



Department  
for Education

# **Professional standards for teaching assistants**

**Departmental advice for headteachers,  
teachers, teaching assistants, governing  
boards and employers**

**February 2015**

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# Summary

## About this departmental advice

This is departmental advice from the Department for Education.

This advice is non-statutory.

## Review date

This advice will next be reviewed by 2020.

## Who is this advice for?

This guidance is for:

- Teaching assistants, teachers and headteachers
- Governing boards and employers
- Local authority support services

These new standards apply to all teaching assistants in schools, working at all levels.

# Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants (2015)

## Purpose

The *Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants (2015)* define high standards which are applicable to all teaching assistant roles in a self-improving school system. The main purpose of these standards is to raise the status and professionalism of teaching assistants and to position their role within a community of professionals, including teachers and school leaders, all working together to improve outcomes for children.

The teaching assistants' standards review follows reviews of both the teachers' and headteachers' standards by independent groups. The publication of these standards recognises that existing standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) do not apply to all teaching assistants. These standards do not replace the professional standards for HLTAs; they are complimentary to them.' (see Further information).

National Occupational Standards for staff supporting teaching and learning provide a detailed framework for the training and development of support staff. They provide more detailed insights and guidance (see Further information).

**The aim of the review** was to establish a set of standards for teaching assistants that:

- are unequivocal, clear and easy to understand and use;
- can be used to inform performance management processes;
- steer the professional development of teaching assistants at all levels;
- are designed to inspire confidence in teaching assistants and ensure that schools use their skills and expertise to best effect;
- focus primarily on the key elements of their professional relationship with teachers to ensure that all pupils attain the highest possible standards.

## Preface

### What is a teaching assistant?

A number of different job titles are used for staff supporting teaching and learning. This document refers to teaching assistants throughout. For the department's school workforce census "Teaching Assistants" comprises those support staff based in the classroom for learning and pupil support, eg HLTAs, teaching assistants, special needs support staff, early years practitioners, minority ethnic pupils support staff and bilingual assistants. While most teaching assistants are employed by schools, some are employed by local authority services and work across a range of schools and settings.

## **The role of the teaching assistant**

The primary role of the teaching assistant should be to work with teachers to raise the learning and attainment of pupils while also promoting their independence, self esteem and social inclusion. They give assistance to pupils so that they can access the curriculum, participate in learning and experience a sense of achievement.

Teaching assistants are an integral part of the school workforce representing a substantial investment of school funding. Effective deployment of teaching assistants is crucial in making a difference to pupil achievement (see Further information). Teaching assistants should act with honesty and integrity to uphold comparable standards to other education professionals, in order to make the education of pupils their first concern. By demonstrating values and behaviours consistent with their professional role, teaching assistants work with other education professionals within a common framework of expectations.

## **The role of school leaders**

School leaders should value and hold teaching assistants in the same esteem as fellow educational professionals . These standards provide school leaders with a tool to ensure consistency for all teaching assistants, so their skills and expertise in raising pupil achievement are recognised and developed.

School leaders should ensure that teaching assistants have the right knowledge and skills to provide effective teacher and pupil support. Teaching assistants should receive appropriate and timely training and professional development, and support to reflect on their own practice in order to identify their training needs. Teaching assistants should have an appropriate career development pathway and access to training within the working day.

Effective deployment of teaching assistants is the key to their success in supporting teaching and learning. Meeting these standards depends on school leaders being able to provide a climate that supports forms of collaborative working that do not burden teachers or teaching assistants; and recognising that many teaching assistants manage other staff and require the time do this effectively.

## **The four themes**

The *Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants* are set out in four themes.

- Personal and professional conduct
- Knowledge and understanding
- Teaching and learning

- Working with others

Within each theme there are several standards expected of teaching assistants.

### **Why were these themes chosen?**

**Personal and professional conduct** - In order for teaching assistants to provide effective support to teachers and pupils, they need to be clear about their role and responsibilities and how these fit within the wider structure of the school. In the same way as teachers, teaching assistants operate in a position of trust and are seen by pupils as role models. They should be able to maintain proper boundaries with pupils and their behaviours should reflect this responsible position.

