

# supporting education

the role of higher level teaching assistants

by **Marion Woodward** and **Andy Peart** for  
The Association of Teachers and Lecturers





Supporting education:

# The role of higher level teaching assistants

**Foreword by Dr Mary Bousted**

ATL is the education union. We believe that a strong school workforce is essential in providing the best education for children and young people. That workforce is changing: we are moving towards an understanding that teachers and teaching assistants are professionals with different but important roles to play in the education of children and young people. Teaching assistants, and higher level teaching assistants, are making an increasing and increasingly valued contribution to the school workforce.

Much has been said and written about the changing roles of support staff. ATL members have been vocal in arguing that the changes implemented through the workload agreement must not undermine the professional role of teachers – and that they must not exploit teaching assistants. Importantly, the changes must ultimately impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. By signing the workload agreement, and making the decision to work in partnership, ATL continues to influence these developments. And by monitoring what happens in practice we can support all our members in building effective professional teams in schools.

This publication is a key part of that support. It brings together relevant national guidance with real-life examples from a forward-thinking local authority, offering a picture of higher level teaching assistants working with teachers to support high quality learning and teaching. We know that practice varies across the country and there are key issues still to be resolved. Through our commitment to social partnership with government and other unions representing teachers and support staff, ATL is working to resolve these issues and strengthen the workforce even further.

## About the authors

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# In the beginning

There can be few professions which have grown over the past 10 years, both in size and stature, as much as working in a supporting role at a school. Long gone are the insulting and derogatory stereotypes of paint pot washers, if indeed they ever existed in the first place.

Instead we have a range of highly skilled and talented individuals who make an enormous contribution to the education of pupils in the 21st century. Support roles are now such an integral part of the school workforce that it is as inconceivable to think of schools without support staff as it has always been to think of schools without teachers.

When the Warnock Report, overseen by Baroness Mary Warnock in 1978, recommended that children with special educational needs (SEN) should, where possible, be educated in mainstream schools it created a framework for people other than teachers to support and work with such pupils. Prior to that support staff had been used sporadically in schools, usually on short-term or casual contracts, and in most cases with no clear definition of the role they were undertaking.

As local education authorities (LEAs) began to identify what was required through the formal process of making statements of special educational needs, support staff became more prevalent in schools and their role more focused. Employment was often on a one-to-one basis, to support individual pupils both in and out of the classroom. When the national curriculum was established with the Education Reform Act 1988, schools were encouraged to employ more support staff to assist teachers in teaching the new curriculum.

Support roles are now such an integral part of the school workforce that it is as inconceivable to think of schools without support staff as it has always been to think of schools without teachers.

## The rise and rise

The number of teaching assistants (TAs) in schools continued to rise steadily during the early to mid-nineties, with the introduction of the SEN Code of Practice in 1994 further reinforcing the need for support staff. Driven by new government initiatives, this increase gathered pace towards the end of the decade. In 1998 the literacy strategy was launched, closely followed in 1999 by the numeracy strategy and an additional literacy support programme to be delivered by TAs.

Two years later the early literacy support programme came into effect and the Springboard maths catch-up programme was introduced, both of which involved a significant input from TAs. To coincide with the enhanced roles and responsibilities required by these initiatives, the number of full-time equivalent TAs in schools increased by a third.

## Onwards and upwards

In 2003 when ATL, along with almost all of the other teaching unions in England and Wales, signed the national agreement, *Raising standards and tackling workload*, it built on the already solid foundations of existing support staff roles by introducing cover supervisors and higher level teaching assistants (HLTA). The creation of these new roles was a major part of the agreement; schools could begin to fully utilise the strengths and skills of existing support staff in new ways.

By the time the training to achieve HLTA status commenced in 2004, the number of TAs working in English schools had doubled. This is clear evidence that the roles have become securely embedded in the culture of schools and are imperative in ensuring that schools provide a high standard of education and support to pupils. With the vital part they play finally being recognised, the continuing rise of TAs and other support staff shows no sign of stopping.



**By the time the training to achieve HLTA status commenced in 2004, the number of TAs working in English schools had doubled.**



## What's in a name?

The 1994 SEN Code of Practice made specific references to “children who need support from a non-teaching assistant”. Since that time (and indeed before) the terms used to describe the majority of support staff have continually changed and there is still no job title which is standardised across the profession. For example, the 1997 Green Paper *Excellence for all* made reference to learning support assistants. The following year's Green Paper *Teachers: Meeting the challenge of change* mentioned teaching assistants and classroom assistants. There are also other titles still in use – special needs assistant and education care officer – but the majority of individuals in these roles are now referred to as teaching assistants.

# 2

## The workload agreement

In January 2003 ATL, along with all the main teaching unions (except the National Union of Teachers and UCAC in Wales) and the local government unions, signed a national agreement with the Government called *Raising standards and tackling workload*. This is commonly known as the workload agreement.

The agreement was the result of a culmination of work over a number of years to identify positive ways to reduce the workload of teachers. A major part of it was the greater involvement of support staff in the delivery of education. The excessive workload of teachers has long been a major concern to ATL and the agreement signalled the first beneficial contractual changes for teachers in a long time.

The main contractual changes were phased in over three years with the following timetable.

### Workload agreement: the timetable ▼

#### September 2003

Teachers should not routinely be required to undertake a list of 24 administrative and clerical tasks.

Teachers should enjoy a reasonable work/life balance (with headteachers being responsible for ensuring this).

Teachers should have a timetable that provides a reasonable allocation of time in support of their leadership and management responsibilities.

#### September 2004

Teachers have a 38-hour limit on the amount of cover for absent colleagues he or she can be required to do in each academic year, with an intention to continually reduce this requirement to the stage where teachers will rarely be required to cover.

#### September 2005

All teachers have a guaranteed 10 per cent of their timetabled teaching to be used as preparation, planning and assessment (PPA) time during the school day.

## Key benefits for support staff

The key benefits for support staff as a result of the national agreement were originally listed as follows:

- a clear recognition of the important role played by support staff in improving schools and raising pupil standards
- funding to enable the recruitment of additional support staff of all types, including technicians, administrative staff and classroom-based staff
- the recognition that the remuneration of support staff should reflect their level of skills, training and responsibilities
- foundation training for all types of staff, building on the success of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) induction training for teaching assistants
- the extension of other key roles for support staff such as personal assistants to provide administrative support to teachers or subject departments and trained cover supervisors who can undertake short-term, ad-hoc cover for absent teachers
- opportunities to progress through clear routes from entry level to the new higher level teaching assistant role, senior administrative roles or advanced roles in relation to behaviour and guidance
- newly developed training to support higher level roles, eg for higher level teaching assistants (qualifications and training are being developed by the National College for School Leadership for school bursars and business managers)
- routes into other roles – for example, making sure that those who wish to become teachers have clear routes such as through the higher level assistant training
- more funding to support training through the Standards Fund
- clear regulations to ensure schools provide support mechanisms and safeguards for support staff when they are undertaking higher level roles.

ATL has been very clear that changes to the school workforce must not create confusion about the distinctive roles of teachers and teaching assistants, and that workforce remodelling must not be at the expense of the quality of children's learning. Through signing the workload agreement, and committing ourselves to working in partnership on these issues through the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG), ATL is helping to ensure that the role of teaching assistants (including HLTAs) is supported and valued.

In the DfES publication, *Developing the role of support staff: what the national agreement means for you*, the Government stated:

The national agreement is not about replacing teachers with teaching assistants and other support staff – it makes clear that teachers and teaching assistants are not interchangeable and that each class/group must have an assigned qualified teacher to teach them. It is about looking at the key role currently played by support staff, identifying ways in which that role can be extended in order to raise standards, and seeing the benefits that having a better trained, wider range of adults can have for pupils, teachers and every aspect of school improvement.

## Contractual changes resulting from the workload agreement

The three contractual changes which really affected support staff roles were those relating to administrative tasks, the limit on cover and PPA time.

### Administrative tasks

There were two main ways in which schools could have devolved administrative tasks away from teachers (one of the requirements by September 2003). The first, and most simple, would have been to employ an extra member of staff with a job description made up of the tasks. However, there would clearly have been a cost implication involved in such an approach, which put the majority of schools off choosing this route.

The second option was to pass on the responsibility for undertaking administrative tasks to current members of the support staff and this is the method most schools have used.

ATL has consistently argued that the workload agreement was not about transferring a workload problem from one group of staff to another. The proper process was for headteachers to consult with all members of the school workforce about the best way of transferring administrative tasks. However, this had to be carried out in a sensitive and practical way.

The core of the workload agreement was (and is) to refocus teachers' professional expertise on teaching and learning, moving them away from things which are not directly connected with pedagogy. However, a large number of support staff roles are primarily focused on supporting teaching and learning. Schools therefore had to be mindful that withdrawing classroom assistance to provide administrative support was not in line with the national agreement, and would not result in standards rising.

