

Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award (BPTAA)

Reassessment Report

School name:	Strathmore Infant and Nursery School
School address and postcode:	Old Hale Way, Hitchin SG5 1XR
School telephone:	01462 459558
School website:	www.strathmore.herts.sch.uk
Head teacher:	Mrs R Howes
Award coordinator:	Mrs C Hargreaves
Award verifier:	Sarah Manning
Date of reassessment:	21 st January 2026

Commentary on the mini-portfolio of evidence:

Comprehensive evidence was provided prior to the reassessment visit through the e-portfolio. This allowed the Award Verifier to gain some in depth knowledge of the school and its processes prior to the visit. During the reassessment, a thorough presentation was given by the Award Coordinator. This was robust in discussing how Strathmore has worked continuously to maintain good practice and further develop a programme of training and development for support staff. This was followed by a tour of the school and discussion with stakeholders.

Strathmore has had a large number of staffing changes since the verification visit in 2022. The Teaching Assistant role has been adapted and the working party has new members.

It is clear that Teaching Assistants are integral to the success of the school and there is a strong ethos of team work among the staff. Teaching Assistants are valued as part of the teaching and learning team and they contribute to the school self-evaluation process.

Commentary on the tour of the school:

The tour of the school showed the value placed on Teaching Assistants who were observed teaching phonics, administering interventions, supporting individual needs, providing general class support and covering classes. All staff work to underpin Strathmore's vision and motto and leaders recognise that the BPTAA has helped with this.

Commentary on discussions with stakeholders:

The Award Verifier met with a range of teaching and support staff who were varied in roles and levels of experience. There was an overwhelming consensus that all staff feel valued, with one Teaching Assistant saying they are “treated without hierarchy”. It was commented that inductions, appraisals and line management systems are effective and the levels of support provided by school leaders cannot be faulted. Staff feel that their voices are heard and they feel comfortable and able to give opinions, add to school processes and bring solutions to the table in cases where changes could be made.

Staff were keen to share that they are proud to work at Strathmore and feel respected and appreciated at work. The group of stakeholders agreed that “team is *felt*” and this team reaches across year groups, making Strathmore a “genuinely nice place to work”. A teacher commented that Teaching Assistants are “incredible and the teachers can’t do their job without them”.

Strengths identified during reassessment:

The BPTAA has given a framework for the role and development of colleagues. Teaching Assistants have become fully included in the running of Strathmore, voicing opinions and feeling listened to about operational matters and areas of school development. They are effectively deployed and have clear line management. Job descriptions are comprehensive and clear, and staff are well supported throughout their career through induction, appraisal and professional training opportunities. There is effective feedback using coaching and observations and colleagues demonstrate that they are happy to assist in development opportunities for their teams.

Appraisal outcomes have been analysed and leaders have been swift in recognising areas for school development and robust in implementing change. One example has been transforming playtimes and lunchtimes with OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning), a whole school training programme to transform outdoor play and make positive changes to behaviour. This goes hand in hand with Positive Regard training which focuses on building relationships to help establish positive behaviour routines. The school’s HLTA was heavily involved in the launch of this.

Teaching Assistants are seen as professionals and valued as much as teachers. This is evidenced in their training programme. Some examples of this have been maths training, Little Wandle phonics training, and the introduction of a personal target in the appraisal process to allow colleagues to develop their skills for the benefit of the school where possible. In addition, Teaching Assistants join solution clusters which is an expertise sharing forum leading to strategies and solutions for individual children. They can also be involved in the SEND advice line for Hertfordshire, sharing information as professionals. On a day to day basis, parents are as willing to discuss their children with Teaching Assistants who are a point of contact on the gate in the morning, attend medical meetings and engage in discourse with external professionals. This makes support staff credible to the community.

Individuals are also recognised and given personal development opportunities, participating in training programmes such as: mental health, mental health lead, drawing and talking, Lego therapy, counselling, etc. With successful completion of some professional development areas, roles have been adapted to allow new knowledge and skills to be implemented. The HLTA, when teaching

whole classes, has support in place to draw on if needed to ensure planning and subject knowledge is secure, and she also has the autonomy to discuss changes to the planning if required. As a result, all staff are given the opportunity to develop and flourish and colleagues recognise that this is the case.

Impact:

The day to day running of Strathmore is clearly enhanced and improved by its highly trained, professional group of Teaching Assistants. Through training and support, the team feel confident in their abilities. They are able to take on teaching programmes and interventions with both groups and classes, use developed strategies to regulate SEND children, and plan and implement wrap around care. There has been a reduction in lunchtime incidents due to well managed behaviour and productive play, raised phonics results and reduced learned dependence. In addition, staff have enhanced ownership of their roles and have become more solution focused during meetings and appraisals, showing a developed culture of reflection and improvement.

Strathmore has shown it has a welcoming culture and new staff members feel part of the team swiftly. The ongoing support given by leaders continuously strives to build skills, play to strengths and enhance careers. As a result, recruitment and retention has improved and staff feel pride in their work. Also parents have reported through a survey that their children are happy at school and they have seen a positive impact of the BPTAA.

Areas for development:

Maintain all the good work which has been put in place and develop ways to further embed school changes.

Continue the good practice of induction, appraisal and training to quickly integrate new staff.

Verifier recommendation:

Strathmore Infant and Nursery School to be awarded BPTAA for a further three years.

Head teacher comments:

We are incredibly proud of the commitment and dedication our Teaching Assistants bring to Strathmore. Our staff strive to offer the best we can for all our pupils and we endeavour to ensure our staff feel confident and trained to support them. The Teachings Assistants at Strathmore are invaluable to us and we are incredibly grateful for all they do. Congratulations everyone on this fantastic achievement!

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