Role and context

For teaching assistant trainers

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Training and Development Agency for Schools
151 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SZ
TDA switchboard: t 0870 4960 123
Publications: t 0845 6060 323 e publications@tda.gov.uk
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Key to symbols

The following symbols are used in the margins of this text:

- Indicates approximate time needed to deliver a section

- Indicates the point at which a presentation slide should be shown

- Indicates a group activity

- Indicates reference to a course document

- Indicates the showing of a video sequence

- Indicates audio clip sequence
Session 1

The role of the teaching assistant

Aims of the session

- To identify effective practice by and for teaching assistants (TAs)
- To consider the role, functions and responsibilities of the TA
- To review and construct job descriptions for the role of TA

Resources

- Presentation slides 1.1 – 1.6
- Course documents 1.1 – 1.3
- Flipchart, projector and screen, or whiteboard
- Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide (TDA0245)
- Job descriptions brought by the TAs and local authority guidance on TA job descriptions (if available)
- Special educational needs: code of practice (DfES 0581/2001)
- The Teaching assistant file – copies should be distributed to all the TAs present if they do not already have them

The room should be set out in advance in a way that facilitates group work; for example, six to eight participants around a table (‘café-style’).
Outline of the session

**Introduction**  5 minutes
The role of teaching assistants; aim of the TA induction programme

**The role, responsibilities and functions of TAs**  20 minutes

**Reviewing job descriptions**  5 minutes

*Note: TAs should attend this session with their mentors*
The role of teaching assistants

The contribution that teaching assistants can make to pupils’ attainment and well-being is becoming increasingly well recognised as the government implements changes to children’s services.

The publication *Every child matters: change for children* (DfES 1081/2004) highlighted the five outcomes that children and young people wanted to achieve: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a contribution; and achieving economic well-being. These outcomes depend on each other: children are more likely to achieve educationally if they are healthy and feel safe. To help children and young people achieve the five outcomes, children’s services are being reconfigured (under the Children Act 2004) to put children and families at the centre, with different agencies working together (for example, in multi-agency teams or in integrated children’s centres) to ensure children and young people get the services they need. At local authority level, education and other services for children are being brought together under new directors of children’s services. At school level, many schools are developing extended services before and after school, and are working more closely with health services and providers of pre-school education and care. Teaching assistants can contribute to the five outcomes, whether they work directly or indirectly to support children’s well-being and attainment.

The TDA’s work on training and development for all school staff is being informed by *Every child matters*. There is a common core of skills for all who work with children, and the TDA is introducing this common core into the standards and qualifications for school staff. It emphasises the importance of understanding child development, working with other agencies, communicating with parents and carers, sharing information, safeguarding children and supporting them through transitions. It provides a way of ensuring that school staff are suitably prepared for a personalised, multi-agency approach to meeting children’s needs, safeguarding their welfare and enabling them to achieve their potential.

Your induction programme will introduce you to key aspects of the common core. If you decide you want to go on to work towards a qualification, either as a teaching assistant or in another support role in a school, you are likely to cover the common core in greater depth as the TDA is revising both the national occupational standards for teaching assistants and the vocational qualification in support work in schools to include the common core.

An understanding of the common core will also help you if you decide to work in another area of children’s services. The TDA is working closely with the Children’s Workforce Development Council and the Children’s Workforce Network of sector skills and professional bodies to develop a coherent framework of standards, qualifications and career pathways for all staff in the school and children’s workforces. The common core will be central to this.
Ask TAs to turn to course document 1.1 in the Role and context section of the TA file, which summarises what the five outcomes of Every child matters mean and tell them that in session 2 of this module they will look at the TA’s role in helping pupils to meet each of these outcomes.

Course document 1.1

What the five outcomes of Every child matters mean

- **Be healthy**
  - Physically healthy
  - Mentally and emotionally healthy
  - Sexually healthy
  - Healthy lifestyles
  - Choose not to take illegal drugs

*Parents, carers and families promote healthy choices*

- **Stay safe**
  - Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation
  - Safe from accidental injury and death
  - Safe from bullying and discrimination
  - Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school
  - Have security, stability and are cared for

*Parents, carers and families provide safe homes and stability*

- **Enjoy and achieve**
  - Ready for school
  - Attend and enjoy school
  - Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school
  - Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation
  - Achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school
Parents, carers and families support learning

- **Make a positive contribution**
  - Engage in decision making and support the community and environment
  - Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school
  - Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate
  - Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges
  - Develop enterprising behaviour

Parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour

- **Achieve economic well-being**
  - Engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school
  - Ready for employment
  - Live in decent homes and sustainable communities
  - Access to transport and material goods
  - Live in households free from low income

Parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active
Aim of the TA induction programme

Show presentation slide 1.1.
Use it to define effective practice by teaching assistants.

Presentation slide 1.1

Definition of effective practice

Effective practice in relation to TAs involves contributions that:
- foster the participation of pupils in the academic and social processes of the school
- seek to enable pupils to become more independent learners
- help to raise standards of learning for pupils

Presentation slide 1.2

Aims of the programme

The programme aims to provide induction training for newly recruited TAs to enable them to assist teachers in raising the standards of pupil performance.
The training is designed to promote:
- support by the TA for teachers, pupils and the school
- support for the TA in carrying out the responsibilities and functions of the role ascribed by the school

Explain that, to cover the two strands, it is crucial that the mentors secure support for the TA so that TAs can carry out their roles effectively.
Show presentation slide 1.3.

Presentation slide 1.3

The role of mentors

- To support the TAs in this session and in the follow-up to this and other sessions back in their schools.
- To help the TAs relate course principles to school practice.
- To help TAs consider follow-up and further training and professional development, including that which can lead to qualifications or career progression.

Use this slide to explain that the mentors’ role is threefold:

- To support the TAs in this session and in the follow-up to this and other sessions back in their schools. Explain that to do this, mentors need to familiarise themselves with the purposes and range of the whole induction programme.

- To help the TAs relate course principles to school practice: for example, after this session, with the construction and content of their job description.

- To help TAs consider follow-up and further training and professional development, including that which can lead to qualifications. This will be considered in more detail in session 4.

Remind TAs about the pre-module activity, which they should have already started. Explain that they should return to this activity throughout the TA induction training to check whether there is more they can add, or if other issues have been raised which they should discuss with their mentor.

Pre-module activity

Activity A – Finding out about your school or setting, your role and the context in which you work

Note: This activity should be started before TAs attend session 1 of the Role and context module, but TAs should return to it throughout the training to update it or to identify further issues arising from their training that they wish to follow up with their mentors.
Activity

Find out as much as you can about your school/setting, your role and the context in which you work through discussions with your mentor and your colleagues.

The following notes are to guide you. Not everything will be relevant to your school/setting and there may be other points that you think it is important to include.

You need not be familiar with the documents listed in this section straight away, but you will need to know of their existence and where they can be found. You may wish to look at some of the documents in more detail when you reach the relevant part of your training. For example, you may wish to look at the school’s/setting’s safeguarding/child protection policy during this module, but leave the behaviour and attendance policy for detailed scrutiny when you are doing the Promoting positive behaviour module.

You can continue to collect this information throughout your induction training. Please discuss this with your mentor. You should bring your work-in-progress on this activity to the Role and context module.

1. Do you know key facts about your school/setting?

What key stages does your school/setting cover?

Is there a nursery class?

How many pupils are there on roll?

How many teachers are there?

How many TAs are there? Are any of them higher level teaching assistants or leading teaching assistants?

How many other support staff are there? What are their roles?

Does the school/setting have a special designation? What does this designation mean in practice?

Is the school in a special local initiative?

Is it an ‘extended school’?

Is your school/setting an ‘Investor in people’?

What else should you know? Check with your mentor.
2. Do you know about the local community?

How would you describe the area from which the pupils are drawn?

For example, is it rural, suburban or urban, an old community or new estates, a tourist centre, multi-ethnic, with refugees or asylum seekers part of the community?

Do pupils live locally or come from further afield?

What is the employment pattern in the area? For example, do people commute, work in local industry? Is there high unemployment?

What links does the school have with:

- pre-school settings, other primary schools, secondary schools, special schools?
- employers?
- community groups – churches, businesses, organisations that regularly hire the premises etc.?

What else should you know? Check with your mentor.

3. Do you know what the governing body does and who the governors are?

4. What regular visitors from the local authority, other services, agencies or teams come to the school?

For example, school nurse, educational psychologist, speech or occupational therapists, curriculum advisers?

What do they do? Does their work affect yours?

What are the school/setting’s protocols/procedures for communicating with practitioners and professionals from outside the school/setting?

What else should you know? Check with your mentor.

5. How is the school organised?

How many forms are there?

How are classes/year groups arranged? eg. in tutor groups, in ability sets or in mixed-ability groups?

How many faculties/subject departments are there?

How are the staff organised? What are their various responsibilities?
Are you familiar with general staff guidance on:

- confidentiality, expectations of dress, punctuality, code of courtesy, etc?
- job descriptions, pay policy, discipline and grievance procedures?
- line management systems, staff structure, staff support systems, professional development procedures?

Do you have a map of the school/setting?

Where can you find up-to-date information? eg. staff handbook, noticeboards, staff message system, school brochure, school intranet?

Where can you find copies of school policies?

What resource areas are there? eg. library, learning support base, ICT areas, workshops, preparation areas, stationery stores, virtual resource centres on the school intranet? What responsibilities do you have for these resources?

What access to books, equipment and resource areas do you have for yourself and on behalf of the teachers or pupils?

Can you borrow ICT equipment? eg. a laptop to take home?

Are there good sources of information near the school? eg. museums, libraries, field centres?

Do you have access to the internet at school?

Can you access the school intranet from home?

*What else should you know? Check with your mentor.*

6. **Are you familiar with the school procedures?**

   The school may have a school handbook that includes some if not all of these.

   Have you read the health and safety policy?

   Do you know who the qualified first aiders are?

   What happens in an emergency, eg. fire, accident, incident, severe weather?

   What are the health and safety procedures, including hygiene and food, ICT, security and off-site responsibilities, school trips, recording and reporting of incidents?
Where are the risk assessments?

What is the behaviour policy: expectations, roles of all staff, responsibilities and strategies, rewards and sanctions?

Who is the designated senior person (DSP) responsible for safeguarding children? Do you know what the safeguarding procedures are?

Who is responsible for the school premises, equipment and resources?

What are the rules on confidentiality?

What are the school security procedures?

What else should you know? Check with your mentor.

7. How does the school provide for pupils’ differing needs?

In providing for the differing needs of the pupils you work with, you will need to know what specialist support is available to you.

Where are the code of practice for special educational needs and other relevant documents kept?

Do you know the school’s policy for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities?

What kinds of special needs and disabilities do pupils have in your school?

Who is the nominated special educational needs coordinator (SENCO)?

Who is the SEN governor?

What other agencies provide services for pupils with SEN or disabilities? eg, nurse, occupational therapist, speech therapist, educational psychological service? What are their roles?

What proportion of pupils speak a language other than English at home?

What support is available to pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language?

Is there a resource bank of specialist materials or equipment available for you to draw on? If so, where is it kept?

What else should you know? Check with your mentor.
8. **What do you know about the curriculum?**

Are you familiar with the national curriculum at key stages 1 and 2?

Do you know its values, aims and purposes?

Are you familiar with its structure and terminology?

Do you know about other requirements, eg. those for religious education?

Do you know which skills teachers promote across the curriculum?

Are you familiar with the inclusion statement and its implications for practice?

Do you know how the curriculum is assessed?

Are you familiar with the primary national strategy for school improvement?

Does your school/setting use any standardised tests to assess pupils?

Does your school have a policy on:

- teaching and learning, including planning, feedback, marking, assessment, recording and reporting pupils’ progress and attainment, including to parents?
- areas of the curriculum which you support?
- presentation of work and displays?
- SEN and disabilities?
- equal opportunities, cultural diversity and anti-discrimination?
- work-related learning?
- out of school learning?

How does your school prepare pupils for secondary school?

Do you know about Ofsted inspections?

- When was your school/setting last inspected?
- What did the report say about your school/setting?

Are you familiar with the school improvement plan (SIP)?
• How does it say the school will continue to improve?

• What implications does this have for your role?

What else should you know? Check with your mentor.

9. What is your school/local authority doing in relation to the Every child matters agenda?

How does your school/setting help pupils to:

• stay safe?

• be healthy? eg, healthy school standard, healthy eating, breakfast clubs, counselling, mentoring etc?

• enjoy and achieve?

• make a contribution?

• achieve economic well-being?

10. What training and development opportunities are available to you in your school/setting or local area?

What continuing professional development opportunities are available to you?

What qualifications are available that might be useful for you?

What career progression opportunities are open to you? eg, higher level teaching assistant status, leading teaching assistant in the local authority?
The role, responsibilities and functions of TAs

Ask participants to sit with their mentors and other participants, in small groups. Explain that the purpose of the activity they are about to do is to explore their perceptions of the TA’s role prior to reviewing and constructing job descriptions.

Ask the participants to turn to course document 1.2 in the TA file.

Course document 1.2

Responsibilities/functions TAs undertake as part of their role

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Ask TAs, working individually, to list about five main responsibilities/functions that they undertake as part of their role. Ask mentors to do the same for a typical TA in the school.

Now ask TAs to work with their mentor in looking at their job descriptions. Ask them to compare the lists each has made and consider how well the responsibilities/functions listed fit their job description.

Allow five minutes for this activity.

After five minutes or so, ask the TAs to share their lists with the group around the table. Invite the group to agree the purpose of the role of a TA and five (or so) functions that might form the basis of a typical job description. Take feedback from the group and list, on the flipchart or whiteboard, for example, 10 or so agreed key functions or responsibilities from their contributions.