Forward-thinking schools realised this quickly and addressed the issue successfully by consulting with the whole school workforce, devolving tasks evenly and without detriment to the quality of education. Where practice has not been ideal and support staff have been moved away from their roles in supporting teaching and learning, ATL has been able to offer support to members individually as well as taking examples to WAMG in order to inform the provision of national guidance.



## PPA and higher level teaching assistants

The final and most significant change was the introduction of higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) to help facilitate the 10 per cent contractual entitlement to PPA time that teachers have had from September 2005. In primary schools especially this has led to major changes.

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) is the organisation that negotiates pay and the main terms and conditions for the majority of local government employees. In October 2003 it issued guidance to all LEAs, in conjunction with the Department for Education and Skills, on a career structure which incorporated all supporting roles up to HLTAs. Entitled *School support staff: the way forward*, the guidance included model job profiles and a career structure but no recommended grades.

Following the guidance was not mandatory; LEAs were not obliged to accept it and were free to implement their own career structures. Whatever option they took, however, LEAs were then required to evaluate the new roles using their own job evaluation schemes and grade each of their own generic job descriptions within the LEA's new career structure (see Somerset LEA's job description in section 5).

The introduction of HLTAs therefore provided the first opportunity that most support staff had ever had to progress in their roles. The workload agreement has galvanised local authorities to create support staff career structures, often for the first time, with clearly defined roles and an element of career progression. How those structures are implemented and managed by schools is another matter, but the workload agreement can be credited not only for reducing teacher workload but also for raising the profile and status of support staff in schools.

## The HLTA story

The HLTA story really began in 2002 when, as an aid to boost teaching, Estelle Morris used the phrases “senior practitioner status” and “high level teaching assistants” in the DfES publication *Time for standards: Reforming the school workforce*. Ms Morris stated that there would be: “extra support inside and outside the classroom, with new school support staff filling roles at every level in the school, so that teachers can focus on teaching”.

The proposals went on to state that reforming the school workforce would achieve a future where:

“our support staff are recognised for their contribution to raising standards and have more opportunities to take on wider and deeper roles in support of teaching and learning, supported by the right training and new career paths, with numbers growing as far as necessary to deliver reform.”

To achieve this, the Government proposed in *Time for standards* that “new types of school support staff will take on more demanding roles in the classroom, for which appropriate training will be developed and provided.” These same 2002 proposals identified the importance of a national framework of standards and accountability as part of the transformation. The end result was to be a more modern, effective, flexible provision; a school workforce where roles showed less demarcation than before.

The scene was set for the development of a new associate professional status – the role of higher level teaching assistant. Further DfES publications added detail to the programme. In *Time for standards: Guidance accompanying the Section 133 Regulations issued under the Education Act 2002*, the message is a clear one:

*“Teachers and HLTAs are not interchangeable. The fact that HLTAs may be working with whole classes for some of the time does not make them substitutes for when pupils need a qualified teacher, bringing the extra range, experience and complexity of understanding reflected in their greater professional training. The use of HLTAs to undertake ‘specified work’ is not intended to worsen pupil-teacher ratios but should improve pupil-adult ratios.”*

## What is specified work?

The Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations 2003 were introduced to clarify that support staff could undertake certain duties, known as “specified work”, under certain conditions. The regulations define “specified work” as:

- planning and preparing lessons and courses for pupils
- delivering lessons to pupils; this includes delivery via distance learning or computer-aided techniques
- assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils
- reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils.

In this list, “pupils” encompasses work with individual pupils as well as groups and whole classes.

There are three groups of people that may carry out the specified work set out in the regulations. The first two are qualified teachers and teachers without qualified teacher status (eg trainee teachers). The third group is support staff, who may undertake the specified work subject to a number of conditions, as follows.

- The support staff member must carry out the specified work in order to assist or support the work of a qualified teacher in the school.
- The support staff member must be subject to the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher in accordance with arrangements made by the headteacher of the school.
- The headteacher must be satisfied that the support staff member has the skills, expertise and experience required to carry out the specified work.

It is strongly recommended that headteachers should have regard to the standards (as outlined below) for higher level teaching assistants in determining whether such staff have the necessary level of skills and expertise to undertake specified work.

## Standards issued

A consultation entitled *Developing the role of support staff* under section 133 of the Education Act 2002 ended on 22 January 2003. In our response to that consultation, ATL emphasised the importance of maintaining quality through properly resourced and supported training for both support staff who pursue new roles and for teachers who will work with them. Three very important statements emerged from the consultation to inform the expansion of access to training, development and career opportunities for teaching assistants as professionals in their own right. These were:

- > a need for high quality training to support teaching assistants who pursue higher level roles
- > a need to review pay and grading structures for teaching assistants
- > an indication that teachers need training to support their work with teaching assistants.

In January 2003, local employers, unions and the DfES signed the national agreement, which paved the way for radical reform of the school workforce to raise standards and tackle workload (see section two). This agreement included the proposal to introduce HLTAs into schools. In September 2003, following approval by ministers, the Teacher Training Agency (now the Training and Development Agency for Schools) published the *Professional standards for higher level teaching assistants*.

The Teacher Training Agency developed the HLTA standards following a wide ranging 2003 consultation with headteachers, teachers, professional bodies, unions, employers and support staff. The resulting standards set out what an individual teaching assistant should know, understand and be able to do to be awarded HLTA status.

The professional standards were grouped into three headings:

- > professional values and practice
- > knowledge and understanding
- > teaching and learning activities.

During the consultation on the standards ATL, along with the vast majority of respondents, specified the importance of including a requirement for nationally recognised qualifications in mathematics/numeracy and English/literacy. Standard 2.6, as it became, ensured that candidates would demonstrate secure standards of literacy and numeracy for both their own benefit (greater portability of skills and progression) and for the benefit of the pupils with whom they would work.

The introduction to the *Professional standards for higher level teaching assistants* states that:

*“The standards apply to HLTAs working in all phases of education and in all areas of school life. They have been designed to be applicable to the diversity of roles in which school support staff work to support pupils’ learning. The standards are also designed to support smooth progression to QTS for those HLTAs with the potential and interest to go on to qualify as teachers.”*

The standards framework is reproduced on page 14.

# The professional standards for higher level teaching assistants

## 1. Professional values and practices

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 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 SEN 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. 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.

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Since the pilot the Training and Development Agency for Schools has issued a booklet, *Guidance to the standards*, which is given to all HLTA candidates. It provides examples of each and every standard written in an evidenced style to guide teaching assistants. For example, for standard 2.4 which requires the candidate to know how to use ICT to advance pupils' learning, the guide suggests the following as an example:

"I used an interactive whiteboard to show pupils how to use search engines to find information about Italian cities on the internet. I then demonstrated how images from the internet can be imported into presentation software."

However, despite some issues over the timescale and the writing requirements, the candidates themselves valued the process and commented upon the extent to which they achieved a greater understanding of their role in school. They were, quite simply, amazed at how much they did and how much they contributed to school life. The direct result was a huge confidence boost for the teaching assistants.

It is fair to say that when some of the pilot group of teaching assistants first began their self assessment against the standards, there were tears and an "I can't do this" mood. With the support of the group and organisers, it was soon clear to most candidates that they had a wealth of evidence from their work with pupils and teachers. They had never before been given the opportunity to recognise the range of activities and roles that they perform on a daily basis. Most developed a better self-image by recognising their skills and increasing their knowledge and understanding of the job they do, and aspirations were raised.

Several teaching assistants commented upon an improved status in school. They were approached more often by teachers for advice and support, and were given greater responsibility for making decisions, which served to further increase the confidence and ability of the teaching assistants. Many developed an appetite for learning.

One further issue that emerged from the pilot and has a bearing on current practice was the need to ensure that school managers understand the HLTA role. Planning must go into both the effective management and deployment of teaching assistants in and beyond the classroom.

To achieve HLTA status, the candidate is assessed against each of the standards, only one of which refers to the ability to take learning forward in a whole class situation. The other standards recognise the wide range of skills that the teaching assistant can demonstrate. As always, when undertaking specified work (as outlined in section 3), teaching assistants must be subject to the direction and supervision of a teacher in accordance with arrangements made by the headteacher of the school.

## The outcome of the pilot

The Somerset pilot ended in February 2004 and 28 out of the 30 candidates successfully completed the programme and were awarded HLTA status. One candidate had decided early on in the pilot that her employment situation did not enable her to meet the HLTA professional standards, despite flexible support. The candidate was a regional learning support assistant for the Traveller Education Service and, as such, had a very different relationship with the schools and individual children. Another candidate withdrew for personal reasons.

In June 2004 a celebration tea and presentation of HLTA “letters” was held within Somerset LEA to recognise the wealth of talent and ability amongst the candidates, most of whom were and are making a major contribution to the success of teaching and learning in their schools.

## HLTAs: the first year

In April 2004, 36 Approved National Training Providers for HLTA began the first round of training and assessment, post the pilot. Contracts were established until December 2005. Initially, two training routes were available: the three-day assessment only programme for those teaching assistants who were already working at or near to the level of the standards; and a full training programme of 50 days, designed for teaching assistants who required training to meet the standards.