**Knowledge and understanding** - Teaching assistants should have sufficient knowledge and skills to help teachers support pupils in achieving their maximum potential. School leaders are best placed to make judgements about the type and level of knowledge and skills that individual teaching assistants need, as this will vary according to job role. This could include: subject knowledge, specialist skills and knowledge to support pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, knowledge of the curriculum, lesson planning and evaluation, and behaviour management strategies.

**Teaching and learning** - An important role of a teaching assistant is to support the teacher in ensuring the best possible outcomes for all pupils. The standards in this theme recognise that teaching assistants work under the supervision of a teacher in accordance with arrangements made by the headteacher of the school. Teaching assistants and schools should refer to the EEF guidance report (see Further information) for 'relevant strategies to support the work of the teacher'.

**Working with others** - Teaching assistants work with other professionals, parents, carers and outside agencies as well as with pupils themselves. Although other themes require teaching assistants to work collaboratively with others, these qualities and skills were considered so important and distinctive to the role as to merit their own theme.

## **Personal and professional conduct**

**Teaching assistants should uphold public trust in the education profession by:**

1. **Having proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school** in which they work as professional members of staff.
2. **Demonstrating positive attitudes, values and behaviours** to develop and sustain effective relationships with the school community.

3. **Having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being** by following relevant statutory guidance along with school policies and practice.
4. **Upholding values consistent with those required from teachers** by respecting individual differences and cultural diversity.
5. **Committing to improve their own practice** through self-evaluation and awareness.

## Knowledge and understanding

Teaching assistants are expected to:

1. **Acquire the appropriate skills, qualifications, and/or experience** required for the teaching assistant role, with support from the school employer.
2. **Demonstrate expertise and skills in understanding the needs of all pupils** (including specialist expertise as appropriate) and know how to adapt and deliver support to meet individual needs.
3. **Share responsibility for ensuring that their own knowledge and understanding is relevant and up to date** by reflecting on their own practice, liaising with school leaders and accessing relevant professional development to improve personal effectiveness.
4. **Demonstrate a level of subject and curriculum knowledge** relevant to their role and apply this effectively in supporting teachers and pupils.
5. **Understand their roles and responsibilities within the classroom and whole school context** recognising that these may extend beyond a direct support role.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching assistants are expected to:

1. **Demonstrate an informed and efficient approach to teaching and learning** by adopting relevant strategies to support the work of the teacher and increase achievement of all pupils including, where appropriate, those with special educational needs and disabilities.
2. **Promote, support and facilitate inclusion** by encouraging participation of all pupils in learning and extracurricular activities.
3. **Use effective behaviour management strategies consistently** in line with the school's policy and procedures.

4. **Contribute to effective assessment and planning** by supporting the monitoring, recording and reporting of pupil progress as appropriate to the level of the role.
5. **Communicate effectively and sensitively with pupils** to adapt to their needs and support their learning.
6. **Maintain a stimulating and safe learning environment** by organising and managing physical teaching space and resources.

## Working with others

Teaching assistants are expected to:

1. **Recognise and respect the role and contribution of other professionals, parents and carers** by liaising effectively and working in partnership with them.
2. **With the class teacher, keep other professionals accurately informed** of progress or concerns they may have about the pupils they work with.
3. **Understand their responsibility to share knowledge** to inform planning and decision making.
4. **Understand their role** in order to be able to work collaboratively with classroom teachers and other colleagues, including specialist advisory teachers.
5. **Communicate their knowledge and understanding of pupils** to other school staff and education, health and social care professionals, so that informed decision making can take place on intervention and provision.



## Supporting guidance

### Who are the standards for?

1. The standards are a tool for teaching assistants and for teachers and members of a school leadership team responsible for managing their work. They are also intended to help employers and governors when recruiting support staff, and defining the job roles of teaching assistants. They may also be useful to local authority support services which employ teaching assistants. They are core standards for all teaching assistants.