*Show presentation slide 1.4.*

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**Presentation slide 1.4**

- **The four types of support provided by the TA**
  - Helping with classroom resources and records
  - Helping with the care and support of pupils
  - Providing support for learning activities
  - Providing support for colleagues

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Explain that there are four types of support that a TA gives:

- **Helping with classroom resources and records**
- **Helping with the care and support of pupils**, eg. by performing routine tasks, such as escorting pupils to work areas outside the classroom
- **Providing support for learning activities**, eg. supporting teaching and assessment across the curriculum
- **Providing support for colleagues** – explain that TAs are important members of the school team and, as such, their remit includes supporting colleagues by translating school policies into practice and furthering the ethos of the school

Explain that these four forms of support are interdependent and at any time a TA may be involved in an activity in which two or more forms of support are being given.
Discuss with the group the list of functions on the flipchart or whiteboard. Through discussion, agree which responsibilities/functions occur when the TAs are helping with classroom resources and records (R), helping with the care and support of pupils (P), providing support for learning activities (L) or providing support for colleagues (C). It may be that some examples may have more than one initial.

Ask TAs to return to their job descriptions and discuss with their mentors:

- whether the functions listed appear on the job description
- whether all four categories of support are reflected as key responsibilities in their job description.

Unless the school is already using the four headings, ask the pairs to list and reposition the TA’s existing key responsibilities under these four headings instead of where they are currently.

Invite the pairs to share their lists with the group around their table. If there is a school represented at the table that is using the four headings already, ask them to show the others at the table what this job description looks like, providing the TA is happy to do this.

*Show presentation slide 1.4 again and remind the participants of the four strands of support.*

Explain that the rest of this module explores the different kinds of support that TAs provide, but that they are just one part of the story. The school has a responsibility to support TAs in fulfilling the expectations of the role. This is the support provided for TAs through the way they are managed and the way that their development needs are met.

*Show presentation slide 1.5 which illustrates the kind of things that might be included in the job description to give support to the TA.*

**Presentation slide 1.5**

**Support from the school**

Support from the school might include:

- an appraisal of performance to inform decisions about priorities for further support or professional development
- involving TAs in planning the programme of support
- including TAs in relevant school-based meetings and training

Tell TAs that support for the TA from the school will be considered in session 4.
Reviewing job descriptions

Explain that course document 1.3 contains a framework for a job description that includes the four types of support that have been discussed.

Course document 1.3

Framework for a job description

Job title: Teaching assistant

Grade:

School: (employer and location)

Responsible to: (line manager)

Liases with: (subject teachers, form tutors, etc.)

Main purpose of job:

Duties and responsibilities:

Helping with classroom resources and records

Helping with the care and support of pupils
Providing support for learning activities

Providing support for colleagues

Arrangements for appraisal of performance:

Show participants a copy of *Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide*. Explain that it is a DfES publication which gives advice on how schools deploy and support TAs. Tell TAs that their schools should have a copy.

Introduce Indicator 1 adapted from the *Good practice guide*.

*Show presentation slide 1.6.*

**Presentation slide 1.6**

**Defining responsibilities clearly**

Indicator 1: Schools have clear policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of TAs

- Does the school provide appropriate job descriptions for TAs?
- Does the school involve TAs in drawing up the job descriptions?
- Do the job descriptions reflect a balance of responsibilities, reflecting TAs’ help with classroom resources and records, care and support of pupils, support for learning activities and support for colleagues?

Indicator 1 focuses on job descriptions as a management responsibility in a school. It also gives three review questions, taken from a set of seven, about roles and responsibilities. Tell TAs that they may wish to look at the complete set of review questions in *Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide* and discuss them with their mentor when they return to school.
Explain that clear, accurate job descriptions should be every employee’s right. Job
descriptions are more likely to reflect what TAs do if TAs are consulted when the descriptions
are drawn up. A well-written job description provides the basis for appraisal and should, if
necessary, be amended at such times.

TAs are entitled to an appraisal of their performance to enable them to perform the job to
the best of their abilities. This, too, should be built into the job description so that TAs can
benefit from constructive feedback about the quality of their work and receive
encouragement and guidance on ways to develop their skills and potential. Tell TAs that they
will look at the appraisal process in more detail in session 4 of this module.

Draw this part of the session to a close by inviting the pairs (TA and mentor) to keep the job
description under review in their school, referring to the above model, and to discuss it in
school as the induction programme proceeds. Stress that the main work of reviewing and
revising the job description should be undertaken as a part of the line management of the
TA in the school.
Session 2

Every child matters

Aims of the session

- To ensure the TAs gain a working knowledge of the main policies, procedures and legislation relevant to their role
- To introduce the five outcomes of Every child matters and show how schools contribute to them
- To identify relevant sources of further information

Resources

Presentation slides 2.1 – 2.31
Course documents 2.1 (see audio clip 2.1) – 2.4
Audio clips 2.1 (transcript available as course document 2.1 in the TA file) – 2.5
Video sequence 2.1
Flipchart, projector and screen or whiteboard

Every child matters: change for children (DfES 1081/2004)
Children Act 2004

Health and safety of pupils on educational visits (ref. HSPV2), Standards for LEAs in overseeing educational visits (DfES 0564-2002) and other relevant local authority guidelines

The national curriculum handbook for primary teachers in England (2005; see www.nc.uk.net)

Safeguarding children in education (DfES 0027-2004)

School staff and their roles beyond the classroom (DfES, 2005)

Special educational needs: code of practice (DfES 0581-2001)

Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide (TDA0245)
Outline of the session

Introduction  15 minutes
Every child matters

Being healthy  45 minutes
The national healthy schools programme – PSHE, healthy eating, physical activities; working as part of a multi-professional team

Staying safe  90 minutes
Health and safety; safeguarding pupils; situations in which TAs might be vulnerable to accusations of abuse; combating bullying

Enjoying and achieving  65 minutes
The school curriculum; assessment; the foundation stage; the primary national strategy for school improvement; learning across the curriculum; inclusion and access; out-of-school learning; extended schools

Making a positive contribution  70 minutes
Ways schools enable pupils to make a positive contribution; supporting transitions; confidentiality

Achieving economic well-being  10 minutes

Rounding off  5 minutes

Note: TAs should attend this session with their mentors.
**Introduction**

Remind participants that in session 1 of this module they learnt that *Every child matters: change for children* (ECM) identified five outcomes for children, based on what they themselves thought most important in their lives.

*Show presentation slide 2.1.*

**Presentation slide 2.1**

*Every child matters: change for children*

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Remind TAs that they can see more detail about what the five outcomes mean in course document 1.1 in the *Role and context* section of the TA file.

Explain that children’s services, which include schools, are restructuring what they do to ensure that all the agencies involved put children and young people’s achievement and well-being at the heart of what they do, and work effectively together to achieve the five outcomes. Tell TAs that in this session they will look at how schools contribute to the five outcomes and the main policies and procedures used to do this. They will also look at how TAs can support schools.

Update TAs about what is happening to implement ECM at local level in relation to the material covered in this session.

**Being healthy**

Schools are increasingly taking action to promote pupils’ welfare through personal, social, emotional and healthcare initiatives.
Tell TAs that they will learn more about ways to develop pupils’ social, emotional and behavioural skills in the *Promoting positive behaviour* module.

By 2009, the government wants every school to be working towards national healthy school status.

**The national healthy schools programme (NHSP)**

Explain that a healthy school promotes the health and well-being of its pupils and staff through a well-planned and taught curriculum in a physical and emotional environment that promotes learning and healthy lifestyle choices.

Tell TAs that the national healthy schools programme (NHSP) was launched in 1999.

The aims of the NHSP are to:

- support pupils in developing healthy behaviours
- help to raise pupil achievement
- help to reduce health inequalities
- help promote social inclusion.

To acquire ‘healthy school’ status schools have to meet criteria in four core themes.

*Show presentation slide 2.2.*

**Presentation slide 2.2**

**The national healthy school standard**

Schools are asked to demonstrate evidence in the core themes using a whole-school approach involving the whole school community:

- personal, social and health education including sex and relationship education and drug education (including alcohol, tobacco and volatile substance abuse)
- healthy eating
- physical activity
- emotional health and well-being (including bullying)
These criteria relate not only to the taught curriculum but also to the emotional, physical and learning environment that the school provides. There are a number of specific actions that schools need to take if they are to be recognised as healthy schools. Many schools are already engaged in these and TAs often play an important role, for example in running breakfast clubs or sporting activities.

If TAs are not aware of what their school does to promote pupils’ well-being, ask them to discuss it with their mentor and other key staff when they return to school.

Take TAs through the national healthy school standard (NHSS).

- **Personal, social and health education**
  Explain to TAs that the NHSP supplements personal, social and health education (PSHE). All pupils in key stages 1 and 2 take PSHE as part of the curriculum. The programme of study in primary school helps to give pupils the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to lead confident, healthy and independent lives and become informed, active and responsible citizens. The programme in primary schools is built on in secondary schools to prepare pupils for adult life.

*Show presentation slide 2.3 and quickly take participants through it.*

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**Presentation slide 2.3**

**Aims of PSHE in primary schools**

PSHE should:
- equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to develop personally and socially
- help them make positive choices as they grow and move into adult life and contribute to their communities and society
- help them develop confidence and responsibility and make the most of their abilities
- prepare them to play an active role as citizens
- help them develop healthier and safer lifestyles
- help them to develop good relationships and respect the differences between people
Healthy eating is one of the themes within the national healthy school standard.

Show presentation slide 2.4. Take participants through it quickly.

Presentation slide 2.4

Healthy eating

To achieve the required standard, schools must ensure that, through a whole-school approach, they:

• present consistent, informed messages about healthy eating – for example, food on offer in vending machines, tuck shops and school meals should complement what is taught about healthy eating in the taught curriculum
• provide, promote and monitor healthier food at lunch and break times and in any breakfast clubs where they are provided
• include education on healthier eating and basic food safety practices in the taught curriculum

The DfES also published compulsory nutritional standards for school lunches which came into effect on 1 April 2001.

Tell TAs that they are going to hear a short audio clip where Kerry, a TA in a mainstream primary school, talks about how she helps Samir, a deafblind boy she supports, to enjoy a healthier diet. Since he went blind at the age of four, Samir has only wanted to eat a very limited range of food. A transcript of this audio clip is available in course document 2.1 in the Role and context section of the TA file.

Play audio clip 2.1.

Audio Clip 2.1 – Encouraging healthy eating

We’re trying to work on his eating at the moment. He’s not open to many things. There’s like five crunchy dry things that he will eat and that’s the kind of consistency he likes. But we started growing vegetables, and we grew some strawberries and Samir loved going out and doing all the watering. He actually loved the whole process of gardening. And we grew these strawberries, we brought them in and made strawberry jam and he ate them, and that was the first time he’d eaten something completely alien to his palate. Now he will eat jam on toast.
We started introducing different tastes in life skills, and he’ll taste a lot more things than he would have done before. He doesn’t like the feel of bananas, and wouldn’t normally eat something with banana in, but today we made a smoothie with banana in and he was quite happy to taste it along with his buddy, Antonia.

It’s important to talk to his mum because we’re trying to tackle his different behaviours at home and in school. He’s a lot more open to new suggestions and ideas in school than he is at home, especially with his eating, so if we speak to his mum and she’s aware of what he does in school, it may then carry over at home.

- **Physical activity**
  Explain to TAs that all pupils in key stages 1 and 2 take physical education (PE) as part of the curriculum. Physical activity is also one of the themes within the NHSS.

*Show presentation slide 2.5. Take participants through it quickly.*

**Presentation slide 2.5**

**Physical activity**

To achieve the required standard, schools must ensure that, through a whole-school approach, they:

- offer all pupils, whatever their age or ability, two hours of physical activity a week within and outside the national curriculum
- take advantage of appropriate opportunities to promote and develop physical activity
- encourage staff, pupils, parents/carers and other adults, eg. sports development officers, to become involved in promoting physical activity and develop their skills, abilities and understanding through appropriate training

- **Emotional health and well-being**
  Tell TAs that schools are involved in a number of initiatives to promote pupils’ emotional health and well-being. Support staff, including TAs taking on aspects of pastoral duties, either formally or informally, are often at the forefront of these initiatives. Emphasise that the emotional climate of the school is created by the behaviour of all staff and, therefore, all TAs have a role to play in this area. Tell TAs that they will learn more about ways to develop pupils’ social, emotional and behavioural skills (SEBS) in the module *Promoting positive behaviour*.

Ask TAs to think of the ways that they and their colleagues contribute to an emotionally healthy school. Take brief feedback.
Working with colleagues from other agencies

Tell TAs that multi-agency working is about different services, agencies and teams working together to provide services that meet the needs of children, young people and their parents or carers. It is becoming an increasingly important way of meeting the needs of pupils and their families. TAs may liaise with other education professionals, such as educational psychologists, or health professionals such as speech and language therapists or physiotherapists. Explain that TAs are often important members of a multi-agency team and, when working as part of such a team, they need not only to be clear about their own role and how to carry it out effectively but also to have a general understanding of the roles of the different services, agencies or teams that are relevant to their work.

Tell TAs that they are going to hear a short audio clip. Sue, a headteacher, explains how the teachers and TAs in her school work closely with a range of colleagues from other agencies. A transcript is available in course document 2.1 in the Role and context section of the TA file.

Play audio clip 2.2.

Audio clip 2.2 – Multi-agency working

We have a range of outside agencies who work with the children, such as the speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and so on. They often devise programmes for the children, which the assistants can then help the class teacher to implement. For example, if it’s a physiotherapy programme it might be that a child needs to do certain exercises every day. Well, that’s something that the teaching assistant could do, say first thing in the morning, or at regular intervals during the day. The same with speech and language programmes – again, small periods of intensive work can be done with the teaching assistant.

Wherever possible, we endeavour to have joint meetings with the therapists and the other outside agencies so there can be regular feedback on pupil progress, and programmes can be monitored quite carefully. Clearly, the teacher is always involved and, wherever possible, we try to include the teaching assistant.