These two programmes were extended during the academic year 2004/05. 18 providers piloted different tailored approaches to training for HLTA status to meet the varied demands of teaching assistant experience. Somerset piloted a 15-day programme for those teaching assistants that needed some training but not an extensive 50-day package of support and personal development.

Schools were, by now, becoming aware of the benefits of supporting a teaching assistant into HLTA status, particularly the potential for greater teacher support and wider contribution to the achievement of the children. School managers further recognised that knowledge of the national standards for HLTA status improved staff development and deployment, aided the selection process and raised morale amongst support staff and teachers.

According to the Teacher Training Agency in the pilot evaluation notes:

*“Higher level teaching assistants have been trained to meet and have been assessed against, national professional standards. These standards have been set at a high level to provide assurance to teachers, employers and parents about the contribution that teaching assistants with HLTA status can make to pupils’ learning.”*

For Somerset LEA, the first full year of the HLTA programme saw nearly 200 teaching assistants being assessed and awarded HLTA status. Within the LEA, schools were forming community learning partnerships and looking closely at the implications of sharing this development between schools in a climate of collaboration. The experience of one teaching assistant during this period was as follows.

## Making the decision to pursue HLTA status: a case study

### Kate Spurway: HLTA

Norton-sub-Hamdon  
School, Somerset

*“In practice, this means working closely with the class teacher, with planning being the key focus.”*

### My story ▼

I work as a higher level teaching assistant at Norton-sub-Hamdon Church of England Primary School in a class of foundation stage and year 1 pupils. Last summer, I was very interested in finding out how I could extend my TA responsibilities and, with support from school, I decided to pursue HLTA status. After an information session at Maiden Beech school, I successfully applied for the assessment only route.

There are other options which provide more training elements for those who need it. In practice, my route meant three briefing days in September/October 2004 which prepared me for writing up tasks from my work experience with individuals, small groups and whole classes.

The headteacher, class teacher and I discussed opportunities for:

- planning and preparation of lessons
- delivering year group/whole class lessons in areas where I have sufficient experience
- continuing my involvement with assessment, particularly with foundation stage
- leading TA meetings.

In practice, this means working closely with the class teacher, with planning being the key focus. As always, working with this age group means that creativity and flexibility are often needed to bring these plans to fruition!

In November, an external assessor arrived at school for an informal interview to discuss my portfolio. Whilst following the assessment only route has meant a concentrated effort for two months, I think the hardest part was waiting until Easter to hear the outcome! Now the good news has arrived and I look forward to the new challenges ahead. ■

# Creating a HLTA job description

HLTA roles have greater complexity and autonomy than other classroom support roles. Many HLTAs have multiple roles and are involved in a wide range of activities. New job descriptions are therefore vital to this role development, alongside effective line management and performance review procedures.

Somerset LEA produced a job description model that would help schools in their discussions with HLTAs about new roles and responsibilities, as reproduced here. The starting point for this process was to look closely at the HLTA standards and national guidance that was available. By studying these, the human resources team was able to work up a job description and, along with the job evaluation team, match it up to Somerset LEA requirements. The proposed job description then went out for consultation to a variety of groups (education unions, education officers, WAMG, headteachers, etc) who gave their input, and the job description was formally accepted.

The role was assigned a grade 12 salary, which is (as of April 2005) £17,922 to £20,295 for a full-time all-year position. Initially Somerset's hope was that most schools would be able financially to create an individual role with responsibilities and duties that would allow a HLTA to be paid at this grade. However, many HLTAs undertake specified work only at certain times during their working week and, as such, receive varying rates of pay. Most are paid pro rata, term-time only. This is not ideal as it means that HLTAs may see little difference in their overall salary for what can be much more demanding work, both in terms of time and professional expertise.

To counter this, the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (or WAMG – this is the group of 11 signatories to the agreement, including ATL) issued an advice note in June 2005 strongly advising schools not to pay HLTAs at a higher rate only when they were carrying out specified work (see Appendix 4 for a copy of this note). It is recognised by all signatories to the workload agreement that the role of an HLTA should be viewed as a whole and therefore be graded based on all the duties involved, irrespective of how many times each duty is carried out.

The Somerset model HLTA job description is as follows.





Job description

<b>Job number</b>	▶	
<b>Department</b>	▶	Lifelong Learning
<b>Section</b>	▶	
<b>Job title</b>	▶	Support staff undertaking "specified work"
<b>Reports to</b>	▶	Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Head of Department

Main purpose of job

Briefly, what is the job there for and why is it being done? Please attach an organisation chart to show clearly the department structure and where the job fits with this.

To complement the professional work of teachers by taking responsibility for delegated learning activities under an agreed system of supervision. This involves a contribution to the planning and preparing of lessons, within a framework set by the assigned teacher, delivering learning activities for individuals/groups or whole classes without the presence of the teacher and monitoring pupils by assessing, recording and reporting their achievements, progress and development.

*"Specified work" is defined in Section 133 of the Education Act 2002 as being these activities:*

- a) planning and preparing lessons and courses for pupils*
- b) delivering lessons to pupils. This includes delivery via distance learning for computer aided techniques*
- c) assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils, and*
- d) reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils.*

continued ▶

### Main responsibilities and duties

*What needs to be done? Describe the main responsibilities and duties required of the job. This should include responsibilities for the support or management of clients, employees, budgets, processes and equipment.*

#### Under an agreed system of supervision of an assigned qualified teacher:

**% of time**  
(allocated by the school)

1. Plan challenging teaching and learning objectives to meet a diversity of pupils' needs and interests, including those in out-of-school contexts.
2. Organise and manage a safe and purposeful learning environment; select and prepare resources appropriate to learning activities, taking account of pupils' interests and language and cultural backgrounds; use ICT to support learning activities and develop pupils' competence and independence in its use.
3. Develop and deliver structured teaching and learning activities for individuals, groups or whole classes within the local and national framework, eg literacy, numeracy, early years, key stage 3 strategies and individual education plans (IEPs); adjust activities according to pupils' responses during lessons; promote the inclusion of all pupils in the learning process.
4. Supervise the work of teaching assistants and voluntary adult helpers who are supporting teaching and learning in the classroom, including the allocation, direction and monitoring of their work.
5. Encourage pupils to work co-operatively with each other within an established discipline policy, anticipate and manage pupil behaviour and promote self-control and independence. Provide feedback for pupils in relation to progress and achievements.
6. Monitor and evaluate pupil responses to learning activities through a range of assessment and monitoring strategies against pre-determined learning objectives to inform future planning.
7. Record progress and achievement in lessons/activities systematically and provide evidence to the assigned teacher, using objective and accurate feedback of the range and level of progress and attainment achieved.
8. Provide constructive feedback, advice and guidance on pupil progress and achievement to parents, encourage the role of parents in pupils' learning and participate in meetings with parents.
9. Administer and assess marked tests and invigilate exams/tests.
10. Implement and assist with the development of policies and procedures relating to child protection, equal opportunities, health, safety and security, confidentiality and data protection; report concerns to the appropriate authorised person.
11. Establish relationships and communicate with other agencies/professionals to support the achievement and progress of pupils.
12. Assist with the development of appropriate multi-agency approaches to supporting pupils.
13. Contribute to the identification and execution of appropriate out-of-school learning activities which consolidate and extend the work carried out in class.
14. Manage and develop a specialist area, eg parental involvement project, School Council, hydrotherapy (special schools), Somerset Total Communication.

continued 

### Facts and figures

*Give facts and figures that help to give a picture of the job. This should include any statistics relevant to the job, for example the number of clients supported, type and value of equipment, resources or premises for which the job has responsibility, size of budgets controlled or which the job has some impact on and, if appropriate, numbers of staff managed.*

Typically there will be a requirement to supervise the work of teaching assistants and voluntary adult helpers in the classroom under the overall supervision and management of the assigned teacher and headteacher.

### Supporting processes

#### Problem solving and creativity

*Give examples of the problem solving and creativity involved in the job. This should include resolving issues over interruptions to work deadlines, priorities and changing demands. How often do these issues occur?*

Plans challenging learning activities for individuals, groups and, on occasions, for whole classes based on assessments of pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Develops teaching and classroom management strategies to achieve appropriate learning objectives; prepares resources needed to deliver strategies, eg to assist a pupil who is experiencing difficulty in learning.

Identifies and prepares the resources needed to successfully deliver the strategies. Contributes ideas to the development of school policies and procedures, eg behaviour, safety and security.

A variety of interpersonal techniques are needed to establish productive relationships with pupils, parents, carers and outside agencies, eg adjusting the style of approach to a parent who becomes aggressive.

Teaching activities and resources may need to be adjusted during lessons according to pupil responses, in order to ensure that lesson objectives are being achieved and all pupils are engaged, eg providing alternative equipment to overcome learning barriers, redirecting the work of other teaching assistants. A strong grasp of behaviour strategies is needed to deal with challenging behaviour which is disrupting effective teaching and learning, or to cater for the needs of a pupil with substantial physical difficulties or a health problem.

