## TEACHING ASSISTANTS DEPLOYMENT REVIEW GUIDE









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### FOREWORD

Teaching assistants represent a significant proportion of the school workforce. Evidence tells us that deployed well, TAs can make a big difference to the outcomes of children and young people.

This Review - developed as part of a suite of SEND Reviews and resources - aims to support the effective deployment and management of teaching assistants. It can be used as a valuable tool for both school self-assessment and improvement, and to support a process of school-to-school review and support.

While created as part of the SEND Review Programme, run by Whole School SEND, it is important to note that this Review - like others - has a value beyond SEND learners. Effective TA preparation and deployment in classrooms can benefit all learners.

The Review can be adapted to local context, and a white label version is available for those wishing to adjust it for specific settings.

The Review has an accompanying guide to useful online resources to support schools' decision-making and the development of points for action. Over 2017/18, Whole School SEND will be running TA Reviewer Training for those wishing to explore our resources in more depth.

We are very grateful to those who have contributed to this Review, which recognises and builds on the research and development of others.

We are delighted to be part of the Whole School SEND community of practice, and excited by the potential it has to transform outcomes for children and young people.

furle kenny

Anita Kerwin-Nye Chair of Whole School SEND

Rovebster

**Rob Webster** Centre for Inclusive Education, UCL Institute of Education



#### What is a TA Deployment Review?

The TA Review is available to every educational setting, including mainstream schools, alternative provisions and specialist settings. Any school or college can commission a TA Review to evaluate its decision-making in relation to how it deploys and prepares TAs, and how effective these practices are for pupils, teachers and, of course, TAs .The purpose of a TA Review is to look at what a school is doing well and identify areas for development.This helps school leaders to share existing best practice across the school, and to be precise about where improvements are needed, so that resources can be appropriately targeted.

The TA Review is a starting point of a whole school improvement journey, which recognises the valuable contribution TAs make to school life, and in particular to teaching and learning. It should not be used as part of staff rationalisation or competency process, or to make judgements on the effectiveness of individual TAs. The lens for the TA Review is the decision-making by school leaders and teachers, which research has shown enable or inhibit TAs from performing their role effectively.

The TA Review is designed to support a process by which leadership teams and classroom teachers can make better, more informed decisions about TA deployment, practice and preparation. Doing so means that TAs are able to thrive in their role and contribute to improved outcomes for all children and young people in the school.

#### What is the TA Review process?

The review process normally takes two to three days. This includes the preparatory work before going into the school, the time needed to collect evidence during the school visit, and the report writing and feedback that takes place after the review. Many schools will establish an on-going relationship with their reviewer who can provide follow-up support and advice. The timescale for a review would normally be two to three weeks from preparation to reporting. Follow-up visits may vary from intensive weekly visits to visits spread across the academic year.

A TA Review should be led by an experienced, independent system leader, with a track record of implementing sustainable strategic, organisational change and improving outcomes for pupils.

# What are the benefits of commissioning a TA Review?

Commissioning a TA Review from a system leader means that both the 'supporting' and 'supported' school benefit from working together. The school receiving the review benefits from an experienced practitioner with knowledge and expertise in making best use of TAs to support teachers and pupils in classrooms – and not just those with SEND, but all pupils. Reviewers, including National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs), also benefit from the process: they gain experience of schools in different contexts and settings, and are able to share what they learn with the schools they work with. It is a rewarding and enriching experience that supports professional development, develops knowledge and inspires new ideas and ways of working. As a result, the opportunity to engage in such work can also offer a powerful staff retention strategy for schools involved.

School-to-school TA Reviews also offer real opportunities for special schools and mainstream schools to learn from each other. For example, many mainstream schools commissioning the SEND review have found it helpful to have their SEND provision reviewed by colleagues from specialist settings. Similar benefits, in both directions, can be gained from a TA Review.

# Who pays for the TA Review and how much will it cost?

Schools or academy trusts are responsible for paying for their TA Review. The cost is agreed between the reviewer and the commissioning school. It may vary depending on the time needed to complete the review and the experience of the reviewer.

