



UNIT-2

Working in the School

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the unique challenges of working in an educational environment
- ✓ Support the curriculum for the benefit of teachers and students
- ✓ Discuss routine and clerical tasks performed by the teaching assistant

Unit 2

Working In The School

Working in a school comes with challenges, but it can also be one of the most satisfying employment experiences a person can have. Watching children learn and develop is inspirational. Being part of that growth is rewarding. Teaching assistants have opportunities to build profound relationships with young people and provide help and guidance that not all children receive at home. They also have a schedule with time off for national holidays and vacation periods, which works well for parents with children who are in grade school.

As a Teaching Assistant, the majority of your work will take place in school classrooms at nursery, primary or secondary level. You may also have an opportunity to work in a private nursery or a crèche with preschool children.

Here Are Few Other Things That Come With It

Being Inspired

Watching children learn about unfamiliar topics and master new skills can reignite your own desire to learn. Student growth can remind you of how important education is and how amazing the human brain can be. By working in a school as teaching assistant, you also have the opportunity to be an inspiration to young people. You can introduce students to subjects they would never have known about or been interested in. Consequently, you can influence their future studies or career paths.

Feeling Rewarded

Helping students reach their potential is highly rewarding because, in many cases, you play a significant role in their improvement. In a school, you can watch struggling students gradually become successful. Many children must overcome great obstacles. Playing a role in a young person's eventual success makes working in a school fulfilling. In fact, education and special education are now among the top 20 college majors that lead to satisfying careers, according to a PayScale College Salary report.

Building Relationships

As a teaching assistant, working in a school provides numerous opportunities throughout the day to interact with young people. Some children don't have the kind of attention at home that they need and deserve. Nurturing relationships with children can serve as a foundation for a child's social and intellectual growth, according to T. Berry Brazelton, M.D., and Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D., in their Scholastic article, "Why Children Need Ongoing Nurturing Relationships." For children, communicating

with a teaching assistant in school may be a very important part of their lives. Consequently, your interaction with school children may play a big role in their development.

Focusing Outward

In today's world, many people lead busy, fast-paced lives. It is easy to become self-focused. A job in a school as a teaching assistant pushes you to focus outwardly and give energy to others, which can be invigorating and even relieving. In her "Psychology Today" article, "The Moment of Youth: How to Change a Teenager's Life," Marilyn Price-Mitchell, Ph.D., uses the term "other-focused" to explain that role models focus on others rather than primarily on themselves. Focusing on others allows you to step outside yourself and your own worries or problems to give to others. You have an opportunity to become a role model as an encouraging guide or leader, servicing and giving back to your community.

Supporting the Curriculum

To support the curriculum, a Teaching Assistant should:

- Support pupils to understand instructions.
- Support pupils in respect of local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, KS3, early years, as directed by the teacher.
- Support the use of ICT in learning activities and develop pupils competence and independence in its use.
- Prepare and maintain equipment/resources as directed by the teacher and assist pupils in their use.
- Undertake structured and agreed learning activities/teaching programmes, adjusting activities according to pupil responses.
- Undertake programmes linked to local and national learning strategies e.g. literacy, numeracy, KS3, early years, recording achievement and progress and feeding back to the teacher.
- Implement agreed learning activities/teaching programmes, adjusting activities according to pupil responses/needs.
- Determine the need for, prepare and maintain general and specialist equipment and resources.
- Select and prepare resources necessary to lead learning activities, taking account of pupils' interests and language and cultural backgrounds.
- Be aware of and appreciate a range of activities, courses, organisations and individuals to provide support for pupils to broaden and enrich their learning.
- Assisting in the preparation of work and other activities for pupils in accordance with objectives set by teaching staff.
- Under guidance and direction of teaching staff, planning and delivering activities.

The UK School System

In England children must attend school from the age of 5 to 16 and legislation will require all young people to stay in a designated learning environment until the age of 17 from 2013 and the age of 18 from 2015 onwards. This can include further education, training and work based training. From the age of 5 to 11, children attend primary schools and at 11 they then transfer to secondary schools.

School Types

1. **Nursery Schools:** 3-4 year olds (EYFS)
2. **Infant Schools:** Reception classes for 4-5 year olds
3. **Infant classes:** For 5-7 year olds (KS1)
Most Infant schools also have a Nursery class
4. **Junior schools:** Junior classes for 8-11 year olds (KS2)
5. **Primary Schools:** Infant and Junior classes within the one school
6. **Secondary Schools:** 11-16 year olds (can cater for up to 18 years old) (KS3 / KS4)
7. **Sixth Form Colleges:** 16-18 year olds
8. **Special Schools:** Pupils who have special educational needs
9. **PRU:** Pupil Referral Units for excluded pupils

Primary

Pre-school education is available for ages two to four/five through playgroups and nursery schools. The emphasis is on group work, creative activity and guided play.

Compulsory education begins at five in England and Wales. At primary level, there is little or no specialist subject teaching and there is great emphasis on Literacy (English) and Numeracy.