Responding to the attitude and behaviour of pupils by exercising sound judgement in the context of school policies and procedures, eg in addressing bullying, harassment or prejudice.

continued 

### Decision making

*Give examples of the types of decisions which the job has responsibilities for making, including where appropriate those relating to resources, budgets and employees. Show where there is authority of freedom to act and where there is an impact via recommendations or advice.*

Works under the supervision of an assigned teacher and within agreed school policies, procedures and IEPs. Assesses pupils' learning needs and decides activities which best meet those needs. Selects resources, including the deployment of other teaching assistants and voluntary helpers. During teaching activities, has to continually assess their effectiveness on pupils' learning and decide if and what to change.

Takes immediate decisions without referral to the assigned teacher to deal with issues of teaching and learning, care, control and safety of pupils during lessons, eg to make judgements about the effectiveness of a teaching style or activity and to make changes considered appropriate to deal with challenging behaviour. Guidance and support will be readily available from teaching staff and more complex or controversial decisions will be referred to the assigned teacher.

### Physical effort and working conditions

*Give details and the frequency of any special effort needed, including the prolonged or frequent use of IT equipment and describe any particular working conditions, other than those encountered in a normal office environment, to which the job holder is subjected, eg noise, outside working, unpleasant surroundings.*

A normal school environment although there may be an involvement in external school activities, such as swimming and educational visits, for which rigorous risk assessments are conducted.

Some of the working days spent standing, with periods of crouching/bending, to engage pupils in activities.

When negotiated and agreed with pupils, parents or carers, substantial physical effort may be required on a regular basis when providing assistance to pupils with significant physical disabilities. There may be an occasional need to physically lift pupils, such as for safety or care needs, and occasional unpleasant conditions relating to pupils' personal hygiene needs.

Occasional physical risks relating to intervention and incidents of challenging behaviour, including aggression, which are encountered with pupils who have psychological and/or physical disabilities.

continued 

### Contacts and relationships

*Give details of the range and type of people within the Council or external organisations and including the recipients of services it is necessary to contact in order to carry out the responsibilities of the job. What is the range and purpose of the contact, eg providing information or advice, directing, monitoring, influencing, motivating.*

There is frequent discussion with teaching staff to receive and provide information and guidance about teaching and learning activities (planning, preparation, delivery of teaching and learning activities, assessment, marking and recording) and the educational, pastoral, physical and emotional needs of pupils.

Continuous interaction with pupils to assess their learning needs, to deliver learning activities, to develop productive working relationships, to promote the inclusion and acceptance of all pupils in the classroom and to encourage independence and self-reliance.

There is continuous contact with other teaching assistants and voluntary adult helpers to guide, direct and allocate their work, and to receive and provide information about teaching and learning processes and the educational, pastoral, physical and emotional needs of pupils.

There is regular contact with parents/carers and occasional contact with outside agencies, to provide advice and guidance, eg giving feedback on pupil progress, encouraging and advising parents in their role of supporting pupil learning, dealing with sensitive issues connected with pupils' behaviour or personal needs.

There is occasional contact with health service professionals to ensure that appropriate daily support is given to pupils with known medical conditions.

### Additional information

*Anything else which is relevant to the job which is not adequately covered elsewhere.*

Not applicable.

### Knowledge, skills and experience (to be completed by the line manager)

*The minimum general education standard, qualifications, training and level of experience required by the job holder **to be fully effective in the job**. Note that this information should relate to the requirements of the job and not what may be available from existing job holders.*

Will have met higher level teaching assistants' standards that are set at level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework or equivalent qualifications or experience; numeracy and literacy skills equivalent to NVQ level 2 in English and maths; training in relevant learning strategies, eg literacy; specialist skills/training in curriculum or learning area, eg bilingual, sign language, ICT, therapeutic techniques. Will have awareness of national frameworks, typical curricular teaching methods and expectations in the key stages or phases.

continued 

Able to use ICT effectively to support learning; full working knowledge of relevant policies, codes of practice and legislation; working knowledge and experience of implementing national/foundation stage curriculum and other relevant teaching programmes/strategies; good understanding of child development and learning processes; understanding of statutory framework relating to teaching; understanding of the legal definition of special educational needs (SEN) and familiar with guidance in SEN Code of Practice; ability to organise, lead and motivate others, consistently improving own practice/knowledge through self-evaluation and learning from others; ability to relate well to pupils and adults; work constructively as part of a team; ability to organise, lead and motivate a team of adults working in the classroom; understanding classroom roles and responsibilities. Personal qualities required are discretion, loyalty, commitment, patience, flexibility, good personal organisation, firmness, good oral communication skills.

Extensive experience of working with pupils of the relevant age in an educational setting.

**Agreed that the job description is a fair and accurate statement of the requirements of the job:**

<b>Job Holder</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Line Manager</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Designated Senior Manager</b>	<b>Date:</b>

The development of accurate job descriptions is vital to the effective deployment of all support staff. In addition to the above, the National Joint Council for Local Government Services provides model job profiles which LEAs can utilise as part of this process – see [www.lg-employers.gov.uk/publications/fullpublications/support.html](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/publications/fullpublications/support.html).

# 6 HLTAs working in practice

The following are some accounts written by higher level teaching assistants who were assessed during the pilot phase in Somerset LEA. They begin to build a picture of this complex deployment issue, one which still has some rough edges as we move into the next phase of workforce reform, that of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.

## My story ▼

**Jane Green: HLTA**  
Burnham-on-Sea  
Infants School,  
Somerset

*“I have really enjoyed being given this opportunity to demonstrate skills that I feel I have acquired as an experienced TA.”*

When I achieved HLTA status last year, this was followed by an immediate change to my role in school. Prior to this, I spent eight years in the reception class as a full-time learning support assistant.

Whilst I still work mainly in the foundation stage, since the summer term 2004, I have provided cover for teachers across the year groups to enable them to have non-contact time. Our school has been very much ahead of the game in this respect. Our headteacher felt that, as she had two HLTAs as a result of the pilot, the school would phase in PPA time for teachers before it became compulsory in September 2005. We now have another teaching assistant (TA) who has recently gained the status with yet another due to do so in the summer. Therefore, as a school, we feel we have already embraced the changes that are upon us and have begun to “get on with the job”.

I have been able to work much more closely with teaching staff both in the planning and teaching of lessons. I know it has been hard for teachers to let go initially, but they tell me they appreciate the extra non-contact time they now have and know that all I do is under their direction and guidance. In the main, I have found this a very positive experience. Teachers in our school have readily accepted my new status and have been extremely supportive. I have been given the opportunity to discuss my new role with teaching staff and the headteacher, with both sides able to provide feedback and offer ideas for future development. The only downside has been finding an appropriate time to plan with teachers in an already very busy timetable. However, the headteacher has gone some way to address this and is to give HLTAs some paid planning time from September.

I have really enjoyed being given this opportunity to demonstrate skills that I feel I have acquired as an experienced TA. I feel confident when I go into a class in the teacher’s absence, and have found the children relate well to me and with respect. Parents, too, have been informed of the changes and have accepted this positively, appreciating that I know their children well and this is more settling for them than having a complete stranger in the class. I enjoy studying the topics I am to cover in class and this has broadened my own knowledge of areas of the curriculum not covered in the foundation stage where I normally work.

I also cover for teachers when subject monitoring is taking place. In my own class, I have covered for the teacher for the whole day during short periods of absence and when she has been on courses.

Other responsibilities I have been given include librarian duties and practical support to the literacy co-ordinator. I helped organise and oversee the new library area in school (we had been without one since the original area had to make way for the computer suite).

HLTA status has made life a bit manic but I am very much enjoying it! ■

**Tracey Baber: HLTA**  
Burnham-on-Sea  
Infants School,  
Somerset

*“I do find it rewarding when the children are pleased to see me...as this gives me a feeling of confidence from the start.”*

## My story ▼

I now undertake some “teaching” to relieve teachers from their classrooms to give them time for co-ordinator, planning, e-Profile time, etc. This tends to be an afternoon at least once or twice a week. From September, due to the workforce reform, teachers will need 10 per cent of their non-contact time so now, as an HLTA, I will be standing in for them. As we are a large school with only three HLTAs, our “teaching” time will increase, possibly up to five afternoons per week.

At present, we discuss the plans for the session with the teachers to ensure we understand the lesson plan and its objectives. This usually takes place during a lunchtime, though from September 2005 we shall be paid extra to have time after school to do this. Some teachers already give me a written plan of the session but with most it is an informal chat. Our school is now trying out a new HLTA planning sheet that they have devised, which teachers should complete, giving written details of the lesson plan, learning objectives, resources needed, extra support in the classroom, arrangements for after school such as clubs, etc. It has only started within the last week so I am not yet familiar with all that is on it, but it seems to work very well, taking away the need to use my own lunchtimes to plan and giving me very clear instructions. The teachers are still very approachable on queries I may have regarding the session and will always give their time to discuss them.