Tell TAs that, depending on their situation, they may need to know how to work collaboratively or communicate effectively, orally, in writing or using ICT, with representatives from different services, agencies and teams.

Whatever their situation, TAs will need to be clear about when they can provide support themselves, and when they should refer a situation to another practitioner or professional. They should know and follow the school’s/setting’s procedures and protocols for communicating with practitioners and professionals from other agencies.
Staying safe

Health and safety policies and procedures

Explain that responsibilities for health and safety derive from the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which places overall responsibility for health and safety with the employer. In practice, local authorities delegate responsibility for health and safety to schools while still retaining ultimate responsibility.

As employees, TAs must:

- take reasonable care of their own and others’ health and safety
- cooperate with their employers
- carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions
- inform the employer of any serious risks.

Tell TAs that they should have been informed about the school’s health and safety policy and the related procedures that are in place. Schools will also have assessed all areas of risk and introduced measures to manage these risks. These risk assessments will be available for all staff to consult.

Explain that schools have to address health and safety issues in everything the school does in its day-to-day running and any activities organised by the school (eg. school visits and journeys, after-school clubs, parents’ evenings). It includes things such as fire procedures, accident and security procedures, use of equipment, classroom practices, planning for school visits, break and lunchtime supervision, access to classrooms and outside space, the food risks involved in school events such as parents’ evenings, etc.

*Show presentation slide 2.6.*

Presentation slide 2.6

TAs need to be familiar with:

- health and safety policies and procedures
- areas of risk and how risks can be minimised
- emergency procedures
- accident and security procedures
Stress the importance of TAs being familiar with the school’s health and safety policies and procedures and any risk assessments associated with their work. Tell TAs that they should raise any health and safety issues when they are planning with the teacher.

**Dealing with emergencies**

Tell TAs that their school may have an ‘emergency management’ plan that considers various types of emergency and how the school will deal with them. Its purpose is to make sure that all members of the school community know how to act if faced with a crisis. TAs need to be familiar with their roles and responsibilities within this plan, including in relation to such matters as responding to the media. TAs should also be familiar with routine procedures such as how to contact the emergency services.

**Safety on school visits**

Tell TAs that they might be asked to accompany the teacher and classes or groups of pupils to extend their learning outside the classroom. This might be in the school grounds, in the local neighbourhood or further afield.

The document *School staff and their roles beyond the classroom* (DFES, 2005) states that no member of staff should be asked to work with pupils outside the classroom unless they have the specific skills, experience and expertise to fulfil the supervisory tasks as assigned to them.

Where suitably skilled and experienced TAs accompany teachers and pupils on visits, the DFES publication *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* sets out the following guidelines.

*Show presentation slide 2.7.*

**Presentation slide 2.7**

**Safety on school visits**

TAs should:
- be clear about their responsibilities
- not be left in sole charge of pupils, except where it has been agreed as part of the risk assessment
- follow the instructions of the group leader and teacher supervisors and help with control and discipline
- speak to the group leader or teacher supervisors if they have concerns about the health and safety of pupils at any time during the visit
Suggest that TAs might like to read this guidance back at school and discuss it with their mentor, especially if they are likely to be asked to work with pupils outside the classroom.

Ask TAs and their mentors to turn to questions on health and safety in the pre-course activity in the Role and context section of the TA file. Ask them to read through this after the session and to consider whether all the points listed have been covered in their school. If not, suggest they make a written note of what still needs to be dealt with to discuss with their mentor.

Ask the TAs to consider the following situation on their own for a couple of minutes.

In a playground incident between two pupils, one sustains an injury needing hospital treatment. The TA was on duty but did not see what happened. In their school:

- who should the TA tell or involve?
- who has responsibility for taking appropriate action?
- which school, local or national guidelines might be consulted?
- what would be an ideal or a suitable outcome to the situation?

Ask the TAs to discuss their answers with their mentors for another couple of minutes.

Refer to the course documentation and school information that might help in the circumstances and remind the TAs that the school is also duty-bound to support them in situations such as these.

**Safeguarding pupils**

**Local safeguarding children board**

Tell TAs that the Department of Health, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Home Office have jointly issued guidance about how professional groups and services should cooperate to safeguard children. As a result of this, local authorities have to set up a multi-agency forum for agreeing how the different services and professional groups should cooperate to safeguard children in their area. The responsibilities of such boards include: developing local policies and procedures within the national framework; evaluating how well local services protect children and improving provision; making sure individual services understand their responsibilities and how they can cooperate with each other; specifying training and making sure it is delivered; and raising awareness in the local community of how to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

**School safeguarding responsibilities and procedures**

Explain that all children have a fundamental right to be safeguarded from harm and abuse, and that all school staff have a duty of care and an important part to play in helping to
safeguard pupils and promote their welfare. This is an important responsibility and requires vigilance. TAs will need to be alert to signs that pupils may not be achieving their developmental potential, that their health may be impaired or that they might be at risk of harm. Explain that they should know how to obtain appropriate sources of help, using school procedures, for such pupils and their families. Stress that it is important to identify concerns as early as possible so that pupils and families can get the help they need.

Explain that this induction training provides just an introduction to the subject and that all school staff (including TAs) who work with pupils should undertake training that equips them with the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their responsibilities for child protection. This training should be updated every three years. Suggest they follow this up with their mentor after the session.
Show TAs a copy of the secretary of state’s guidance *Safeguarding children in education* (if available) and explain that it is supplemented by a dedicated child protection website (www.teachernet.gov.uk/childprotection) containing more detailed subject-specific advice and examples of policy documents and good practice.

*Show presentation slide 2.10 and use it to explain the meaning of ‘safeguarding’.*

**Presentation slide 2.10**

‘Safeguarding’

- All agencies working with children, young people and their families take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children’s welfare are minimised
- Where there are concerns about children and young people’s welfare, all agencies take all appropriate actions to address those concerns, working to agreed local policies and procedures

Ask participants to consider the question: What do we mean by child abuse?

Allow two minutes for discussion with partners or in small groups. Invite answers and then show slide 2.11 to establish a broad definition of child abuse.

*Show presentation slide 2.11.*

**Presentation slide 2.11**

**What do we mean by child abuse?**

Abuse is when a child is hurt or harmed by another person in a way that causes significant harm to that child and which may well have an effect on the child’s development or well-being.
Explain that all schools must have a designated senior person (DSP) with responsibility for safeguarding matters. TAs should refer suspicions of child abuse to the DSP, **without delay**. In the absence of the DSP the TA should refer, as a matter of urgency, to the pupil’s form tutor, head of year or the headteacher.

*Show presentation slide 2.12.*

**Presentation slide 2.12**

**Duty to refer**

Through their day-to-day contact with pupils and direct work with families, education staff have a crucial role to play in noticing indicators of possible abuse or neglect, and in referring concerns to the designated senior person (DSP) in their school.

*Explain the role of the DSP, using presentation slide 2.13.*

**Presentation slide 2.13**

**Designated senior person**

The designated senior person:

- need not be a teacher, but must have sufficient authority within the school management structure to carry out the duties of the post, including committing resources to child protection matters and, where appropriate, directing other staff
- will have undertaken training to standards set by the local safeguarding children board and is responsible for coordinating action to safeguard pupils
- liaises with other agencies about safeguarding concerns and referrals
- offers support and advice to staff who may have concerns about pupils
Explain that the ultimate responsibility for action in cases of child abuse rests with the social services and the police.

Ask TAs if they know who the DSP is in their school. If they do not know they should find out as soon as they are back in school.

_Show presentation slide 2.14._

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**Presentation slide 2.14**

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**Barriers to diagnosis**

“The biggest barrier to diagnosis is the existence of emotional blocks in the minds of professionals. These can be so powerful that they prevent diagnosis even being considered in quite obvious cases. All those working with children should be warned that their overwhelming impulse on confronting their first case is to cover it up.”

_British Medical Journal (1989)_

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The sensitivities associated with child protection are such that TAs may well be reluctant to identify indicators of abuse. They should be reassured that this is a common barrier but one that must be overcome. Although there can, of course, be false accusations (including against school staff) and misinterpretation of possible indicators, TAs should be aware that child abuse takes several forms and that sometimes signs of abuse can be subtle and expressed in different ways. The important thing is not to ignore the evidence, but to report any concerns, following school procedure, so that others can investigate the matter.

TAs might notice or become aware of several indicators of abuse.

Ask participants to form into pairs and discuss what signs they might encounter that would indicate possible abuse.

Allow five minutes for this discussion. Take feedback on a flipchart and ensure that the following indicators are included:

- unusual or difficult behaviour
- bruises, marks, injuries
- developmental delay which causes concern
• pupil or other person telling of a worrying event
• a feeling that ‘things are not at all right with this pupil’
• pupil being unusually withdrawn.

Follow this by going through the main categories of abuse using presentation slides 2.15 – 2.18.

Invite brief discussion on each slide about recognising the indicators in each case.

*Show presentation slide 2.15.*

**Presentation slide 2.15**

**Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fakes the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to, a child whom they are looking after.

Explain that this may include:

• extreme, inappropriate physical chastisement
• deliberate, malicious injuries
• restraining the child inappropriately
• leaving a child unsupervised, which results in accidents causing harm.
Show presentation slide 2.16.

Presentation slide 2.16

**Emotional abuse**

Actual or likely adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child under the age of 18 years, caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection.

Explain that this may include:

- persistent ridicule, rejection or humiliation
- living in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation
- not being allowed any contact with other children
- imposition of inappropriate expectations
- low warmth, high criticism
- being bullied or made a scapegoat.

Briefly discuss with TAs what might indicate that a pupil is a victim of this kind of abuse.
Show presentation slide 2.17.

Presentation slide 2.17

**Neglect**

Persistent or severe neglect of children under the age of 18 years, or the failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger.

Explain that this may include:

- lack of adequate nourishment/shelter
- lack of medical attention when needed
- inappropriate clothing
- absence of boundaries and limits in terms of the child's actions and behaviours.

Briefly discuss with TAs what might indicate that a pupil is a victim of this kind of abuse.

Show presentation slide 2.18.

Presentation slide 2.18

**Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent under the age of 18 years by any person. This would include any form of sexual activity to which the child cannot give true consent either by law or because of ignorance, dependence, developmental immaturity or fear.
Explain that this includes:

- access to pornographic materials
- being involved in sexual activities with adults
- being touched or talked to in sexually explicit ways, directly or indirectly
- being spoken to about sex in ways that are inappropriate for the child and which seek to gratify the needs of others.

Briefly discuss with TAs what might indicate that a pupil is a victim of this kind of abuse.

Explain that sometimes a pupil may reveal to a member of staff that they are being abused. TAs are particularly well placed for this as pupils feel secure with them, they work closely with pupils in small groups or individually and they may have a slightly different relationship with pupils than do teaching staff. However, TAs must understand that it is not their responsibility, or that of any other member of staff, to investigate allegations of abuse. If a pupil decides to tell them something, they should explain that they cannot promise confidentiality and that they may need to pass on information to other professionals to help keep the pupil or other children safe. TAs should listen carefully to what the pupil has to say and inwardly note it. They should then pass on the information, without delay, to the DSP. It is then the DSP’s responsibility to deal with the issue by informing social services or the police, who have trained personnel for helping the pupils and their families.

Explain that where TAs have worries about the welfare or safety of a pupil there are some 'golden rules' to follow.

*Show presentation slides 2.19a and 2.19b.*

**Presentation slide 2.19a**

**Golden rules**

- It is not the responsibility of education staff to interview pupils. If a pupil makes a disclosure of abuse they should listen carefully to what the pupil has to say, but should not question them in a way that puts words in their mouth
- It is important to make accurate notes about what has been heard, seen or told
- Interviewing pupils should be left to the police and social care staff, who have the necessary training to carry out this role effectively. Inappropriate interviewing may jeopardise the chances of a successful prosecution at a later date
Golden rules

- Concerns should always be made known quickly to the DSP, or in their absence to another senior member of staff.
- Concerns should not be discussed with parents/carers until advice on how to proceed has been obtained from the DSP.
- A pupil must not be promised confidentiality about any information on abuse they may choose to disclose. The TA must explain that they may need to pass on information to other professionals to help keep the pupil or other children safe.

Finally, tell TAs that they need to be aware that hearing about, or being involved in, upsetting situations concerned with child protection can be distressing and they should find out where they can go for support, should it become necessary.

Ask the participants to form into four groups, and ask each group to turn to one of the five case studies in course document 2.2 in the Role and context section of the TA file. Ask them to decide which category of abuse their case study falls into, and then to discuss what action they would take.

Allow 10 minutes for the activity.

Case studies

Sally

Eight-year-old Sally has been physically and sexually abused by her father for three years. She has tried to tell her mother without success. She has a younger brother and sister who attend this school. Her older half-sister is 17 and in care. Sally wants to tell someone what’s going on, but cannot decide who would keep it a secret. She doesn’t want anyone to know she’s told and is terrified the police would come to her house.

Sally tells you.

- What would you do and why?
Wayne

Wayne (11) is the eldest of four children. The family live in a caravan on the local travellers’ site. Wayne is absent from school for long periods while working with his father in the family scrap metal business. On his return to school after a period away you notice a dirty bandage over a deep wound to his leg. When you ask him how he got the injury he tells you to mind your own business and limps away.

- What do you think you should do next?

Sanjay

Sanjay is a sickly child. He no sooner recovers from one illness than another attacks. He is nearly 12 years old, very thin, lethargic and quiet. You have talked to his parents who believe very strongly that human illness should be treated through faith. They refuse to take him to the doctor or allow the school medical officer to examine him. Sanjay comes into school looking so ill that you think he should have stayed at home.

- What should you do?