Secondary

Compulsory education ends at age sixteen, though many pupils stay on beyond the minimum leaving age. The majority of state secondary school pupils in England and Wales attend comprehensive or academy schools. These provide a wide range of secondary education for most children of all abilities from a particular district, in the eleven to eighteen age ranges.

At secondary school, teachers teach specialist subjects in addition to many cross curricular subjects such as Literacy, Numeracy, Citizenship, ICT and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE).

Special Schools

Children who have special educational needs which cannot be met in mainstream school are taught in special schools. The age range of pupils in special schools can be very varied with many providing education from pre-school level to 18 years.

The national curriculum is taught in special schools although the levels may vary dependant on the particular needs of pupils. Schools can be categorised by a particular type of special need so that they have access to specialist teaching and resources.

Structure of the school year

Most schools operate on a 39 week school year broken into three terms starting in September and finishing in July. Each term is made up of approximately 12 teaching weeks with a 'half term' break of one week after 6 weeks.

School Terms

Autumn Term: First week in September to third week in December

Spring Term: First week of January until Easter

Summer Term: Two weeks after Easter until third week in July

The usual pattern for school holidays is two weeks at Christmas, two weeks at Easter and six weeks in the summer.

Structure of the school day

Primary School

All schools have control over the structure of their own school day although most will finish at 3.30pm. The statutory Literacy Hour and Numeracy Hour will be a feature of all state school timetables. The example below illustrates what you will typically find in a primary school. Teaching Personnel consultants will be able to provide you with further details of the exact timetable in your assigned school for long term placements.

Sample breakdown of a day at a primary school:

9.00am	Registration
9.10am	School Assembly
9.30am	Literacy Hour
10.30am	Break time
10.45am	Numeracy Hour
11.45am	Subject class
12.15pm	Lunch
13.30pm	Afternoon Registration
13.35pm	Classes
14.45pm	Break time
15.00pm	Classes
15.30pm	End of school day

Secondary School

A typical day is shown below. However, there is much variation within secondary schools and you will need to speak to your consultant to obtain timetable information for schools. Some secondary schools operate a two-week timetable, which means that if you are in the school for more than one week you may not be working with the same class at the same period each week.

Sample breakdown of a day at a secondary school:

09.00am	Registration
09.20am	Period 1
10.00am	Period 2
10.40am	Break
11.00am	Period 3
11.40am	Period 4
12.20pm	Lunch
13.20pm	Registration
13.40pm	Period 5
14.20pm	Period 6
15.00pm	Period 7
15.40pm	School ends

The National Curriculum

In England there is a National Curriculum for all pupils. It sets out a clear, full and statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils. It determines the content of what will be taught, and sets attainment targets for learning. It also determines how performance will be assessed and reported.

From September 2002, the National Curriculum included citizenship as part of the statutory curriculum for secondary schools.

In the late 1990s, the Government launched National Numeracy and Literacy strategies. The aim of these strategies is to raise standards of primary school pupils in these key skill areas. If you intend to teach primary school pupils you will need to ensure that you are familiar with the requirements of the strategies.

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the statutory framework that sets the standards that all Early Years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children are ready for school and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

The curriculum defines four 'key stages', and ten statutory subjects:

- **Key Stage 1:** up to age seven
- **Key Stage 2:** seven to eleven
- **Key Stage 3:** eleven to fourteen (pre-GCSE)
- **Key Stage 4:** fourteen to sixteen (preparation for GCSE and equivalent vocational qualifications).

Key stages one and two are the primary phase, and key stages three and four constitute the secondary phase. There are three 'core' subjects, which are:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- (In Wales Welsh is a core subject in Welsh speaking schools).

There are seven other 'foundation' subjects which are:

- Design Technology

- History
- Geography
- Music
- Art and Design
- Physical Education
- A Modern Foreign Language – French, Spanish, German, Italian
- In Wales (Welsh is a foundation subject in non-Welsh speaking schools).

All children in key stages one to three must study the first nine of these subjects. In key stage three, they must also study a modern foreign language. Pupils aged fourteen to sixteen must study the core subjects, technology, a modern foreign language and physical education, plus either history or geography or short courses in both.

School Staff

Head teacher

The head teacher is the person with overall responsibility for how a school runs. Some may actually teach but this is not always possible due the amount of administration work involved in the position.

Deputy Head

The Deputy Head works closely with the head teacher and the senior school management team in running the school. The deputy head will generally be an experienced teacher and the majority continue to teach alongside this role.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator has day-to-day responsibility for the operation of a mainstream school's SEN policy and for co-ordinating provision for pupils with SEN. The SENCO gives SEN staff valuable information and support, helping with the school's SEN procedures, policy and support timetables. They should also provide staff with a list of children on the SEN register, including their teaching programme and individual education plans (see p26 for additional information on an IEP).

Class Teacher

In primary schools, a class teacher will teach all subjects to a class all day. The classteacher deals will all aspects of discipline, pastoral and everyday welfare of the children.