As an HLTA, I always have a TA from the particular year group with which I am working in the classroom to support me, which I find comforting as I am not so familiar with other year groups.

As an HLTA, I was also given the responsibility of cataloguing all school resources for the foundation subjects. I sent questionnaires, subject by subject, to each teacher asking them to list all the resources they had in their classrooms. This took several weeks. I also sent a form to subject co-ordinators asking for requests in their subjects. From the information I was given, I was then able to make an inventory of the resources. Each teacher has a copy of the school resources list and a copy is kept in the staff room. This is ongoing and updated as new resources come in. By doing this, I am enabling the school to identify areas of the curriculum that need more or improved resources.

From a personal point of view, I have found that HLTA duties within the classroom setting require much more of my skills, time and energy. I feel that I am the teacher of that class at that time and am fully responsible for providing those children with a good standard of education. I am much more aware of the need to “manage” the adults in the classroom and how physically and mentally exhausting teaching actually is, even though I only take a few lessons each week! I do find it rewarding when the children are pleased to see me, especially those in other year groups as this gives me a feeling of confidence from the start. I often feel pleased with myself if a lesson has gone particularly well, even more so when I teach other year groups on subjects or topics with which I am unfamiliar. ■

**Angela Witcher:  
HLTA**

Milford Junior  
School, Somerset

*“...and as a team we were fully involved in the whole decision-making process...”*

**My story ▼**

As the TA co-ordinator, I already had a range of responsibilities that meant I was involved in tasks such as appraisal of other TAs in the team. As an HLTA, I have had the opportunity to take classes for short amounts of time when a teacher with whom I normally work with is not in the class. This has been done in a very considered way in order for me to adjust to the new role and its different challenges.

My role as an HLTA will be more clearly defined from September 2005 as our headteacher has, in collaboration with us (there are currently six TAs who have gained the status) devised a tiered approach to how often we take on HLTA responsibilities. Staff were offered the opportunity to commit to taking whole classes for a maximum of two days in any week to cover planned staff absences. A further option was to agree to take a class at short notice. Pay scales would be allocated accordingly and as a team we were fully involved in the whole decision-making process – working within the restrictions of the budget and taking a view of the whole school set up. This has led to a fully informed staff who feel part of what is occurring and who understand the compromises that need to be made by all involved. ■

**Diane Morris: HLTA**  
Ash Primary School,  
Somerset

*“I am confident with leading maths and literacy sessions, feeling more aware of factors that could affect a child’s learning.”*

**My story ▼**

Following my achieving the status of HLTA, my role has not changed that much. I have always felt a valued and useful member of a team. I regularly lead maths and literacy sessions in year groups, as the class I work in comprises Year 1 and 2. The work is planned by the teacher and myself and I give feedback to her at the end of the session. I also lead ICT sessions and sometimes PE with a year group of up to 19 children.

The biggest change has been within myself. I am confident with leading these sessions, feeling more aware of factors that could affect a child’s learning. I have been keen to attend further training in literacy and ICT to extend my knowledge. Before achieving the status, I was not involved in parental contact but I now feel competent in dealing with minor problems, after being approached by parents who do not want to bother the class teacher.

I was disappointed that HLTA was not a qualification but it has opened other career opportunities. I am training to become an NVQ assessor, sharing my experiences with other classroom assistants. In September 2005 my role will be altering slightly as sport coaches/art tutors will be employed to release teachers for non-contact time. Myself and the two other HLTAs will be responsible for the children during these sessions. ■

## My story ▼

**Lucy Horrox: HLTA**  
Somerset

*“It feels like we are making history now booklets are being produced about it!”*

Since doing the HLTA pilot, things have changed quite a lot for me in school. I now regularly take classes in the absence of the class teacher for which I am paid a higher rate. We have three classes: reception/Year 1 and 2, Year 3 and 4, Year 5 and 6. Every week I take each class during their golden time to allow three teachers PPA time and cover additional classes for reception, Year 1 and 2 to cover a multitude of things! I love it although it is not without its difficulties. These largely boil down to the delicate decision about when, as an HLTA, it is best to cover the class or whether it should be a supply teacher. With so few teachers in school, the overall number of “proper teachers” needs to be considered if more than one of our own teachers is out.

I was a bit concerned that it may be a difficult issue with TA colleagues but they have all been fabulous and very supportive; and dare I say, keen to help out in the classes I am taking. I have also been very pleased with the further development information that has been coming through for HLTAs. I have a place at St John’s and St Francis in September on the graduate teacher programme (GTP) so it has not really been relevant to me, but pleasing none the less to see things developing for HLTAs.

I feel sure the experience and result of achieving the HLTA was a contributory factor in getting on to the GTP, and the experience I have been able to get taking classes since will be a boon next year.

I keep extolling the HLTA scheme virtues to my colleagues. As a school governor, I can see the benefits to the school particularly in relation to workplace reform and we really could do with another HLTA when I leave in September.

It feels like we are making history now booklets are being produced about it! ■

In summary, these multiple roles will always depend upon the circumstances of the schools, the skills, knowledge and experience of the HLTA, the weekly hours of the HLTA, and the needs of the teachers and the pupils, to name but a few variables. Importantly, each of these roles must be carried out under the supervision of a qualified teacher, and there are certain things that HLTAs should not be asked to do. WAMG guidance gives further information, and ATL can provide support to any member who feels that this guidance is not being followed.

## What a HLTA can contribute

Through the work in Somerset LEA, the following tasks have been identified as those undertaken by our higher level teaching assistants from pilot to present day:

- > school-based NVQ assessor
- > recruitment, induction, appraisal, training and mentoring of other teaching assistants and support staff
- > line management and deployment of school teaching assistants
- > responsibility for planning and teaching intervention programmes and the deployment of teaching assistants to support these
- > school community/parent liaison officer
- > making joint home visits with teachers
- > responsibility for the school library/resource base
- > responsibility for the school inclusion room
- > member of the school's "positive behaviour" panel
- > responsibility for special arrangements for national tests, collating information, arranging support and passing information to teachers
- > work experience co-ordinator for Year 10, helping pupils to arrange placements, make visits to pupils, feedback information to teachers and encourage work-based learning to be recognised within the school curriculum
- > responsibility for school trips, visits, residentials and work experience
- > organising and running a school homework club
- > organising and running after/pre-school activities, for example breakfast clubs, football, music or drama
- > linking with local colleges and further education provision for pupils and parents
- > ICT co-ordinator for school, with responsibility for ICT room/suite, resources, whiteboards and teaching ICT to pupils, teachers, TAs, support staff, governors and parents; overseeing personalised learning for classes in resource suite
- > setting up and teaching extension groups for the gifted and talented
- > taking whole classes as appropriate

- > working as a specialist subject TA in a secondary school department, for example, modern foreign languages, science, humanities; involved in departmental meetings, planning and delivery of lessons, often whole classes in a departmental suite of rooms
- > marking work; making and recording assessments; testing, observing and assessing as appropriate
- > providing PPA time for teachers
- > working with individual children or small groups on guided learning
- > working with a whole class whilst the teacher supports small groups for intervention/extension
- > supporting individual children or groups of children as they approach test/exam periods
- > mentoring pupils who may be finding school difficult
- > attending school in-service training days/events, staff meetings and team/key stage/departmental meetings
- > joint planning with teachers prior to delivery of the curriculum
- > assisting with school planning and the production of the school development plan
- > taking whole school assemblies
- > attending and contributing to parents' meetings.

### The difference a HLTA can make

Although there is increasing recognition across the country of the role HLTAs can play in a school, there are those who still have doubts about their deployment. In the following, a Somerset headteacher gives her perspective of the HLTA role and the effect it has had on their school.

**Jaqui Tobin:  
Headteacher**

Elmwood School,  
Somerset  
June 2005

*“We used our staff creatively, building on their abilities and talents before they could be accredited with HLTA status.”*

**A headteacher’s perspective ▼**

The core value of our school is to support our pupils with a variety of learning, behavioural and emotional needs in becoming independent young people able to be part of their local community. We do this in an environment where everyone feels safe and valued.

This impacts on all decisions made in the school and the way the staff are deployed. We are a team and everyone has some responsibility in making us successful in supporting the learning of our pupils.

**How we use HLTAs**

We currently have one HLTA. She has been used to support pupil learning in a variety of ways.

- Organisation of the weekly riding session for six pupils – liaising with the riding centre, medical professionals, parents, carers and managing two other teaching assistants during this task.
- Taking responsibility for medical needs within the school, involving liaison with medical professionals, parents and carers to ensure care plans are in place and adhered to. This impacts on the learning of the pupils as they need to “feel right to learn right”.
- Providing continuity for children’s learning during the art teacher’s maternity leave. The HLTA used the art teacher’s schemes of work and worked under the supervision of a qualified teacher but she taught the lesson as she had the subject knowledge to do this. She had non-contact time to enable her to plan and prepare for the lessons.
- Our HLTA teaches a first-aid course to our Year 10 pupils as part of their life skills curriculum. A qualified teacher is alongside her but the content and delivery is the remit of the HLTA.
- Overseeing a group of 10 key stage 3/4 youngsters (two from our campus secondary school and one from another special school) at Forest School. She liaises with the Forest School organisers directly under my remit. She manages a TA from Elmwood School and the TA from the other special school.
- The organisation of Year 10 pupils who attend the link course at Cannington College, which requires the management of three other TAs.
- Organising the Elmwood School work for the GCSE art exhibition at the Arts Centre which involves working alongside the other local secondary schools.

