

Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award (BPTAA)

Verification Report

School name:	Strathmore Infant & Nursery School
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Award verifier:	Maureen Nash
Award adviser (if applicable):	School-led route
Date of verification:	21 st February 2022

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The term teaching assistant (TA) will be used throughout this report, but it is acknowledged that this includes the valued roles of Learning Support Assistants, Early Years Practitioners and TAs.

General Comment

The verification of the Best Practice with Teaching Assistants Award at Strathmore Infant & Nursery School was carried out through a virtual visit and all the evidence required was available to show that the school should be awarded the award. Evidence was presented mainly through a well prepared power point presentation along with a well organised e-portfolio. The tour of the school was provided through videos and photographs and discussions with stakeholder groups provided additional valuable insight to the value placed on the TA role at Strathmore. In particular, there was evidence to show that:

- The working party is representative of the whole school community.
- Leaders effectively monitor progress towards the award and analyse the impact of actions.
- All stakeholders, including governors, have been kept well informed about development towards the award.
- The development of staff is an integral part of the school's improvement plan.

- Leaders have developed systems to support TAs and because of this, the staff feels well supported.
- Job descriptions are very clear, outlining key responsibilities.
- Support staff have the opportunity benefit from a programme of training and develop a range of qualifications.

Strengths identified during verification:

Strong leadership by the Head, Deputy Head (coordinator) and SENCo has driven forward the strategic development of TA practice at Strathmore Nursery and Infant School in order to ensure high quality teaching and learning throughout the school. This strategic approach is very evident through having BPTAA as a priority in the School Development Plan, providing a clear vision in relation to the award and a positive plan of action. The award action plan was monitored, discussed and moved forward by a committed working group that included staff across the school, the SENCo and a governor, 'Having a clear aim in the School Development Plan demonstrates that school has a good commitment to the work, development and well-being of TAs' (Governor).

The BPTAA has been a positive framework for change, both as a celebration of existing practice and as a framework to develop this even further. The initial audit showed that Strathmore had existing good practice, but BPTAA has provided a framework to enhance this, 'It has given us a structure and direction and a base line for where we go next' (coordinator).

There has been a thoughtful restructure of TAs within the school, for example with TAs supporting pupils at lunchtime and the appointment of a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA). There are clear job descriptions for all TAs and the HLTA is now out of a class, providing whole school support such as PPA cover and supporting TAs in delivering interventions.

There is now an enhanced structured induction policy for TAs. This includes having a checklist and system of reviews with the induction reviewed over time and a new buddy system has been introduced. Two new TAs are piloting and reviewed this system.

An updated system of appraisal is in place, with up to three targets relating, for example, to school priorities and their professional practice. Training needs are identified and personal and professional development is encouraged. Lesson observations are now part of this process.

Strathmore has proved to be a listening school. For example, analysis of the views of TAs and HLTAs has informed changes, as shown through their strong contributions to the working party. Their views have been sought on systems such as Induction and appraisal and they have been part of whole staff school trainings, providing opportunities for discussions.

Whilst the learning and progress of all children is recognised as the overall responsibility of the teacher, the TAs are an integral part of driving teaching and learning throughout the school. There is a range of evidence to show that TAs work with children of all abilities in the classroom, 'Teachers want to work with lower abilities as well' (TA). TAs are part of termly whole class pupil progress meetings, offering their perspectives and insights.

TAs provide individual support in line with recommendations from EHCPs and professionals, 'in a mutual partnership' (SENCo) and there is a range of interventions including Speech and Language, social skills, Wellcomm and phonics. The HLTA initially models the interventions, followed by TAs being encouraged to take ownership of these. TAs are aware of the individual needs of children, for example through the Acorn Files and they complete tracking sheets to monitor progress.

TAs are prepared for their classroom practice, for example with plans discussed in Monday meetings. There is a programme of training for TAs including joint training with teachers and also TAs were provided with ICT training in order to help them meet the needs of pupils during Covid times. Individual support is offered through the HLTA and, 'It is very much a team approach' (SENCo).

It is clear that TAs are a valued part of the Strathmore team and this was recognised by stakeholders during the verification, 'Wellbeing is good here' (TA), 'This school has a strong nurturing ethos and the TAs are part of that' (parent governor) and the coordinator wanted to have their work recognised through the BPTAA process, 'To thank and celebrate our TAs. They do such an amazing job and go above and beyond'.

Impact:

The school considers that the impact of the award is that:

The award has had a positive impact on the self-esteem and self-worth of the TAs

It has given a clear indication of what is next

The award ensures consistency and cohesion across all stakeholders and consistency of documenting and recording the evidence and impact of our work with TAs

Areas for development:

The following areas were agreed between the school and Verifier:

To continue to embed our good practice in working with TAs through a continuous cycle of reflection and review

To raise awareness of staff throughout the school in the effective use of TAs

Verifier recommendation:



Strathmore Infant & Nursery School to be awarded BPTAA for a period of three years.

Head teacher comments:

We are very proud of our team at Strathmore and our Teaching Assistants are integral to ensure pupil's feel safe, continue to develop their love of learning and support their progress in terms of academics and well-being. The BPTAA has helped us to identify a clear pathway to support our Teaching Assistants as best as we can and ensure they feel empowered and valued members of our community.

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