#### Taking an evidence-informed approach

Extensive research into the deployment and impact of TAs has shown the impact of TA support is linked to the quality of TAs' deployment and preparation. This is an important point. It means that the best predictors of how effective TAs are in classrooms are not the decisions and actions they take, but the decisions and actions made by those above and around them: school leaders and teachers.

Every school values its TA workforce, but how much do school leaders know about how the decisions they take about TAs impact on practice in the classroom? And are the right conditions and training for teachers in place to ensure they can plan lessons to maximise the contribution of TAs?

Decision-making and planning about the use of TAs is very often related to decision-making and planning about how schools meet the needs of pupils with

1. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/398815/SEND\_Code\_of\_Practice\_ January\_2015.pdf

2. educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/making-the-best-use-of-teaching-assistants/

3. thesendreview.com

SEND, and vice versa. The Code of Practice<sup>1</sup> makes it clear that provision for pupils with SEND is 'underpinned by high quality teaching and is compromised by anything less'. On the basis of the best available evidence, the advice to schools is use TAs to supplement high quality teaching, not replace teachers. School leaders are encouraged to avoid using TAs as an informal teaching resource for lower-attaining pupils and those with SEND<sup>2</sup>.

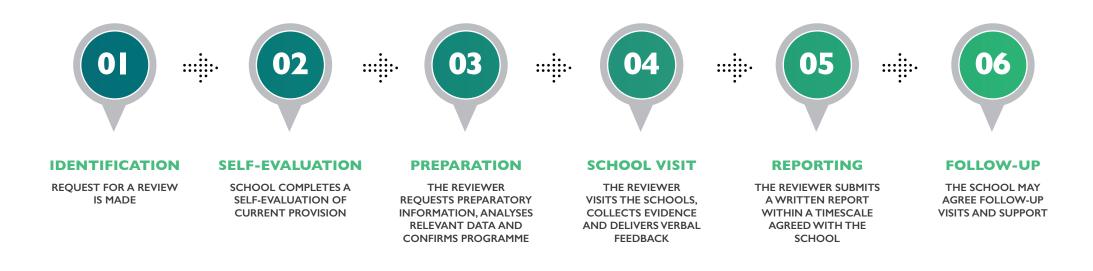
As decisions about TAs often interact with decisions about SEND, it is important that schools also consider a specific review of their provision and processes for pupils with SEND alongside a TA Review. This is why this TA Review has been written to dovetail with the London Leadership Strategy's SEND review<sup>3</sup>.

Having keen and careful focus on improvement and recognising effective and ineffective strategies and processes for unleashing the potential of TAs has benefits for all pupils – not just those with SEND. There is good evidence that teachers benefit too. Taking an evidence-informed approach can maximise TA impact and provide improved value for money. Many schools use the EEF Toolkit<sup>4</sup> to inform decision-making, and Whole School SEND has produced a guide to useful resources, which gathers together free online materials.

Research highlights possibilities; it does not provide certainty. School leaders and teachers should weigh the evidence with their own professional knowledge and experience of what works in their specific context in order to make intelligent and informed judgements.

<sup>4.</sup> educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/

### SIX STAGE PROCESS





#### **IDENTIFYING SCHOOLS FOR A REVIEW**

#### When should schools commission a review?

Reviews can be commissioned for a variety of reasons including:

- Raising attainment and improving progress
- Improving the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms
- Identifying areas and examples of good practice on which to build
- To complement a SEND review or review of inclusive practice
- Raising the professional profile and status of TAs
- Identifying training needs for TAs and teachers
- Identifying ways of using TAs to reduce teacher workload
- Auditing investment of Pupil Premium funds
- Improving the quality of effective teacher-TA partnerships

- Gaining a better understanding of the quality of provision for pupils with SEND
- To support effective implementation of the SEND reforms
- Identifying TA deployment and impact as an area for development through self-evaluation or inspection
- Obtaining a fresh perspective on provision from an experienced leader
- A change in leadership and management at the school
- External validation of a school's evaluation of its SEND provision
- Obtaining a baseline against which improvement can be assessed

#### Who recommends that a TA Review should take place?

A review might be recommended as a result of a peer review process or it can be requested by a number of stakeholder bodies, which may include:

- A school, including the governing body or board of trustess
- Further education colleges
- Independent providers
- Regional Schools Commissioners
- A school's local authority
- A Teaching School Alliance
- A Multi Academy Trust
- A school cluster or federation
- An organisation involved in running the school, such as a Trust or Diocese.



