

**Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award Case Study**

**School name:** Meadow High School

**Location:** Hillingdon, Uxbridge

**Brief summary of your school:**

Meadow High School is an LA maintained secondary SEN school located in the borough of Hillingdon. We currently have 236 pupils on role from the ages of 11 - 19 years of age (January 2019). The last OFSTED inspection took place in May 2018 where the school was judged overall as 'Good.

**Why did your school decide to take the Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award (BPTAA)?**

As a SEN school we have a large number of TA’s who support the students within school. They work extremely hard and support in a variety of different ways. As a school we encourage and value the chance for all of our staff to develop and therefore, when we first looked into completing the BPTAA, we realised that we already do much of what the award states and completing the award would help us to:

* Fine tune the systems we already have in place. Ensuring they are fit for purpose.
* Further develop these systems in order to provide a standardised recruitment and development pathway for all of our TA’s.
* It was a useful scaffold for what we wanted to implement across the school

**What particular issue(s) did the BPTAA help you to identify?**

The recruitment process was already in the process of being reviewed but completing the BPTAA helped us to identify the strengths of our current system but also the areas that needed developing. It also helped us recognise that we needed to fine tune our Induction programme for the TAs as we found that many were put straight into the class without knowing fully how the school functions.

Similarly, for staff development. We knew as a school that we wanted to recognise the hard work that our TA’s do but to also encourage them to keep developing during their time with us.

**What changes did you make as a result of this?**

The recruitment process became more standardised and followed a specific format. All elements of the interview became more specific to the role of a TA.

The Induction process was developed to include a week of shadowing an experienced TA to understand how the school works. Time was also given to complete any training that was necessary to complete the role.

We identified standards for TA’s with the view to these being used as the basis for target setting for all TA’s. TA’s following the development process identify 3 targets using the teaching assistant standards and collect a piece of evidence to support the completion of each target. TA’s are now observed once a year and have an appraisal meeting once per year.

**What impact did this have?**

As a school we became much more confident in our decision-making regarding recruitment. There is now a 3-stage process. On day one, the candidates would take part in a group interview where they are given scenarios and various other activities to do, followed by a Literacy, Numeracy and ICT test to see the level of competency. Candidates were then shortlisted and invited to a second day which included an interview and an observation in the class by the class teacher. This proved to be a more robust system and the level of TAs recruited were of a good standard.

TA’s now feel challenged and empowered to take control of their own development. Many enjoy picking more challenging targets and feel that their development is having a positive impact on the overall development of the school. They feel that they are being recognised for their work and have something to show for their time here. Appraisal meetings have been successful as it provides TA’s with a voice. Observations have been welcomed as many recognised this was a supportive tool to help them develop as opposed to being a way of catching them out.

**What are your next steps?**

The appraisal process is being reviewed to include more of a coaching based approach – enabling TA’s to reflect on their development and think about the areas they would like to develop moving forward.

When our teachers create their performance management targets they are linked to the school development plan. This is something we want to do for TA’s targets too. To ensure there is a tangible link between TA’s targets and the school development plan.

Currently TA’s attend most of the training that is held for teachers. Moving forward we want to review which training is most relevant and eventually create a training program for the year which is specifically for TA’s. This may involve attending training sessions alongside teachers but will also include separate training which is more specifically related to the role of TA’s.

**Overall, how would you describe the whole experience from start to finish and achieving the award?**

As a school we completed the school-led route. We had support via email and the award place/dashboard was very straightforward to use. Each KPI was easy to understand and it was clear what evidence was needed for each. Being able to upload evidence online was better as it saved having folders of unorganised paper and you could see clearly what evidence you had in place.

During the assessment day it was helpful to talk through our strengths and areas for development and identify 3 areas in which we wanted to continue to develop. The process overall has been very supportive and it’s encouraging to know that the completion of the BPTAA doesn’t mean that all the systems have to be in place and in 100% working order. Part of the process involves the school identifying elements which need continued development and creating an action plan going forward.

**How would you recommend this award to a school thinking about undertaking the process?**

Completing the BPTAA means that your TA’s are recognised and valued. I feel that going through the process has slowly changed the attitude of many of the TA’s and they now feel important and that they have control of their development. We had a small working party who were all involved in the process as our trial group which helped greatly as we were able to discuss successes and difficulties and distribute workload. We were able to get instant feedback and many TAs felt empowered and included in the process. I would highly recommend having that.