

working as a

Teaching Assistant

a Lambeth Professional Development Handbook



Foreword

Over the last few years there has been a gradual but significant expansion in the number of teaching assistants working in Lambeth schools. The impact of this evolving workforce has been significant. Research nationally has shown that teaching assistants make a huge contribution to supporting quality teaching and enriching the learning experience for children. There are, for example, a significant number of initiatives designed to raise achievement that could not take place without the expertise and commitment of teaching assistants. Another important part of the work is the enormous support for children with special needs in the borough.

As an LEA, Lambeth recognises and values the work that you do. This handbook has been written for all teaching assistants working in Lambeth, in early years, primary and secondary schools. It is part of our commitment to supporting you in your role in school and contains information about the wide range of training opportunities that are available in the borough. As well as outlining the content of some of the courses, it includes information that will be useful as you consider how you might develop your career in the future.

The handbook has been produced in recognition of the importance of professional development opportunities for all teaching assistants. The LEA also acknowledges the need to develop a clear career path, whether you want to continue your work as a teaching assistant, perhaps in a more senior role, or become a teacher some time in the future.

Lambeth LEA would like to thank the Learning & Skills Council London Central for providing the funds to provide this handbook.

I hope that it will be useful source of reference for you and wish you well in your career.



Phyllis Dunipace

Interim Executive Director of Education

Lambeth LEA



Introduction

This professional development handbook has been written for all teaching assistants in Lambeth. It has been developed in recognition that well managed and well trained teaching assistants play a key role in the success of all schools and provide high quality support for teaching and learning. The handbook has been designed to be a useful source of reference. It contains information about the training opportunities that are available to you and suggests ways that you might develop your career in the future. It will be added to over time so that it stays an up to date and relevant working document for you.

The folder is organised into five main parts:

Part One	The role of the teaching assistant
Part Two	Locally based training opportunities
Part Three	Career development – looking to the future
Part Four	Key school documents
Part Five	Developing a portfolio of achievement
Appendices	A – Relevant qualifications B – Training courses C – Career progression D – Signposts to teaching E – Useful information

Parts One to Three of the handbook contain practical information about some of the training and career paths open to you. Included within this, are first hand accounts by teaching assistants of the opportunities they have taken for training and how these have supported them in their work in school and in furthering their careers.

Parts Four and Five have been designed for you to add to over time. Part Four is for copies of the key school documents, with which you need to be familiar: on behaviour, child protection and health and safety. The final Part is designed to become a 'Portfolio of Achievement', containing information about your professional development, which you can add to. This can provide useful evidence of your prior learning when applying for a longer training course or a new job in another school. There are suggestions outlining the kind of information that it may be helpful to include.

In the Appendices you will find a 'map' of the courses currently offered (Appendix B), examples of career opportunities and 'Signposts to teaching' (Appendix D), which outline some of the main routes to gaining qualified teacher status (QTS).



The role of the teaching assistant

'Teaching Assistant' (TA) is an umbrella term to describe all adults who are paid to work with children in the classroom. Other titles include 'Learning Support Assistant' or 'Classroom Assistant', but 'Teaching Assistant' is the Government's preferred term. It includes everyone whose main role is to assist the teacher in the classroom.

Lambeth teaching assistants come from many different backgrounds and bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the role. For some, becoming a teaching assistant is a planned decision, for others, it is a more gradual process.

Megan Huntley has a degree in comparative religion. She knew that she wanted to work with children and young people and thought that a job as a teaching assistant would be an ideal place to start. Megan has now worked at Lilian Baylis Secondary School for two years. She teaches and plans for a small reading group, gives in class support to statemented pupils and team teaches the Year 9 maths booster group. When she started work she had no intention of becoming a teacher herself, but after her positive experiences at the school, has decided to begin a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at university next year, specialising in art. Megan will qualify as a teacher in 2004.

Angela Simpson is a teaching assistant at Effra Nursery and a very valued member of the staff team. When her daughter started at the school she didn't anticipate becoming a teaching assistant. Like many parents, she helped out at school fetes and other school functions, and gradually became more involved becoming a midday meals supervisor. Angela has personal experience of working with children with special needs and was encouraged to apply for a job as a learning support assistant at the nursery, initially to work with one child. She acknowledges that the job was challenging at first and that there was much to learn. However, she had good support from the staff team and took every opportunity for her own professional development, attending a number of training courses. Last year, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership funded Angela and other TAs to do an access to NVQ course based at the nursery, and then to go on to do NVQ Level 2. Angela has now successfully completed this well regarded qualification.



What kind of work can I expect to do?

To suggest that there is one role carried out by teaching assistants (TAs) would be misleading. Each school has its own character and needs which means that the work you do will vary from one school to another and will also vary within the school itself. Your own experiences and the personal and professional skills you bring to your work will also play a part in determining what you do. The main areas of work that you are currently likely to be involved in are outlined on this page.

Support for the class teacher

Some teaching assistants have a general administrative role which may involve supporting teachers by taking on routine teaching tasks such as photocopying, preparing and organising resources. Others may have data handling skills or provide technical support particularly for Information & Communication Technology (ICT). However, teaching assistants are increasingly involved in the teaching, observation and assessment of individuals and small groups under the supervision of a qualified teacher.

Working with pupils

Many teaching assistants will have general classroom responsibilities but a growing number are employed specifically to work with individual children, often with a statement of special educational need. In some schools, teaching assistants will have particular responsibilities for working with bilingual children. Whatever your role, the aim is to enable children to become more independent as learners and support their participation in the life of the school.

