

## ***Working with adults***

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Based on the original work of: David Short, Park View Community School, County Durham (2004) and revised by John Woollard, School of Education, University of Southampton in 2006 and 2009.

As part of the workforce reform agenda <http://www.remodelling.org> (remodelling) there is an increasing emphasis on support for teachers both inside and outside the classroom. Currently schools are redefining the roles of support staff and expectations and responsibilities of technicians and classroom assistants vary from school to school.

Trainee teachers will have little appreciation of the roles of support staff and will need help to understand what they can expect of them and how to develop effective working relationships. There are two aspects to working with adults that are important for trainee teachers working in IT, ICT and computing:

### ***Working with ICT technical support staff***

### ***Working with classroom assistants***

Links between schools and the communities they serve are increasing. ICT is a popular topic and often involves ICT teachers in teaching adults within in a community education programme. Some issues to help trainee teachers prepare for this are included in

### ***Working with adult learners***

A further, and important issue, is that meeting the Professional Standards (Q1 - Q33) Training and Development Agency for Schools (2007) requires of trainee teachers to:

Q4 Communicate effectively with children, young people, colleagues, parents and carers.

Q5 Recognise and respect the contribution that colleagues, parents and carers can make to the development and well-being of children and young people and to raising their levels of attainment.

Q6 Have a commitment to collaboration and co-operative working.

Q20 Know and understand the roles of colleagues with specific responsibilities, including those with responsibility for learners with special educational needs and disabilities and other individual learning needs.

Q33 Ensure that colleagues working with them are appropriately involved in supporting learning and understand the roles they are expected to fulfil.

## ***Working with ICT technical support staff***

ICT teachers work closely with ICT technical staff and familiarity with their roles as well as the ICT infrastructure of the school are important. However, arrangements in individual schools differ so trainees will need to check what applies in the schools in which they work. Technical staff roles range from those offering basic maintenance to managing complex hardware installations and making a significant contribution to the school's ICT strategy. While some support staff will have little in the way of formal technical qualifications, others may be keen to extend their professional development through, for example, a work-based degree for ICT (see for example <http://degree.ultralab.net>)

Trainees should invest time in finding out about the technical support staff they work with, their roles and their range of expertise. It can be useful to make a requirement of trainees to interview a member of the technical support team near to the start of each placement.

ICT technical staff may use the resources available on the BECTA website. Of particular use is the Framework for ICT Technical Support (FITS) <http://www.becta.org.uk/fits> Also on the BECTA site is a useful introduction to the range of technologies available <http://www.becta.org.uk/leaders/technicalsupport>

This BECTA service is a highly practical toolkit of advice, checklists and tools to help schools implement best practice ICT infrastructure management and technical support. It defines ten processes that technical support should carry out to manage a stable, reliable and available ICT infrastructure and provide the school's ICT user with the service they need to carry out their day-to-day teaching and learning. Trainees may find this helps them to identify questions to ask about infrastructure and support in their placement schools, and later in the school where they take up their first teaching post. It will also be a

valuable resource to support them later in their career when they take on ICT managerial tasks.

The Becta website also contains advice on Health and Safety <http://www.schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=tl&rid=151> both in setting up an ICT installation and in ensuring its safe use.

### ***Working with classroom assistants***

As the use of classroom assistants in schools increases, there is a likelihood that within an ICT classroom the trainee teacher could be offered an assistant to work under his or her direction with one or more teaching groups. In these circumstances, the trainee needs to consider how to use this help to best support teaching and learning in the classroom. In order to do this the trainee will have to

- Find out about the expected role of the teaching assistant
- Involve the teaching assistant in planning lessons
- Discuss in detail the teaching assistant's role within each lesson
- Give explicit guidance on expected pupil outcomes
- Monitor the work of the teaching assistant during the lesson
- Obtain feedback from the teaching assistant about pupils' achievements and areas of work that were too easy or too difficult.

Research suggests that using classroom assistants in professional roles rather than the delegation of menial tasks leads to greater success in the classroom. This success is based on the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the assistant, working as a supportive team, as well as the assistant and the pupils.

Trainees should find out what the school's policies are relating to the roles and responsibilities of support staff. Since this is an emerging development, particularly as a result of workforce reform, in many schools this information may not be readily available.

To find out more about the national context relating to workforce reform and the role of teaching assistants see

<http://www.remodelling.org>

<http://www.hlta.gov.uk>

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/remodelling>

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/teachingassistants>

The GMB Union, representing classroom assistants, have guidelines for schools to follow. Among their recommendations are:

- Defined roles and responsibilities disseminated to staff and pupils
- A consistent and coherent set of job titles
- A whole school approach to information, consultation and involvement, which would include attendance at staff meetings and preparation time within contracted hours
- Appropriate training and development provision

As the role of classroom assistant is developing, the responsibilities and expectations are likely to differ from school to school, and trainees will need to seek the advice of the Head of Department or ICT Co-ordinator. Nevertheless the following points may be helpful.

