

A smiling man in a blue button-down shirt and tan trousers stands in a classroom, gesturing with his right hand while holding a tablet in his left. He is positioned in front of a whiteboard. The whiteboard has some handwritten notes, including a checkmark, the letters 'PP', and 'EP' circled. The background is slightly blurred, showing the heads of students in the foreground.

SCG.

Teaching Assistant Handbook

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Introduction.



The role of classroom support staff in schools has been developing over many years and the role of the teaching assistant has changed over time.

In recent decades, there has been a move towards the increasing inclusion of pupils with additional and special needs in mainstream schools. This has led to a greater need for additional

support in classrooms, a need often satisfied through support staff and teaching assistant roles.

So, for someone looking to start their career in education, we hope that this handbook acts as a useful and practical guide, providing an insight into the roles and responsibilities of support staff within education settings.

The Role and Responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant.

There are a wide range of job titles for support staff that work alongside teachers in classrooms including:

- Classroom Assistant
- Teaching Assistant
- Learning Support Assistant
- Special Needs Assistant
- Higher Learning Teaching Assistant
- Learning Mentor
- Non -Teaching Assistant

In general, the term Teaching Assistant is the most common phrase used by schools (and child care centres) when referring to the many support staff roles in schools and will be the term used mostly throughout this handbook.



The primary role of the Teaching Assistant is to enable access to the curriculum, to facilitate independent learning and to promote inclusion.

Teaching Assistants generally carry out a variety of functions in support of teachers and what they do varies between classes, key stages and even schools. Some support individual pupils with special needs, others support the whole class or groups within the class, especially with literacy and numeracy.

Teaching Assistants may also provide administrative support, technical support or be involved in pastoral care.

The role of the Teaching Assistant can be crucial to pupils achieving greater autonomy, higher academic standards, a greater social awareness and feeling part of the whole school community.

It is important to note that the teaching assistant's objective is to support the teacher and or other school staff in providing a quality education to pupils. They should not be left in sole charge of a class at any time.

All support staff should feel valued and part of a team approach, to meet the needs of the pupil/s in their care. Where possible, support staff should be included in planning meetings and their training needs should be identified, especially when committing to a school long term.

What Skills/Qualities Are Needed To Become an Effective Teaching Assistant?

What Skills/Qualities Are Needed To Become an Effective Teaching Assistant?

Although there are a wide range of Teaching Assistant qualifications available, it is not compulsory and great emphasis is placed on the skills, attributes and qualities a Teaching Assistant needs to be effective.

These include:

- Professionalism, the ability to grasp the importance of this exciting role and how to act in the correct manner when dealing with stakeholders of every kind.
- An ability to get on with children and other adults – a sense of humour is an asset.
- Flexibility – things can happen unexpectedly in classrooms/schools and you need to be able to cope with the pace.
- Initiative – whilst you will be working under the guidance of a teacher there will be occasions when you need to make a decision and use your initiative.
- Patience and understanding – all children will occasionally try your patience and some children need constant understanding.
- Ability to cope with stress – schools are hectic places and you can expect to be involved in hundreds of interactions in a day, remember the teacher has the overall responsibility for the pupils, but you need a cool head and the ability to stay calm.
- A reasonable level of literacy and numeracy.
- ICT skills – not essential but increasingly important to support pupils' learning.
- Tact and sensitivity – when dealing with pupils, their parents, information provided to you, or perhaps even the teacher that guides you.
- Being a team player – in a school you will be part of a large team who need to share ideas and information as well as accepting advice, you will need a good working relationship with the teacher and other TAs and be sensitive to their needs.
- An ability to follow policy and procedure that inform you of the way in which you must conduct yourself at all times, whilst in and out of the school setting.



Behaviour Management.

Part of your role as a Teaching Assistant will be promoting the school's policies regarding pupil behaviour by consistently and effectively implementing agreed behaviour strategies as directed by the class teacher.