#### **SELF-EVALUATION**

A school should take the opportunity to self-evaluate its current practice before the TA Review takes place. This can provide useful information to the reviewer and also help the school to focus on what it does well and identify areas for development. Completing a self-evaluation is therefore a useful way for the school to make the most of their review. This should take into account the context of whole school improvement priorities.

The self-evaluation template is a useful starting point for schools to think about and reflect on the nature and quality of current deployment and practice of TAs, and the impact this has in classrooms. The template has been designed for use in mainstream schools and specialist settings. It can be found in Annex 1. A school may also wish to administer a staff survey in order to obtain the experiences and views of teachers and TAs. The staff survey template (Annex 2) can be distributed to staff and completed anonymously.

A member of the senior leadership team should complete the self-evaluation and collate the results of the staff survey (if used), then forward to the reviewer before the day of the on-site visit.



#### PREPARATION

Taking time to collect a range of evidence before the review can provide invaluable information for the reviewer. Reviewers often spend at least a half-day in preparation prior to visiting the school. This can help to identify a particular focus, as well as areas of strength and areas for improvement. It is helpful to agree a programme or timetable in advance, so that the right people are available on the day the review takes place. This will also maximise the reviewer's time in school.

Useful information for reviewers might include:

- The school's Self-Evaluation Form
- The school's development plan
- A provision map
- Any internal auditing information relevant to the TA Review
- Action plans relevant to the TA Review
- TA and whole school staffing structures
- Staffing allocations (e.g. distribution of TAs to year groups, subjects or classes)
- An outline of roles and responsibilities in relation to TA deployment and management
- TA recruitment policy
- TA deployment policy
- TA job descriptions or role profiles
- Terms and conditions of TA employment
- Induction and training processes for TAs
- TAs' timetables

- CPD programme for staff
- Audit data of TAs' skills, qualifications and training
- Review of the effectiveness of TA-led intervention programmes
- Current progress data relating to TA-led intervention programmes, including pre/post intervention data
- Records of classroom observations
- The SEND information report
- SEND development plan
- The school's Ofsted report
- Statutory policies relating to SEND
- The school's Pupil Premium statement
- External reviews or reports, including Pupil Premium review
- Timetable of the school visit day for the reviewer



#### SCHOOL VISIT

The reviewers should follow a programme or timetable, which has been agreed in advance with the school. The school visit should include gathering the views of a range of stakeholders, including:

- Headteacher/Principal
- Teaching assistants
- Classroom teachers
- The TAs' line manager
- Senior lead for SEND
- Chair of governors or governor for SEND
- Parents/carers
- Pupils
- Specialist teachers (e.g. a speech and language therapist)

Talking to small groups of teachers and TAs is a good way of exploring points of interest from the staff survey results.

In addition to the completed school self-evaluation and staff survey results, the reviewer will find it useful to gather evidence from a variety of sources, including:

- Lesson observation
- Observation of intervention sessions led by TAs
- Reporting systems used by TAs (e.g. for assessment/ progress; behaviour)
- A tour of the school
- Learning walks
- Paperwork scrutiny (e.g. policies; job descriptions; timetables)
- Book looks
- Observation of unstructured activities involving TAs work (e.g. break-time and lunchtime clubs)
- Observation of alternative/off-site provision where TAs work
- Review case studies on pupils

The school visit/self-evaluation template provides the reviewer with a useful framework for exploring, deepening and building on the school's self-evaluation.



#### REPORTING

Following the school visits, the reviewer is expected to produce a written report for the school leadership team. The report should summarise the school's areas of strengths and identify areas for development. The reviewer will also set out a series of evidence-informed recommendations for improving the deployment, practice and preparation of TAs.