**The effect the HLTA has had on the school**

We used our staff creatively, building on their abilities and talents before they could be accredited with HLTA status. Some of the tasks the HLTA currently undertakes, she has been doing for a number of years. We currently have another TA, who has not achieved HLTA status, organising the Year 11 pupils in their link course at Bridgwater College.

The accreditation for HLTA status has endorsed and confirmed my judgements that the member of staff had the ability to develop in her career, and I am using it (the standards) in current performance management objectives for other TAs.

*continued* ▶

Listed below is the direct effect of using a TA with HLTA status.

- Pupils taking art have all had continuity in the delivery and input they received whilst the art teacher was on maternity leave. She also knew how to handle the pupils and she was a familiar face, helping to maintain the pupils' routines.
- The links with our local secondary school have been strengthened which helps break down the barriers – emotional and physical – between the pupil population, leading to greater tolerance when the pupils are in their community.
- Having another tier in the support staff structure plays a part in the reviewing of my staff structure as part of workforce remodelling.
- The HLTA is a role model for other staff to aspire to achieving this status.

#### **The effect HLTA status has had on the individual**

- It has increased the HLTA's belief in herself and the abilities she has, which in time will lead to her looking towards becoming a qualified teacher.
- In art lessons, the pupils saw the HLTA as their teacher.
- It enabled the HLTA to become an NVQ assessor.
- The HLTA has increased her status within the team, which initially meant some distancing from some other TAs and a teacher. ■

ATL supports the ways in which headteachers and schools in Somerset have built on the strengths of HLTAs in making decisions about the most effective ways of deploying them. HLTAs must always work under the supervision of a qualified teacher in carrying out their roles. HLTAs are well placed to provide support during the long-term absence of a teacher, particularly in terms of the continuity of children's learning. However, a school must ensure that a qualified teacher provides long-term cover (for maternity or sickness for example).

# 7 Looking to the future

*“Schools are changing – and the pace of that change is fast. More people are working in our schools than ever before... schools are becoming more complex organisations and the work of support staff is becoming more varied and demanding.”*

*“Change on this scale can only be managed with the help of a well-trained, highly motivated workforce with the up-to-date skills and knowledge to carry out their roles effectively and develop the skills they will need in the future. In the past, the uptake of training and development in schools has been uneven. Many support staff have not had the opportunity to develop their skills and have their experience recognised.*

*We aim to set a clear strategic direction for support staff training and development that will lead to a strong, confident and competent workforce focused on increasing pupils’ achievement.”*

**Stephen Twigg MP**

Foreword to *Building the school team*,  
School Workforce Development Board

Higher level teaching assistant status is now firmly established as part of support staff vocabulary. In September 2005 the TDA announced a review of the National Occupational Standards for Teaching Assistants, with possible new standards to meet the demands of the wider children’s workforce and national education strategies. The outcome of the review is expected in 2006.

Plans are already in place for developing and deploying specialist higher level teaching assistants with a focus upon, for example, science, mathematics, SEN and English as an additional language. The research pilot for secondary HLTAs, maths and science, began in September 2005 with three providers, and 400 TAs are expected to achieve this status.

From January 2006, nine new HLTA regional providers will offer a variety of programmes nationally. There will be different HLTA training and provision routes based on a “needs” assessment. We have already seen the piloting of some of this provision.

Higher level teaching assistants now have an opportunity, if they so choose, to progress within a clear career structure. In Somerset, HLTAs have been invited to train as NVQ school-based assessors (A1 training) and this is proving a popular development in community learning partnerships where schools work together to train their collaborative workforce.

In July 2005, a group of HLTAs planned, organised and ran a county conference for teaching assistants to celebrate their achievements and to share good practice.

In September 2005, Somerset started a Foundation Degree in Child and Youth Studies (College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth with Canterbury Christchurch University College). Expressions of interest have been requested from HLTAs and several have now taken the first steps towards qualified teacher status.

Somerset's highly motivated, well trained and aspiring TAs are now key agents for change in an emerging children's workforce of this new decade.

Finally, the introduction of HLTA roles into schools should not be viewed as the end of a process. It is more of a beginning, opening up the possibilities for schools and empowering support staff to contribute even wider as important members of the school workforce. This will ensure that pupils continue to reap the benefits of not only excellent teachers but also excellent support staff.

ATL has welcomed the changes to the school workforce believing that, if they are properly implemented, they can improve the quality of children's learning. Somerset LEA is at the forefront of these developments, and it is important that we learn from the experiences of HLTAs and teachers as they begin this important process. It is obvious, however, that around the country there are teachers and support staff whose experiences are less positive. Through WAMG, ATL is committed to monitoring the changes and providing support to members. The benefits to support staff of a better defined career structure and greater definition of their roles are huge, and these must have a beneficial impact on children, young people and teachers in schools.

## Further information

### Publications

*Building the school team: our plans for support staff training and development 2005/06*, School Workforce Development Board.

*Developing the role of school support staff: what the national agreement means for you*, DfES.

*Meeting the professional standards for the award of higher level teaching assistant status: Guidance to the standards*, Training and Development Agency for Schools.

*Professional standards for higher level teaching assistants*, Training and Development Agency for Schools.

*Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement.*

*School support staff: the way forward*, National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

*Time for standards: Guidance accompanying the Section 133 Regulations issued under the Education Act 2002*, DfES.

*Time for standards: reforming the school workforce*, DfES.

### Useful websites

Department for Education and Skills: [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

HLTA discussion forum: [www.hlta.org.uk](http://www.hlta.org.uk)

National Remodelling Team: [www.remodelling.org](http://www.remodelling.org)

Teachernet: [www.teachernet.org.uk](http://www.teachernet.org.uk)

Training and Development Agency for Schools:  
[www.tda.gov.uk](http://www.tda.gov.uk)

## The pay issue: what ATL has to say

Whilst the roles of support staff have undoubtedly achieved greater recognition in recent years, the one thing which hasn't kept pace with how those roles have evolved is their pay and the way in which support staff are employed. Up until the workload agreement, for near on 20 years, most support staff were placed by local authorities at the bottom of the local government pay scale. In most instances, they were left there earning barely above what is now the minimum wage. It follows that there can be few other professions, if any, which have grown and changed so much in the past 10 years but which have not been recognised and rewarded in the way they are paid.

One of the main reasons for this is that there are no national pay scales. Local authorities employ the majority of support staff and, with a few notable and honourable exceptions, have consistently undervalued the salaries such posts merit. In reality the salary a lot of support staff receive is the equivalent rate of pay they would have received for the same job 15 years ago when, in reality, that job is completely different now.

Such lamentable employment practices have continued with the introduction of HLTAs. Despite national advice to the contrary, a number of authorities and schools have insisted on paying HLTAs at a higher rate of pay to that of a TA only when they are working with a whole class unsupervised. This is another example of the penny-pinching exploitation of a professional and extremely dedicated workforce.

The employment situation in itself is far from straightforward. Support staff in community schools are employed by their local authority. However, local authorities cannot simply instruct schools what to pay and how to employ their support staff as it is the school governors, through the local management of schools, who have responsibility for employment. In practice, community schools accept their local authority's advice and guidance on employment matters.

All support staff job descriptions should be evaluated using the authorities job evaluation scheme and then be graded accordingly. Since the workload agreement most authorities have drawn up generic job descriptions within a career structure, graded them and then recommended that schools slot their support staff into the most appropriate job description.

The situation is different in foundation schools where support staff are employed by the governing body of their school, who are under no obligation to accept any advice from their local authority, although in practice most do.

The other major detriment that support staff suffer is term-time only employment. This means that most support staff are not paid all year round but receive a salary only for the weeks they work plus a holiday allowance. This is in stark contrast to the teachers they work alongside who are paid all year round. It is totally contradictory to have support staff treated so differently in terms of pay and conditions from their colleagues whom they work increasingly closely with.

For many years, the standard response from the Government and DfES to anyone raising the issue of pay has been that they believe local authorities and schools are best placed to set pay rates and terms and conditions for support staff. However, recently and in conjunction with the implementation of the workload agreement, there does appear to be some movement. At the 2005 ATL National Conference, Secretary of State for Education, Ruth Kelly, replied to a question on the subject by saying that the Government would have to seriously consider the way support staff were being rewarded for the work that they now do.