You will help pupils follow the school rules and also work towards specific goals and expectations as prescribed by the class teacher including individual, group or class targets.

You can promote positive behaviour and so help to prevent or reduce disruptive behaviour by:

- Learning and using pupils' names.
- Using effective communication skills and encouraging the use of these in pupils.
- Identifying pupils' needs and interests to help develop effective learning activities.
- Helping to organise a stimulating working environment to encourage learning.
- Having well prepared learning materials.
- Helping to encourage parental involvement.



Responsibilities.

Teaching Assistant responsibilities can be broken into three main areas:

1. Supporting the Pupils
2. Supporting the Teacher
3. Supporting the Curriculum

1. Supporting the Pupils

In this capacity, support staff might be required to:

- Attend to the pupils' personal needs, and implement related personal programmes, including social, health, physical, hygiene, first-aid and welfare matters.
- Supervise and support pupils ensuring their safety and access to learning.
- Establish good relationships with pupils, acting as a role model and being aware of and responding appropriately to individual needs.
- Promote the inclusion and acceptance of all pupils.
- Encourage pupils to interact with others and engage in activities led by the teacher.
- Encourage pupils to act independently as appropriate.
- Assist with the development and implementation of Individual Education/ Behaviour plans and Personal Care programmes.
- Set challenging and demanding expectations that promote self-esteem and independence.
- Provide feedback to pupils in relation to progress and achievement under guidance of the teacher.
- Consistently support pupils whilst recognising and responding to their individual needs.
- Promote independence and employ strategies to recognise and reward achievement of self-reliance.
- Assess the needs of pupils and use detailed knowledge and specialist skills to support pupils' learning.
- Receive and supervise pupils excluded from, or otherwise not working to, a normal timetable.
- Support provision for pupils with special needs.

- Develop 1:1 mentoring arrangements with pupils and provide support for distressed pupils.
- Promote the speedy/effective transfer of pupils across phases/integration of those who have been absent.
- Provide information and advice to enable pupils to make choices about their own learning/behaviour/attendance.
- Challenge and motivate pupils, promote and reinforce self-esteem.
- Use equipment as required maintaining pupils' needs and supporting their participation in learning tasks and activities.



2. Supporting the Teacher

As a support to the Teacher, a Teaching Assistant should:

- Prepare the classroom as directed for lessons, clear away afterwards and assist with displays of pupils' work. Be aware of pupil problems/progress/achievements and report to the teacher as agreed.
- Undertake pupil record keeping as requested.
- Support the teacher in managing pupil behaviour, reporting difficulties as appropriate.
- Gather/report information from/to parents/carers as directed.
- Provide clerical/administrative support e.g. photocopying, typing, filing, collecting money etc.
- Create and maintain a purposeful, orderly and supportive environment, in accordance with lesson plans.
- Use strategies, in liaison with the teacher, to support pupils to achieve learning goals.

- Assist with the planning of learning activities.
- Monitor pupils' responses to learning activities and accurately record achievement/progress as directed.
- Provide detailed and regular feedback to teachers on pupil's achievement, progress, problems etc.
- Promote good pupil behaviour, dealing promptly with conflict and incidents in line with established policy and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Establish constructive relationships with parents/carers.
- Work with the teacher in lesson planning, evaluating and adjusting lessons/work plans as appropriate.
- Monitor and evaluate pupil's responses to learning activities through observation and recording of achievement against pre-determined learning objectives.
- Provide objective and accurate feedback and reports as required on pupil achievement, progress and other matters, ensuring the availability of appropriate evidence.
- Be responsible for keeping and updating records as agreed with the teacher, contributing to reviews of systems/records as requested.
- Promote positive values, attitudes and good pupil behaviour, dealing promptly with conflict and incidents in line with established policy and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour.



3. Supporting the Curriculum

To support the curriculum, a Teaching Assistant should:

- Support pupils to understand instructions.