Supporting the curriculum

There are a significant number of curriculum initiatives designed to raise achievement that could not take place without the expertise of teaching assistants. In many schools, teaching assistants take responsibility for implementing programmes to support literacy and numeracy development and to raise achievement. In primary schools these include Early Literacy Support, (ELS), Additional Literacy Support (ALS), Further Literacy Support (FLS) booster classes, Success Maker and Springboard. In some special circumstances,

teaching assistants may support children with tests and examinations under the direction of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or class teacher, perhaps reading questions aloud, or scribing responses.

Supporting the school

Teaching assistants are very much part of the staff team and as such will play a part in supporting and furthering the ethos of the school. Some teaching assistants have a role strengthening links with parents, for example taking part in home school visits before children begin nursery, working to maintain consistent approaches to behaviour, or tackling other barriers to pupils' learning.

These four key areas are discussed in greater detail on the five day induction course provided for all teaching assistants in Lambeth. However, it is likely that there will be an even greater range of opportunities in the future as the government looks to develop three broad areas of work for support staff – teaching, behaviour and guidance, and administration and organisation.

The government is also considering ways of pushing back the boundaries of teaching assistants' work in schools further with the introduction of personal administrative assistants for teachers and higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) who may have greater teaching responsibilities.

Up to date information about these developments is available from the Teacher Training Agency (see contact numbers and addresses in Appendix E).



What kind of support can I expect to do my job in school?

Job descriptions

One of the most important things for you to know before you take up your post is what is expected of you. This will usually have been discussed at interview and when you start work you will be given a job description outlining what your work involves. The job description should be clear and accurate but in practice it can be quite general, so it is important that you are able to go through the detail of your role with your line manager or another designated member of the school staff.

School based induction

There is usually a designated member of staff who will be responsible for your induction into the school and its practices. This is often your line manager or a more senior or experienced teaching assistant. The process usually begins soon after your appointment but exactly what it looks like in practice will vary from school to school depending on its size, staffing arrangements and the job that you have been employed to do. In addition to practical information about the school, you will need to know about some of the school's policies, particularly on health and safety, confidentiality, child protection and behaviour. You will also need to be clear about how the lines of communication work in school. As part of your induction you may be assigned a mentor or be able to shadow a more experienced colleague. Schools often have a staff handbook containing valuable information about school procedures.

At St Stephen's Primary School, there is a comprehensive induction programme for all staff. This is carefully structured to ensure that new staff become familiar with what they need to know in a methodical way during their first term. The programme covers everything to do with the running of the school, from the available resources through to line management structures. There is a workbook for the TA to fill in, and this becomes part of their Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

The school's Primary Learning Mentor (PLM) is the team leader for the teaching assistants in the school and often fulfils the role of induction mentor for them. She has worked as a TA in the school herself, and had the opportunity for training as she has grown into this strategic role in the school. Teaching assistants work together in this team for specific school development work. They each have an annual performance management appraisal where targets are set and reviewed. Professional development needs are discussed and appropriate training proposed.

The school places a high priority on developing effective working partnerships with teachers. Teaching assistants meet daily with teaching staff for planning and evaluation. This provides further opportunity for new staff to address any issues that they may have. They attend parent's evenings and parent Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings as well as annual reviews. All teaching assistants attend Inset and full time teaching assistants also attend staff development meetings. They are very much involved and valued as part of the staff team.

Partnership with teachers

Successful partnerships are a key factor in effective practice. You will be working under the direction of a qualified teacher who is responsible for planning and overseeing the work that you do. It is important to establish practical ground rules with them as soon as possible. This will not only ensure a smooth start for you but will also guarantee consistency of approach with the children from the beginning. The key areas to agree are likely to include the space where you will work; your role during whole class and group work; how to reward good work and behaviour; what to do if pupils misbehave; and how you will feedback to the teacher on the work with which you have been involved. You will also need to be well informed about the current attainment of the children and their learning needs and be involved wherever possible in planning and preparation. The Lambeth induction course will deal with these issues in more detail.

Central Induction Training

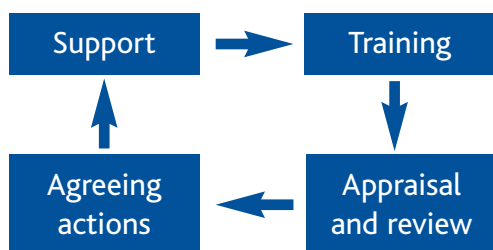
Lambeth offers a centrally based induction course for teaching assistants. This is provided as an entitlement for all new teaching assistants during their first year in school and it is expected that you will be released from school to attend the training.

The five day course takes place at International House in Brixton during the school day and is spread over about half a term. It covers a range of topics, designed to provide you with important underpinning knowledge about how children learn, children's literacy and numeracy development, behaviour management, successful strategies for working with children with special needs and supporting bilingual children. It provides a good foundation, whether you work at primary or secondary level and will complement any induction programme offered by your individual school. In addition, it offers an opportunity to meet colleagues working in different settings and discuss any questions and concerns about your experiences and work.

One teaching assistant attending the induction course this year commented *"The training course has been very informative. There is definitely a need for a course of this nature and I would like to attend more in the future..."*

Ongoing support

After the initial recruitment and induction, you can expect ongoing support as you become more experienced. This can be represented as a professional development cycle of:



At Clapham Manor Primary School this process is well established. Teaching assistants are line managed by the SENCO, Naeth Cowley. She provides all new teaching assistants with a staff booklet containing basic information about the school, a 'How to become a successful teaching assistant' book and a very useful professional development portfolio, which is added to over time. Naeth ensures that all newly appointed staff are assigned a mentor. When they begin, they are able to observe an experienced teaching assistant working in a parallel class: a valuable opportunity to see the job in action. This is the beginning of the professional development cycle.

In September, Naeth meets with all the teaching assistants on an individual basis. This professional development meeting is an opportunity to reflect on the past year, to talk about the work that they are going to do, and agree actions for the coming year. At this meeting, there is also the opportunity to discuss training needs and opportunities.