Within the classroom the ICT teacher should consider the following opportunities provided by extra assistance within the classroom. These opportunities will, inevitably depend upon the personal qualities of the assistant, their skills, personality, and the rapport they have with children.

- Providing general whole class support, including guidance on written tasks, such as layout, spelling and additional explanations to small groups or individuals to ensure tasks are completed.
- Organising small groups to improve specific ICT skills, resolve common ICT problems, or provide greater challenge.

- Preparation and delivery of IEP's with individual pupils within the classroom.

The teacher should ensure that an assistant is able to contribute effectively by involving the assistant in planning the lesson and briefing the assistant clearly about what he/she should or should not do and about the expected pupil outcomes.

Ofsted evaluated the role of teaching assistants in primary schools [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Leadership/Management/Teaching-assistants-in-primary-schools-an-evaluation-of-the-quality-and-impact-of-their-work/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Leadership/Management/Teaching-assistants-in-primary-schools-an-evaluation-of-the-quality-and-impact-of-their-work/(language)/eng-GB) Several of the key points Ofsted made are also relevant to secondary teachers. Amongst these are:

- As the role of teaching assistants shifts towards providing learning support they have less time for managing and preparing resources – the balance between these roles needs to be well managed if teachers are to reap the full benefits of teaching assistant support
- The quality of teaching improves when teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers or follow tightly prescribed programmes
- Teaching assistants can only be effective if they have the necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively with pupils [training, joint planning, detailed briefings and feedback are important in this respect]
- Teachers should be alert to the amount of time individual pupils or groups of pupils, eg those with special educational needs, spend with teaching assistants rather than being taught by a qualified teacher.

**A further source of information** is the research carried out by Paula Smith, Karen Whitby and Caroline Sharp which investigated the profile of teaching assistants, employment patterns, how they are deployed in schools, professional and career opportunities and their impact in schools.

Smith, P., Whitby, K. and Sharp, C. (2004) The Employment and Deployment of Teaching Assistants <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/summaries/tad-the-employment-and-deployment-of-teaching-assistants.cfm> (LGA Research Report 5/04), NFER

### ***Working with adult learners***

Once appointed, ICT teachers may be encouraged to teach adults as part of a school's community education programme. ICT courses for adults are very popular and can be a form of relaxation after the rigours of teaching children all day! Trainees and newly appointed teachers of ICT may also be encouraged to deliver part of the ICT development programme targeted at the rest of the school staff. This can be a daunting prospect and only undertaken if the trainee or teacher is both competent and confident. It can be a boost to their standing within the school.

Although Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) will have some experience of teaching children from teaching practices, the prospect of teaching adults may be a new experience.

### **What are the similarities and differences between children and adults as learners?**

- Adults' participation in learning is voluntary
- Adults' reasons for participation are many and varied. They have a variety of needs and demands for education at different points in their lives, depending on their previous education, the roles they currently perform and the goals they wish to achieve.
- Both children and adults may have had negative experiences of education whilst at school
- Within a class of children or adults there may be a broad range of ICT skills depending on prior experience.

### **Should adults be taught differently to children?**

The debate regarding teaching methods is discussed elsewhere on the ICT-Tutors' website in relation to teaching trainee teachers. The pedagogy relating to adults as lifelong learners is also the subject of much discussion. Given the broad range of learners and their previous experience there are questions as to whether any one type of pedagogy is effective with all adult learners. Just as in the classroom, you might expect to find a wide range of preferred learning styles within any adult group.

Hodgson and Kambouri (1999) argue that there are three major factors which underpin the way in which adults learn. These factors - personal characteristics, reasons for participation and the context in which the learning takes place, have a determining effect on the type of pedagogy that will be perceived as practical, useful or relevant to different groups of learners.

Exploring different styles of teaching is perhaps the best way to approach the teaching of adults. There may be opportunities to try out new ideas before attempting them with children. It can be an enjoyable, rewarding experience which will be very different from teaching children. And they might be better behaved!!

### **What to teach?**

There are a wide range of ICT courses to cover all ranges of ability from absolute beginners' classes to highly advanced course in specific ICT applications. More experienced staff in school would be able to advise but it is worth also finding out which courses are currently on offer in the area, e.g. at other schools, the local further education college, LearnDirect. Many schools work in partnership with other course providers. This is an option worth exploring, not just to extend the range of courses offered, but to link into their expertise and the broader range of services and facilities they may offer.



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