- Support pupils in respect of local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, KS1, KS2, Early Years Foundation Stage, as directed by the teacher.
- Support the use of ICT in learning activities and develop pupil's competence and independence in its use.
- Prepare and maintain equipment/resources as directed by the teacher and assist pupils in their use.
- Undertake structured and agreed learning activities/teaching programmes, adjusting activities according to pupil responses.
- Undertake programmes linked to local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, KS1, KS2, Early Years Foundation Stage, recording achievement and progress and feeding back to the teacher.
- Implement agreed learning activities/teaching programmes, adjusting activities according to pupil responses/needs.
- Determine the need for, prepare and maintain general and specialist equipment and resources.
- Select and prepare resources necessary to lead learning activities, taking account of pupils' interests and language and cultural backgrounds.
- Be aware of and appreciate a range of activities, courses, organisations and individuals to provide support for pupils to broaden and enrich their learning.
- Assisting in the preparation of work and other activities for pupils in accordance with objectives set by teaching staff.
- Under guidance and direction of teaching staff, planning and delivering activities.



Professional Behaviour and Confidentiality.



In order for your school to continue offering high quality standards of care, the school will operate in a way that respects every individual and family's right to privacy.

All staff and visitors are therefore expected to work within the guidelines of the school's policy which will conform to current legislation and government guidelines, and which protect confidentiality.

In practice this means:

- Making it clear that gossip of any kind is discouraged among or about pupils and staff, including discussing personal details about members of staff. (e.g. reasons for absence).
- Before sharing any information about staff or pupils, ensure that the sharing is necessary. (Does this person need to know?)
- Keeping personal records of behaviour confidential.
- Not discussing pupil or family personal matters in a general way at any time.
- Using teaching methods which protect confidentiality.
- Always encouraging students to talk to their parents or carers about any anxieties they may have, while at the same time, offering support for individuals and families from staff specialising in pastoral care.

School Types.

The UK education system is worldwide reputed for its high quality and standards. In general, the British higher education system has five stages of education: early years, primary years, secondary education, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE).

Britons enter the education system at the age of three and up to 18 are obliged to attend school (compulsory education), while afterward it is upon their choice.

- Nursery Schools: 3-4 year olds (EYFS).
- Infant Schools: Reception classes for 4-5 year olds.

- Infant Classes for 5-7 year olds (KS1)
Most Infant schools also have a Nursery class.
- Junior Schools: Junior classes for 8-11 year olds (KS2).
- Primary Schools: Infant and Junior classes within the one school.
- Secondary Schools: 11-16 year olds (can cater for up to 18 years old) (KS3 / KS4).
- Sixth Form Colleges: 16-18 year olds.
- Special Schools: Pupils who have special educational needs.
- PRU: Pupil Referral Units for excluded pupils.



Primary

Pre-school education is available for ages two to four/five through playgroups and nursery schools. The emphasis is on group work, creative activity and guided play.

Compulsory education begins at five in England and Wales. At primary level, there is little or no specialist subject teaching and there is great emphasis on Literacy (English) and Numeracy.



Secondary

Compulsory education ends at age sixteen though many pupils stay on beyond the minimum leaving age. The majority of state secondary school pupils in England and Wales attend comprehensive or academy schools.

These provide a wide range of secondary education for most children of all abilities from a particular district, in the eleven to eighteen age ranges.

At secondary school, teachers teach specialist subjects in addition to many cross curricular subjects such as Literacy, Numeracy, Citizenship, ICT and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE).



Special Schools

Children who have special educational needs which cannot be met in mainstream school are taught in special schools. The age range of pupils in special schools can be very varied with many providing education from preschool level to 18 years.

The national curriculum is taught in special schools although the levels may vary depending on the particular needs of pupils.

Working in the Classroom.

When working in the classroom, you will responsible for:

1. Supporting pupils' learning.
2. Helping pupils to develop their literacy skills.
3. Helping pupils to develop their numeracy skills.

1. Supporting Pupils' Learning

Children and adults have different ways of processing information. People use the skills of looking, touching or listening in varying amounts depending on their learning style. In addition, different times of the day affect individual levels of concentration; some pupils work better in the morning, others in the afternoon.