Later in the term, Naeth observes each teaching assistant working in the classroom and meets with them to provide constructive positive feedback. In March and April there is a pay grading review, and this provides a further opportunity to discuss any issues on both sides. Towards the end of the summer term, all teaching assistants are given a self assessment review form to complete. This is a valuable tool for reflecting on the work that they have been doing during the year and forms the basis of the professional development meeting in September.

The teaching assistants are very much a part of the school team. They are involved in meetings with parents and external agencies and reviews of Individual Education Plans. They regularly attend in school Inset sessions and provide work shadow opportunities for teaching assistants from other schools as part of Clapham Manor's 'Beacon Status' initiative. Experienced teaching assistants also carry out observations of their colleagues working with children.

Locally based training opportunities

Some of the most effective training that you will receive will be from working alongside colleagues in school and from the school's Inset programme. However, as with any new job, you can expect to receive more formal training to support you in your role and Lambeth LEA is committed to offering you a wide range of centrally based training opportunities. Details of all of these are sent to every school in the borough during the summer term, in a folder entitled 'Promoting Achievement through Learning – Continuing Professional Development for School Staff.'

Why training?

The most important reason for providing quality training is to ensure that you have the knowledge, skills and understanding to feel confident in your work and to maintain high quality support for teaching and learning.

At the moment there are no requirements for teaching assistants to have any formal training or qualifications and your personal skills and life experiences are highly valued. However, *National Occupational Standards* for teaching assistants have recently been published. These describe the expected level of practice for teaching assistants. They are a start towards greater regulation so that your responsibilities become more clearly defined by the government, local authorities and schools. Over time, training courses will increasingly be linked to the Occupational Standards, so that you can be confident about the relevance of any training you receive.

As well as equipping you with the skills you need to do the job, some courses give you the option of obtaining nationally recognised qualifications. These can open up a number of opportunities for you in the future, perhaps in a more specialised or senior role in school, a career in education, or provide access to further education and higher qualifications.

Which is the best course for me to do?

Once you have completed your induction training, the options open to you are considerable. There are many different kinds of training to choose from ranging from half day courses to longer, more substantial accredited courses (courses which involve formally recognised learning), which usually take a year to complete.

Decisions about the courses you can take will need to be agreed with your line manager or Inset coordinator and will take account of several factors: your own interests and expertise, your career aspirations and the needs of the school. The main courses on offer are outlined in the rest of this section.

Shorter courses

The short courses for teaching assistants vary from year to year, and have ranged from sessions on observation in the early years to supporting bilingual children in the numeracy hour. There are usually no course requirements and they are open to all teaching assistants.



Courses to develop areas of expertise

A number of teaching assistants are employed to support more specialist areas of work in the school. These include carefully structured programmes such as Early Literacy Support (ELS) and Springboard. These scripted programmes are designed to be taught to a small group of children by teaching assistants. The training for these programmes takes place over one or two sessions. They are usually repeated each year and will ensure that you feel properly equipped and confident to take on these key tasks.

Lambeth also provides specialist courses, usually spread over a number of sessions. These are designed to support you in developing real expertise in a particular area such as ICT or special needs. As yet, only the ten day course for teaching assistants working with ethnic minority children carries with it the option of accreditation, but it is anticipated that over time other courses will follow this model.

Many teaching assistants find the opportunity to look at an area in greater depth very beneficial. Course members on the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) course this year have commented *"The more the course goes on, the more relevant it is to my work and professional development ... It has stimulated me into looking at my practice ... I have a better understanding of working with bilingual/ethnic minority children ... I have gained lots of ideas for making my own resources and key visuals ... It has given me confidence and ideas to suggest to other staff."*

Whether or not the course you decide to attend is accredited, you should expect to receive a certificate of attendance and should keep this as evidence of your learning for future reference. It will be counted as 'prior learning' and may in time count towards a qualification such as a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).

Longer developmental training courses

Gaining a nationally recognised qualification can contribute substantially to your work in school, as well as your job satisfaction and confidence. Lambeth currently offers two substantial courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications for teaching assistants. Both last for one year and will support you in your role in school by substantially developing your expertise and confidence. In addition, they can open up the possibility of wider opportunities for you in the future. The course that will most suit you depends partly on how you feel you learn best and how you see your career developing.

Here is an overview of the types of courses from which you can choose.

1. National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) for Teaching Assistants

Two brand new NVQs have been developed for teaching assistants. Lambeth has been at the forefront of their development and has run a successful pilot course in conjunction with Lambeth College. The NVQs are practical, vocational qualifications that assess the application of your skills and knowledge of real work practices. They are based on the new National Occupational Standards and recognise your competence to do your job to these standards in the workplace. They are intended for teaching assistants who want to prove they are competent in what they do or wish to raise their level of practice to National Standards. NVQs are not linked to a specific training programme although there is some provision at Lambeth College for training to cover the underpinning knowledge. The NVQ can be taken at either Level 2, the vocational equivalent to GCSE, or Level 3, the vocational equivalent to 'A' level. Level 3 is most suitable for more experienced teaching assistants whose work calls for competence across a varied range of responsibilities. Assessment is mainly by classroom observation, projects and assignments and you will be well supported by course tutors throughout the course.

Julie Best, has worked at Crown Lane Primary School for over fifteen years. She started work serving meals in the kitchen and since then has been a midday meals supervisor and primary helper. Julie is now an experienced teaching assistant. Her work has changed enormously, 'from washing paintpots to working with children,' and among her responsibilities are the delivery of Additional Literacy Support and Springboard programmes. She has regularly taken the opportunities she has had for professional development.