### What are the standards for?

2. These core standards are intended to raise the status and professionalism of teaching assistants. They define characteristics that all teaching assistants can demonstrate regardless of their working context. The standards are designed to ensure that the skills and experience demonstrated by teaching assistants help to support high-quality teaching, learning and social inclusion.
3. The standards have been written to reflect the diversity of school employers and the wide-ranging responsibilities of teaching assistants working with pupils and teachers in a variety of contexts. They are designed for all teaching assistants and for schools to adapt to their own context.
4. The standards are complementary to the existing standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (see Further information), rather than a replacement for them. The standards provide clear and concise expectations for all teaching assistants, working at all levels, and a framework to strengthen their status as education professionals.
5. The standards may be used as a tool to support the performance management of teaching assistants, although employers are free to decide the standards against which teaching assistants are assessed.

### What are the standards not for?

6. Whilst the standards may be used in support of any recruitment exercise, they should not be used as a checklist. The standards are not appropriate for job evaluation; instead the role profiles developed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services role profiles can be used (see Further information). The standards are generic and broad based – they do not specify requirements for staff recruited to specialist roles.
7. The standards should be considered as a whole. Although some standards may be more important in some contexts, the professionalism and contribution of

teaching assistants needs to be recognised in its entirety rather than under specific themes. The weight given to each element will vary from school to school and will depend on the individual job role and responsibilities.

## Using the standards

The standards can be used:

### **1. For teaching assistants, to shape their own practice and professional development, within and beyond the school**

- Self-evaluation in a supportive context is key to the development of all education professionals. These standards can be used by teaching assistants as a focus for reflection on their own practice.
- Teaching assistants can use the standards to have a constructive conversation with headteachers, teachers and others about areas where support is needed for professional development. Teaching assistants should feel empowered to seek such support. School leaders are expected to provide such training and support as may be necessary for the support staff in their schools.

### **2. For teachers or other line managers, to inform the appraisal of teaching assistants**

- There is no mandatory requirement to use the standards for this purpose, but they provide a useful framework for appraisal discussions. These standards should not be used as prescribed objectives. Objectives must be relevant to the context of the individual school and teaching assistant.
- They may be used to support and supplement existing appraisal frameworks, but are not designed as a sole tool for performance management.
- The standards should not be used to assess the performance of teaching assistants in the way that teachers' performance is assessed. The standards are not part of a statutory framework and teaching assistants do not have the same sort of pay and career structure as teachers. Teaching assistants should not be expected to provide evidence against each of the standards for appraisal.

### **3. For employers to support the recruitment and appointment of teaching assistants**

- The standards are not an off-the-shelf job description or a person specification, but they can be used to underpin and shape both of these documents.
- It is important to focus on the context of the individual school. Different schools and teaching assistants within each school, will have different levels of responsibility and so require different skills and experience.

#### **4. For employers to evaluate their induction arrangements and provision of continuous professional development (CPD) for teaching assistants**

- The standards should inform schools' processes for identifying training and development needs. Schools need to have CPD policies which effectively address the needs of the whole workforce and should use their own and external training budgets to this end.

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## Further information

### Teaching assistant deployment

- Education Endowment Foundation (2015, forthcoming). Guidance report: Making effective use of teaching assistants.
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-deployment-of-classroom-staff>
- <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1095/1/Workforce%20reform%20in%20schools%20has%20it%20made%20a%20difference.pdf>

### Previous standards for teaching assistants

- [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/hlta\\_professionalstandards\\_nov06.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/hlta_professionalstandards_nov06.pdf)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-occupational-standards-for-supporting-teaching-learning>

### Teaching assistants – careers, training and development

- <http://www.skillsforschools.org.uk/>

### NJC job profiles

- [http://www.nwemployers.org.uk/uploads/documents/aug\\_13/nweo\\_1375875566\\_Model\\_School\\_Profiles\\_Cover\\_Ci.pdf](http://www.nwemployers.org.uk/uploads/documents/aug_13/nweo_1375875566_Model_School_Profiles_Cover_Ci.pdf)

### Teachers' and headteachers' standards

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/teachers-standards>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-standards-of-excellence-for-headteachers>

### Other departmental resources

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-policies-for-schools>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education>
- <https://www.gov.uk/schools-colleges-childrens-services/special-educational-needs-disabilities>



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