As a Teaching Assistant, you will need to be aware of the stages in the development of pupils and their individual learning styles.

The pupils you will be working with will be constantly thinking and learning; gathering new information and formulating new ideas about themselves, other people and the world around them.

During learning activities, pupils need:

- To explore their environment and or investigate new information/ideas.
- To discover things for themselves through a wide variety of experiences.
- To feel free to make mistakes in a safe and secure environment using 'trial and error'.
- Appropriate support from adults (and other pupils) to encourage and extend their knowledge and skills.
- To develop autonomy through increased responsibility and working independently.
- An appropriate learning framework in which to make sense of new information and ideas.

The Teaching Assistant's role in supporting learning activities involves:

- Providing learning activities as directed by the teacher.
- Using appropriate materials and support strategies for each pupil's needs and abilities.
- Modifying or adapting learning activities to meet intended learning goals/objectives.
- Providing assistance at an appropriate level for each pupil.
- Encouraging pupils to make choices about their own learning.
- Promoting independent learning.

2. Helping Pupils to Develop their Literacy Skills

The Teaching Assistant plays a key role in supporting the teacher and the pupils during literacy activities. You will need to work with the teacher and find out how the literacy activities are to be organised and your specific role in supporting various activities including class discussions, group activities and tasks for individuals.

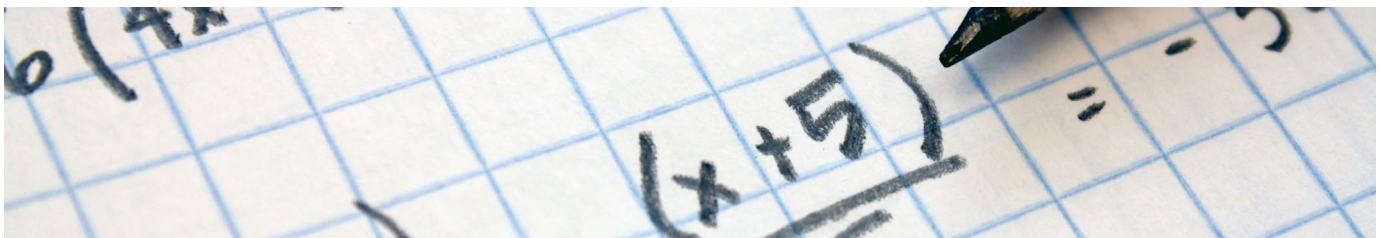
To support primary pupils you will help them to:

- Read and write confidently and fluently.
- Check their reading and correct their own mistakes.
- Know and understand the spelling system.
- Use this spelling system to read and spell accurately.
- Develop fluent and legible handwriting.
- Be interested in words and their meanings.
- Develop and use an ever increasing vocabulary.
- Know about and be able to write stories, poems and factual accounts.
- Plan, draft and revise their own writing.
- Be interested in books and read for pleasure.
- Assess and give reasons for their literacy preferences.
- Develop their imagination, creativity and critical awareness.

3. Helping Pupils To Develop Their Numeracy Skills

When supporting pupils in primary school with their numeracy skills you will help them to:

- Know and understand numbers and the number system.
- Count, calculate and solve simple maths problems and make simple lists, tables and charts.
- Use and apply mathematics to tackle and solve practical mathematical problems.
- Communicate their reasoning about problems and explain their solutions using objects, pictures, diagrams, numbers, symbols and relevant mathematical language.
- Make mental calculations by imagining numbers and the relationships between them.
- Select, collect, organise and present appropriate data using graphs and diagrams.