Shawana

Shawana has just turned 13. She is physically disabled and profoundly deaf. She communicates through sign language. Her mother died when she was a baby, and her father has always refused help and assistance in caring for her. Shawana has told you that she doesn’t like the way her father bathes her any more. You are surprised that her father is still bathing her because she joins in with many physical activities in school and she is capable of bathing herself.

- What do you do next?

John

John is 12 years old, bright and from a very supportive family. His father was recently made redundant and his mother works as a clerk at a local bank. You notice that John seems increasingly reluctant to leave the classroom to go home after school. When you ask him why he eventually tells you that his dad is always in a bad temper, goes to the pub a lot, and comes home and hits his mum. His mum tells them to go to bed before he gets home and not to worry, but he hears his mum crying a lot and is scared.

- What would you do now?

Refer TAs to course document 2.3 for the procedure to follow when there are concerns about a child’s welfare.
Referral

**TA has concerns about pupil’s welfare**

- TA immediately discusses with the designated senior person (DSP) or, in their absence, the pupil’s class teacher, form tutor, head of year or headteacher
  - **Still has concerns**
    - DSP refers to social services, following up in writing within 48 hours
      - Social worker and DSP acknowledge receipt of referral and decide on next course of action within one working day
        - Initial assessment required
          - Concerns about pupil’s immediate safety
            - Emergency action
  - **No longer has concerns**
    - No further safeguarding action, although may need to act to ensure services provided
      - Feedback to referrer on next course of action
        - No further social services involvement at this stage, although other action may be necessary, eg. onward referral
      - Initial assessment

Situations in which TAs might be vulnerable to accusations of abuse

Explain that TAs need to be careful when fulfilling their role that they do not put themselves into situations where they could be vulnerable to accusations of abuse.

Ask the participants to identify, in pairs, the situations in which they might be vulnerable.

Allow two or three minutes for this discussion and then take feedback on a flipchart, ensuring that the following situations are covered:

- when they are alone with pupils
- when providing intimate care, or a service that involves touching pupils, such as dealing with incontinence
- if they have to restrain a pupil
- when taking action if they are concerned about the behaviour of a colleague
- when talking to parents or carers – ensuring that matters that should remain confidential to school are not discussed more generally.

Explain that it is crucially important for TAs to act strictly within the policies, codes of conduct and guidelines of the school on these matters so that they do not put themselves into situations that could lead to misunderstanding or accusation.

Ascertain that all participants are aware of their school contacts and sources of advice and information on these matters.

To conclude this section, tell the participants that there are two useful websites where they can get more information on child protection.

Show presentation slide 2.20.

Presentation slide 2.20

Useful websites

www.publications.doh.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren
www.teachernet.gov.uk/childprotection
**Combating bullying**

Tell participants that, for the past six years, bullying has been the single biggest reason behind children’s calls to Childline.

Give participants two minutes to recall examples of bullying behaviour that they have experienced or witnessed. Ask them to identify why these were ‘bullying’ rather than other forms of aggression.

Now ask them to work with a partner for a further five minutes to discuss their observations, noting areas of agreement and disagreement about the features of bullying.

Take brief feedback.

*Show presentation slide 2.21 and pick up any points not covered in feedback from the activity.*

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**Presentation slide 2.21**

### The nature of bullying

There are many definitions of bullying, but most consider it to be:

- deliberately hurtful (including aggression)
- repeated over a period of time
- difficult for victims to defend themselves against

Bullying can take many forms, but three main types are:

- physical – hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- verbal – name calling, insulting, making offensive remarks
- indirect – spreading nasty stories, exclusion from social groups, being the subject of malicious rumours, sending malicious e-mails or text messages

Combating bullying is most effective through a whole-school approach in which all adults in the school work together to create an environment in which bullying is not tolerated.

Point out that any intervention that TAs take against bullying needs to be part of a whole-school behaviour strategy. Each school will have a bullying policy, which may be part of the behaviour policy. Tell TAs that it is crucial that they are familiar with school procedures and act in accordance with them.

If a bullied pupil has told a TA that they would prefer the information they provide to remain confidential, they should explain that they must speak to a senior member of pastoral staff to make sure that the pupil is safe and to keep other pupils from harm. It may
also be useful to speak to a bullied pupil’s form tutor. Many schools now use TAs and learning mentors to deal with bullying issues. These members of staff will always receive appropriate training for their role.

Tell TAs that if they are not aware of the school’s anti-bullying policy, they should make a note to locate it and read it when they get back to school. They should discuss any issues arising from the policy with their mentor. Explain that they will look in more detail at ways of managing pupils’ behaviour in the module *Promoting positive behaviour*.

### Enjoying and achieving

Explain to TAs that there are many aspects to pupils enjoying and achieving in school. This section will introduce the main areas. Tell TAs that more information on these areas can be found by searching on the websites of the main government departments and agencies.

#### The school curriculum

An important part of the TA’s role is to support the curriculum. Tell TAs that because time is short you will move very quickly through information about the school curriculum in this part of the session.

**The school curriculum, including the national curriculum and religious education**

*Show presentation slide 2.22.*

#### Presentation slide 2.22

**The school curriculum**

“The school curriculum comprises all learning and other experiences that each school plans for its pupils. The national curriculum is an important element of the school curriculum.”

*The national curriculum handbook for primary teachers in England, p. 10*

TAs may well know about the national curriculum, but may not understand that the national curriculum is not the whole curriculum. The following short quiz will help explore what constitutes the whole curriculum.
Ask the participants to form into their pairs of TA and mentor. The answers to the questions are to be written by the TAs with no help from the mentors at this stage.

Ask the TAs to:

1. write down the statutory age of schooling in England
2. write down the age ranges of pupils in the foundation stage, key stage 1 and key stage 2
3. list the subjects of the national curriculum for key stages 1 and 2
4. put a ring around those subjects on their list that have statutory national tests (SATs) at the end of key stage 1
5. mark those subjects on their list that have statutory national tests (SATs) at the end of key stage 2
6. note down three subjects that are taught in their school, but are not part of the national curriculum (answers will vary)
7. write down the name of the subject that has a locally 'agreed syllabus'
8. spell out what 'QCA' and 'Ofsted' stand for
9. spell out what 'DfES' stands for.

When they have all finished, ask the mentors to check their partner’s answers.
Reinforce the following points:

- The national curriculum sets out a statutory minimum entitlement of knowledge, skills and understanding to be taught to all pupils of statutory school age

- We are concerned here with the national curriculum in England. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland each have their own national curriculum

- The national curriculum is a part, and not the whole, of the school curriculum.
The national curriculum provides for ‘core’ subjects and for ‘non-core foundation’ subjects. Explain that ‘non-core foundation subjects’ are not to be confused with the foundation stage.

One further non-core subject has to be taught to all pupils (unless their parents object); this is religious education. The syllabus is determined locally or according to the religious foundation of the school.

Information and communication technology (ICT) also has special status. As well as being taught as a separate subject it is a key skill that, wherever possible, has to be applied across the national curriculum. TAs may find themselves involved in ICT work.
Show presentation slide 2.26. Explain that the national curriculum is organised on the basis of four key stages and that the foundation stage is a distinct phase of education for pupils aged between three and five years. Primary education covers key stages 1 and 2. Secondary education covers key stages 3 and 4.

**Presentation slide 2.26**

### Phases of education

- **The foundation stage** is for children aged 3 to the end of the reception year.
- **National curriculum key stages**
  - Key stage 1 – pupils aged 5 to 7 (years 1 and 2)
  - Key stage 2 – pupils aged 7 to 11 (years 3 to 6)
  - Key stage 3 – pupils aged 11 to 14 (years 7 to 9)
  - Key stage 4 – pupils aged 14 to 16 (years 10 and 11)
- **Post-16 provision**

Tell TAs that they may hear the terms ‘programme of study’ and ‘scheme of work’ in relation to the national curriculum. Check that TAs know the difference. If they do not, explain the difference between a programme of study and a scheme of work for the same subject – broadly speaking, a programme of study is laid out in the national guidelines for the teaching of a particular curriculum subject and is statutory, while schemes of work are determined in detail within schools, usually by the staff who will be teaching them.

Tell TAs that they will often assist in the planning of activities and the preparation of lesson materials from schemes of work. They will look at teacher planning in more detail in session 3 of this module.

### Assessment

Tell TAs that teachers are assessing pupils’ attainment and progress all the time through informal and formal assessment, but that there are formal assessment procedures associated with the national curriculum and qualifications that teachers are required to carry out. TAs may well be involved in some of these assessment processes.

TAs will need to be familiar with the assessment terms used in the national curriculum. The key ones are given on the next slide.
Terminology used in the national curriculum

- Attainment targets
- Level descriptions

Ask the mentors to explain each term to their TA. When they have finished, check that TAs have a clear understanding.

- **Attainment targets**

  An attainment target sets out the ‘knowledge, skills and understanding’ that pupils of different abilities and levels of maturity are expected to have by the end of each key stage.

  Warn TAs not to get confused by the two terms ‘attainment targets’, used of the national curriculum, and the ‘national targets for English and mathematics’ for 11-year-olds. The latter underpin the training materials they will encounter in the literacy and mathematics modules. TAs will almost certainly be assisting teachers both to achieve attainment targets and to contribute to the achievement of national targets for English and mathematics.

- **Level descriptions**

  Except in the case of citizenship, attainment targets consist of eight level descriptions of increasing difficulty, plus a description for exceptional performance above level 8.

  Each level description describes the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate. The level descriptions provide the basis for making judgements about pupils’ performance at the end of key stages 1, 2 and 3.

  At key stage 4, national qualifications are the main means of assessing attainment in national curriculum subjects. An example of the level descriptions for English attainment target 2 (reading) is given in further reading 2.1 in the **Role and context** section of the TA file.
Further reading 2.1 – Level descriptions for English attainment
target 2: reading

Level 1

Pupils recognise familiar words in simple texts. They use their knowledge of letters and sound–symbol relationships in order to read words and to establish meaning when reading aloud. In these activities they sometimes require support. They express their response to poems, stories and non-fiction by identifying aspects they like.

Level 2

Pupils’ reading of simple texts shows understanding and is generally accurate. They express opinions about major events or ideas in stories, poems and non-fiction. They use more than one strategy, such as phonic, graphic, syntactic and contextual, in reading unfamiliar words and establishing meaning.

Level 3

Pupils read a range of texts fluently and accurately. They read independently, using strategies appropriately to establish meaning. In responding to fiction and non-fiction they show understanding of the main points and express preferences. They use their knowledge of the alphabet to locate books and find information.

Level 4

In responding to a range of texts, pupils show understanding of significant ideas, themes, events and characters, beginning to use inference and deduction. They refer to the text when explaining their views. They locate and use ideas and information.

Level 5

Pupils show understanding of a range of texts, selecting essential points and using inference and deduction where appropriate. In their responses, they identify key features, themes and characters and select sentences, phrases and relevant information to support their views. They retrieve and collate information from a range of sources.

Level 6

In reading and discussing a range of texts, pupils identify different layers of meaning and comment on their significance and effect. They give personal responses to literary texts, referring to aspects of language, structure and themes in justifying their views. They summarise a range of information from different sources.

Level 7

Pupils show understanding of the ways in which meaning and information are conveyed in a range of texts. They articulate personal and critical responses to poems, plays and novels,
showing awareness of their thematic, structural and linguistic features. They select and synthesise a range of information from a variety of sources.

**Level 8**

Pupils’ response is shown in their appreciation of, and comment on, a range of texts, and they evaluate how authors achieve their effects through the use of linguistic, structural and presentational devices. They select and analyse information and ideas, and comment on how these are conveyed in different texts.

**Exceptional performance**

Pupils confidently sustain their responses to a demanding range of texts, developing their ideas and referring in detail to aspects of language, structure and presentation. They make apt and careful comparison between texts, including consideration of audience, purpose and form. They identify and analyse argument, opinion and alternative interpretations, making cross-references, where appropriate.

Explain that the expected attainment for the majority of pupils is as follows.

*Show presentation slide 2.28.*

### Presentation slide 2.28

**Age-related expectations**

- Range of levels within which the great majority of pupils are expected to work:
  - Key stage 1 1–3
  - Key stage 2 2–5
  - Key stage 3 3–7

- Expected attainment for the majority of pupils at the end of the key stage:
  - Age 7 level 2
  - Age 11 level 4
  - Age 14 level 5/6

Explain that to help teachers set targets for pupils who achieve significantly below age-related expectations, performance criteria (p scales) have been developed which outline attainment for pupils working below level 1 of the national curriculum.
The foundation stage

Explain that the foundation stage is the first stage of the national curriculum. It was introduced in September 2000 as a distinct stage for children aged three to the end of the reception year. Its launch was supported by the publication of *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* (QCA/00/587). This helps practitioners to meet the diverse needs of all children so that, by the end of their reception year, most will achieve the early learning goals, and some, where appropriate, will go beyond them. The early learning goals cover the six areas of learning that make up the foundation stage curriculum. 'Stepping stones' illustrate children’s typical progress towards the early learning goals, throughout the foundation stage.

*Show presentation slide 2.29.*

Presentation slide 2.29

The foundation stage

The six areas in the foundation stage are:
- personal, social and emotional development
- communication, language and literacy
- mathematical development
- knowledge and understanding of the world
- physical development
- creative development

By the end of the foundation stage many children will have had at least two terms of full-time education in a reception class, in addition to their nursery and/or pre-school experience. Some children will be progressing towards the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage, and others will have achieved and progressed beyond them. The foundation stage profile is an assessment framework used at the end of the foundation stage, which provides the practitioner with a way of summing up each child’s progress against the early learning goals. Pupils’ progress beyond the early learning goals can be assessed using the level descriptions at key stage 1 of the national curriculum.

Remind the assistants working in reception or nursery classes that they will need to become familiar with the foundation stage as described in the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and the Foundation stage profile handbook* (QCA/03/1006).
The primary national strategy

Explain the content and status of the primary national strategy. Point out that the literacy and mathematics strands are dealt with in depth in separate modules of this induction course.

