

Adults Supporting Pupils with SEN

The Role of the Assistant

The role of the assistant should be to help pupils gain access to the full school curriculum (including the National Curriculum), and to enable them to become more self-empowered and independent.

Supporting independence may include:

- Physical independence;
- Psychological independence - risk taking, enabling children to make choices, overcoming difficulties etc; and
- Social independence, interacting with peer groups and teachers.

Schools can promote the development of assistants by making sure that:

- Access to learning is a shared role with the teacher, who will ensure that support is deployed effectively;
- Where appropriate assistants are involved in decision making processes related to SEN within the school;
- There is guidance for assistants covering:

- * Supporting children-ground rules e.g. discipline, permission for pupils to leave class, confidentiality, access to statements/records;
- * Recording and monitoring, including academic feedback or progress with contributions to group/individual education plans and annual reviews, where appropriate;
- * Professional development including broadening knowledge of the curriculum and of particular learning needs;
- * Line Management;
- * Role of the assistant.

- Developing a handbook for assistants which could include the following:

- * General information (car parking, lunches, breaks, absence procedures, office staff, photocopying, lockers pigeon holes, filing cabinets, equipment);
- * Specific information about the school;
- * The school/LEA special needs policy;
- * All pro-formas with which assistants should be familiar;
- * Job description;

* Information on disabilities and learning difficulties.

Whole School Issues

What whole school issues need to be addressed to help assistants to function in a way that supports the pupil, the teacher and the school? Examples are:

- Planning time with individual members of staff, or departments/faculties, whichever is appropriate;
- Teacher training for assistants can be used to support the work of the school in delivering an appropriate accessible curriculum for pupils with SEN;
- Teacher responsibility for the teaching and learning which takes place within the classroom;
- Organisational structures which can accommodate the flexible response often needed for pupils with SEN;
- Opportunities for assistants to feel an integral part of the SEN provision and the school; and
- Assisting individual pupils/small groups in test situations.

Recording

SEN generates a considerable amount of paperwork and the assistant will have some responsibilities within this area.

Typical duties may include:

- Maintaining an up to date file on individual pupil(s);
- In high schools, ensuring that individual education plans (IEP's) are circulated/brought to the attention of subject/form tutors;
- Contributing to group/individual education plans from knowledge of the child's/young persons progress;
- Helping to gain the child's/young persons view of the IEP;

- Collating relevant information from any other assistants who work with that pupil;
- Contributing to the Annual Review process;
- Attending the Annual Review meeting;
- Involvement in target setting for the pupil in line with the aims of the IEP.

Practicalities

The practicalities of a school and how it functions are complex and can be very daunting.

Has your school given assistants the following kinds of information?

- Staffing lists with roles and responsibilities;
- Car parking arrangements;
- Office staff names, roles and responsibilities;
- Relevant parts of the staff handbook or school prospectus;
- Lockers and pigeon holes;
- Meetings they should attend;
- Break times, lunch times and routines;
- How to access equipment;
- SEN Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Information on the implications of the educational, social, communication, physical, emotional and behavioural needs of the pupil(s) supported;
- School outings;
- Playground supervision;
- Using own transport for pupils etc; and
- Involvement with outside agencies.

Information relating to procedures relating to

- Photocopying;
- INSET or other staff training;
- Access to filing cabinets/statements/Group/individual education plans;
- Access to pupil timetable information; and
- Any other information that is relevant to your school circumstances and routines.

The assistant's role is to enable the school to meet the pupil's educational needs; working under the direction of and supporting, the class teacher. The assistant can be of practical help to the teacher in meeting the pupil's academic and social needs by:

1. Helping the child to stay on task, by prompting, by checking out whether the child has understood what they have to do and if necessary by interpreting or explaining again the teacher's request.
2. Fostering independence: This should include allowing the pupils to make their own mistakes. Pupils need to adopt independent learning and behaviour skills, helping the pupil to record work, but not to do the work for them.
3. Befriending the child by listening and providing encouragement and support.
4. Giving a positive response to pupils, reinforcing good patterns of learning and behaviour. Observing patterns of behaviour and feeding back to the teacher, for example:
 - Time of day;
 - Type of activity;
 - Groupings of pupils; and
 - Influence on and of other pupils.
5. Responding and helping to build up the pupil's self esteem.
6. Redirecting attention should it wander.
7. Trying to de-escalate in pupil conflicts calmly, in line with behaviour policy.
8. Supervising on-going work and/or repetitive work, or situations when the teacher cannot watch everything.
9. Making sure the pupils understand the school's Code of Conduct and what is expected of them.
10. Rewarding good behaviour; teachers will instigate sanctions if necessary.
11. Extending the discussion experience of the pupils.
12. Contributing local knowledge to the lesson by being a point of contact with the local community.
13. Contributing specialist skills such as ICT or artistic skills.
14. Working with pupils in small groups or one to one when directed to do so by following activities planned by the teacher.
15. Giving practical help by preparing materials in advance for pupils use in class, at the discretion of the teacher or SENCO.
16. Contributing to group/individual education plans and reviews at the request of the SENCO or teacher.
17. Helping the pupil with any physical problems, this may include visiting the toilet, dressing and undressing for P.E. and getting around school.
18. Helping to plan the work ahead under the guidance of the teacher.

