small group or individual for a sustained period.
- The teacher and TA work with groups of pupils on a rotational basis. Over the course of the week, all pupils spend roughly an equal amount of time working with the teacher and with the TA. Such an arrangement can also provide opportunities for peer-led group work.
- Divide the class into two ‘zones’ and deploy each adult to provide support to the groups in their ‘zone’.

After conducting an audit, your school may find it helpful to develop a whole-school policy on TA deployment.


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