

Professional standards for higher level teaching assistants

**Higher level
teaching
assistant**

Foreword

Schools are changing. Headteachers and teachers know that the school workforce needs to be able to take its part in leading this change.

In January 2003, local employers, school workforce unions and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) signed a national agreement that paved the way for radical reform of the school workforce to raise standards and tackle workload.

This agreement included proposals to introduce the role of higher level teaching assistants (HLTA) who would bring a distinct contribution to the work of schools. Support for these proposals was very encouraging and the DfES and the Teacher Training Agency – now the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) – published a set of national standards for higher level teaching assistants. This document sets out what is expected of those who are seeking to take on this additional responsibility. These standards help to ensure that all higher level teaching assistants have the necessary skills and expertise to make an active contribution to pupils' learning.

This is an exciting time to be working in schools: standards are rising; there are more teachers and support staff employed than ever before; teaching quality has never been better; there is greater community involvement; and time is being found for teachers to focus more closely on their professional role. We believe these standards reflect the high expectations the education sector has for all those who work in this role in schools, and that they will play their part in further embedding the role of the higher level teaching assistant in our schools.

Schools are changing. Headteachers and teachers know that the school workforce needs to be able to take its part in leading this change.

Jacqui Smith
Minister of state for
school standards



Graham Holley
Chief executive



Introduction

Support staff in schools make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and achievement. The national agreement between government, employers and school workforce unions has created the conditions in which teachers and support staff can work together even more effectively in professional teams. In this context, some support staff – HLTAs – are able to undertake a more extended role. The professional standards contained in this document set out the expectations of support staff who are identified as being able to work at this level.

Teachers' professional training, knowledge and experience prepare them to take overall responsibility for pupils' learning. However, they are not required to take sole responsibility for every aspect of each lesson that is taught. There are times when they will want to draw upon support from a wide range of other colleagues, including HLTAs.

The work of HLTAs complements that of teachers and the roles are not interchangeable. As more HLTAs have been trained and assessed as having met the standards, the range of support available to teachers and schools has been enhanced, allowing qualified teachers to make even more effective use of their time and their particular professional knowledge, skills and understanding.

HLTAs work in a range of different settings and with more autonomy than most other school support staff. Teachers and headteachers, working within the regulatory framework¹, will be expected to make professional judgements about which teaching and learning activities HLTAs should undertake and what support and guidance they should have. These standards, and the associated training and assessment, are designed to provide assurance to teachers, employers and parents about the quality of contribution to pupils' learning that HLTAs can be expected to make.

¹ For further details see the regulations and guidance under Section 133 of the Education Act 2002.

The standards for HLTAs

These standards set out what an individual should know, understand and be able to do to be awarded HLTA status. They are organised in three inter-related sections:

Professional values and practice

These standards set out the attitudes and commitment to be expected from those trained as HLTAs.

Knowledge and understanding

These standards require HLTAs to demonstrate they have sufficient knowledge, expertise and awareness of the pupils' curriculum to work effectively with teachers as part of a professional team. They also require HLTAs to demonstrate that they know how to use their skills, expertise and experience to advance pupils' learning.

Teaching and learning activities

These standards require all HLTAs to demonstrate that they can work effectively with individual pupils, small groups and whole classes under the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher, and that they can contribute to a range of teaching and learning activities in the areas where they have expertise. They require all HLTAs to demonstrate skills in planning, monitoring, assessment and class management.

The standards apply to HLTAs working in all phases of education and in all areas of school life. They are designed to be applicable to the diversity of roles in which school support staff work to support pupils' learning. The standards complement those for qualified teacher status (QTS) enabling schools and candidates to see the relationship between the role of teachers and that of staff working at the higher level. HLTAs who wish to progress to QTS will have a clearer understanding of the additional knowledge and skills required.

Guidance to the standards

An accompanying booklet, *Guidance to the standards*, helps to explain the knowledge and skills required by those seeking to demonstrate they have met the HLTA standards. It sets out the kind of evidence that would show

that the standards have been met and the contexts in which this evidence is likely to be found. It also outlines the scope of each standard, and sets out the range of experiences, knowledge and activities that an individual may need to cover before being able to demonstrate that a standard has been met. Where relevant, the guidance indicates what falls outside the scope of a standard. The guidance is designed to help those who assess individuals against the standards, though it may be useful to headteachers and others with an interest in the work of HLTAs. The guidance aims to promote consistency of interpretation of the standards regardless of the context in which an HLTA works and is assessed.

Training for HLTAs

Support staff wishing to achieve HLTA status but who need to gain more knowledge, experience and skills relevant to, and related to, the standards should use the training opportunities available locally. This will be through their school, local authority (LA) or independent training providers. Candidates' prior achievements, experience of working in schools² and previous training could provide a firm foundation for their HLTA work. For support staff working in maintained schools, funding is available from the LA.