School leaders should expect to see recommendations for actions that can directly improve TAs' practice (e.g. via training), as well as recommendations for improvements to teachers' practice (e.g. how to plan lessons with TAs in mind). The report may also contain advice for school leaders on any wider school processes that require attention in order to ensure the impact of TA support is maximised (e.g. ensuring teacher-TA liaison time). The report will provide links to references and suggested resources in relation to implementing the recommendations, which school leaders may find useful.

The school and reviewer should agree a timescale for the delivery of the report. A suggested TA Review report template, using the themes of the school visit/self-evaluation framework, is provided in Annex 3.



#### FOLLOW-UP

Following the reporting stage, schools may find it helpful to request a further visit from their reviewer after an agreed period. A follow-up visit is an opportunity to review the school's progress on implementing the recommendations.

The cost of the follow-up visit should be agreed between the reviewer and the school. A school may wish to agree a package of support with their reviewer for additional support, or the reviewer may be able to direct the school to practitioners or organisations who can provide on-going support. Regular visits can help the school to maintain focus on making improvements and access expert advice from a 'critical friend' familiar with the school and its context.

A suggested report template for follow-up visits is provided in Annex 4.





## ANNEX I

School visit/self-evaluation template Brief context of school: number of TAs employed (full/part time) and broad deployment trends (e.g. % of TAs supporting pupils with an EHCP; subject/dept-based TAs)

AREA OF FOCUS	SUGGESTED THEMES AND AREAS TO EXPLORE	STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
Leadership of TAs	<ul> <li>There is a clear line management structure for TAs, with a direct link to SLT. SLT keep up-to-date on issues and changes to national policy and practice of relevance to TAs. Updates are communicated to TAs.</li> <li>There is a clear, shared vision for the role and contribution of TAs. The TA workforce is cohesive and efficiently integrated into school's wider processes and systems.</li> <li>TAs supplement, not replace, high quality, teacher-led classroom teaching. Boundaries between teaching and classroom support roles are clearly defined and understood.</li> <li>There is a clear, shared conceptualisation of what constitutes 'TA support'.</li> <li>There is a reciprocal relationship between SLT, teachers and TAs based on agreed standards of professional conduct. The role and contribution of TAs has a high profile in the school.</li> </ul>		

AREA OF FOCUS	SUGGESTED THEMES AND AREAS TO EXPLORE	STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
Strategic use of TAs	TA deployment is supported and enabled by contingent decision-making elsewhere (e.g. where TAs have a lunchtime supervision role, it does not interfere with their capacity to be effective in their TA role).		
	TAs are deployed to work with pupils across the attainment range, not restricted to working only with pupils with SEND and/or lower-attainers.		
	TAs contribute to the lesson planning and feedback cycle. Their input is used to inform further planning and provision.		
	TAs are part of the school's performance management and review cycle.		
	Strategic and operational decision-making regarding the employment and deployment of TA is regularly reviewed against the latest evidence of impact.		
Classroom deployment	Teachers plan and organise TA support to expressly serve the objectives and expected outcomes for target groups and individuals.		
	Teachers' TA deployment decisions fall within specific parameters set by the school, and are commensurate with individual TA's skills and aptitudes.		
	Teachers and TAs display effective teamwork and 'real-time' information sharing during lessons. The needs of pupils drive teachers' moment-by-moment decision-making and TAs are deployed to create opportunities for teachers to provide targeted support.		
	TAs assist pupils' access to general classroom teaching. Teachers routinely provide high-level, technical instruction wherever the need is greatest.		
Effective interactions	Effective support is characterised by careful observation of pupils working, allowing sufficient 'wait time', and intervening only when pupils are unable to overcome difficulty independently.		
	TAs consistently give the least amount of help first. Questions are pitched to offer the appropriate level of challenge.		
	TAs ensure pupils retain ownership over their learning and responsibility for the work produced. TAs address what pupils need to do to progress through the task, not complete it.		
	TAs give pupils specific feedback on performance and encourage them to reflect meaningfully on their learning, successes and difficulties.		
	Without adults present, pupils demonstrate the capacity and confidence to self-scaffold.		