Subject Teacher

In secondary schools, teachers teach a specific subject rather than working as a class teacher. Subject teachers will be teach a range of year groups during a day and will work with the subject department to develop the subject curriculum in the school.

School Governor

All schools have a governing body that is made up of representatives from the school, teaching staff, support staff, parents and external interested parties. The body works closely with the head and makes key decisions for the school such as managing the school budget, reviewing staffing levels, interviewing new staff and managing the school facilities. The governing body do have legal obligations and responsibilities but serving as a governor is entirely voluntary.

EAL/ESL/TESL Teachers

Children who do not have English as a first language may be assisted by teachers specialised in teaching English to non-speakers. These teachers are called English as an additional language teacher (EAL), English as a second language teacher (ESL) and Teaching English as a second language teacher (TESL).

EMTAG Teachers

Teachers teaching ethnic minority or traveller children are called EMTAG teachers. This stands for Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant. The grant is given to schools to help manage pupils from these backgrounds and EMTAG teachers are employed to assist these pupils in their learning.

Peripatetic Teachers

Peripatetic literally means 'wandering' and the term peripatetic teachers is used to describe teachers that work for more than one school in their day to day role. Where a school does not have sufficient pupils to warrant a permanent teacher of a specific subject i.e. music or hearing impaired teacher, they may collectively use a peripatetic teacher who travels among the schools teaching the pupils.

Support Staff

Schools employ a wide range of support staff to manage important tasks within the school. The class room support staff can include teaching assistants, learning support assistants, learning mentors, intervention support, 1 to 1 subject specialists and many others. Support staff plays a vital role in assisting teachers to raise attainment and achievement. Support staff also includes non-classroom based staff like secretarial and administrative staff, dinner ladies, caretakers, grounds men, school nurse, chaplain, librarians, cleaners and others.

Planning Preparation and Assessment (PPA) Time

PPA time was introduced in schools as part of the government's workforce agreement in September 2005. PPA time is time set aside for teachers during their timetabled day for planning, preparation and assessment activities. Its purpose is to relieve some of the workload pressures on teachers. PPA time must be a minimum of 10% of a teacher's timetabled teaching time.

The introduction of PPA time has put pressure on schools with regards to staffing arrangements and this in turn has led to the introduction of the term 'cover supervisor'. 'Cover Supervisor' is the job title given to non-teaching staff that have been chosen by the head teacher of a school to supervise a whole class of children. However, it is also possible for other non-teaching staff, such as Higher Level Teaching Assistants to supervise whole classes too.

Cover supervisors are usually deemed suitable if they have the necessary training and skills to fulfil the task of whole class supervision (not teaching). The head teacher of the school will normally be the person who decides if, in their professional judgement an individual is suitable to be a cover supervisor. This person could be a Teaching Assistant in the school.

Routine and Clerical Tasks

The agreement identified activities that do not require the professional expertise of a teacher and could be delegated. Administrative and clerical activities are now more often carried out more effectively by members of support staff and this may form part of your role as a Teaching Assistant.

The list of tasks included is:

1. Collecting money
2. Chasing absences (teachers are to pass on information to the relevant staff member regarding absences)
3. Bulk photocopying
4. Copy typing
5. Producing standard letters (teachers may be required to contribute as appropriate in formulating the content of standard letters)
6. Producing class lists (teachers may be required to be involved as appropriate in allocating students to a particular class)
7. Record keeping and filing (teachers may be required to contribute to the content of records)
8. Classroom display (teachers will make professional decisions in determining what material is displayed in and around their classroom)
9. Analysing attendance figures
10. Processing exam results (teachers will need to use the analysis of exam results)
11. Collating pupil reports
12. Administering work experience (teachers may be required to support pupils on work experience through advice and visits)

13. Administering examinations (teachers have a professional responsibility for identifying appropriate examinations for their pupils)
14. Administering teacher cover
15. ICT trouble shooting and minor repairs
16. Commissioning new ICT equipment
17. Ordering supplies and equipment (teachers may be involved in identifying needs)
18. Stocktaking
19. Cataloguing, preparing, issuing and maintaining equipment and materials
20. Taking Minutes of meetings (teachers may be required to communicate action points from meetings)
21. Co-ordinating and submitting bids (teachers may be required to make a professional input into the content of bids)
22. Seeking and giving personnel advice
23. Managing pupil data (teachers will need to make use of the analysis of pupil data)
24. Inputting pupil data (teachers will need to make the initial entry of pupil data into school management systems)

Both special and mainstream schools use supply agencies to find cover staff including Teachers, Teaching Assistants and Nursery Nurses. The majority of positions for Teaching Assistants are on a long term basis due to the nature of the work and the importance of continuity to schools and pupils.

The demand is increasing continuously and the need for Teaching Assistants to provide pupils with safe, quality and relevant support has never been greater.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Allyson Hadwin, Susan Wilcox, (2000), A Handbook for Teaching Assistants.*