When supporting pupils in secondary schools, you will be helping them to:

- Know and understand numbers and the number system including positive and negative numbers, factors and prime numbers, equivalent fractions, how fractions, decimals and percentages relate to each other, ratio and proportion.
- Employ standard methods to perform mental and written calculations including addition, subtraction, multiplication and division using whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percentages.
- Use calculator functions to complete complex calculations and understand then answers calculators give in relation to the initial mathematical problems.
- Develop efficient problem solving skills.
- Know and understand how to use letter symbols in algebra.
- Set up and use simple equations to solve problems select, collect and organise appropriate data using tables, surveys, questionnaires, and CD ROMs presenting results using graphs, pie charts and diagrams relating these to the original problem.
- Solve increasingly demanding mathematical problems by breaking the problem down into smaller more manageable tasks and developing deductive reasoning.

Social Media.



Your school will also expect you to understand and adhere to its detailed social media policy. Schools advocate and utilise social media policies for a number of purposes, but their overriding function is to protect staff, students and parents from the many issues that can arise as a result of posting on social networking sites.

Staff

Staff may be vulnerable to malicious and defamatory comments (and potentially even threats and abuse) from parents or pupils, and to allegations of grooming and other forms of online abuse. Twenty one per cent of teachers say they've had derogatory remarks made about them online.

Parents

Parents may become involved in online disputes with other parents through social media.

They may also potentially put their child and others within the school at risk by sharing photos, videos or other information that could make the children identifiable to others.

Pupils

Pupils are at risk of cyber bullying, and may also become involved in cyberbullying themselves. They are also vulnerable to other serious crimes such as grooming and abduction if they share too much personal information on social media.

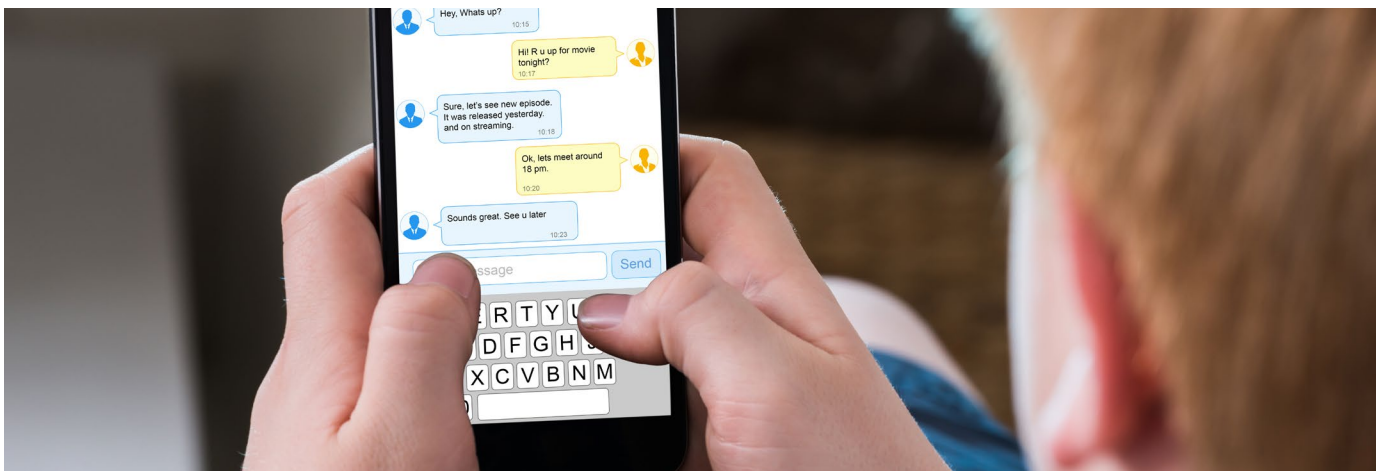
The main aim of any school's social media policy is to keep everyone within the school safe and within the law. Because the policies aren't mandatory, schools are free to decide what they include. Often, the policies are divided into three separate sections directed at staff, parents and pupils.