AREA OF FOCUS	SUGGESTED THEMES AND AREAS TO EXPLORE	STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
Preparation and training	Teachers have received extensive and on-going training on how to manage, organise and work with TAs.		
	Teachers plan tasks matched to individual's needs, which (if need be) are broken down into smaller achievable actions.		
	For new TA appointments, there are minimum requirements in terms of qualifications/experience and subject knowledge.		
	Ahead of lessons, TAs have a clear understanding of concepts and information to be taught, skills to be learned and applied, intended learning outcomes and specific learning needs of pupils they will work with.		
	There are mechanisms in place to capture meaningful feedback for teachers, which is used to inform the next stages of learning within and/or after lessons.		
	There is allocated time outside of lessons for TAs and teachers to both plan and review lessons. SLT set clear expectations on how planning time is used, and monitor regularly.		
Structured interventions	Trained TAs deliver a small number of carefully selected, evidence-based structured interventions to complement and extend teaching and learning in the classroom.		
	Intervention sessions are carefully timetabled to minimise the amount of time pupils spend out of class. Sessions are delivered in quiet and distraction-free environments.		
	TA-led interventions are delivered with fidelity. Sessions are brief, regular, steadily paced and well-resourced.		
	Teachers have good awareness of the structure and coverage of intervention programmes. There are opportunities for TAs and teachers to both plan and review interventions.		
	Teachers and TAs both help pupils make connections between the learning in interventions and the wider curriculum.		

AREA OF FOCUS	SUGGESTED THEMES AND AREAS TO EXPLORE	STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
Monitoring, tracking and evaluation	The role and purpose of TA support is explicit as a part of the comprehensive school SEND offer, including where TAs liaise with parents/carers and other professionals.		
	TAs' role in and contribution to provision for pupils with SEND is carefully planned, and made explicit on personalised plans. Plans are reviewed at least termly by the SENCO, SLT and parents/carer.		
	TAs make effective contributions to school procedures for reporting and reviewing pupil performance, progress and provision (e.g. pupil progress meetings; SEND Annual Reviews).		
Outcomes or improving outcomes	Self-evaluation is thorough, accurate and routine, and is designed to capture the effectiveness of the school's carefully planned, concerted actions on improving the use of TAs.		
	Evidence from robust internal evaluations of impact indicates that improvements to the school processes that directly and indirectly affect the quality of TA support makes a difference to pupils' development and progress (including in relation to TA-led interventions).		
	Evidence shows that TA support is proportionate to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils with SEND and lower-attainers receive at least as much time with teachers as other pupils.		
	Evidence shows that TAs' interactions with pupils are consistent with nurturing pupil independence, not dependence on adults.		
	Evidence shows that teachers collect and utilise information collected on pupil performance to inform the planning and review process.		



#### Staff survey

#### **QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

For the first few questions, you will need to think about the LAST lesson in which you received support from a TA.

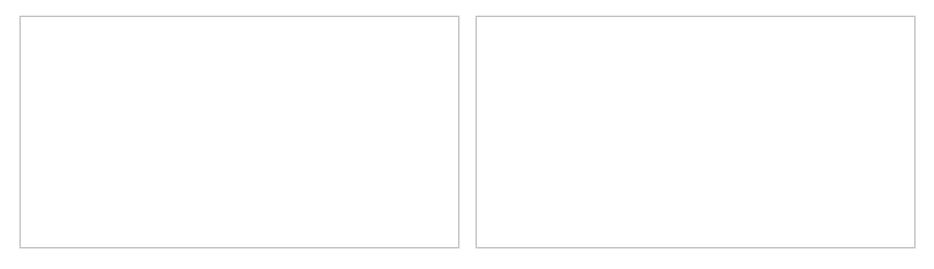
- 1. Thinking about what you did in that lesson, put the list of five activities into rank order from 1 to 5. Use I to indicate the activity you spent the MOST time doing in that lesson, and 5 to indicate the activity you spent the LEAST time doing.
- 2. To what extent are the answers you provided in Q1 typical of what you do in other lessons?

