5. Preparing the teacher so that they can make best use of the teaching assistant

It’s only recently that teacher training has begun to address how to manage teaching assistants; and as a result some written guidance or training is likely to benefit teachers not used to working with teaching assistants.

This guidance should cover the role of teaching assistants, how to communicate effectively, what information to share, and how to involve teaching assistants in the planning and delivery of lessons.

To achieve their full value, teachers and their schools must deploy teaching assistants effectively. A good working relationship must be established and maintained between teachers and teaching assistants. You can encourage this by allocating time for good communications. You should:

- Discuss teaching plans
- Share ideas
- Give and receive feedback
- Regularly review the classroom relationship

Both parties must understand the differing roles of the teacher and the teaching assistant. The teacher is responsible for planning lessons and directing learning, while the teaching assistant provides support to the teacher and the pupils. The teaching assistant works under the direction of the teacher, whether in the whole class or when working alone with small groups of pupils.

You must ensure that the teaching assistant is fully briefed on lesson plans. Ideally the teaching assistant should be given the opportunity to participate in the planning and preparation of this work. For short term planning, this may only require a few minutes each day to ensure both the teacher and teaching assistant understand their role in the lesson.

Medium term planning will require longer conversations, and some dedicated planning time at least once a term is needed.

Every teacher has their own approach to dealing with behaviour difficulties. The teaching assistant needs to be familiar with these approaches, so that pupils don’t get conflicting messages. The teacher should also inform the teaching assistant about any pupils in the class with behavioural difficulties or special educational needs, and should mention any strategies they may find helpful in dealing with these pupils.