"Taking opportunities for training is important, and helps you to feel more confident about what you are doing," Julie says. She is now completing the new NVQ at Lambeth College. "It is good to see the whole picture. I definitely feel more equipped to work in the classroom and enthusiastic to take on more. I spend a lot of time with groups of children ... I know what I am expected to do and can adapt the work for them."

Julie's headteacher Yvonne Steele, agrees that having a qualification such as an NVQ gives value and status to teaching assistants and sees this as an important part of the professionalism of the role. "Teaching assistants are valuable members of the school workforce. There are so many demands on the curriculum that schools couldn't operate without them. Teaching assistants are generally keen to be trained and the NVQ is an important way in which they can know they are qualified for the role."

2. Specialist Teaching Assistant Course (STA)

Lambeth also funds a well established, nationally recognised Specialist Teaching Assistant course. It takes place over a school year and has been designed for Lambeth teachers in conjunction with The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE). This advanced course predated the development of the National Standards and leads to a university awarded qualification. The taught course days are practical in nature but underpinned by educational theory. They include sessions on language and literacy development, how children learn to read, developing mathematical understanding and assessing progress and development.

In addition there are conference days and the opportunity to visit teaching assistants in other schools. The course is assessed through school based tasks and written course work including three essays. It is accredited by the University of East London and on successful completion you are awarded the Specialist Teaching Assistant Certificate. The qualification is highly regarded and this course may particularly suit you if you would like to take on a more senior role within a school in the future. Some schools advertise for teaching assistants with the STA qualification.

Teaching assistants who have recently completed the training have commented:

"Over the year I feel that I have come a long way. I am much more aware of all that I am involved with and have enjoyed the journey immensely. I feel particularly privileged to have been given access to the experience and knowledge of so many great speakers.

I feel that the course has laid out good working practices enabling me to organise strategies that follow an orderly and progressive course, giving consideration to the learning needs of individual pupils, under the guidance of the class teacher.

The course really came into its element in supporting and developing children's reading. I was extremely inspired by the range of exciting books we were shown, and all the strategies to enable a child to become a better reader."



STA and higher qualifications

In addition to the STA qualification, you also receive 60 Credit Accumulation Transfer (CAT) points at Level 1. The points become particularly significant if you decide to go on to do a further course of study, for example a diploma or degree. STA can often be considered for credit towards such a qualification. Most higher education institutions will accept CAT points as evidence of your prior learning even if you have no other formal qualifications, and you can usually negotiate some exemption from the first year of further study. The amount of credit actually given depends on how well the content of the STA course matches the specific requirements of your chosen course. You can also use the STA qualification as the first step on the road to becoming a teacher and further information about this is given in Part Three.

Lansdowne School has a long history of effective teaching assistant deployment and teaching assistants are actively encouraged to undertake a wide range of professional development.

Ginni Bealing, the headteacher at Lansdowne sees the relationship between teacher and teaching assistant as 'a real partnership'. She is committed to building on the strengths and potential of those who work in the school and has developed a highly trained support staff with considerable expertise. David Tarasand, for example, began work at Lansdowne with little experience of working with children, but his ability and interest in EMAG work was recognised and developed. He attended training, built up a range of quality resources and went on to become the school's EMAG coordinator. The quality of his work was impressive and praised by Ofsted. This work is now being developed further by Mark Ripper and Vicky Hewison, both teaching assistants at the school.

At present, teaching assistants at Lansdowne are following all the long developmental training courses offered by the LEA – NVQ Level 3, EMAG and STA. Their response to the training is positive. Maureen McKenzie commented "Everyone has different ways of learning ...the training gives you more knowledge and

understanding of how to help a child the best way ... There is time to reflect on what you already do and what you might do differently ...

Even when not all the course is immediately relevant the underpinning knowledge is invaluable. When you come across a new situation you think, I know what to do with this..."

The school provides a TA mentor for any teaching assistant undertaking an accredited course, a responsibility currently taken on by Mark who has the skills and expertise to carry out this important role.

Additional Courses

In addition to these courses, which are usually run every year, the 'Promoting Achievement through Learning' folder will contain details of all the new and rewarding courses that are currently being developed in the borough. This folder is sent to every school in Lambeth during the summer term. For the first time this year there has been a STA module for teaching assistants focusing on teaching numeracy. Other teaching assistants in secondary schools in the North Lambeth Education Action Zone (EAZ) are following a GCSE course in maths. This has been very successful and some of them will be taking their GCSE at the end of the year. Current course members have commented on the benefits to them and the children of the course.

"The course has been an eye opener for me. I have encountered methods of working out questions which are different from what I had learnt in my school days. It has so far empowered me with different strategies I can use in the classroom ..."

"I believe that when I have finished I will be able to teach problem solving more easily and effectively ..."

"I have always liked maths and think of myself as confident in my approach. I started this course to refresh my skills. However, I have learnt so much already I realise that I did not know as much as I thought! I feel I am gaining useful knowledge that I can apply to my children and in my work."

Career development

Looking to the future

Many teaching assistants want to remain as general teaching assistants in the classroom and your experience and expertise will be highly valued by the teachers and schools with which you work. However, others will be interested in further career development. At the moment there is no clear national career progression for teaching assistants, but schools in Lambeth have been very creative in ensuring that they make the most of your expertise.

Senior Teaching Assistants

Some schools have created a Senior Teaching Assistant post (sometimes described as the TA coordinator) with managerial responsibility for other assistants. This often includes meeting regularly with the headteacher or TA line manager to discuss the work of the teaching assistants, timetabling and planning, organising and leading regular meetings with the team and providing support for colleagues. Other senior teaching assistants may be involved in mentoring, training or observing others, or planning and organising a school based programme of professional development.