The following background information can be adapted to explain the primary national strategy.

On 20 May 2003, the Secretary of State launched *Excellence and enjoyment – a strategy for primary schools*, which set out the vision for the future of primary education built on what had already been achieved. The primary national strategy now incorporates the former national literacy and numeracy strategies.

The new primary strategy will extend the sort of support provided by the literacy and numeracy strategies to all of the foundation subjects so that pupils achieve high standards across a broad and creative curriculum. The primary strategy will develop a framework for teaching and learning across the curriculum, which will propose the range of learning skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils should develop as they progress through primary school. It will help teachers to map the development of different learning skills against the opportunities offered by different curriculum areas.

Learning across the curriculum

Explain that there are some aspects of pupils’ learning that go across the curriculum. Teachers will seek opportunities to promote these whatever subjects they teach.

_show presentation slide 2.30._

Presentation slide 2.30

Learning across the curriculum

- Creativity
- ICT
- Education for sustainable development
- Literacy
- Numeracy
Inclusion and access

Tell the participants that the principles of inclusion will be explored thoroughly in the *Inclusion* module, where TAs will look in particular at inclusion for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). It is important to note now, however, that entitlement to a balanced and challenging curriculum is for all pupils. This includes those who have SEN and/or disabilities, (EAL learners who have English as an additional language) and gifted and talented pupils. It is only a small minority of pupils for whom aspects of the national curriculum will not be applied (usually so that they can undertake a specialist programme). As the inspection handbook says, ‘an effective school is an inclusive school’.

Out-of-school learning

Pupils are encouraged to take part in out-of-school learning (OSL). OSL refers to any school-linked activity that takes place outside of normal school hours, eg. before school starts in the morning, during lunch breaks, after school, on weekends or in the school holidays. OSL may include homework or other study clubs; sporting activities; art clubs; drama, music and dance; volunteering; residential activities, summer schools, etc. Tell TAs that they are about to hear two short audio clips in which TAs talk about their involvement in out-of-school learning. Transcripts of these audio clips are available in course document 2.1 in the *Role and context* section of the TA file.

In the first, Polly, a TA in a special school, talks about how TAs in her school are involved in running after-school ‘golden time’ clubs.

*Play audio clip 2.3.*

**Audio clip 2.3 – Golden time**

The children have golden time at the end of every day. It’s like an after-school club – time to socialise with their friends. They have football, tea and toast, disco and they can choose which club they go to. We change the activities on a regular basis to keep the children interested.

It can be teaching assistants or teachers that run the groups. It depends on the teacher or teaching assistant’s strengths and what they enjoy. If they enjoy playing football or outdoor activities then those are the types of groups that they’ll run with the children.

In the second clip they will hear from Louise, a TA in a primary school, talking about how she is involved in ‘pyramid club’, an after-school club that aims to promote pupils’ confidence and self-esteem.
Audio clip 2.4 – Pyramid club

I’ve been involved with the pyramid club, which is a club in year 3 that promotes self-esteem, and it helps the ‘invisible’ child in the corner just come out of their shell a bit.

And that was something that I wanted to do and the school paid for. It involved going on a training course to show us how to bring these children out. They do a 10-week club after school from three till five and we take them on a trip. We do lots of fun activities with them and every time we start with a circle time, we eat, we drink, we have fun and then at the end of the day we do a circle time and end it. And at first the children don’t speak and then they come out of their shells a bit, yeah, it’s really good. By the tenth week they’re like ‘Can you quieten down please’.

After TAs have listened to clips ask them:

- how TAs contribute to out-of-school learning in their schools
- what support and training is available for them to carry out these activities
- if there are any particular considerations, such as health and safety, that TAs have to take account of when becoming involved in such activities.

Extended schools

Tell TAs that an extended school is one that provides a range of activities and services, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community.

Tell TAs that, across the country, many schools are already providing some extended services including adult education, study support, ICT facilities and community sports programmes. Working with local partners, schools can develop as little or as much provision as they think suitable for their own community.

Extended schools may have more flexible opening hours. Schools that have extended their provision have reported benefits to themselves and their pupils, to families and to the wider community.
Making a positive contribution

Tell TAs that this area of Every child matters covers a wide range of school activity. Ask TAs what their schools do to enable pupils to make a positive contribution to the school and/or the community. What role do teaching assistants play in each of these?

Take brief feedback.

TAs may come up with some or all of the following. If they don’t, draw attention to them:

- Strategies to promote positive behaviour, challenging bullying and anti-discriminatory behaviour. Tell TAs that this is dealt with in detail elsewhere in the induction training.

- Extra-curricular activities, especially those with voluntary or community aspects, such as local environmental projects or the community activities associated with extended schools (mentioned earlier in relation to ‘enjoying and achieving’).

- Some schools run schemes, such as the young enterprise scheme, which motivate pupils to develop creative, positive and innovative attitudes towards the world of work with an enterprise activity.

- Many primary schools have a school council. School councils are democratically elected groups of pupils who represent their peers. This enables pupils to make a positive contribution to the school by enabling them to become partners in their own education, to engage in decision making and to influence the school environment and ethos. Evidence suggests that school councils make a positive contribution to every aspect of the school community. They improve academic performance, reduce bullying and vandalism, reduce school exclusions and improve teacher–pupil relations.

- Some schools run peer support or ‘buddy’ schemes that enable pupils to offer help and support to their peers, eg. listening, mentoring and befriending schemes. These schemes enhance and develop the social and emotional well-being of pupils.

Supporting transitions

Tell TAs that one aspect of the ‘making a positive contribution’ outcome of Every child matters is helping pupils to develop the self-confidence to deal with significant life changes and challenges.

Children naturally pass through a number of stages as they grow and develop. Tell TAs that such changes are commonly referred to as transitions.

Ask TAs to think of the transitions that pupils may need to face. Jot these down, on the flipchart or whiteboard, for example.
Add to the list any transitions not suggested by TAs, for example:

- movement from primary to secondary school and, for children with disabilities or chronic ill-health, from children’s to adult services
- family illness or the death of a close relative
- divorce and family break-up
- issues related to sexuality
- adoption
- the process of asylum
- illness or disability
- parental mental health
- the consequences of crime.

Point out to TAs that some of these transitions may be very personal and not necessarily shared or understood by all the children’s peers.

Tell TAs that they need to be aware that particular events in pupils’ lives may affect the way they behave and their ability to learn. Teachers take account of these factors when planning their teaching to ensure that all pupils feel secure, are included, and can benefit from lessons. Good communication between home and school, and between all the staff in the school team, can ensure that everyone is aware of transitions that pupils may be going through, and can respond sensitively to pupils and their families or caring networks.
A child tells you that his dad moved out of the house after rowing with his mum and that he has been living apart from the family, in a flat, for several months now. They are going to get divorced and the child has to decide who he wants to live with. He doesn’t know what to do and is worried that whatever decision he makes will upset and alienate him from one or other of his parents. He also feels guilty because he thinks that he was responsible for the break up because his parents always used to argue about his behaviour.

What should you do?

What effect might this transition have on the child’s learning and behaviour?

How could the school support him through the transition?

What might be a TA’s role in this?

What knowledge or skills might they need to act appropriately?

A child has been in your school for some time. Originally she came from Turkey but she and her family left because they were scared of being harassed because of their culture. She has made friends and made good progress with learning English. She seemed very settled. She has just heard that she and her family will be moved to a detention centre. She will no longer be able to attend school. She and her family are scared and upset. They do not know how long they will be in the detention centre or what will happen to them next.

What can you do?

What effect might this transition have on the child’s learning and behaviour?

How could the school support her?

What might be a TA's role in this?

What knowledge or skills might they need to act appropriately?
Transition C

A pupil who uses a wheelchair is in her final year at primary school. She has attended since nursery and is included fully in the curriculum and the wider life of the school. She is worried about moving to the local secondary school.

What can you do?

What effect might this transition have on the child’s learning and behaviour?

How could the school support her through this transition?

What might be a TA’s role in this?

What knowledge or skills might they need to act appropriately?

Transition D

A pupil tells you that his mum is very sad and he is worried about leaving her to come to school because he is frightened about what might happen to her or what she might do when he is not there.

What can you do?

What effect might this transition have on the child’s learning and behaviour?

How could the school support and advise him?

What might be a TA’s role in this?

What knowledge or skills might they need to act appropriately?

Ask TAs and their mentors to work in small groups. TAs should be in the same group with their mentor. Allocate a case study to each group to discuss. Make sure all the case studies are covered. Allow 10 minutes for the group to discuss their case and to answer the questions. If they finish quickly, ask them to look at another.

Take feedback and involve the whole group in a brief discussion of each case study.
Show presentation slide 2.31 and use it to draw out some of the principles of supporting pupils through transitions.

**Presentation slide 2.31**

**Supporting transitions**

- Look out for signs of changes in attitudes and behaviour
- Build open and honest relationships with pupils
- Employ good listening skills
- Empathise and reassure
- Understand the limits of your role
- Know about school procedures and referral routes
- Provide practical help if it has been agreed by senior colleagues

Explain that a TA may be able to provide practical help to pupils if it has been agreed with senior staff. For example, in transition C the TA might be able to visit the secondary school with the pupil to meet staff and allay fears, and liaise with key staff to ensure that everything is in place so the pupil can be fully included when she joins the school.

**Confidentiality**

Ask TAs how many of them are part of the community local to their school. Tell them that they might find that they are privy to additional information about pupils’ personal circumstances. Tell them that, in many cases, it will be appropriate for them to offer informal reassurance, advice or support to pupils and/or their families/carers. However, in such circumstances, they must be absolutely clear about what information, either from school or the community, can or must be shared, and what information should remain confidential.

Tell TAs they are going to listen to a short audio clip. Louise is a TA in a primary school. She lives very close to the school. Tell them that a transcript of the audio is available as course document 2.1 in the TA file.
Audio clip 2.5 – Living locally

I live very close to the school and I know a lot of the parents that send their children here. I’m aware how important it is to be professional. Parents usually come up to me and ask questions about how their child’s doing, ‘What do you think about this? What’s going on at the school?’ and sometimes they try to prise information out of you. But I find the best way to deal with this is to say, ‘If you’ve got a problem, would you like to go and see your class teacher, please’.

Working with children that you know from outside school, you occasionally hear things. If it’s to do with child protection, it’s very important that this is brought forward to the class teacher or senior members of staff.

Once TAs have heard the audio ask them:

- what the advantages of living locally might be for a TA
- if there are any disadvantages
- what school issues should not be discussed outside school
- if there are issues from outside school that should not be discussed with colleagues or pupils in school, and if so, what they are
- if there are issues from outside school that must be reported to someone in school, and if so, what they are.

Take brief feedback. Make the point that anything concerned with child protection must be reported to the DSP so that the matter can be followed up.
Achieving economic well-being

Tell TAs that this is a rapidly developing area of school life and you are only able to give them a flavour of it here. Tell them they can get more information by talking to relevant staff back at school.

Explain that for many primary school pupils the ‘extended school’ initiative will be an important factor in helping them and their families achieve economic well-being. The government’s *Five-year strategy for children and learners* (DfES, 2004) promotes dawn-to-dusk schools offering childcare through breakfast clubs and after-school clubs to help parents juggle work and childcare responsibilities. TAs may well become involved in such initiatives.

In primary schools, pupils will also begin to learn about ways to ensure their own economic well-being in the future. For example, as part of their PSHE programme in years 3, 4, 5 and 6, pupils will learn about financial capability. QCA has recently published materials to support this teaching; *Looking after my money* introduces pupils to keeping their money safe, saving, planning and budgeting. Primary school will also introduce aspects of work-related education into the curriculum through visits from people who do various jobs and visits to different workplaces, relevant to topics being covered.

Rounding off

Emphasise that TAs are not just members of school staff but are important members of the staff team and, as part of the team, they need to know and understand school policies and translate these into practice. TAs’ work should further the ethos of the school and they should act as role models to others by demonstrating the values that the school is trying to promote.

Tell TAs that it is important that they have a working knowledge of the legislation that is relevant to their role and the policies and procedures of the school or setting in which they work. Remind mentors that it is their responsibility to help TAs to identify which areas are particularly relevant to them. The pre-course activity provides an overview of the policies and procedures, legislation and structures relevant to the TA role. After this session mentors should review the activity with the TA, prioritise the most important areas still to be covered, and put together a plan for filling the gaps. They may decide that some areas are better left until after the TA has completed specific modules in their induction training.

Suggest that TAs also start a simple notebook (or learning journal or diary) to record anything they think significant. In this, they should note any activities to do with the course materials, including the reading of documents, and their comments on what they have read and done, together with what they feel they have learned that is of significance in their day-to-day work.
Remind them of the need for strict confidentiality and that care should be taken in the naming of adults or pupils in such a notebook, and care should be taken about where such a document is kept.

Entries from such a notebook can provide useful material for accreditation purposes if kept accurately and dated. The notebook may also form part of a portfolio of achievements that will provide evidence of learning and achievement.

Ask TAs to complete inter-sessional activity B.

**Inter-sessional activity**

**Activity B – School improvement plan**

A school improvement plan (SIP) is a tool to plan the progress of the school and to ensure everyone, including parents, knows what the school intends to achieve. It is like the business plan of a company.

SIPs define how schools (or other settings) intend to develop policy and practice within a given timeframe. They also state who will be responsible for carrying out actions within the plan – individuals, teams and groups of staff. In most schools several people are usually involved in identifying needs for staff development and training, and in setting the targets. In many schools this process includes TAs.

