



GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS ON HIGHER LEVEL TEACHING ASSISTANT ROLES FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

Introduction

1. Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status provides a new and very welcome opportunity to recognise the levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that many school support staff have and the valuable contribution that they make in schools. It gives a wide range of school support staff – for example, librarians, technicians, nursery nurses and other teaching assistants (TAs) – a further option for career progression. This guidance is part of the package of materials that is intended to help schools to decide the type and how many staff they need as they plan their workforce. It reflects the arrangements in place in England. Similar guidance reflecting the practical and legislative position in Wales will be issued to accompany The Education (Specified Work and Registration) (Wales) Regulations which were made on 6 July 2004.

Background

2. The National Agreement for school workforce reform has highlighted the significant contribution made by school support staff to raising standards and the efficient running of schools. Many schools have already developed new roles for their support staff and support staff roles will continue to develop over time. All schools need to consider what roles are appropriate for members of their workforce, what training and other support is needed so staff can undertake those roles effectively, and what levels of remuneration are appropriate for the roles concerned.
3. Recent legislation¹ and guidance² have provided clarification of the respective roles of school support staff and teachers. They make it clear that school support staff and teachers are not interchangeable. Each class or group for timetabled core and other foundation subjects and for religious education must have a teacher assigned to teach them. Accountability for the overall learning outcomes must rest with the teacher.
4. School support staff, when undertaking specified work, must be subject to the direction and supervision of a teacher in accordance with arrangements made by the headteacher of the school. The headteacher must be satisfied that support staff have the skills, expertise and experience to carry out a range of activities at different levels – including, for some staff, working with whole classes. Headteachers should have regard to the national HLTA professional standards in considering whether a member of support staff has the necessary skills and expertise to undertake an HLTA role even though they may not yet have achieved HLTA status. Many school support staff are already working at the level of the HLTA professional standards.
5. HLTA status is awarded by the Teacher Training Agency to school support staff who successfully demonstrate the agreed national professional standards through one of the HLTA assessment and training programmes³ that are available across the country. These programmes are part of a wide range of training opportunities for school support staff. The DfES and the Learning and Skills Council have both published documents setting out their

¹ The Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations 2003 can be accessed at www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031663.htm.

² The Guidance Accompanying the Section 133 Regulations issued under the Education Act 2002 can be accessed on www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling.

³ For further details of HLTA assessment and training programmes and for details of the HLTA standards see www.hlta.gov.uk and WAMG Note 9 on www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling.

plans for the school support staff training and development in 2004-05.⁴ The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has also published guidance on school support staff training and development.⁵

6. School support staff who took part in the pilot HLTA assessment programme that ended in February this year said it boosted their confidence and improved their skills. They now have a national status that recognises their skills, knowledge and experience. Their status provides assurance to headteachers, teachers and parents that they can demonstrate agreed national professional standards.
7. Initially the availability of places on HLTA programmes will be limited. It has been estimated that around 7,000 centrally funded places will be available this year but this is expected to rise to about 14,000 places in 2005/06 and to 20,000 in 2006/07. It may therefore be the second year of the programme before some support staff can register for a place on an HLTA programme. Schools and LEAs should aim to ensure that support staff who are already operating at the level of the HLTA standards have an early opportunity to take part in an HLTA programme so that their skills and expertise can be developed, assessed and recognised against a set of national professional standards.
8. Schools should think about the current and future make-up and structure of their workforce, and in particular their likely need for staff working in HLTA roles, when they support candidates on HLTA programmes. Schools should advise support staff on whether or not an HLTA post will be available on their completion of HLTA training.
9. As the capacity of the HLTA programme grows more support staff will be able to pursue HLTA status. In the longer term there may be scope for support staff to take part in an HLTA training and assessment programme to further their career progression in circumstances where there is no vacant HLTA post available in their own school.