Higher Level Teaching Assistants

The role of 'higher level' teaching assistants is currently under discussion. The new role is intended to give experienced teaching assistants the opportunity to progress in their career, as it is likely that some teaching assistants with relevant training and

expertise will be given greater teaching and learning responsibilities in the future. It is not intended that the role of teacher and HLTAs are interchangeable. Each class or group of pupils will still have a qualified teacher with responsibility for their overall learning. More information about the proposed changes is available from the Teacher Training Agency website (see Appendix F).

SEN support

Experienced teaching assistants are sometimes employed to provide support for the Special Education Needs Coordinator. This may involve working collaboratively on Individual Education Plans, collating the paperwork necessary for annual reviews and statement applications. This is often in addition to designing and making resources and working in the classroom alongside children with special needs.

Coordinators of specialist areas

A number of teaching assistants in Lambeth have the role of coordinating intervention or catch up programmes or even heading up the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) work in school. This can involve working alongside and training other teaching assistants, as well as developing and organising resources to support teaching and learning.

Other teaching assistants have been appointed as ICT coordinators or technicians, often providing valuable support for teachers on a very practical level. This could involve tasks such as, ordering and changing



consumables such as ink cartridges, putting programmes onto the computers and sorting out straightforward technical problems. Others teach in the ICT suite. This important work has proved very beneficial to the schools concerned, and supported them in maintaining and developing this key curriculum area.

Learning mentors

Some teaching assistants have gone on to become learning mentors. The exact job of the learning mentor varies depending on the needs of the school. In general though, learning mentors will often be involved in tackling barriers to a pupil's learning, improving behaviour and attendance, and strengthening links with parents and the local community.

In Appendix C, you will find a diagram giving an example what career progression might look like.

How can I use my experience and qualifications to become a teacher?

Whether or not you have qualifications, there are a growing number of ways into teaching – and teaching assistants in Lambeth have followed almost all of them.

Studying for further qualifications is demanding but the route you take, and the time it will take you to achieve Qualified Teacher Status can be flexible and tailored to suit your individual circumstances. What is clear, however, is that your experience of working as a teaching assistant is an excellent preparation for teacher training.

Ruth Burtonshaw is currently completing her PGCE at Goldsmith's College in London. She believes that her experience as a teaching assistant has given her an invaluable foundation for her training.

Ruth started work as a TA at Rosendale Primary School. She was initially employed to support a child with complex medical needs but it quickly became apparent that her skills could also be used more widely in the

school. When ALS was introduced by the National Literacy Strategy, she attended the training courses run by Lambeth and soon found herself being given the role of assistant ALS coordinator, taking responsibility for the practical management of resources and also training other teaching assistants in its implementation. Ruth also went on to organise the ELS programme in the school.

In addition to these roles, she was able to develop her interest in SEN by working alongside the school SENCO, and was closely involved in the development of workable systems for the assessment of children causing concern. Her communication skills were recognised and built on and she took part in review meetings with the class teacher, parents, and the SENCO.

Reflecting on how this has prepared her for teaching she says "Working as a teaching assistant really has been totally invaluable ... Even if you don't realise it, when you spend so much time observing teaching, you're reflecting and analysing what is happening. You have current knowledge ... I know what is happening in schools now and have a lot of practical experience that is very relevant."

Her experience has also helped her to appreciate the teaching assistants she now works with in school. "Teaching assistants can be under utilised in schools. But I realise that well trained teaching assistants are invaluable."

Teaching is a graduate profession. If you want to work as a teacher you will need to have or acquire:

GCSE grade C or above in English and Mathematics, or the equivalent.	The Teacher Training Agency can tell you which qualifications count as equivalent
GCSE grade C or above in Science	Only required if you were born after 1979
An honours degree	See following pages
Qualified teacher status	See following pages

See Appendix D for more information

Next steps to becoming a teacher

The information below, together with the 'Signposts to teaching' map (Appendix D) outlines some of the more common routes through to becoming a qualified teacher.

Do you have a degree?

If you have already obtained a degree, you can apply to do a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Because you will already have developed your subject knowledge through your degree course, you will normally follow a one-year full time programme, although there are a growing number of part time and flexible programmes.

An alternative work based route involves finding a school that will employ you as a trainee on the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). The advantage of this programme is that you are paid while you train. The Teacher Training Agency produces a list of contact people who may be able to offer advice on how to find a job in your area. You can go to the TTA website www.canteach.gov.uk or phone the Teaching Information Line on 0845 6000 991.

Do you have 'A' levels and the relevant GCSEs?

Universities usually require applicants to have 'A' levels, or the equivalent of 'A' levels or above in order to study for a degree. If you have 'A' levels, you can apply to follow the undergraduate route - a full or part time honours degree (BEd or BA/BSc) with Qualified Teacher Status. On an undergraduate course you combine subject studies with professional training over three or four years.

What happens if I don't have any relevant qualifications?

The STA course is often able to act as a bridge to higher education and can sometimes exempt you from part of a degree course.

Honours degrees can be thought of in terms of points. To obtain an honours degree you need to have a total of 360 points:

- 120 at Level 1 (Year 1 of a degree)
- 120 at Level 2 (Year 2 of a degree)
- 120 at Level 3 (Year 3 of a degree)

As outlined in Part Two, STA provides you with 60 CAT points at Level 1 and demonstrates that you have the aptitude and ability to study at this level.

Below are some examples of what this can mean in practice.

The University of East London (UEL) offers part time courses for teaching assistants wishing to obtain a degree. A BA(Hons) degree in 'Facilitating Learning and Development', has been designed especially for support staff in primary schools who need to continue to work while they study. It is flexible and work-friendly and there is the option of studying at home 'on line' or through distance learning with occasional locally based teaching days. The STA qualification from Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) exempts teaching assistants from up to half the first year of study. You can then go on to do a PGCE or take part in the Graduate Teacher Programme.

