

Raising Standards and Tackling Workload Implementing the National Agreement

June 2005

department for
education and skills
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EFFECTIVE DEPLOYMENT OF HIGHER LEVEL TEACHING ASSISTANTS

The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG)¹ fully supports the deployment of Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) in schools. We welcome the fact that so far some 10,000 people have registered for a place with an HLTA training provider and over 2,700 have achieved HLTA status. The development of HLTA standards, and the award of HLTA status to individuals by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), complements other areas of support staff deployment in schools and the changes to teachers' conditions of service arising from the National Agreement. HLTA deployment represents an important element in embedding and ensuring sustainability of the gains achieved through the implementation of the National Agreement.

The work of staff supporting teaching and learning, such as HLTAs, complements the work of teachers, but the roles remain essentially different and are not interchangeable. The guidance in this WAMG note builds on the previously issued *Guidance for schools on Higher Level Teaching Assistant roles for school support staff*.²

Schools and LEAs should aim to ensure that staff supporting teaching and learning who are already operating at the level of the HLTA standards have an early opportunity to take part in an HLTA programme. HLTA standards cover professional values and practices, knowledge and understanding and the delivery of teaching and learning activities under the supervision and guidance of a teacher. Achievement of HLTA status provides an objective assurance to schools and parents that those members of support staff are working to this set of agreed national professional standards on a daily basis.

When considering the deployment of HLTAs, schools should take into consideration the wide range of experience and expertise that has enabled them to gain the status. This nationally recognised expertise will be applied to the whole of the contribution they make to teaching and learning in schools as part of a professional whole-school team.

Continuing the curriculum during teacher PPA time

One of the 31 broad-ranging professional standards requires HLTAs to demonstrate that they are able to advance pupils' learning in a range of classroom settings including working with whole classes. This provides schools with opportunities to ensure teaching and learning continues when, for example, teachers are undertaking planning, preparation and assessment (PPA).



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



the education union



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NASUWT

NEOST



Professional Association of Teachers



the public service union

¹ The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group is composed of representatives from ATL, DfES, GMB, NASUWT, NEOST, PAT, SHA, T&G, UNISON and the Welsh Assembly Government who are all signatories to the Agreement.

² The Guidance for schools on Higher Level Teaching Assistant roles for school support staff can be accessed at www.remodelling.org/download.php

When schools timetable other staff to enable teachers to access their entitlement to PPA time, these staff will be undertaking 'specified work' for the purposes of the regulations made under S133 of the Education Act 2002³. This work is distinct from cover supervision work where there is no active teaching taking place, but pupils continue their learning by carrying out a pre-prepared exercise under supervision. It is important that schools appreciate the distinction between these two areas of support staff deployment:

- The need for **cover** arises when a teacher is absent from a lesson they are timetabled to teach.
- **PPA time** is time during which a teacher is **not** timetabled to teach. Schools are therefore required to put additional staffing into their timetables in order to ensure that delivery of the curriculum is maintained.

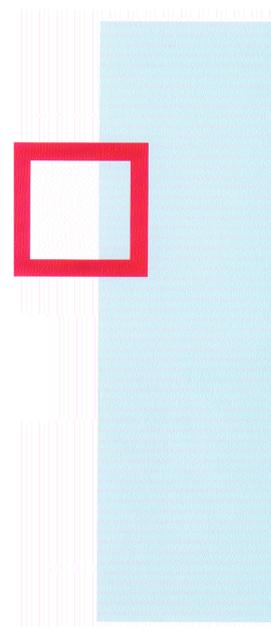
Headteachers are required by the regulations to ensure that any support staff undertaking specified work have the necessary skills, expertise and experience to fulfil their roles, and that they do so under a system of direction and supervision from a teacher. Where more demanding aspects of specified work are carried out, including work with whole classes, the guidance to the S133 regulations strongly recommends that headteachers use the HLTA standards to assess the levels of skills and experience required.

HLTA roles have greater complexity and autonomy than other classroom support roles and are expected to make a significant contribution in teaching and learning activities in a variety of contexts. The wide-ranging nature of these roles means that WAMG considers it inadvisable for schools to view their requirements for staff working at HLTA level solely in terms of the hours of teacher PPA time they need to implement. This introduces an artificial distinction between interrelated components of HLTA work.

Pay and grading considerations

Pay and conditions for support staff, including those in HLTA roles, are determined in accordance with local authority pay and grading structures, reflecting in particular the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services Green Book Agreement. The appropriate grade for HLTA roles should reflect all the demands of the post using the guidance on grading structures published in the NJC guidance *School Support Staff: The Way Forward*.

It follows from the discussion above that casual arrangements – which give to teaching assistants who meet the HLTA standards enhanced pay only for those hours when they are deployed with whole classes to provide PPA time for teachers – are not in line with the aims of workforce reform and the principles of the National Agreement. This approach risks undermining the professional status of those meeting the HLTA standards and is unlikely to be sustainable in terms of the long-term deployment of highly trained support staff. Schools will only be making the most effective use of these valuable resources if they ensure that HLTA deployment is based on sustained roles which reflect the wider expertise related to the HLTA standards, and that this is properly recognised in the grading of these posts. In small schools, this may need to be facilitated by sharing staff.



³ Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations 2003 and Education (Specified Work and Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2004