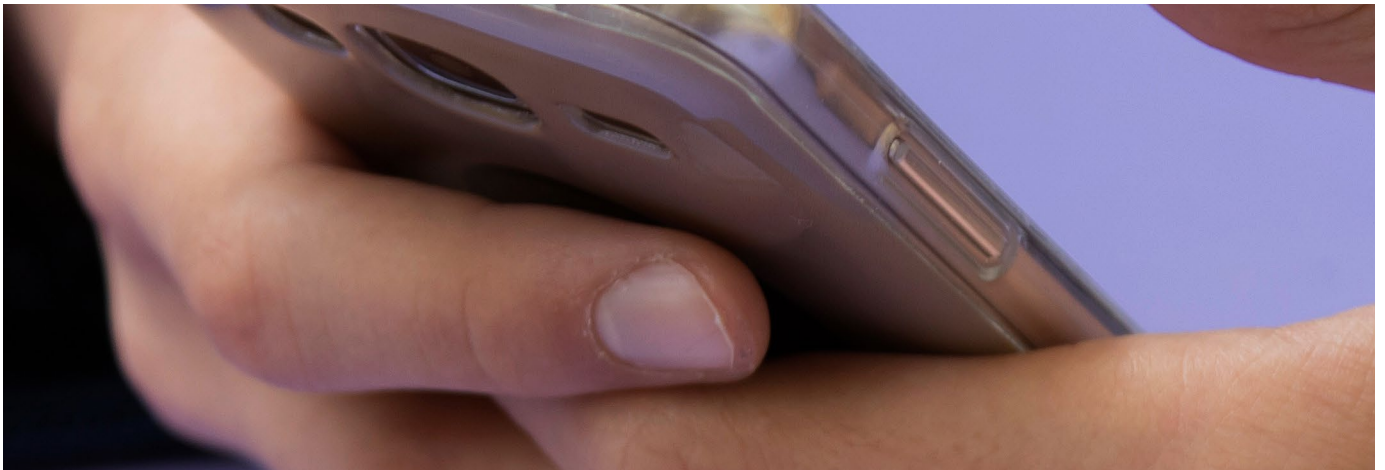
For staff, requirements typically include:

- Not accepting friend requests from current pupils or ex-pupils under the age of 18.
- Notifying the parents if a child sends a friend request.
- Using extreme caution when corresponding with parents via social media, and preferably using a school email address instead.
- Not discussing anything to do with school, pupils or other staff members, or posting photos of school events.
- Only posting things that they would be happy to be attributed to them as a teaching professional.
- Not identifying themselves as being associated with the school.
- Using the tightest privacy settings possible.
- Not using social media on school devices, or on personal devices while on the school premises.

Parental requirements often include:

- Not posting photos, videos or comments that include other children at the school.
- Not using social media on their own devices while on school premises.
- Not accessing social media while helping at school or on school visits.
- Raising queries, concerns and complaints directly with the school rather than posting them on social media – whether on their own pages, in closed groups (e.g. groups set up for school parents to communicate with each other) or on the school's pages.
- Not posting anything malicious about the school or any member of the school community.





Children are typically required to:

- Not join any social networking sites if they are below the permitted age (13 for most sites including Facebook and Instagram).
- Tell their parents if they are using the sites, and when they are online.
- Be aware how to report abuse and inappropriate content.
- Not access social media on school devices, or on their own devices while they're at school.
- Not make inappropriate comments (including in private messages) about the school, teachers or other children.

Within schools, there is usually a designated social media representative that is permitted, within their school's policy, to utilise the various social media platforms that are freely available.

Remember:

Social media policies aren't legally enforceable but schools can take their own action if a member of staff, parent or pupil breaches its policy.

A child who breaks the rules is likely to be disciplined according to the school's normal behaviour policies (such as through the anti bullying policy, if they're found to be involved in cyberbullying).

Schools will also take social media infringements by teachers and teaching assistants seriously.

If, for example, a teacher, or teaching assistant is found to have been making inappropriate contact with a pupil on social media, they're likely to face internal disciplinary action, and in extreme cases – such as if anyone is suspected of making sexual advances to a minor via social media – the police can be involved.



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