UEL also offers courses based at the University:

- Early Childhood Education for those working with children aged 3-8 years
- ICT in Education for those working with children aged 3-11 years
- Language in Education for those working with children aged 3-11 years

Each of these courses leads to a PGCE teaching qualification.



The STA qualification from CLPE exempts students from two of the six study units in the first year of the honours degree. No access course is required, although all candidates have to have GCSE in maths and English.

Foundation Degrees

Foundation Degrees are new employment related higher education qualifications, designed to recognise specialist knowledge and skills. Once completed, the degree opens up opportunities for further study and qualifications, i.e. an honours degree or becoming a qualified teacher. These new degrees are vocational in nature, they include work experience, and are usually developed between Universities, Colleges and employers. They can be followed on a part time basis and are made up of 120 points at Level 1 and 120 points at Level 2.

Foundation Degrees are being developed specifically for teaching assistants and are being piloted at the moment. Currently, there are relatively few institutions, which offer a relevant Foundation Degree, but both South Bank and Greenwich Universities have this type of degree.

South Bank University will be running an Early Years Foundation Degree for staff working with children aged 0-5 years from September 2003. The course provides an opportunity for you to enhance your professional understanding and knowledge while still working with children, and is designed to draw on your experience as a childcare practitioner. It is being developed in partnership with Further Education colleges in south London, including Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Colleges, and you can choose to study at the college nearest to your workplace or home.

The Foundation Degree in Educational Studies at Greenwich University is not specifically designed for teaching assistants, although applications from teaching assistants are welcomed. It can be done either part time or full time and takes about two years.

Once the Foundation Degree has been completed, there are then two options to obtain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS):

1. Complete your honours degree and obtain Qualified Teacher Status while working as a teacher on the Registered Teacher Programme (RTP). This takes about two years. For more information on the RTP go to www.canteach.gov.uk or phone 0845 6000 991
2. Complete the honours degree programme through further part time or full time study and then go on to obtain a PGCE.

As before, if you are studying with an institution that accepts CAT points, you can negotiate some exemption from the first year of study if you have these. The amount of credit given will again depend on how well the course matches their specific requirements.



Key school documents

You can use this part of the Handbook to file useful documents from your school



A portfolio of achievement

Whatever your qualifications and experience, it is worth keeping a personal professional portfolio. This is simply a collection of information about you and will be very useful to you if you decide to apply for a different job in the future.

Useful information may include:

Your personal information and history

Education, life experiences (include parenting) your career history and copies of any references you may have.

Your job description

You will find an example of a job description on the following page.

A record of all the courses you have attended

Keep a record of all the Inset you have attended at school level as well as centrally. You will find it useful to keep the course outline, your certificates of attendance and details of any work that you have done for the course.

All central courses in Lambeth will in time be linked to the new *Occupational Standards for Teaching Assistants*. These form the basis for the NVQ for Teaching Assistants. By keeping details of the courses you will be building up valuable evidence that may be accredited as prior learning if you choose to do a nationally recognised qualification like this.

Documentation from any appraisal, review or performance monitoring

Increasingly, teaching assistants have the opportunity to take part in a review and appraisal of their work each year. This is usually an informal discussion with your line manager and helps to ensure that the school is able to make the most of your strengths.



Example job description

Job: Teaching Assistant
Responsible to: SENCO/Class teacher
Responsible for:

Main purpose

Under the direction of the SENCO/Class teacher, to support pupils (including those with special educational needs), within mainstream schools in order to facilitate their access to a broad and balanced curriculum. To assist the classteacher in providing a stimulating educational environment in which all pupils can achieve their potential.

Accountabilities

1. Helping pupils to learn as effectively as possible both in group sessions and individually by:
 - Clarifying and explaining instructions
 - Ensuring they are able to use equipment and materials provided
 - Motivating and encouraging as required
 - Assisting in weaker areas eg. language, behaviour, numeracy, literacy, presentation
 - Meeting physical needs whilst encouraging independence
 - Establishing a supportive relationship with the pupils in order to promote/reinforce their self-esteem
 - Reinforcing the learning principles being introduced by the teacher
 - Promoting personal and social development and citizenship skills.
 2. Providing regular feedback about pupils to the class teacher.
 3. Assisting class teachers (and other professional staff) in the development of suitable programmes of support (IEPs) for pupils who need learning support.
 4. Contributing towards the planning, monitoring, evaluation and record keeping of individual record plans.
 5. Participating in lesson, planning and annual review meetings of individual pupils.
 6. Having an awareness of confidential issues linked to home/pupil/teacher/school work and to keep confidences appropriately.
 7. Attending relevant in-service training (Inset).
 8. Developing a knowledge of learning support needs over the range of pupils supported.
 9. Carrying out other general duties consistent with assisting teachers in the classroom such as: distributing beverages, collection of dinner monies, washing up, tidying up the classroom, administering first aid to pupils, escorting children on school trip.
- Undertake such other duties as may be required to meet the needs of the service.