One of the options open to the Government, and indeed probably the only one which will radically change the status quo, would be the introduction of a national pay scale and terms and conditions similar to those which apply to the employment of teachers. Taking the control away from local authorities in this way would not only end the vast pay disparity in different parts of the country, but would also lead to such roles being recognised properly and paid appropriately, away from the pressures on local authority budgets. Some may see this as simply being government lip service to a profession which has always been exploited and will continue to be so. Others hope that there could be light at the end of the tunnel in the not too distant future.

Polly Toynbee's book, *Hard work: life in low-pay Britain*, established that in 2002, working as a TA was one of the 10 lowest paid occupations in Britain and 80 per cent of those lowest paid jobs were carried out by women. For many TAs and other support staff this is still the case. The introduction of a national pay scale with just rewards for the roles that support staff undertake would show that the Government is serious about tackling low pay and extending their commitment to education to the entire school workforce, including the hundreds of thousands of support staff who make a vital contribution in schools every day of their working lives.

# National guidance for schools on cover supervision

Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group

## Introduction

- 1 This guidance is designed to provide assistance to schools who are considering using cover supervision, along with a range of other strategies, in order to deliver an effective and tailored school policy for dealing with cover. It outlines issues around determining the circumstances in which cover supervision will be appropriate, what the role of the staff who provide cover supervision might be and the skills and knowledge needed to carry out that role successfully. It also suggests ways in which schools might access appropriate training and identifies sources for case studies of schools which are already making effective use of cover supervision.
- 2 'Cover supervision' occurs when there is no active teaching taking place. Pupils would continue their learning by carrying out a pre-prepared exercise under supervision. The precise nature of 'cover supervision' is further developed in paragraph 9 of this guidance. Cover supervision does not involve carrying out 'specified work' as outlined in the Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations 2003 and accompanying guidance.<sup>1</sup>
- 3 Cover supervision by effectively deployed support staff with appropriate skills and training will be a fundamental part of an effective cover strategy, increasing the options available to headteachers and allowing them to deal with teacher absence in a way which is compatible with the standards agenda and the efficient use of resources. In addition, permanently appointed staff providing cover supervision will be known to pupils, will be familiar with the school's policies and procedures, and can provide continuity when the class' usual teacher returns.

## Context

- 4 The term 'cover' refers to any occasion where the teacher normally responsible for teaching a particular class is absent from the classroom during the time they have been timetabled to teach.<sup>2</sup> One of the aims of the National Agreement on '*Raising standards and tackling workload*' is to reduce significantly the amount of cover for absent colleagues which teachers at a school are required to carry out. Cover is not an effective use of their time. From September 2004 there will be an initial contractual limit of 38 hours per year. The National Agreement makes clear that the objective in the longer term is for teachers at a school to rarely cover at all. To achieve this objective, schools will need to find new ways of managing cover.
- 5 Guidance on changes to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document resulting from the National Agreement<sup>3</sup> outlines the full range of cover strategies, of which cover supervision is one that schools should consider in preparation for the introduction of the contractual limit from 2004 and to meet the longer-term objective. Schools should refer to this guidance and, once they have decided on a strategy, should publicise the cover arrangements so that staff, pupils and parents are clear about the cover policy of the school.

## What is cover supervision?

- 6 The headteacher will need to use his/her professional judgement to determine the precise responsibilities of staff carrying out cover supervision duties. Needs may differ depending on particular classes and whether the setting is a primary, secondary or special school. In whatever context, cover supervision is likely to include some core elements:
  - a) supervising work that has been set in accordance with the school policy (see 7);
  - b) managing the behaviour of pupils whilst they are undertaking this work to ensure a constructive environment;
  - c) responding to any questions from pupils about process and procedures;
  - d) dealing with any immediate problems or emergencies according to the school's policies and procedures;

<sup>1</sup> Guidance on the regulations is available via [www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/remodelling/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/remodelling/). These regulations apply in England only. The Welsh Assembly Government is currently consulting on regulations and accompanying guidance for Wales (available at [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)).

<sup>2</sup> As outlined in the guidance on the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (accessed via [www.teachernet.gov.uk/paydoc/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/paydoc/)).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.teachernet.gov.uk/paydoc/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/paydoc/).

- e) collecting any completed work after the lesson and returning it to the appropriate teacher (see 7 below);
  - f) reporting back as appropriate using the school's agreed referral procedures on the behaviour of pupils during the class, and any issues arising.
- 7 Work should be set in accordance with the school's strategy. It is good practice to seek to agree this strategy with staff. It should be devised to ensure that the arrangements for providing appropriate work for pupils who are being supervised do not place excessive additional burdens of planning, preparation and assessment on teachers – this could include developing banks of suitable material. Work set should be relevant to the age group and the point the pupils have reached in the curriculum to assist with continuity.

### When is the use of cover supervision appropriate?

- 8 Cover supervision should only be used for short-term absences. These might be known in advance (for example, where a teacher has a medical appointment or is undergoing professional development) or unexpected (for example, absence due to illness). Longer term absence – eg due to long-term sick or maternity leave should be covered by a teacher.
- 9 Headteachers will exercise their professional judgement in determining what should be regarded as a “short-term” absence for these purposes. There will be a number of considerations which the headteacher will need to take into account when deciding whether the use of cover supervision is appropriate or not. The key factors are:
- a) the extent to which continuity of learning can be maintained;
  - b) the length of time a particular group of pupils would be working without a teacher;
  - c) the proportion of the total curriculum time affected in a specific subject over the course of the term.
- 10 For example, in a setting where a class is predominantly led by one teacher for the majority of the day, it is likely that cover supervision will very quickly become “specified work” and active teaching would be required. This would therefore fall under the Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations.<sup>4</sup> In any case, it would clearly be inappropriate in such settings for a class to be ‘supervised’ for more than three consecutive days.
- 11 On the other hand, where pupils are only timetabled for occasional lessons which are affected by teacher absence, the use of cover supervision over a longer period of time may be appropriate.

### Who should be deployed to undertake cover supervision?

- 12 Headteachers will determine the appropriate system for delivering cover supervision. Headteachers could employ new staff to the school and/or deploy existing staff to provide cover supervision. In either case, they must be satisfied that a member of staff has the necessary training and skills.
- 13 When existing members of support staff are carrying out cover supervision duties, formal recognition should be given to the extended role and the terms of their contract should be reviewed in accordance with the first guidance note issued by the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (April 2003).<sup>5</sup> Any revision of job description should normally be agreed between the headteacher and the member of staff. Factors which the head should consider are the suitability of the task to the member of staff's current role, the impact on their workload, whether additional training is needed and any implications for pay and grading.

<sup>4</sup> See paragraph 2 and footnote on the previous page.

<sup>5</sup> Also available at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling).

**14** When considering the grading of staff undertaking cover supervision, headteachers will want to seek advice from their local authority before advertising a post or regrading an existing one. The National Joint Council for Local Government Services has produced model job profiles for support staff.<sup>6</sup> These assume that those undertaking cover supervision and who are carrying out the kinds of tasks set out in paragraph 6, would meet level three within a range of four skill levels.

**15** There are a number of possible ways of deploying staff to undertake cover supervision which may be the basis of a role in its own right, although it will usually be more appropriate as an element of a wider role within the school. A clear and well-publicised system should be put in place to outline which members of staff should be approached – and at what stage – to provide cover supervision:

- a) schools may wish to employ staff for whom cover supervision and possibly other types of supervisory activity forms the core part of their role. On occasions where they are not needed for cover, they might be released to provide additional support to teachers in classrooms, or to carry out administrative tasks, or they may have management responsibilities within the school;
- b) schools may want to employ staff for whom cover supervision is only one element of a wider, more varied, range of duties. This approach will require particularly careful handling to make sure that the requirement to provide cover is not at the expense of other elements of their job. One option might be to ensure that the job description includes some tasks which can be deferred if the member of staff is required for cover duties. Alternatively, a limit could be agreed on the amount of cover that can normally be expected by one individual member of staff;
- c) small schools may decide to employ staff to undertake cover supervision on a shared basis between a cluster of schools – schools may wish to seek advice and support from their LEA to facilitate such arrangements;
- d) some schools have chosen to use appropriately qualified persons who are available on a casual, as required, basis. However, such provision may present problems of availability at short notice and lack of familiarity with the pupils and school policies and procedures.

### Skills, knowledge and training

**16** Cover supervision is a responsible role, involving as it does taking sole charge of a group of pupils. Schools should therefore take care to ensure that staff have the necessary skills and knowledge before being given charge of a class. Given the nature of the work likely to be carried out by staff working regularly with children, it is strongly recommended that an enhanced disclosure, the same as required for teachers, is requested from the Criminal Records Bureau. The school's public liability insurance policy should already cover staff to a level appropriate for the work they are undertaking.

**17** In particular, staff undertaking cover supervision should:

- a) be familiar with the full range of school policies, particularly those regarding health and safety, equal opportunity issues and special educational needs (SEN);
- b) have the necessary skills to manage safely classroom activities, the physical learning space and resources for which they are responsible;
- c) understand and be able to use a range of strategies to deal with classroom behaviour as a whole and also individual behavioural needs.