If you have not done so already, find a copy of your SIP. Your mentor can help you with this. Discuss with your mentor the way your SIP applies to you.
Session 3

Supporting in the classroom

Aims of the session

- To explore practical ways in which TAs can support the curriculum, pupils and teachers
- To develop TAs’ skills of observing and assessing pupils’ progress and reporting relevant information to the teacher
- To consider the role of the TA in the planning, preparation and review of work in partnership with teachers, and in assessing pupil performance
- To help TAs understand how they can support learning across the curriculum

Resources

Presentation slides 3.1 – 3.6
Course document 3.1
Video sequences 3.1 and 3.2
Flipchart, projector and screen or whiteboard

*Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide (TDA0245)*
(referred to in this session as the *Good practice guide* )

The room should be laid out in advance in a way that facilitates group work; for example, six to eight participants around a table (‘café-style’). This needs to be planned so that all participants can also see the video screen(s).
Outline of the session

**Introduction**  5 minutes

**Observing pupils**  25 minutes
The purpose of observation; ways to observe

**Matching work to pupils’ developing abilities and levels of attainment**  10 minutes
The ways pupils are organised in class; differentiation

**The cyclical process of supporting in the classroom**  80 minutes
A ‘virtuous circle’ for supporting teachers and pupils; plan, prepare, do, review; how the *Good practice guide* can support this; video sequences

*Note:* TAs should attend this session with their mentors.
**Introduction**

Explain that this session is concerned with the range of activities that TAs would generally be expected to cover when supporting in primary school classrooms.

Issues of inclusion, and the arrangements for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities and for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), are dealt with in a separate module.

**Observing pupils**

Explain that to provide support in the classroom and to feed information and evidence back to the teacher, TAs need good observation skills.

**The purpose of observation**

Ask the TAs and mentors around each table to work in separate groups to discuss the purposes of observation, making notes.

Allow 10 minutes for this activity, including the feedback.

Ask each set of TAs and mentors to compare their lists.

Ask each group to give their purposes and record them, for example, on the flipchart, or whiteboard.
Now compare the answers from the flipchart with presentation slide 3.1.

Presentation slide 3.1

The purpose of observation

Observation is intended to:

- provide reliable information of pupils’ progress on the curriculum
- identify pupils’ strengths and weaknesses
- discover how well pupils are responding to the teaching resources
- enable feedback to pupils of what they need to do to progress
- enable feedback to teachers of the response of pupils to the work

Ways to observe

Tell TAs that when they are working with pupils, it is important to have a focus for observations they make. They should plan with the teacher what, in particular, their observations should focus on, how they should record their observations, and what and how they should feed back to the teacher.

Tell TAs that they should note down pupils’ responses while they are working with them, or if that is not possible, as soon as possible afterwards. Tell TAs that they will often be asked to observe how pupils tackle tasks, as well as what they produce.

Explain that there may be occasions when time might be set aside for the TA just to observe pupils’ responses from a less involved position, or when the activity itself calls for a more detached view from the TA, for example during whole-class work led by the teacher. The teacher might ask the TA how well pupils work independently and how well they work in cooperation with other pupils. It is quite common for a teacher to ask a TA to make observations of particular pupils. Examples of this will be seen in the video material later in the module.

Tell TAs that they will be asked to make some of these more ‘detached’ observations as part of this induction training. Alert TAs and mentors to the difference between observations that TAs will be making as a regular part of their work in the classroom and special observations that they will be asked to make in other classes as a part of their training. For more information on the courtesies and protocols of making written observations in classes other than those they normally work with, refer participants to further reading 3.1 in the Role and context section of the TA file. Explain, too, that there are various protocols that cover the
sharing of observations of all kinds with third parties, such as not identifying individual pupils by name. Stress that all observations by TAs are subject to management by teachers.

Course document 3.1 in the same part of the TA file provides a sheet for recording observations in others’ classrooms. The TAs may wish to photocopy it for use in different lessons. They may wish to use it while observing the video clips later in this session.

Course document 3.1

Observation sheet for classroom use – example 1

Record the following:

Name of observer: ____________________________

Class: ____________________________

Teacher: ____________________________

Date and time: ____________________________

Number in class: ____________________________

Objectives of the lesson: ____________________________

What activities are taking place? ____________________________

What is the focus of your observations? ____________________________

A sketch map of the location with the placing of the key players: ____________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Pupil(s) observed</th>
<th>Observations/notes</th>
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</table>
Further reading 3.1 – Observing in the classroom

Before making and recording observations in the classroom, please discuss this with your teacher and mentor. They will guide you in the first instance and ensure you follow the protocols established in your school.

It is, for example, important to keep confidential the details of what you observe in a lesson, especially if you keep a written record. If any materials are shared more widely – on a course, for instance – then the names of those observed should be withheld or altered. If you go further and plan to use observational work for serious study purposes, take photographs or video, the permission of all taking part should be sought beforehand. The purposes of the observation should be made clear to them.

If you are planning to make observations in a class other than the one in which you work, you should arrange this beforehand with the teacher taking the class. Make sure that they understand what you are doing and who you are observing, and that they are happy with it. If it is being done for the purposes of your own studies, such as the activities contained in this course, this should not normally be a problem, but if you are planning to share what you have seen with other people, especially those outside the school, offer to show what you have written to the teacher afterwards so that they can check it for accuracy.

Matching work to pupils’ developing abilities and levels of attainment

Remind the participants of the main ways in which teachers organise pupils when teaching in ordinary classes:

- as a whole class (which may be mixed-ability, in sets or streamed)
- in groups (including pairs)
- as individuals.

Ask them to recall in which subjects and circumstances they have met these different ways of organising pupils. Then ask them to suggest and discuss with their colleagues around their table (or in groups of four to six if the tables are large) reasons why teachers might choose to organise pupils like this.

Ask the participants to identify in which year groups and subject departments mixed-ability, sets and streamed groups are found in their own school.

Differentiation

Explain that teachers differentiate their teaching to meet the learning needs of pupils.
Show presentation slide 3.2 and use the notes below to explain each point.

**Presentation slide 3.2**

**Differentiation**

- By grouping
- By task
- By outcome
- By support

Explain that teachers might differentiate:

- **by grouping** together pupils who are making progress at a similar rate, e.g. dividing pupils into different sets for mathematics

- **by task** – setting different tasks for pupils of different abilities or to suit different learning styles

- **by outcome** – setting open-ended tasks and allowing pupils to respond at different levels

- **by support** – giving more help to certain pupils.

Ask participants to think of examples of differentiation that they know happen in their school, for example by grouping, task, outcome or adult support. Ask them to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each type of organisation.

After a few minutes take brief contributions from the whole group. Draw out the following points and principles, or establish them yourself if they are not included:

- **Mixed-ability classes**

  Primary classes are commonly composed of pupils of ‘mixed ability’. Irrespective of their ability or attainment, pupils typically move up a class at the start of each school year, with their peer group. This is in contrast to the systems in some other countries; in the USA, for example, where a pupil moves up or stays to repeat a year on the basis of the grades they have achieved. Mixed-ability teaching facilitates the development of peer support activities and cooperative learning. Pupils benefit by learning from each other and can support one another’s learning. However, it demands careful management by teachers and can be complex in terms of classroom organisation.
Grouping pupils according to ability – ‘setting’ or streaming

Although pupils have much in common and can sometimes be taught effectively together, pupils also have differences in the way they learn. For example, some learn more readily and more rapidly than others in particular subjects. Sometimes pupils may be grouped according to their differences, so that those having particular talents or needs can learn at a level or pace commensurate with their attainment. Setting and streaming are ways that some primary schools use to do this. ‘Setting’ is where pupils are grouped according to ability for particular subjects, so a pupil could be in a higher set for mathematics than for literacy. ‘Streaming’ is where pupils are grouped according to general ability and stay in that stream across all or most subjects. The former is more common.

Differentiated work and targeted support

In any class there can be a wide range of ability and pupils learn in different ways. To cater for these learning differences, teachers plan and prepare ‘differentiated’ work, to match the learning needs and developing abilities of the pupils. This enables learning to be more personal for pupils.

Giving targeted support

Where pupils are given the same work, some may need targeted support to meet lesson objectives.

Emphasise that the main purpose of organising lessons in these different ways is to provide the best conditions for teaching and learning and thus secure the progress of all pupils. Make it clear that much of what TAs are expected to do in assisting teachers and pupils in classrooms is concerned with supporting differentiated work or providing differentiation by giving pupils additional support with the same work.

Suggest to the participants that back in their schools they ask their mentors to arrange for them to be given opportunities to work closely with particular departments, so they can develop deeper knowledge of the ways in which these classes are organised and pupils are supported in a few different subjects.

The cyclical process of supporting in the classroom

Remind TAs that Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide defines effective practice in TAs’ work.
The ideas put forward in this session are based on these principles.

Tell the participants that they are about to do a short activity based on questions in the Good practice guide. These highlight ways of working cooperatively with teachers in supporting learning and participation in the curriculum. Explain that the slide starts with a statement of what will be found when TAs and teachers are working well together (the indicator). This is followed by a selection of questions to ask in order to establish whether any given case satisfies this indicator.

Show presentation slide 3.4.

Presentation slide 3.4

Working cooperatively with teachers

Indicator 3.1: TAs work cooperatively with teachers to support the learning and participation of pupils.

- Do TAs understand the purpose of lesson activities?
- Do TAs share in long- and medium-term planning?
- Are TAs involved in the planning of specific lessons where teachers and TAs share the classroom?
- Do TAs and teachers have arrangements that encourage them to offer one another constructive feedback?
- Do TAs and teachers plan in ways that demonstrate to pupils their commitment to teamwork?
- Are there agreed plans for TAs to respond to individual pupils' needs?
Ask TAs to discuss with their mentors each of these questions in relation to their own work and that of the teachers in their own school.

- In what ways and in which lessons or curriculum subjects do they have positive answers to some or all of these questions?
- Where their answers are negative, what were their experiences?
- Who might support them in making changes to achieve more positive experiences?
- What examples can they give of a positive development since they started in their job?

Take answers from the whole group, writing, on a flipchart or whiteboard, for example, useful points about how teachers and TAs can support one another’s work in encouraging pupil participation in the curriculum.

Point out that the Good practice guide can help them and the school in developing effective ways for TAs to support the curriculum, the teachers and the pupils. For example, indicator 2.2 refers to the flexible use of skills and knowledge. Again, a selection of the review questions is given, so that TAs can reflect on their own experiences.

Show presentation slide 3.5.

Presentation slide 3.5

The use of TAs’ skills

Indicator 2.2: The expertise, skills and knowledge of TAs are used flexibly to foster the learning of pupils.
- Are TAs’ previous experiences and skills used to support curriculum access and flexible approaches?
- Is care taken to make sure that TAs are actively encouraged to work in curriculum areas or faculties in which they feel confident and interested?
- Is the particular curricular knowledge of TAs recognised and used?
- Do TAs contribute to record keeping and collecting evidence of pupils’ progress for formal assessments?

Ask the participants to consider in their pairs (and with others round their tables if they wish) the following questions:

- In their own school, how well are the skills and knowledge they have brought, perhaps from a different job, used to support a curriculum area or a particular activity with pupils?
• Is their particular knowledge of pupils used well in assessment and record-keeping?

Tell the TAs that they are likely to be asked to assist teachers in supporting pupils’ learning in all three forms of organisation – whole-class teaching, group and individual work.

*Show presentation slide 3.6.*

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**Presentation slide 3.6**

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Explain that this process is best understood as a cyclical one: plan, prepare, practice, review. It enables the teacher and TA to meet the common and the differing educational needs of all pupils in the class.

Point out that each element of the cycle is dependent upon the others. It is possible, for example, to find well-planned work that fails in the classroom because of weaknesses in preparation. Worksheets, for instance, may be poorly designed, or materials for practical work may be ill-prepared or difficult for pupils to access. TAs therefore need to be involved to some degree in planning the work in order to assist with thorough preparation, effective classroom practice and review.

**Plan**

All teachers plan in advance what they are going to do in their lessons. One of the most crucial areas in which the work of TAs can be enhanced is by allowing time for TAs to share this planning. Tell TAs they will see examples of this in the video sequences later.
Prepare

TAs may be asked to assist with preparing resources for a lesson. They may also need to do some work to prepare themselves, for example, by familiarising themselves with the subject matter or the skills to be covered in the lesson. The teacher can help with issues of subject knowledge when you are planning the lesson together.

Practice

Explain that the teacher’s task is to ensure that the curriculum is taught in a way that is suitable to the pupils and which is as interesting as possible and appropriate to the context of the classroom and school.

The TA and teacher together use a variety of strategies to provide the best possible support to pupils.

TAs provide a valuable ‘extra pair of eyes and ears’ in the classroom, which can be of great use in assessment and recording. Assessing pupils has always been an essential part of teaching, so that teachers can judge how they teach and whether they are making a difference. TAs are increasingly involved in the assessment of pupils. Careful observation is crucial to reliable assessment.

All schools should have arrangements and systems for collecting and recording information. In primary schools the link between TAs and teachers in pooling this information is crucial to effective record-keeping.

Ask the TAs to discuss with their mentors, or with others round their table if they wish:

- how recording of information is done in their own school
- the types of information recorded
- by whom it is recorded
- for what purposes it is recorded.

With the whole group establish what seems to be common practice and note any unusual or innovative ways in which TAs contribute to assessment. Draw attention to the ways in which collaboration with curriculum department staff leads to effective records.

Draw out the following points:

- Information about pupils should be regarded as confidential. It follows that this is an area where the TA works closely with class teachers, curriculum departments – particularly heads of departments – and the SENCO

- It is time-wasting to collect a lot of information that cannot be used to good effect. On the other hand, too little knowledge can lead to pupils under-achieving. The school should offer to TAs guidelines and formats that strike the right balance.
Review

Explain that in the virtuous circle, assessing pupils' work and performance is a crucial part of the review. It involves gathering information about the success or otherwise of particular teaching approaches and resources. What works effectively can then be sustained and built upon, and what is not successful can be changed. In working with pupils and teachers TAs can make useful observations on what can be done to improve materials or strategies. By careful observation, TAs can make well-informed judgements about pupils' learning and progress and spot obstacles to their learning and participation.