HLTA Roles

10. Schools should seek to ensure that staff achieving HLTA status are subsequently deployed in HLTA roles. Before any such deployment schools should determine the appropriate pay for the post using their local authority pay and grading structures which reflect the guidance on grading structures published in the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) guidance "*School Support Staff: The Way Forward*".⁶ The NJC guidance provides job profiles for school support staff roles, including higher level roles. The job profiles for roles at level 4 are attached as Annex 1 to this guidance for reference.
11. A wide range of school support staff provide support for teachers in relation to teaching and learning. HLTA roles have greater complexity and autonomy than other classroom support roles. HLTAs may undertake the more demanding elements of "specified work" under the direction and supervision of a teacher. This may involve working with individual pupils as well as with groups and whole classes. HLTAs may have other roles involving managing and working with others – for example, guiding the work of other adults supporting teaching and learning in the classroom, working collaboratively with colleagues and liaising sensitively and effectively with parents and carers. HLTAs may have multiple roles. Headteachers should consult with individuals in drawing up their roles and timetables. The various components of roles can be taken into account through job evaluation and, where necessary, reflected in revisions to job descriptions. Any revision of job descriptions should normally be agreed between the head and the HLTA.

Cover Supervision

12. The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group has published detailed guidance on cover supervision and a range of materials to illustrate approaches to cover.⁷ Cover supervision occurs when no active teaching is taking place and involves the supervision of pre-set learning activities in the absence of a teacher.

⁴ School Support Staff Training and Development: Our Plans for 2004-05 can be accessed on www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff and the LSC School Support Staff Sector Plan for 2004-05 and Beyond can be accessed on www.lsc.gov.uk.

⁵ The National Joint Council for Local Government Services publication "*School Support Staff The Way Forward*" provides guidance on training and development. For details see www.lg-employers.gov.uk/publications/fullpublications/support.html.

⁶ The National Joint Council for Local Government Services' guidance can be accessed at www.lg-employers.gov.uk/publications/fullpublications/support.html.

⁷ Guidance on cover supervision can be accessed at www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff. The cover strategy pack has been published on www.remodelling.org.uk.

13. A wide range of support staff may provide cover supervision, either as part of their role or as dedicated cover supervisors, subject to their having the necessary training and skills. The NJC's model job profiles reflect the expectation that staff providing cover supervision would have skills and knowledge at the level of or equivalent to NVQ3. Where providing cover supervision is part of a support staff role, the job should be assessed and graded accordingly.
14. Cover supervision does not constitute specified work and is not an HLTA role. HLTAs could provide timetabled cover supervision as part of their role but it would not be an appropriate use of their skills, knowledge and expertise for this to be a major element of their role.

Some key points to consider

Support in the Classroom

15. As indicated in the guidance accompanying the Section 133 Regulations, HLTAs or other support staff and teachers are not interchangeable. HLTAs working with whole classes should not mean any reduction in the support for pupils. The headteacher should, therefore, consider what additional classroom support may be needed.

Age Range, Subject and Other Specialisms

16. In considering what roles there are for HLTAs in their schools, headteachers should consider whether these roles require skills, expertise and experience in relation to a particular age range, subject or other specialism. HLTA training and assessment programmes are not age or subject specific. Further training may be necessary for a particular role depending on the previous skills, expertise and experience of the individual concerned.

Management and Supervision

17. Support staff in higher level roles should be working within the school's system of management and supervision which should reflect good practice set out in existing guidance.⁸ They may be working under the direction and supervision of more than one teacher: for example, if they are based in the science department a number of science teachers may direct and supervise their work. Supervision arrangements should include time for teachers and support staff to discuss planning and pupil progress within the contracted hours of the support staff and teachers involved.
18. Line management is distinct from the direction and supervision provided by a teacher for activities relating to teaching and learning. Line management covers the more day-to-day matters relating to the management of support staff. Support staff should have only one line manager, usually a senior member of the school's support staff. As indicated in the NJC job profiles, HLTAs may be responsible for the management of other support staff.
19. The line managers who co-ordinate the work of the HLTAs and provide support should undertake appraisal. The teachers who direct and supervise the HLTAs should provide feedback to the line manager on progress to inform the appraisal process. Regular reviews allow an assessment of training and development needs so the staff concerned can develop professionally and improve the level of support they can offer.

