

# Working with a TA - Primary

**By Ellie Adjei**

## **How does your TA support in the classroom?**

In Primary, the role of the TA is diverse. An average day for my TA in our upper key stage two class would start with some well-being check-ins during registration; talking to pupils who might have had a tricky weekend or evening so they could get their worries off their chests before their learning began.

During early work, my TA would then do some targeted maths pre-teaching with identified pupils. This ensured those identified pupils had refreshed the skills required for the lesson. Pupils were selected based upon the previous days marking.

During my maths input, my TA would scaffold and support an identified pair or individual. To do this, she would use a small flip chart and any practical manipulatives relevant to the lesson. During the independent work, my TA would circulate and check understanding while I worked with a focus group of pupils. During the plenary, my TA would work with an identified pupil/ group to rectify any identified barriers to achieving the learning objective, such as a misconception or a process error.

This model would be used for our English lessons too, the only change being that I would often incorporate my TA into my input for English. For example, scribing for role on the wall, being a character for our hot-seating activity or selecting pupils to feed into our group writing while I scribed on the board. During the plenary, she would do some one-to-one editing with an identified pupil.

After lunch, my TA would support any pupils who needed mediation following lunchtime – this would ensure any lunchtime disagreements were quickly addressed and pupils felt satisfied that their thoughts had been heard. This meant a much smoother start to our afternoon learning.

The approach to afternoon learning changed depending on the subject. My TA had studied art, so one day a week we would split the class in two: she would teach art to half of the class while I taught half the class PE and then we would swap. Children loved these afternoons as they felt they had special dedicated time with us both. For science, my TA would support with my input, for example by helping me to model how to set up investigations. We would then have two focus groups each to assess and support. Some afternoons were identified for targeted interventions linked to pupil targets. My TA would work with individuals and groups for no more than 20 minutes at a time on pre-planned interventions and would feedback to me at the end of the day so intervention groups could be adapted and refined.

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

At the end of every day, we would reflect together in terms of what had gone well and what we needed to improve and adapt. We would consider wellbeing for individual children, how plans might need to be adapted for the next day and which children to target for pre-teaching and intervention work. My TA would also identify any resources she might need for the next day and set these up or ask for my support if she needed it.

Each morning, we would have about 15 minutes together to set up resources, review the plans and share any relevant information, such as messages from parents, messages from staff meetings.

Each week, I would also email my TA a copy of my plans and resources, and I would review the diary with her for the forthcoming week so she knew if there was anything approaching that she might need to be aware of, such as book week or science week.

My TA was always welcome to attend Pupil Progress Meetings and medium-term planning meetings. This was optional but my TA always liked to be involved in these meetings and over time we both found it beneficial to have this open way of working. Her insights into progress meetings were invaluable as she had information about individual pupils that I didn't. She also had brilliant ideas for planning: involving her in the medium-term planning meeting for the following term meant we would draw upon her experience of the year group. For example, themes that had gone well previously and links between subjects that had worked well. It would also mean she was onboard with helping me to set up the learning environment ready for our new theme or topic which was a great help!

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

All of our conversations were focussed on moving learning forward and supporting pupil wellbeing. The reflections at the end of the day were particularly impactful and important for us. It meant that we could be far more targeted, and my TA was well-prepared to run her interventions the next day.

Our open and honest relationship also meant that we could both give each other feedback on our teaching so over time we both refined and developed our practice which benefitted the class as a whole.

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

Adult support was always carefully planned around need – this sometimes meant that some children received more support than others. We did however ensure that all pupils had the chance to work with an adult in English and maths each week. It's difficult to monitor exactly how much time you both spend with each child per week let alone per day but by planning to work with identified pupils based upon need, you can usually ensure that everyone has been given some dedicated adult support during the week. It's important to note that 'need' refers to whoever needs support to move forward to the next step – this does not always mean a lower achieving pupil or group. In changing your mindset about who needs support – everyone - you can ensure all pupils benefit from adult support throughout the week.