Remind the TAs that we are concerned not only with helping pupils to achieve high standards of work, but also with helping them to achieve high standards of behaviour. Tell TAs they will see examples of the review part of the cycle in the video sequences later.

Video sequences

Tell TAs that they are going to see some video material from a primary school that illustrates this cycle.

Note to trainer

There are two video sequences on the DVD. Sequence 1 shows a teacher and teaching assistant working together in a lesson in which year 4 pupils make maps associated with their work in history and art. Sequence 2 shows a teacher and teaching assistant working together on core subjects in a reception class. Trainers should view the video material before the session to select the material they are going to use and to prepare their questions for the discussion that follows. For trainers who do not feel comfortable in providing their own commentary, a re-edited version of each section of the video is available with a voice-over narration from the teacher and teaching assistant featured in the video. Trainers can either use this version to assist their preparation, or show it directly to participants after they have discussed each video clip. There will not be time to show all the video material so trainers should decide, as part of their preparation, which clips to prioritise.

All the material was filmed in real classes in real time.

Various observation points are given to use before showing each sequence. These indicate what should be brought out in discussion. Discussion points are also suggested for the trainer to bring out after the clip. Wherever possible, trainers should encourage TAs to relate what they see in the video to their own experience in school – are there similarities and differences in the way they work in their own school? They should think about this in relation to the ways they support the:

- curriculum
- teachers
- pupils.
Tell the participants that there will be occasional breaks during the showing of the video so that they can discuss what they have seen. There will also be time for a longer discussion at the end. Suggest that they record their comments and observations while they watch.

Explain if you are showing a sequence more than once.

Remind the participants of what they learned earlier in the session about observation purposes and strategies.

Trainers should use whichever sections are relevant from the text below.

**Background notes**

**Video sequence 3.1 – Supporting in a year 4 class**

Sequence 3.1 features Louise D (the teacher) and Louise S (the TA) working with a year 4 class who are making maps associated with their recent work in history and art. The primary school in which they work has a unit for pupils with physical disabilities. Pupils from this unit are included in mainstream classes as much as possible. Louise S works with two pupils with physical disabilities who are included in mainstream classes full-time. In this lesson she supports Cormack who has a physical disability and Leah who has a physical disability and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Louise S accompanies these pupils to their various sets for the core subjects and stays with them in the mixed-ability class in which they study non-core subjects. The aim is to include both pupils as fully as possible in the work of the class, while allowing them to work as independently as possible. Sometimes, if Leah needs to leave the class for a while, because she is upset or because her behaviour might disrupt the learning of others, Louise S accompanies her. The aim is always to let Leah calm down and then return to the class as quickly as possible.

**Video 3.1.1a – Planning**

Before showing the clip ask TAs to notice:

- how Louise S finds out what the lesson is about
- the ways in which they plan to include Leah in the lesson so that she does not become frustrated
- the preparation that Louise S has to do
- the skills Louise S needs to prepare for the lesson and those they think she will need in the lesson
- how Louise D draws upon Louise S's knowledge of the pupils
- how they think the type of planning that Louise D and Louise S do will benefit them and the pupils in the lesson.
Bring out the following points in the discussion following this clip:

- Louise D outlines the lesson for Louise S
- Louise S has considerable experience and knows Leah very well. The teacher uses Louise S’s ideas and knowledge of the pupils she supports to plan inclusive strategies and the most effective pupil groupings
- The preparation that Louise S does is there as an alternative, if Leah feels she cannot cope with the task in the same way as the rest of the class
- The teacher sometimes gives Louise S some background reading on the content of the lesson. Louise S appreciates this as it enables her to support pupils at a higher level.

**Video 3.1.2a – The lesson**

Before showing the clip ask TAs to consider:

- how well the planning works out in practice in the lesson
- what skills or strategies Louise S, the TA, uses at different stages of the lesson
- how well Louise S helps to include Leah in the lesson
- how what Louise S does benefits the teacher and the pupils.

Tell TAs that they should listen for Leah and Louise S’s voices in the background, even when the teacher is speaking.

Bring out the following points in the discussion following this clip:

- Louise S is able to give some pupils the extra attention they need. The teacher, working alone, could not give them as much attention
- Louise S listens carefully to the teacher’s introduction – sometimes she takes notes – so that she can reinforce what the teacher says with pupils
- While she is listening to the teacher, Louise S keeps an eye on pupils’ engagement and behaviour
- Louise S has a good relationship with Leah. She uses humour
- She knows pupils well and is familiar with the school behaviour policy
- Louise S helps Leah by keeping calm; reminding her how to behave appropriately; redirecting her to the task if she gets distracted; repeating the task and breaking it down into smaller steps; encouraging her and praising her for the things she does well; helping her with the task where necessary but allowing her to work independently whenever possible; anticipating trigger points and pre-empting possible inappropriate behaviour from Leah
If Louise S has to leave the class with Leah, the aim is always to calm her down so that she can rejoin the lesson as quickly as possible.

Louise D helps and supports other pupils in the group.

She works as a team with the teacher and is treated with equal respect by pupils.

**Video 3.1.3a – Feedback**

Before showing the clip ask TAs to consider:

- why it was important for the teacher and TA to have the feedback session and what it achieved
- how important the TA’s contribution was.

Bring out the following points in the discussion following this clip:

- Although the teacher had a general idea of what took place in the groups that Louise S led, she needed to get detailed information from the TA
- Feedback helps the teacher to decide if the lesson was suitable for certain pupils, or if it needs to be adapted further
- Because the TA knows pupils well she is often able to suggest different ways of differentiating or personalising material so that the pupil can achieve more in future lessons
- Louise S was able to report back on the way Leah used specialist equipment
- The resources that Louise S made were made available to all pupils in the group. There was no pressure for Leah to use them. In fact, she used them in a different way to that which was planned and they were used by other pupils in the group.

**Video sequence 3.2 – Supporting in a reception class**

Sequence 3.2 features Becky (the teacher) and Ruth (the TA) working with a reception class. In the morning pupils do literacy and numeracy activities. After a whole-class introduction, the teacher takes half the class for a directed activity and the TA, working under the direction of the teacher, takes the rest of the class for another directed activity. In this lesson pupils are working on capacity in the whole-class activity and the directed activity which Ruth, the TA, leads. While Ruth takes her group outside, Becky leads a directed literacy activity in the classroom. Pupils in the class are being assessed against the foundation stage profile.
**Video 3.2.1a – Planning**

Before showing the clip ask TAs to notice:

- how Ruth finds out what will happen in the lesson
- how she knows what role she is to play in the lesson
- what knowledge and skills Ruth will need in the lesson
- how they think the type of planning that Becky and Ruth do will benefit them and the pupils in the lesson.

Bring out the following points in the discussion following this clip:

- Becky tells Ruth, the TA, the objectives for the lesson, outlines its purpose and sequence and gives Ruth a copy of the lesson plan and observation sheets she will use, so Ruth is well informed about the lesson
- She tells Ruth what her role is in each part of the lesson
- Becky identifies a pupil for Ruth to observe. She explains exactly what she wants Ruth to observe, the language she wants her to use and how she wants her to record it
- She explains the reasons why she wants Ruth to do things in a particular way
- Planning together with the teacher gives a much better outcome
- Sometimes things don’t quite go to plan and Ruth has to adapt the activity as she goes along. If she does this she is always careful to report what she has done to the teacher
- Becky is always very open to Ruth’s suggestions and ideas for improving the lesson for pupils.

**Video 3.2.2a – The lesson and Preparation, coming in, settling down**

Before showing the clip ask TAs to consider:

- the different roles that Ruth has
- how well the planning works in practice in the lesson
- what skills or strategies Ruth, the TA, uses at different stages of the lesson
- what curriculum knowledge Ruth has developed and how she uses it
- how what Ruth does benefits the teacher and the pupils.
Bring out the following points in the discussion following this clip:

- Ruth, the TA, greets pupils and chats to parents at the door, reassures them and sorts out any problems
- Becky and Ruth learn a lot from parents, who are pupils’ first educators
- Before she meets parents Becky always consults Ruth to see if she has any observations for Becky to consider
- While Becky, the teacher, takes the register and makes sure pupils have been to the toilet, Ruth collects the dinner money and gets resources ready.

**Video 3.2.3a – Supporting in whole-class activities**

Bring out the following points in the discussion following this clip:

- Teacher and TA work together as a team
- Ruth, the TA, notes down her observations of a child as discussed in the planning, including quotations from the pupil
- While the teacher teaches the whole class, Ruth scans the room to make sure that everyone is engaged. She supports anyone who appears to be off-task or struggling to keep up or understand
- She models the key vocabulary for pupils who are learning English as an additional language.

**Video 3.2.4a – Working with a small group**

Bring out the following points in the discussion following this clip:

- Ruth, the TA, carries out the activity as directed by the teacher
- She reinforces the new vocabulary that the teacher introduced to the whole class
- She also encourages good social skills, eg. participation, taking turns
- She directs some questions at the pupil that she has been asked to observe particularly
- She picks up on other learning opportunities as they arise, eg. asking pupils about the transparent water tray
- Immediately after the activity Ruth notes down her observations to feed back to the teacher
- Becky feels confident to let Ruth lead a group. In this way each pupil in the class can get more adult time and attention.
Video 3.2.5a – Feedback

Before showing the clip ask TAs to consider:

- why it was important for the teacher and TA to have the feedback session and what it achieved
- how important Ruth, the TA's, contribution was.

Bring out the following points in the discussion following this clip:

- Although Becky, the teacher, had a general idea of what happened in the whole-class activity, she needed to ask Ruth for detailed information on what Riley, the pupil Ruth was observing particularly, achieved
- Feedback enables Becky and Ruth to review pupils’ progress and agree some next steps that offer an appropriate degree of challenge
- Becky needed to get feedback from Ruth’s first-hand experience of leading the directed activity. She could not observe it herself as she was teaching another group
- Ruth was able to reassure the teacher that the activity fulfilled the objectives and suggest improvements to the directed activity that would improve learning for future groups
- Becky and Ruth don’t just rely on formal opportunities for feedback. Because they work together in the same classroom, Becky and Ruth talk to each other throughout the day.
Session 4

Support for teaching assistants

Aims of the session

- To ensure that all TAs have an appropriate job description
- To consider strategies for TA appraisal
- To look at opportunities for training, qualifications, accreditation and career development

Resources

Presentation slides 4.1 – 4.5
Course documents 4.1 and 4.2 (see audio clip 4.1)
Audio clip 4.1 (a transcript of this is available as course document 4.2 in the TA file)
Working with teaching assistants: a good practice guide (TDA0245)

Flipchart, projector and screen or whiteboard

Material trainers may wish to have available, as appropriate:

- information on local opportunities for training, accreditation and mentor support, including consultancy packages or materials for school-based training or distance learning
- information on local opportunities for training teachers and managers in the deploying and managing of TAs
- information on NVQs and national occupational standards for TAs
- information on higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) and other local opportunities for TAs, eg. leading teaching assistant schemes
Outline of the session

Introduction 5 minutes

Appraisal 15 minutes
The appraisal process; self-review

Opportunities for continuing professional development 15 minutes
Training and qualifications; HLTA status and other opportunities; on-going continuing professional development; self-study skills

Rounding off 10 minutes
Issues that may have arisen; completing an action plan for future work
**Introduction**

Explain that the *Good practice guide* has a section on reviewing TAs’ performance and promoting their development. Indicator 6 includes several review questions. These have been adapted on presentation slide 4.1.

*Show presentation slide 4.1.*

**Presentation slide 4.1**

**Support for the TA**

Indicator 6: TAs are supported in relation to their induction, mentoring and development needs.

- Are TAs provided with a school induction programme?
- Are TAs encouraged to complete a professional achievement and development portfolio?
- Are TAs appraised as a means of developing their contributions and accountabilities in the school?
- Does the school structure responsibilities for TAs to reflect their qualifications, experience and training?
- Are there clear means of identifying appropriate and relevant continuing professional development to support TAs’ further development?

Tell TAs that this session is going to focus on two of these indicators:

- Appraisal as a means of developing their contributions and accountabilities in the school (see third bullet point above)
- Identifying appropriate and relevant continuing professional development to support TAs’ further development (see fifth bullet point above).
Ask participants to turn to further reading 4.1 *Appraisal and further development* in the *Role and context* section of the TA file.

**Further reading 4.1 – Appraisal and further development**

When you have been in post for a while it is good practice for there to be a formal review of your job, usually called an appraisal. If you are serving a probationary period, it may come at the end of it, or it may be towards the end of your first year. It should then become at least annual.

Basically, the appraisal is a review of your performance conducted by you and your line manager. The aim is to review progress on targets that were set at the last appraisal, set targets for the future, identify any training or other help you might require, and identify any changes that need to be made to the job description. An appraisal should be a positive process that recognises and identifies areas for development.

The form below is offered as an example of what you might complete as part of the self-review in preparation for an appraisal. The school may have its own form. In any event, the process should be discussed with your mentor. This will prepare you for the topics that will be discussed at the appraisal.

Self-review is a process whereby you consider your performance in your job, concentrating on the successes you have achieved, any areas requiring development, and your plans for the future. You should make notes of what you consider to be your strengths and what you want to improve.

**Self-review**

*Areas to consider include:*

The job description – is it still appropriate? If not, what changes need to be made in relation to the following points:

- helping with classroom resources and records
- helping with the care and support of pupils
- providing support for learning activities
- providing support for colleagues
- the resources available for the job
- the way you organise your job, eg. time management and communication with others
What extra contributions have you made to school life, in particular through using your talents and in relation to your 'key' accountabilities?

What appreciative and critical comments have you received from others?

What aspect of your job satisfies you the most and what the least? List your successes and those things that you are still concerned about.