Regional providers of assessment (RPAs) or local authorities will be able to provide details of local provision. Contact details for the RPA in your region are available from www.tda.gov.uk/hlta_contacts

While the standards are generic across all key stages, training will provide opportunities for participants to build on and develop their prior specialist knowledge and experience, for example in individual subject areas, behaviour management, pastoral care, early years or special educational needs. Training will be tailored to meet the candidate's individual needs identified by a training needs analysis. All training will be related to one or more of the HLTA standards. Although training is likely to vary, all candidates will undergo the same HLTA preparation and assessment process. Assessment will require participants to apply their training to their own situation and will take place in the context of their specific specialist area.

² In this document, the term 'schools' includes mainstream schools, further education and sixth form colleges, early years settings, pupil referral units, and special schools where aspiring HLTAs can demonstrate that they meet the standards.

Professional standards for HLTAs

1. Professional values and practice

Those meeting the higher level teaching assistant standards must demonstrate all of the following.

- 1.1 They have high expectations of all pupils; respect their social, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds; and are committed to raising their educational achievement.
- 1.2 They build and maintain successful relationships with pupils, treat them consistently, with respect and consideration, and are concerned for their development as learners.
- 1.3 They demonstrate and promote the positive values, attitudes and behaviour they expect from the pupils with whom they work.
- 1.4 They work collaboratively with colleagues, and carry out their roles effectively, knowing when to seek help and advice.
- 1.5 They are able to liaise sensitively and effectively with parents and carers, recognising their roles in pupils' learning.
- 1.6 They are able to improve their own practice, including through observation, evaluation and discussion with colleagues.

2. Knowledge and understanding

Those meeting the higher level teaching assistant standards must demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding to be able to help the pupils they work with make progress with their learning. This knowledge and understanding will relate to a specialist area which could be subject-based or linked to a specific role (eg. in support of an age phase or pupils with particular needs). Those meeting the higher level teaching assistant standards must demonstrate all of the following.

- 2.1 They have sufficient understanding of their specialist area to support pupils' learning, and are able to acquire further knowledge to contribute effectively and with confidence to the classes in which they are involved.
- 2.2 They are familiar with the school curriculum, the age-related expectations of pupils, the main teaching methods and the testing/examination frameworks in the subjects and age ranges in which they are involved.
- 2.3 They understand the aims, content, teaching strategies and intended outcomes for the lessons in which they are involved, and understand the place of these in the related teaching programme.
- 2.4 They know how to use information and communication technology (ICT) to advance pupils' learning, and can use common ICT tools for their own and pupils' benefit.
- 2.5 They know the key factors that can affect the way pupils learn.
- 2.6 They have achieved a qualification in English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, equivalent to at least level 2 of the national qualifications framework.
- 2.7 They are aware of the statutory frameworks relevant to their role.
- 2.8 They know the legal definition of special educational needs (SEN), and are familiar with the guidance about meeting SEN given in the *Special educational needs: code of practice*.
- 2.9 They know a range of strategies to establish a purposeful learning environment and to promote good behaviour.

3. Teaching and learning activities

The following teaching and learning activities should take place under the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher in accordance with arrangements made by the headteacher of the school.³

Those meeting the higher level teaching assistant standards must demonstrate all of the following.

3.1 Planning and expectations

- 3.1.1 They contribute effectively to teachers' planning and preparation of lessons.
- 3.1.2 Working within a framework set by the teacher, they plan their role in lessons including how they will provide feedback to pupils and colleagues on pupils' learning and behaviour.
- 3.1.3 They contribute effectively to the selection and preparation of teaching resources that meet the diversity of pupils' needs and interests.
- 3.1.4 They are able to contribute to the planning of opportunities for pupils to learn in out-of-school contexts, in accordance with school policies and procedures.

3.2 Monitoring and assessment

- 3.2.1 They are able to support teachers in evaluating pupils' progress through a range of assessment activities.
- 3.2.2 They monitor pupils' responses to learning tasks and modify their approach accordingly.
- 3.2.3 They monitor pupils' participation and progress, providing feedback to teachers, and giving constructive support to pupils as they learn.

- 3.2.4 They contribute to maintaining and analysing records of pupils' progress.

3.3 Teaching and learning activities

- 3.3.1 Using clearly structured teaching and learning activities, they interest and motivate pupils, and advance their learning.
- 3.3.2 They communicate effectively and sensitively with pupils to support their learning.
- 3.3.3 They promote and support the inclusion of all pupils in the learning activities in which they are involved.
- 3.3.4 They use behaviour management strategies, in line with the school's policy and procedures, which contribute to a purposeful learning environment.
- 3.3.5 They advance pupils' learning in a range of classroom settings, including working with individuals, small groups and whole classes where the assigned teacher is not present.
- 3.3.6 They are able, where relevant, to guide the work of other adults supporting teaching and learning in the classroom.
- 3.3.7 They recognise and respond effectively to equal opportunities issues as they arise, including by challenging stereotyped views, and by challenging bullying or harassment, following relevant policies and procedures.
- 3.3.8 They organise and manage safely the learning activities, the physical teaching space and resources for which they are given responsibility.

³ For further details see the regulations and guidance under Section 133 of the Education Act 2002.

Higher level teaching assistant

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