19. Recording the lesson and the progress made by the pupil(s), in accordance with the school policy.
20. Ensuring any special equipment is working.
21. Being part of a team- sharing ideas, knowledge of children.
22. Assisting individual pupils/small groups in test situations.
23. Developing a rationale for the way(s) of working with individual pupils.
24. Monitoring individual pupils over a period of time either for particular subjects in high schools or aspects of their work such as progress towards IEP targets.
25. Supporting transfer, when a child with SEN transfers from one school to another, there are many ways in which ESA's can support the process and help to ensure that all goes smoothly for both the child and the adults concerned. Sometimes it is in the interest of the child for the ESA to transfer with the pupil if there are particular and complex needs to be met. It may be advantageous for the person who is to work with the child in the new school to be identified early so that they can play an active part in the transfer process.

Training and Professional Development

Many Education Support Assistants and Teaching Assistants will have undertaken the LEA's accredited course 'Supporting Pupils with SEN' which will have provided a background in SEN and possibly option study within a specialised area relevant to their work. The range of courses available to assistants has widened considerably and full access to the LEA INSET programme is an entitlement in the same way as for teachers, in line with the needs and resources of the school. In considering programmes of INSET in school generally related to SEN, the needs of assistants should be taken into account. Wherever possible appropriate assistants should be included in INSET days and in relevant staff meetings. Team meetings should be organised with the appropriate member of staff (usually the SENCO or the head teacher) on a regular basis.

In order to carry out their role effectively it is expected that assistants will be involved in programme planning for individual or groups of children with the class teacher and SEN Coordinator; contact with other professionals including psychologists and therapists will also be helpful. Assistants should have access to statements and to relevant educational records to help them in their understanding of needs. Parents should know that normally this will be

the case and should feel assured that the assistants will respect the confidentiality of information to which they have access. In many instances assistants provide a valuable link between parents and the school.

Finally, role confusion can be minimised by ensuring that the assistant has a clear job description related to the needs of children they are supporting. There are a number of positive examples around, which can provide a template but it is also important that any description matches the working context of the particular assistant.

Commonly Asked Questions

Who is responsible for SEN pupils on school outings?

The assistant's role is to enable school to meet the child's educational needs and to work under the direction of and to support the teacher. The assistant should not normally be responsible for pupils out of school, this makes the assistant vulnerable as he/she is not usually qualified or paid to provide the same type of supervision as a teacher. An ESA should accompany any individual pupil whom they support, but should be additional to the number of adults needed to support the whole group. Prior to any school visits risk assessments should always take place.

What is the position when assisting with playground duty?

The assistant should not be left to supervise children alone. If assistance is required in the playground the assistant should offer to enable the teacher to maintain supervision.

What is the position when using own transport?

Anyone using their own transport for school use should ensure that their insurance covers business use. This means when transporting children, shopping on behalf of the school, carrying cash to banks for school. When children are involved child protection procedures should always be followed.

What about involvement with outside agencies?

Professional advice is available to school and to outside agencies. These

professionals (Educational Psychologists and SENSS etc) may wish to consult with the assistant. Attendance at case conferences is rare because of difficulties of staff cover in schools, referrals are made by the Head teacher or SENCo and do not usually involve the assistant.

Have Assistants seen policy documents in school?

Each school should have:

- Wakefield LEA policy documents;
- School SEN policy; and
- Code of Practice and other Government legislation.

The assistant would be wise to become familiar with such policies.

Should the Assistant working with a child move with them to another school?

This is a decision to be made at the discretion of Head teachers, and may be dependent on the needs of the child, staffing in the new school as well as personal choice.

How can schools promote the development of assistants?

Access to learning should be shared, with the teacher taking the lead. Where appropriate involve assistants in decision making processes.

A policy should outline roles and responsibilities such as:

- Supporting individual children - ground rules discipline, leaving the room for the toilet etc;
- Recording and Monitoring progress;
- Some contribution to IEP's and Reviews;
- Line Management; and
- Role of the Assistant.