<sup>6</sup> The job profiles are available at [www.lg-employers.gov.uk/conditions/education/support/index.html](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/conditions/education/support/index.html).

**18** In many cases staff will already have some of these skills/knowledge because of previous experience in the school or elsewhere. However, it is likely that specific training will be needed. It will be the responsibility of the headteacher to satisfy him/herself that an individual has the skills required, and to ensure that they receive such appropriate training. A cover supervision role could provide the basis for progression into other areas, for example more advanced roles in relation to the guidance and supervision of pupils.

**19** In England, funding will be available to LEAs through the Standards Fund in order to develop training for staff for whom cover supervision is part of their job remit. Relevant training materials which LEAs might choose to build on are those used to assist teaching assistants in meeting the National Occupational Standards<sup>7</sup> with particular reference to standards 3-1 'Contribute to the management of pupil behaviour'; 3-10 'Support the maintenance of pupil safety'; and 3-5 'Assist in preparing the learning environment'.

**20** Other suitable training might include:

- a) TA induction training (in England only) – in particular the sessions on “Strategies and approaches for positive behaviour management” and “Effective practice in action”.<sup>8</sup> However, it should be noted that this in itself will not be sufficient. In particular, further training in behaviour management will be required;
- b) support staff introductory training (launched October 2003 in England only) – in particular the modules on “Behaviour management”, “Inclusion, SEN and disabilities” and “Risk and reflection”. Again it should be noted that this introductory training in itself will not be sufficient;
- c) training provided locally by LEAs or by private organisations (there are a number of organisations currently offering training for cover supervisors);
- d) training in school, especially on relevant policies and procedures;
- e) higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) training – to be rolled out nationally from April 2004 (in England only at the time of publication). The HLTA standards<sup>9</sup> are considerably broader in scope than is needed for cover supervision and therefore the training will not necessarily be appropriate for someone whose main role is to be a cover supervisor. However, anyone who meets the HLTA standards will, as a matter of course, have the necessary training and skills for cover supervision if that is to be part of their role.

### Case studies

**21** Many useful case studies – including those of staff already successfully undertaking roles which involve cover supervision – can be accessed via the National Remodelling Team’s website [www.remodelling.org/index.php](http://www.remodelling.org/index.php).

<sup>7</sup> Available to view via [www.lg-employers.gov.uk/skills/teaching/download.html](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/skills/teaching/download.html).

<sup>8</sup> Further information about TA induction training and the way in which they link to the National Occupational Standards can be found at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/teachingassistants/training/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/teachingassistants/training/).

<sup>9</sup> The HLTA standards can be accessed via [www.tda.gov.uk/support/hlta.aspx](http://www.tda.gov.uk/support/hlta.aspx).

# National guidance on higher level teaching assistant roles for school support staff

Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group

## 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 legislation<sup>1</sup> and guidance<sup>2</sup> 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 programmes<sup>3</sup> 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 plans for the school support staff training and development in 2004-05.<sup>4</sup> The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has also published guidance on school support staff training and development.<sup>5</sup>
- 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.

**1** The Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations 2003 can be accessed at [www.legislation.hms.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031663.htm](http://www.legislation.hms.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](http://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](http://www.hlta.gov.uk) and WAMG Note 9 on [www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling).

**4** "School Support Staff Training and Development: Our Plans for 2004-05" can be accessed on [www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff](http://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](http://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](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/publications/fullpublications/support.html).

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*”.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.
- 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.

<sup>6</sup> The National Joint Council for Local Government Services’ guidance can be accessed at [www.lg-employers.gov.uk/publications/fullpublications/support.html](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/publications/fullpublications/support.html).

<sup>7</sup> Guidance on cover supervision can be accessed at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff). The cover strategy pack has been published on [www.remodelling.org.uk](http://www.remodelling.org.uk).

## 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.<sup>8</sup> 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 HLTA and provide support should undertake appraisal. The teachers who direct and supervise the HLTA 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](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff) and [www.remodelling.org.uk](http://www.remodelling.org.uk) as these become available.

<sup>8</sup> See WAMG Note 1 and Guidance Accompanying the Section 133 Regulations issued under the Education Act 2002 on [www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling).

## Annex 1

### 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, eg 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, eg literacy.
- Specialist skills/training in curriculum or learning area, eg 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.

## Annex 2

### 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 three 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 three 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 one school but there is time allocated for planning, preparation and assessment with teachers in all three schools and where possible for the HLTA to attend relevant whole school meetings and training days in all three schools. The teachers who provide direction and supervision across the three 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.

# Effective deployment of higher level teaching assistants

## WAMG advice note 12: June 2005

The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG)<sup>1</sup> fully supports the deployment of higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) in schools. We welcome the fact that so far some 10,000 people have registered for a place with an HLTA training provider and over 2,700 have achieved HLTA status. The development of HLTA standards, and the award of HLTA status to individuals by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), complements other areas of support staff deployment in schools and the changes to teachers' conditions of service arising from the National Agreement. HLTA deployment represents an important element in embedding and ensuring sustainability of the gains achieved through the implementation of the National Agreement.

The work of staff supporting teaching and learning, such as HLTAs, complements the work of teachers, but the roles remain essentially different and are not interchangeable. The guidance in this WAMG note builds on the previously issued *Guidance for schools on higher level teaching assistant roles for school support staff*.<sup>2</sup>

Schools and LEAs should aim to ensure that staff supporting teaching and learning who are already operating at the level of the HLTA standards have an early opportunity to take part in an HLTA programme. HLTA standards cover professional values and practices, knowledge and understanding and the delivery of teaching and learning activities under the supervision and guidance of a teacher. Achievement of HLTA status provides an objective assurance to schools and parents that those members of support staff are working to this set of agreed national professional standards on a daily basis.

When considering the deployment of HLTAs, schools should take into consideration the wide range of experience and expertise that has enabled them to gain the status. This nationally recognised expertise will be applied to the whole of the contribution they make to teaching and learning in schools as part of a professional whole-school team.

### Continuing the curriculum during teacher PPA time

One of the 31 broad-ranging professional standards requires HLTAs to demonstrate that they are able to advance pupils' learning in a range of classroom settings including working with whole classes. This provides schools with opportunities to ensure teaching and learning continues when, for example, teachers are undertaking planning, preparation and assessment (PPA).

When schools timetable other staff to enable teachers to access their entitlement to PPA time, these staff will be undertaking 'specified work' for the purposes of the regulations made under S133 of the Education Act 2002<sup>3</sup>. This work is distinct from cover supervision work where there is no active teaching taking place, but pupils continue their learning by carrying out a pre-prepared exercise under supervision. It is important that schools appreciate the distinction between these two areas of support staff deployment:

- The need for **cover** arises when a teacher is absent from a lesson they are timetabled to teach.
- **PPA** time is time during which a teacher is **not** timetabled to teach. Schools are therefore required to put additional staffing into their timetables in order to ensure that delivery of the curriculum is maintained.

<sup>1</sup> The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group is composed of representatives from ATL, DfES, GMB, NASUWT, NEOST, PAT, SHA, T&G, UNISON and the Welsh Assembly Government who are all signatories to the Agreement.

<sup>2</sup> *Guidance for schools on higher level teaching assistant roles for school support staff* can be accessed at [www.remodelling.org](http://www.remodelling.org).

<sup>3</sup> Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations 2003 and Education (Specified Work and Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2004.

Headteachers are required by the regulations to ensure that any support staff undertaking specified work have the necessary skills, expertise and experience to fulfil their roles, and that they do so under a system of direction and supervision from a teacher. Where more demanding aspects of specified work are carried out, including work with whole classes, the guidance to the S133 regulations strongly recommends that headteachers use the HLTA standards to assess the levels of skills and experience required.

HLTA roles have greater complexity and autonomy than other classroom support roles and are expected to make a significant contribution in teaching and learning activities in a variety of contexts. The wide-ranging nature of these roles means that WAMG considers it inadvisable for schools to view their requirements for staff working at HLTA level solely in terms of the hours of teacher PPA time they need to implement. This introduces an artificial distinction between interrelated components of HLTA work.

### Pay and grading considerations

Pay and conditions for support staff, including those in HLTA roles, are determined in accordance with local authority pay and grading structures, reflecting in particular the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services Green Book Agreement. The appropriate grade for HLTA roles should reflect all the demands of the post using the guidance on grading structures published in the NJC guidance *School Support Staff: The Way Forward*.

It follows from the discussion above that casual arrangements – which give to teaching assistants who meet the HLTA standards enhanced pay only for those hours when they are deployed with whole classes to provide PPA time for teachers – are not in line with the aims of workforce reform and the principles of the National Agreement. This approach risks undermining the professional status of those meeting the HLTA standards and is unlikely to be sustainable in terms of the long-term deployment of highly trained support staff. Schools will only be making the most effective use of these valuable resources if they ensure that HLTA deployment is based on sustained roles which reflect the wider expertise related to the HLTA standards, and that this is properly recognised in the grading of these posts. In small schools, this may need to be facilitated by sharing staff.

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