What targets were set at the last appraisal/start of the job? What do you feel you have achieved?

Where you have not achieved the targets, what are the reasons?

Are there areas of your present work you would like to improve upon?

How successful was any training received?

What factors helped or hindered your professional development during the year?

What are your thoughts on future aspirations, with reference to development opportunities and training, in or outside of school?

Are there other areas you would like to extend your work into, that you cannot be involved in at present?

Consider your needs for career development; for example, where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Would you like some formal observation of your work? If so, what focus would you like it to have? (If you have decided that you would like your work to be observed prior to the appraisal, agree the time and place of appraisal with your line manager, and also agree the focus and the class in which you will be observed.)

**The appraisal meeting**

*The appraisal meeting should cover:*

- consideration of how well targets established in the last appraisal have been met
- a self-assessment by the person being appraised
- observations on the performance of the person being appraised by the line manager
- dialogue, including any problems raised by the person being appraised
- setting targets to be achieved by the next appraisal
- agreeing the actions required to meet those targets, including any training needed
Tell TAs that this document gives a possible framework for appraisal (or 'professional development review') and suggestions of how the school can manage this. Suggest TAs look at this in more detail, with their mentors, after the session, but tell them you are going to outline the key points now.

*Show presentation slide 4.2.*

**Presentation slide 4.2**

**Appraisal**

The purpose of appraisal is to:
- provide an opportunity for two-way dialogue and review
- enhance professional development
- recognise achievement
- identify any areas of weakness
- set targets
- identify any professional development needed
- provide information for management

Explain that an appraisal is a planned opportunity for TAs to discuss performance and professional needs with their line manager. Appraisals usually occur at regular intervals, say yearly or half-yearly. They are meant to be frank and constructive, with the appraiser and TA both contributing freely. They are opportunities to review the period since the last appraisal, to recognise achievement and to look ahead to the next period, identifying any professional development needs. They offer opportunities for the TAs to raise issues of concern, as well as for their managers to comment on how they are doing their job.

Explain that before any appraisal it is valuable to conduct a self-review. This will get TAs thinking about the things that will be discussed at the appraisal, and help to identify issues that they may want to raise.
A self-review should be an honest appraisal of:

- your strengths and development needs in respect of working in support of the school, the curriculum, pupils and teachers
- any extra contributions you have made to school life, in particular in relation to your key responsibilities
- any appreciative or critical comments you have received from others
- your future professional development needs

The appraisal itself should be conducted with reference to the job description. It is an opportunity both to see whether the TA is performing the job that is required and to amend the job description if it is no longer appropriate or accurate.

It is advisable to give thought to the appraisal beforehand and to make notes if necessary, so as to ensure that the appraisal includes the issues you want to discuss.

*Ask the TAs to look at course document 4.1.*

**Course document 4.1**

**Appraisal preparation**

These are my key:

- Strengths

- Skills

- Experiences
I use them in the following situations:
I would like to use them...
Something I know I’m not confident about is...
To help me overcome, or if necessary avoid, this I would like...

**Action points**
I will discuss this with...
I will need help/support from...
Possible obstacles might be...
I will need (eg. resources, practical help, time)...

Tell TAs to spend five minutes on their own in starting to complete course document 4.1. Then ask them to work with their mentor for a further five minutes discussing what they have written.

- What are the implications for a formal appraisal in the future?
- Are there any implications for the TA’s job description?

Tell TAs that there is not enough time for them to complete the activity here, but suggest they and their mentor continue the discussion back at school.

Allow 10 minutes for this activity.
Show presentation slides 4.4a and 4.4b, which describes the points normally covered by an appraisal.

Presentation slide 4.4a

The process of an appraisal

- Consideration of how well targets established in the last appraisal have been met
- A self-assessment by the person being appraised
- Observations on the performance of the person being appraised by the line manager
- Dialogue, including any problems raised by the person being appraised
- Setting targets to be achieved by the next appraisal

Presentation slide 4.4b

The process of an appraisal

- Agreeing the actions required to meet those targets, including any training needed
- Consideration of the job description and agreeing any changes, if necessary
- Setting a date for the next review
- Agreeing what is to go on the recorded note for the headteacher/staff development manager/governors

Explain that this is not meant to prescribe a rigid agenda, although it does describe a logical progression. Most appraisals are fairly informal, so that both parties feel at ease and able to discuss any issues openly.

Reassure TAs that appraisal is not an examination but is about their development and the school’s support for it. The actions agreed at an appraisal include ones for the manager to carry out to help develop the TA’s skills and help them perform their job better.
Tell TAs that they are going to listen to a headteacher, Sue, talking about the support that TAs in her school receive. Ask TAs as they listen to note down the way the school supports TAs. Tell them that a transcript of the audio clip is available as course document 4.2 in the TA file.

Audio clip 4.1 – Support for TAs

Teaching assistants are an important part of the school team. They provide invaluable support in the school, not only for individual pupils, but also for the teachers and for the school as an organisation.

All our assistants have very clear job descriptions and we’ve now brought them into the performance management cycle.

At their review meeting we go through the job description and that’s a good opportunity to identify areas with which, perhaps, they’re having difficulty, but also to celebrate the successes they are having. We discuss what their training needs are, not only for their own personal development, but also in relation to whole-school targets and objectives. We then set objectives for them in the same way that we do for the teachers and they have targets to achieve in terms of their professional development and also for how they’re going to help the teachers achieve the pupil progress targets.

We have invested heavily in training for our teaching assistants over the past three years because we want them to be competent and confident to deliver the job we want them to do. They are always included in training that takes place in school and they have an equal voice with the teachers.

The teaching assistants have their own meeting once a week. It’s either used for training or issues that they’d like to discuss. The higher level teaching assistant who chairs the meeting also attends the senior management team meetings, and we’ve found this improves communication throughout the school and ensures that everyone not only knows what’s going on, but also has a voice.

We have whole-school training once a term, for example in behaviour management. The assistants all attend as well as going on courses and also visiting other schools.

Schools can be very stressful places in which to work and we have a buddy system that was actually suggested by our teaching assistants, because, in the same way we encourage the children to talk about things that are upsetting them or worrying them, sometimes staff need this safety valve. So all staff in this school have an unofficial buddy to whom they can go for what we call a ‘buddy moment’, if they need to, and that can be for something really good that has happened or something’s happened that’s made them really upset or absolutely furious. Sometimes you just need to go and tell someone and get that off your chest.
All staff here have very clear job descriptions and are aware of the boundaries and their responsibilities within the school. But we also have a collective sense of responsibility, so if someone’s having difficulty with a particular pupil, or group of pupils, we work together as a team to see how we can support the member of staff and overcome the problem.

Briefly take feedback. Draw out that in the audio clip Sue:

- talks about TAs being an important part of the school team
- describes how the TAs support pupils, teachers and the school as a whole
- explains that they have clear job descriptions
- explains how TAs are included in the performance management cycle where successes are celebrated, targets are set and training needs are identified
- explains the training and development opportunities available for TAs
- explains how good communication is established and maintained
- describes how staff support each other.

Opportunities for continuing professional development

Training and qualifications

Explain that, after a time, TAs might find that they want and need further training. This might be to learn more about some special educational needs presented by pupils that they work with, or to develop their skills in a specific area of the curriculum or aspect of their practice. Alternatively, they may want to undertake training that will eventually contribute towards gaining a qualification.

If the local authority is offering accreditation for this induction training, explain what is involved, and what records the TAs need to keep, such as a portfolio of activities. Even if not being offered accreditation, TAs should be advised to keep their records as they may be useful evidence towards a qualification in due course.

Explain that the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) has produced a career development framework (CDF) which shows all the qualifications commonly used by school support staff and how they relate to job roles. In discussion with their school or local authority, TAs can identify opportunities for development within their current role as well as qualifications that will help them to progress within their current job role or onto other roles within the school. The CDF is accompanied by guidance for local authorities and school
leaders to help them make effective use of its contents. The CDF is available on the TDA’s website (www.tda.gov.uk).

Assure participants that the appraisal process is a very good starting point for continuing professional development. It encourages the practice of self-review and develops TAs’ skills in identifying their own professional needs.

Explain that the TDA is responsible for a set of national occupational standards (NOS) for TAs. The standards describe a range of activities that TAs need to be able to carry out if they are to do their job effectively. Tell TAs and their mentors that, when back in school, they will find it helpful to use the standards in conjunction with the job description to review their performance and identify possible development needs. The standards will also form a useful basis for TAs and mentors to review and refine the TA’s job description.

Tell TAs that NOS form the basis of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for TAs. NVQs for TAs are available at two levels:

- level 2 is appropriate to TAs who may be new entrants to the occupation and/or whose responsibilities at work are more limited in scope
- level 3 is appropriate to experienced TAs and/or those whose work role calls for competence across a varied range of responsibilities.

NVQs are competence-based qualifications that cover the duties that a TA might undertake at each level, and test whether they can carry out these duties in practice to the nationally accepted standard. The qualifications also assess key areas of knowledge and understanding relevant to the TA role. Assessment is done by qualified assessors, experienced in classroom settings, who observe the TA at work and examine things they have done – for example, preparing for lessons. Question-and-answer sessions and projects/assignments are used to test knowledge and understanding. Each qualification consists of a core of units that every candidate must cover. Over and above those, the TA can select from a number of optional units those that best fit their particular responsibilities or interests. TAs do not have to do an NVQ level 2 before they can do a level 3; they should choose the one which corresponds best to the level at which they are working.

Up-to-date information about the NVQs and the national occupational standards for TAs is available from: www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingassistants and www.skillsplus.gov.uk

**Higher level teaching assistant status and other opportunities**

Explain that higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) undertake a more extended role in schools, particularly in terms of supporting teaching and learning, where their role complements that of teachers, allowing teachers to make better use of their time, professional knowledge, understanding and skills. HLTAs often work with more autonomy than other TAs.

To gain HLTA status, TAs have to meet a set of professional standards, usually attained through a training programme and associated assessment. Outline the arrangements that your local authority has for selecting and training HLTA candidates.
Tell TAs that more information on HLTAs can be obtained at www.tda.gov.uk/support/hlta

**On-going continuing professional training and development**

Explain that continuing professional development doesn’t necessarily mean going on courses or working towards qualifications for a particular status. One of the most effective ways of training and developing support staff and of ensuring consistency of implementation of school policies, aims and understanding is for training to take place within the school. This is also a good means of promoting teamwork. Many schools include their TAs in their staff training and some of the TAs present may have already been involved in this. Allow course members a couple of minutes to share positive experiences of training that they have had or that have been relayed to them by colleagues.

Some local authorities offer other career development opportunities for TAs, eg. in some authorities ‘leading teaching assistants’ deliver training for groups of TAs and go into schools to advise and work alongside less-experienced TAs. Outline any such arrangements in your local authority.

**Self-study skills**

Explain to TAs that it will be very useful for them to develop self-study skills, to support both the development opportunities provided by the school and for any further external training they undertake.

Ask the participants to form again into their groups of three or four and to identify and discuss half a dozen skills they think will be needed for studying on their own.

*After a few minutes show presentation slide 4.5.*

**Presentation slide 4.5**

**Study skills needed for further professional development**

- Organisation – time management
- Recording
- Reflective thought
- Sharing professional ideas

Ask participants for their own ideas. Write on the flipchart any that you think are worth adding to this list.
Guidance on the kinds of skills it will be useful to develop can be found in further reading 4.2 Study skills in the Role and context section of the TA file.

**Further reading 4.2 – Study skills**

Whatever else you do with the school, or with the local authority, or in courses you undertake at a local college, developing your own study skills will help.

Discuss the following with your mentor and ask where you can get help if you feel you need it in any of the following areas. They are all things that you will need to develop for yourself if you take on more advanced training.

Study skills include things like:

- organisation skills
- recording skills
- ICT skills
- reflective thought
- sharing professional ideas.

You will need to be able to:

- read for interest or information
- take notes and keep references as you read
- take notes at courses or meetings
- write essays or summaries concisely
- use local libraries/resource centres
- use websites, CD-ROMs and DVDs
- find a quiet place to study at home, a shelf for books
- keep articles/information/handouts/pamphlets on a range of topics likely to be useful in school (such as recipes, instructions, games with their rules) and organise them so you can access the information easily.
Rounding off

Note to trainer
The final part of this session enables you to ensure that all the issues raised over the two sessions have been appropriately dealt with, whether from other units in this module or from the assignments to be carried out between the days of the course.

Ask the participants to bring forward any issues that have arisen from the course.

Write them up, on a flipchart or whiteboard, for example, classifying them as you write. Categories that come up may include:

- time issues, eg. time to meet with teachers, plan, and share feedback outside class contact time; time to observe while pupils are asking for help or attention; time to reflect, read or write up any notes; time involved in training

- differences in practice, eg. between teachers, between TAs, between faculties/subjects

- expectations of and demands on the TA(s) or the teacher(s)

- boundaries, eg. knowing how much scope TAs have for independent action.

Explain that you cannot provide instant solutions to these issues. They bring questions into the open that TAs should take away and discuss back at school, seeking answers suitable to their own situations.

Reassure course members that these issues are not new, and have been anticipated. School staff will work to promote a climate where issues and concerns are shared through professional discussion.

Ask TAs to think back over the content of this module. Suggest that they make some notes on aspects that they would like to follow up with their mentor back in school. This may include:

- updating of aspects of the job description

- the appraisal process

- the need for further training

- support in establishing a professional development portfolio.
Role and context

For teaching assistant trainers

Primary induction

The TDA is committed to providing accessible information. To request this item in another language or format, contact TDA corporate communications at the address below or e-mail corporatecomms@tda.gov.uk. Please tell us what you require and we will consider how to meet your needs.

Training and Development Agency for Schools
151 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SZ
TDA switchboard: 0870 4960 123
Publications: 0845 6060 323 e publications@tda.gov.uk
www.tda.gov.uk
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