

# Working with a teaching assistant – Early Years

**By Maria Craster**

In Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) I think the role of an assistant teacher (AT), which is our name for a teaching assistant (TA), is slightly different to elsewhere in the school as when we're in free flow we are both basically doing the same thing: either supporting children in an adult-led focus group or developing their learning through play. However, during carpet sessions, I mostly lead, and my AT supports with behaviour as well as providing scaffolding for children who need more support to access the curriculum. In addition to this she runs some interventions throughout the day and is generally just really awesome.

## **How do you prepare your TA for this?**

So, we reflect together at the end of each day in terms of both what went well and what wasn't so great. We're thinking about learning and any social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) things that have arisen that need addressing either that evening, perhaps a phone call home, or tomorrow by adapting plans or re-teaching lessons. I try to go through the day each morning and we have about 20 minutes together before the kids arrive to go through the day and set up our activities and resources. Though I am really lucky because Muna and I get on really well, this is our second year working together now so our communication is a lot quicker and clearer than it first was when we were first getting to know each other.

## **What impact does this have on pupils?**

The reflections at the end of the day are particularly impactful and important for us as a team. We both try to be honest around the progression of learning throughout the day. Due to the nature of EYFS and us often being in different rooms and working with different children on different areas of the curriculum, Muna often sees things that I don't and vice versa. So, sharing what we've observed means we can accurately adapt planning to suit the children's needs for the next day. Also, taking the time to go through everything in the morning ensures that Muna is prepared and has any manipulatives ready that she might need to support during carpet sessions so that learning is accessible to all students, as far as possible.

## **How do you ensure all pupils get a similar amount of support from both you and your TA throughout the day/week?**

I guess, honestly, we don't on a daily basis. Unfortunately, because we are in a temporary site, we don't have free flow inside and outside, but we do have two rooms to make up for it. We try to ensure that we spend one of the 'activity times' in each room per day so we get to see a wider range of the provision, but we allow children to mostly choose where they would like to play and learn, so it could be that one child spends an entire day in the rooms I'm in. We alternate who does the English focus groups each week so we both see every child write once a fortnight, at least. Also, we split for phonics but adapt the groups and swap around every six weeks so we both get to work with all students across a term. I think it's difficult to monitor exactly how much time you both spend with each child per week let alone per day. I think that's why it's important that you communicate frequently and obviously we monitor through observations on Tapestry and in our Learning Journals as well.