	RANK	Very typical
Working one-to-one with a pupil		Fairly typical
Working with a pair or group		Not very typical
Walking around the classroom (monitoring pupils)		Not at all typical
Leading or teaching the class		
Other (marking)		<ol> <li>To what extent are the a you provided in Q3 typi</li> </ol>

- answers
- pical of what you do in other lessons?
- Very typical Fairly typical Not very typical Not at all typical
- 3. Once again, thinking about what you did in that lesson, which two groups of pupils did you spend the MOST time supporting?

	HIGHER ATTAINING PUPILS	AVERAGE ATTAINING PUPILS	LOWER ATTAINING PUPILS	PUPILS WITH SEND	MIXED ATTAINING PUPILS
Most time with					
Second most time with					

- 5. What are TAs' main roles and duties in your school? Describe what they do.
- 6. What suggestions would you make to improve the way TAs are deployed?



7. In general, when TAs come into the classroom, how confident are they about carrying out their role effectively?

Fully confident	
Fairly confident	
Partially confident	
Not very confident	
Unconfident	
Not sure	

8. In general, when TAs are in the classroom, how would you describe their impact on the following aspects of pupil development?

	SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE IMPACT	MOSTLY POSITIVE IMPACT	SMALL POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT
Learning					
Confidence					
Motivation					
Staying on-task					
Independence					

9. Tick the statement that best describes your opportunity for communication with TAs before and after lessons.



My communication with TAs before/ after lessons is brief and ad hoc

TAs come into school early and/or stay behind after school. I use this as an opportunity to meet with them

The TA(s) and I have scheduled time to meet each week

11. Tick the statement that best describes your opportunity to communicate with TAs about structured interventions.

> There is no opportunity to communicate with TAs about interventions

> My communication with TAs about interventions is brief and ad hoc

There is scheduled time each week to communicate with TAs about interventions 10. Thinking about any structured intervention or catch-up programmes that you run in your school (e.g. for phonics, reading, numeracy, etc), who is responsible for their selection, preparation, delivery and assessment?

	SENCO (OR EQUIVALENT)	TEACHER	ТА	SOMEONE ELSE	NOT SURE
Who selects the intervention programme?					
Who plans and prepares the intervention sessions?					
Who delivers the intervention sessions?					
Who assesses the work complet- ed in intervention sessions?					

12. Is there is anything else you would like to add? If so, please use the box below.



#### Staff survey

#### QUESTIONS FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

For the first few questions, you will need to think about the LAST lesson in which you supported a teacher.

- Thinking about what you did in that lesson, put the list of five activities into rank order from 1 to 5. Use 1 to indicate the activity you spent the MOST time doing in that lesson, and 5 to indicate the activity you spent the LEAST time doing.
- 2. To what extent are the answers you provided in QI typical of what you do in other lessons?

	RANK
Working one-to-one with a pupil	
Working with a pair or group	
Walking around the classroom (monitoring pupils)	
Leading or teaching the class	
Listening to the teacher teach	
Other (marking)	

Very typical	
Fairly typical	
Not very typical	
Not at all typical	

4. To what extent are the answers you provided in Q3 typical of what you do in other lessons?

Very typical	
Fairly typical	
Not very typical	
Not at all typical	

3. Once again, thinking about what you did in that lesson, which two groups of pupils did you spend the MOST time supporting?

	HIGHER ATTAINING PUPILS	AVERAGE ATTAINING PUPILS	LOWER ATTAINING PUPILS	PUPILS WITH SEND	MIXED ATTAINING PUPILS
Most time with					
Second most time with					

 What are your main roles and duties as a TA in your school? Describe what you do. It might help to think about a typical 'day in your life' as a TA.

