

Unit 7:

Developing Professional

Relationships

A Teaching assistant is an important member of the school team. Adults working together who are able to demonstrate consistency and predictability have a significant and positive impact on behaviour.

There are some basic skills used in working effectively with pupils, typified by high quality relationships, positive attitudes and successful learning. By developing these skills the teaching assistant will enhance their ability to influence, guide, encourage and direct pupils so that they can achieve their full potential.

Planning the approach

The teaching assistant should take some time to think about the strategies they plan to use. When their strategies are clear it will make it easier for them to lead the class confidently and effectively. The teaching assistant should always show a good example in their interactions with the pupils because to pupils, the teaching assistant is a model of the behaviour expected in school

The teaching assistant should Imagine possible classroom challenges and review their strategies for dealing with them. Having clear-cut strategies will help to keep them grounded when these challenges do arise.

- Balance correction with praise and encouragement
- Use rewards and consequences consistently and teach them to pupils
- Plan the language to use
- Plan alternatives to confrontation
- Know how to get help when necessary

Making Expectations Clear

The pupils should always know what is expected of them. The classroom rules should be positive, specific and concise. They may be posted in the classroom or distributed for pupils to sign. It should be clear what will happen if students do not meet expectations. In schools with good standards of behaviour there is a balance between the use of rewards and sanctions.

Praise is used to motivate and encourage pupils. At the same time, pupils are aware of sanctions that will be applied for poor behaviour. Schools should;

- have a wide range of appropriate rewards and sanctions and ensure they are applied fairly and consistently by all staff;
- ensure that planning about behaviour improvement is informed by statistical information
- ensure their systems identify which matters should be dealt with by classroom teachers and those which require referral to a more senior member of staff.

The key to effective support work is a clear and consistent approach between teachers and teaching assistants. The success or otherwise of this approach is greatly influenced by a clear understanding of the nature and scope of their respective roles and responsibilities.

Building self esteem

When praise is given to pupils who are excelling, it mustn't be forgotten to encourage those who are trying, but struggling. These students often lack confidence and need more positive reinforcement. Providing praise, encouragement and support and showing pupils how their ideas are valued and respected is a great tool for building self-esteem. If experiences in school are constantly negative, they will, in time, undermine the pupil's belief in their ability to succeed. This can lead to pupils feeling demotivated and failing to achieve. At worst, pupils who become disaffected can display behaviour that is disruptive to the learning of others.

Showing Respect

Showing respect for pupils includes listening to their needs and preserving their dignity. It also means living up to their expectations, such as being greeted at the beginning of class or returning corrected homework on time. To build positive relationships with pupils, it is necessary to share experiences with them and to demonstrate an interest and an understanding of their world. It involves social interaction that may have little or nothing to do with the taught curriculum. Building rapport with pupils requires effort and commitment. Showing genuine interest not only in pupils' learning in school but also in them as human beings, builds trust and confidence

Being Consistent

Student behaviour should always be addressed in a consistent manner. Shifting strategies may show a lack of decisiveness. Once the teaching assistant has found a strategy that they like they should stick to it. The consistent application of good behaviour management strategies helps pupils understand the school's expectations and allows staff to be mutually supportive.

Listening to Students' Suggestions

When building a foundation, the teaching assistant may be able to draw from pupils' and other teachers' past classroom experiences. They could ask pupils to make suggestions about what should be expected of them and how misbehaviour should be addressed. Pupils are often more responsive to rules they helped create. The school should give opportunities for class, year and school councils to discuss and make recommendations about behaviour, including bullying, and the effectiveness of rewards and sanctions.