Existing Staff who take on Higher Level Roles

20. It is expected that the grading, pay and conditions of support staff will reflect the level of work they are undertaking. Any revision of job descriptions should normally be agreed between the headteacher and the member of staff.

Some Illustrations

21. A number of illustrations of higher level support staff roles are given in Annex 2 of this guidance. Further examples and case studies will be published on www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff and www.remodelling.org.uk as these become available.

⁸ See WAMG Note 1 and Guidance Accompanying the Section 133 Regulations issued under the Education Act 2002 on www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS - SUPPORTING AND DELIVERING LEARNING (LEVEL 4)

LEVEL 4 - To complement the professional work of teachers by taking responsibility for agreed learning activities under an agreed system of supervision. This may involve planning, preparing and delivering learning activities for individuals/groups or short term for whole classes and monitoring pupils and assessing, recording and reporting on pupils' achievement, progress and development.

Responsible for the management and development of a specialist area within the school and/or management of other teaching assistants including allocation and monitoring of work, appraisal and training.

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- Assess the needs of pupils and use detailed knowledge and specialist skills to support pupils' learning.
- Establish productive working relationships with pupils, acting as a role model and setting high expectations.
- Develop and implement IEPs.
- Promote the inclusion and acceptance of all pupils within the classroom.
- Support pupils consistently whilst recognising and responding to their individual needs.
- Encourage pupils to interact and work co-operatively with others and engage all pupils in activities.
- Promote independence and employ strategies to recognise and reward achievement of self-reliance.
- Provide feedback to pupils in relation to progress and achievement.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

- Organise and manage appropriate learning environment and resources.
- Within an agreed system of supervision, plan challenging teaching and learning objectives to evaluate and adjust lessons/work plans as appropriate.
- Monitor and evaluate pupil responses to learning activities through a range of assessment and monitoring strategies 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.
- Record progress and achievement in lessons/activities systematically and provide evidence of range and level of progress and attainment.
- Work within an established discipline policy to anticipate and manage behaviour constructively, promoting self-control and independence.
- Supporting the role of parents in pupils' learning and contribute to/lead meetings with parents to provide constructive feedback on pupil progress/achievement etc.
- Administer and assess/mark tests and invigilate exams/tests.
- Production of lesson plans, worksheet, plans etc.

SUPPORT FOR THE CURRICULUM

- 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.
- 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.

SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL

- Comply with and assist with the development of policies and procedures relating to child protection, health, safety and security, confidentiality and data protection, reporting concerns to an appropriate person.
- Be aware of and support difference and ensure all pupils have equal access to opportunities to learn and develop.
- 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.
- Recognise own strengths and areas of specialist expertise and use these to lead, advise and support others.
- Deliver out-of-school learning activities within guidelines established by the school.
- Contribute to the identification and execution of appropriate out-of-school learning activities which consolidate and extend work carried out in class.

LINE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES WHERE APPROPRIATE

- Manage other teaching assistants.
- Liaise between managers/teaching staff and teaching assistants.
- Hold regular team meetings with managed staff.
- Represent teaching assistants at teaching staff/management/other appropriate meetings.
- Undertake recruitment/induction/appraisal/training/mentoring for other teaching assistants.

Experience

- Experience of working with children of relevant age in a learning environment.

Qualifications/Training

- Meet Higher Level Teaching Assistant standards or equivalent qualification or experience.
- Excellent numeracy/literacy skills – equivalent to NVQ Level 2 in English and Maths.
- Training in relevant learning strategies e.g. literacy.
- Specialist skills/training in curriculum or learning area e.g. bilingual, sign language, ICT.