- 7. In general, when you go into the classroom, how confident are you about carrying out your role effectively?
- Fully confident

   Fairly confident

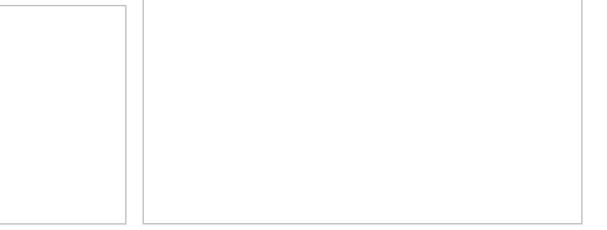
   Partially confident

   Not very confident

   Unconfident

   Not sure
- 8. In general, how would you describe your impact on the following aspects of pupil development?

6. What suggestions would you make to improve the way you are deployed?



	SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE IMPACT	MOSTLY POSITIVE IMPACT	SMALL POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT
Learning					
Confidence					
Motivation					
Staying on-task					
Independence					

9. Tick the statement that best describes your opportunity for communication with teachers before and after lessons.

There is no opportunity or time to communicate with teachers before/ after lessons

My communication with teachers before/after lessons is brief and ad hoc

I come into school early and/or stay behind after school in order to meet with teachers

The teacher(s) and I have scheduled time to meet each week

II. Tick the statement that best describes your opportunity to communicate with teachers about structured interventions.

> There is no opportunity to communicate with teachers about interventions

My communication with teachers about interventions is brief and ad hoc

There is scheduled time each week to communicate with teachers about interventions 10. Thinking about any structured intervention or catch-up programmes that you run in your school (e.g. for phonics, reading, numeracy, etc), who is responsible for their selection, preparation, delivery and assessment?

	SENCO (OR EQUIVALENT)	TEACHER	ТА	SOMEONE ELSE	NOT SURE
Who selects the intervention programme?					
Who plans and prepares the intervention sessions?					
Who delivers the intervention sessions?					
Who assesses the work completed in intervention sessions?					

12. Is there is anything else you would like to add? If so, please use the box below.

### ANNEX 3

#### TA Review report template

Name of school:	Name of reviewer:		Date of review:
Brief context of school: number of TAs employed (full/part time) and broad deployment trends (e.g. % of TAs supporting pupils with an EHCP; subject/dept-based TAs)			
Particular area of focus for the TA Review		Vision for an improved TA workforce	

FOCUS	STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> (LINKS TO REFERENCES AND RESOURCES)
Leadership			
Strategic use of TAs			
Classroom deployment			
Effective interactions			
Preparation and training			
Structured interventions			
Monitoring, tracking and evaluation			
Outcomes or improving outcomes			

### ANNEX 4

### Follow-up visit report template

Name of school:	Name of reviewer:	Date of review:
SUMMARY OF VISIT		
ACTION POINTS FOR THE SCHOOL		
ACTION POINTS FOR THE REVIEWER		
VISION FOR AN IMPROVED TA WORKFORCE		
Date of next visit:		

### CONTRIBUTORS

Adam Arnell, Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance
Beth Barnsley, Whole Education
Penny Barratt, Challenge Partners
David Bartram, London Leadership Strategy
Joyce Brako-Amoafo, National Network of Parent Carer Forums
Sue Briggs, UCL Institute of Education
Adam Boddison, nasen
Maria Constantinou, St. Mary's C of E Primary School
Sally Franklin, UCL Institute of Education
Octavia Holland, The Communication Trust
Anita Kerwin-Nye, London Leadership Strategy
Simon Knight, National Education Trust
Bob Lowndes, Autism Education Trust

Matt McArthur, Frank Wise School, Banbury
<b>Jo McGovern,</b> Priory School, Slough
Loic Menzies, LKMco
arlath O'Brien, Carwarden House Community School
Vijita Patel, Swiss Cottage School
Charlotte Rains, London Leadership Strategy
Malcolm Reeve, Academies Enterprise Trust
Chris Rossiter, Driver Youth Trust
Karen Sitch, Harris Federation
Philippa Stobbs, Council for Disabled Children
Michael Surr, nasen
Elaine Underwood, Department for Education
Hannah Wilson, GLF Schools



Funded by

Department for Education

#### EMAIL:

info@londonleadershipstrategy.com

#### WEBSITES:

thesendreview.com londonleadershipstrategy.com

#### PHONE NUMBER:

020 3096 7704

#### TWITTER:

@llsinfo