Appendix A – Relevant qualifications for teaching assistants

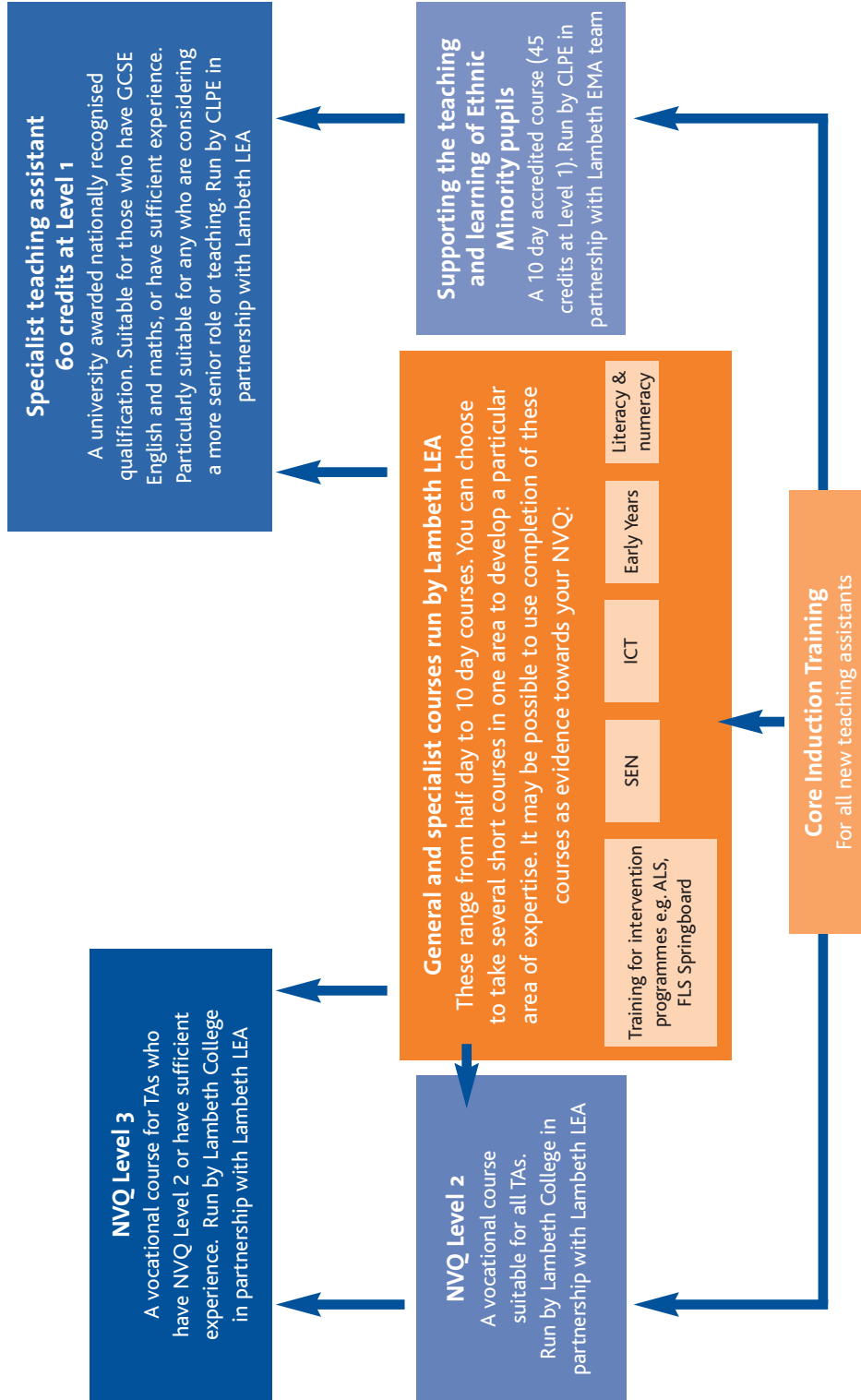
Increasing levels of knowledge, skills and understanding

General qualifications	Other qualifications	Vocationally related	Occupational qualifications
Honours Degree 360 credits: 120 credits at Level 3 120 credits at Level 2 120 credits at Level 1 Foundation Degree (emphasis on work related learning) 240 credits: 120 credits at Level 2 120 credits at Level 1	QTS		
	Diploma		
	STA 60 credits at Level 1		
AS/A levels		Vocational A level Advanced GNVQ HNC/BTEC	NVQ Level 3 City & Guilds 3
GCSE Grades A*-C		Intermediate GNVQ	NVQ Level 2 Suitable for new teaching assistants City & Guilds 2
GCSE Grades D-G		Foundation GNVQ	NVQ Level 1