Knowledge/Skills

- Can use ICT effectively to support learning.
- Full working knowledge of relevant policies/codes of practice/legislation.
- Working knowledge and experience of implementing national/foundation stage curriculum and other relevant learning programmes/strategies.
- Good understanding of child development and learning processes.
- Understanding of statutory frameworks relating to teaching.
- Ability to organise, lead and motivate a team.
- Constantly improve own practice/knowledge through self-evaluation and learning from others.
- Ability to relate well to children and adults.
- Work constructively as part of a team, understanding classroom roles and responsibilities and your own position within these.

SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF HLTA ROLES

It is up to schools and LEAs to decide exactly how individual support staff are deployed, taking into account the various points highlighted above. The following illustrations are offered to help schools to visualise the wide range of activities that are suitable for those who meet the HLTA standards under the direction and supervision of a teacher. They are purely indicative and are not intended to be exhaustive. Nor do they necessarily reflect a full-time post. Many staff have multiple roles and may combine a number of activities to make up a full-time post.

Line management of TAs in a primary school. This involves supporting new TAs and contributing to their induction, co-ordinating the work and deployment of the other TAs, researching and setting up appropriate training opportunities for them (both within and outside the school) and providing regular feedback on their performance in the context of the school's appraisal system for all staff.

Wide range of activities undertaken by nursery nurse, including: joint planning & assessment with the teacher in lower reception class; planning and assessment for a small group of children in mixed-age class for 3 sessions a week; leading whole school assemblies, KS1 and Reception assemblies; playground duty, attending and contributing to parents' meetings; making joint home visits for new reception children; joint planning of and creating displays; marking work; and working with whole classes for a whole morning or an afternoon a week, to release the teacher for PPA time.

Supporting ICT developments in a primary school. The role, undertaken by a former ICT technician, involves working with pupils across a number of age ranges in the school. The role involves contributing to lesson planning and delivery, and working with groups of pupils and whole classes under the direction and supervision of the class teachers.

Setting up and managing the delivery of a booster mathematics programme for years three, four and five under the direction and supervision of a teacher. This role involves helping to plan coursework, contributing to its delivery to groups of pupils while the teacher works with other pupils, managing the work of other TAs involved in the programme, and helping to assess materials and pupils' progress.

Supporting the delivery of PE in 3 primary schools - all within a short distance of each other. The role involves delivering some PE lessons and supporting sports activities in after school and holiday clubs, planning some activities with the teachers, and helping to assess pupils' progress. Line management is based in 1 school but there is time allocated for planning, preparation and assessment with teachers in all 3 schools and where possible for the HLTA to attend relevant whole school meetings and training days in all 3 schools. The teachers who provide direction and supervision across the 3 schools each provide feedback to the HLTA and to the line manager to inform appraisal and review meetings.

Helping to plan and deliver science lessons in a secondary school to groups of pupils and to whole classes across a number of year groups under the direction and supervision of the teachers concerned, and providing feedback and discussing pupil performance with teachers. Based in the science department, the HLTA who is a former science technician, also manages the school's team of science technicians.

Helping a secondary school to manage and support pupils through transitions. This role involves visiting local primary schools to help to prepare their pupils for the move to secondary school, planning and preparing introductory materials for pupils new to the schools, delivering welcome sessions and other support sessions for new pupils – including more personalised support to individuals and small groups of pupils who may be finding the transition difficult, and providing feedback to other staff. It also involves supporting Year 10 pupils who are undertaking work experience by helping to arrange work experience placements, making visits, and providing feedback and input to lesson planning so that work experience is effectively linked to school-based learning.

Librarian who now supports the history, geography and RE departments in a secondary school by helping to plan lessons in those subjects and by helping to deliver courses to groups of pupils and whole classes under the direction and supervision of the subject teachers. The role also involves helping to plan and support the delivery of out-of-school activities that inform and extend the coverage of classroom-based teaching in those subjects.

Providing support to selected children on the special needs register across key stages and the curriculum in a special school under the direction and supervision of the class teachers. This involves spending a lot of time supporting the teaching and learning of pupils with autism and challenging behaviours but also working with teachers on lesson planning and delivery.