

Role of the Teaching Assistant

This leaflet is about Teaching Assistants working with individual children in schools to meet their Special Educational Needs.

Is your child receiving some extra classroom help in school?

You will probably be pleased. You will certainly want to be sure that the help will be used to the best possible advantage. These are some of the things you may want to consider:

What Are The Aims Of This Support?

- to ensure your child can attend a mainstream school and be fully included with the other children
- to give your child the same opportunities to learn as all the other children
- to ensure that your child takes part in every one of the subjects that are taught in school
- to help your child learn more and make progress
- to help your child to learn more independently
- to work towards a time when your child has made enough progress so that the support may be reduced or not be needed. This would be discussed with you at a review
- you could add any other specific aims that are important to you and your child

Now your child's being given some help, will you soon see some progress?

Having extra help should lead to progress, but the way the extra help is used is important. Schools have responsibility for planning how to use the help and they should make the best use of it for your child. You should be consulted about this. It is important that the plans meet the targets set out for your child and that everyone is clear about this. Your child's class teacher has the overall responsibilities for your child's learning.

These are some of the ways TA's can help in school -

Working directly with your child:

- following an individual learning programme
- checking that your child has understood an activity or lesson
- showing how to do something your child finds difficult
- ensuring that your child takes part in a class activity, such as PE or listening to a story
- helping your child if there are physical difficulties, e.g. with mobility, toileting, dressing, getting around school
- working with your child in a small group, involving one or more other children

Helping your child indirectly:

- helping your child to be part of the group in class
- preparing learning materials and equipment

- adapting materials for your child, e.g. simplifying a worksheet that the teacher feels is too complex
- keeping records
- doing an observation in class
- helping other children relate appropriately to your child
- working with other children (e.g. reading a story) while the teacher works with your child
- working with parents

Assisting the teacher or other members of staff in any of the following:

- planning teaching programmes
- completing assessments or checklists
- talking with parents and professionals
- attending review meetings

Would it be ideal if your child had full time one to one support?

Not really, very few children need this. There are many obvious advantages, but there can also be disadvantages to one to one help, such as:

- the child can become isolated or made to seem 'different'
- it can create a 'social barrier' so that a child with individual support has very little involvement with the other children
- a child can become too dependent on having someone there to help; sometimes this leads to 'learned helplessness' when the child always relies on help
- it can prevent a child from having direct contact with the class teacher and the other children: children need to learn to relate to lots of different people

Some children share support: how does this work?

Working in a pair with an adult is often more effective than one to one. If two children in a school or class, with five hours allocated to each, are brought together they can have up to ten hours where extra help is readily available.

How can I help?

- you can help by keeping in touch with the class teacher
- you can attend reviews to discuss your child's progress, and to give your views about how your child is responding.
- you can help at home by doing things like reading to your child and talking about what your child is doing
- if any changes are made which you don't understand, do talk to the school.

What about other children in the school or class?

- children often help each other and all children benefit from learning how to help, and how to accept help
- a school has a responsibility for all the children in the school, while you as a parent are quite rightly concerned about the interests of your child. If you are concerned about the balance of this attention, do talk to the school.

Further information, advice and support:

If you would like any further information, advice or support please contact SENDIASS Gloucestershire. This service is independent, impartial, confidential and free.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)
Gloucestershire
Messenger House – 2nd Floor
35 St. Michael's Square
Gloucester GL1 1HX



Freephone: 0800 158 3603



Direct Line: 01452 389344/5



sendiass@carersgloucestershire.org.uk



www.sendiassglos.org.uk



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[@sendiassglos](https://twitter.com/sendiassglos)

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