Increasing occupational focus

This information is based on the National Qualification Framework

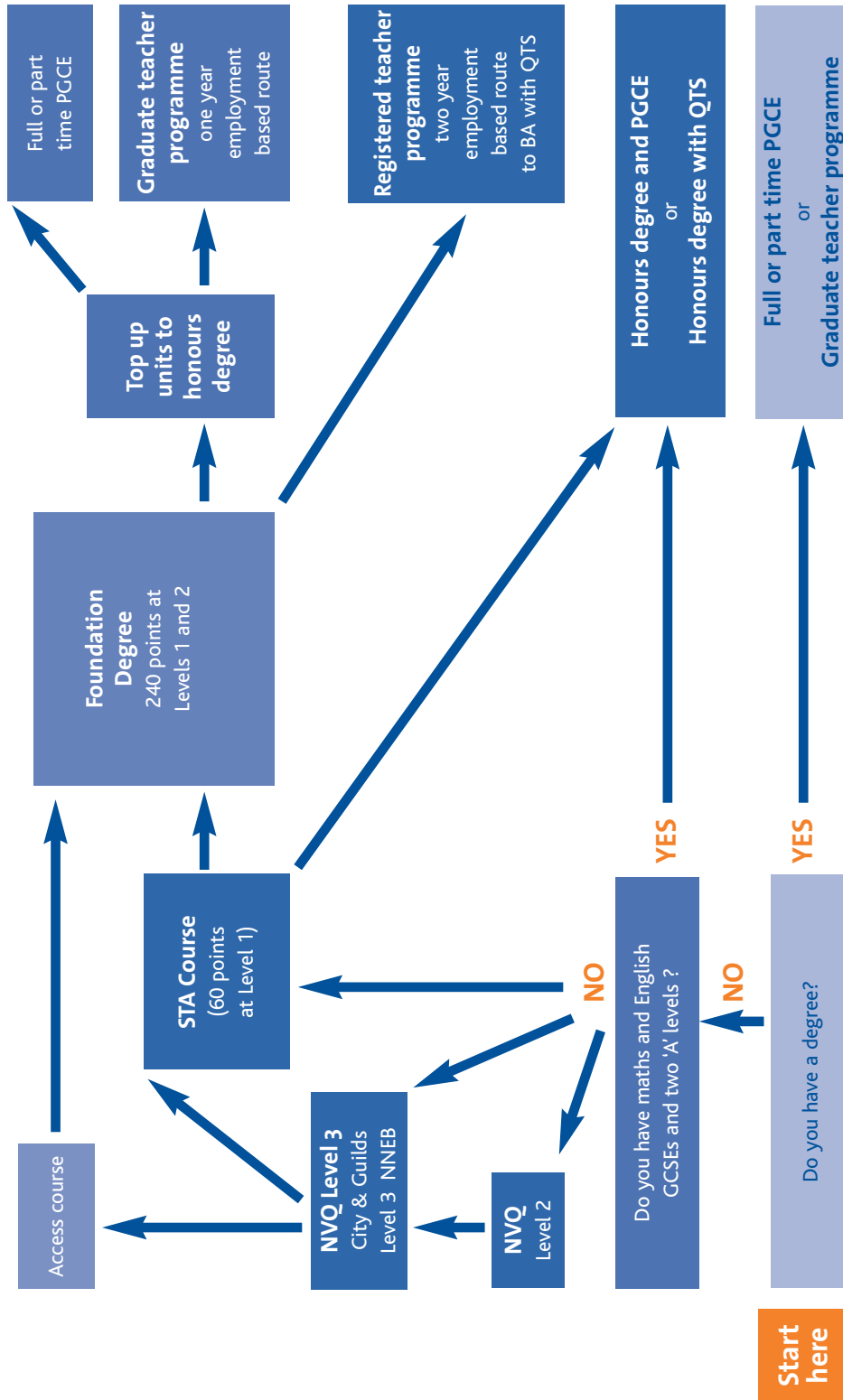
Appendix B – Training courses



Appendix C – Career progression



Appendix D – Signposts to teaching



Appendix E – Useful information

Contact numbers and addresses

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

Webber Street
London SE1 8QW
Tel: 020 7401 3382
Email: info@clpe.co.uk
Web: www.clpe.co.uk

Department for Education and Skills

Teaching Assistants Team
Area 6B
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1 3BT
Tel: 020 7925 5907
Email: assistants@dfes.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.Teachernet.gov.uk

Goldsmiths College

Tel: 020 7919 7171
Web: www.goldsmiths.ac.uk

Lambeth College

Clapham Centre
45 Clapham Common South Side
London SW4 9BL
Tel: 020 7501 5010
Email: courses@lambethcollege.ac.uk
Web: www.lambethcollege.ac.uk
For information about the Teaching Assistant NVQ please contact:
Judith Foskett, Course Coordinator
Tel: 0788 1922 517
Email: jfoskett@lambethcollege.ac.uk

Learning & Skills Council London Central

Tel: 0845 019 4144
Email: londoncentralinfo@lsc.gov.uk
Web: www.lsc.gov.uk

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

83 Piccadilly
London WJ 8QA
Tel: 020 7509 5556
Email: info@qca.org.uk
Web: www.qca.org.uk

Recruitment Strategy Manager

Lambeth LEA
International House
Canterbury Crescent
London SW9 7QE
Tel: 020 7926 9829
Web: www.lambeth.gov.uk

South Bank University

Tel: 020 7928 8989
Web: www.sbu.ac.uk/

The South London Graduate Teaching Partnership

Web: www.slgtp.gov.uk

The Teacher Training Agency

Portland House
Stag Place
London SW1E 5TT
Tel: 0845 6000 991
Email: via the online advice form at
Web: www.canteach.gov.uk

University of East London

Tel: 020 8223 2154 or 020 8223 2025
Web: www.uel.ac.uk

University of Greenwich

Tel: 020 8331 9541
Web: www.gre.ac.uk/

University of North London

Tel: 020 7753 5797
Web: www.unl.ac.uk

Useful websites

www.askatl.org.uk

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and some other teaching unions have their own TA section.

www.foundationdegree.org.uk

More information about Foundation Degrees

www.lambeth.gov.uk

The Lambeth website contains valuable information about the borough.

www.lg-employers.gov.uk/skills/teaching

This links to the National Occupational Standards for teaching assistants.

www.spare-chair.com

This website is for those involved in all aspects of classroom support.

www.tahelp.co.uk

A very useful site, full of information about qualifications, career development, and links to DfES and Ofsted documents.

www.tasonlinemagazine.org

This website was set up for all teaching assistants in the South West of England but it has relevance to all teaching assistants

www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingassistants

The government site for teachers and teaching assistants. Lots of very useful information – worth becoming familiar with this site.

www.tes.co.uk

This is the on-line version of the Times Educational Supplement. It is relevant reading for anyone involved within education, at any phase. For informal advice go to the 'Staffroom' section and click on 'Teaching Assistants'.

Glossary

ALS	Additional Literacy Support	Inset	In-service training
CAT	Credit Accumulation Transfer	IEP	Individual Education Plan
CLPE	Centre for Literacy in Primary Education	NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
CPD	Continuous Professional Development	Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
EAZ	Education Action Zone	PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
ELS	Early Literacy Support	PLM	Primary Learning Mentor
EMA	Ethnic Minority Achievement	QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
EMAG	Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant	RTP	Registered Teacher Programme
FLS	Further Literacy Support	SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education	STA	Specialist Teaching Assistant course
GTP	Graduate Teacher Programme	TA	Teaching Assistant
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant	TTA	Teacher Training Agency
ICT	Information & Communication Technology		

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