



MAXIMISING
THE IMPACT OF
TEACHING
ASSISTANTS



Centre for
Inclusive Education



Education
Endowment
Foundation



SEND Futures Conference

Principles and first steps

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Aims for today

- Explore and understand the evidence on:
 - i. The experiences of pupils with SEND
 - ii. The deployment and impact of TAs
- Review and understand the context for MITA
- Introduce key principles of the MITA approach
- Consider foundations for good implementation
- Introduce some key resources

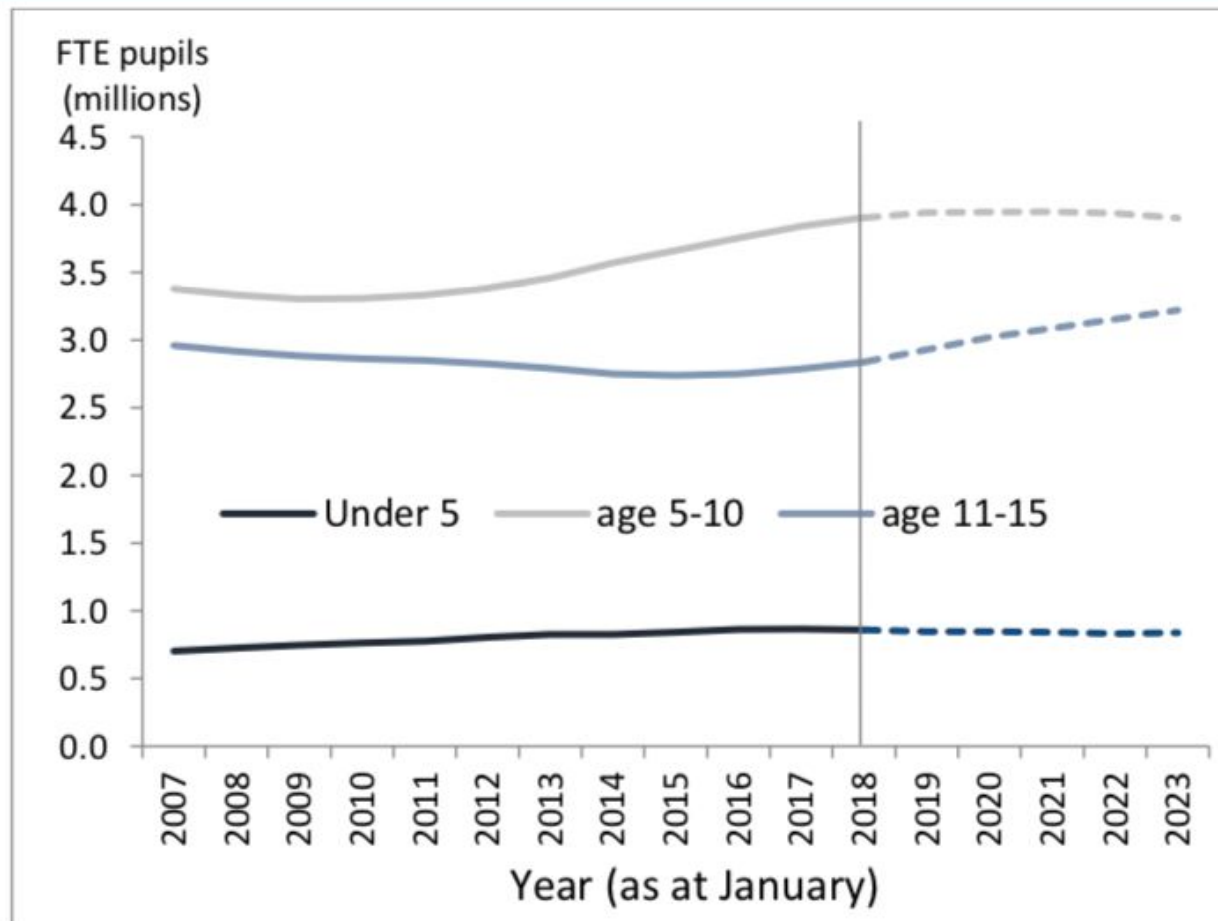
Working with the evidence



Evidence provides 'best bets' to help teachers and leaders to make more informed decisions about what to do (and what to stop doing).

Research evidence *supplements* expertise, it does not supplant it.

Why TAs? The big picture



State-funded schools only

Source: DfE. National pupil projections: July 2020

The big picture

- Secondary population rising; SEND rising (proportionately)
- Additional SEND provision (-14%), special school and AP capacity in decline (-11% vs. pop. +22% since 2004)
- Pace of opening new specialist settings slow (50% by 2023)
- Exclusions, off-rolling and 'hostile' admissions add to pressure on specialist settings
- Specialist provision for secondary-aged pupils prioritised
- Mainstream schools required to be more inclusive

The rise of TAs...

~400,000
TAs in English
schools

Trebled
since
2000

Largest
Pupil
Premium
investment

More than
roads,
social
housing

More TAs
than
teachers
in primary

~£5bn
to employ

What an
opportunity!

Our TA workforce in numbers

- Headcount (June 2021): 382,200 TAs in England
- Primary and nursery: 273,000 TAs vs. 242,300 teachers
- 85% TAs work part-time (90% primary)
- Secondary schools: one TA to every four teachers
- 7% TAs have HLTA status
- £4.5 billion per year
- The unsung heroes of the pandemic?

The mortar in the brickwork



Pause and reflect



What is the role and contribution of TAs in my setting (or the school that my child attends?)

Try to summarise in one sentence.

Discuss and share with others

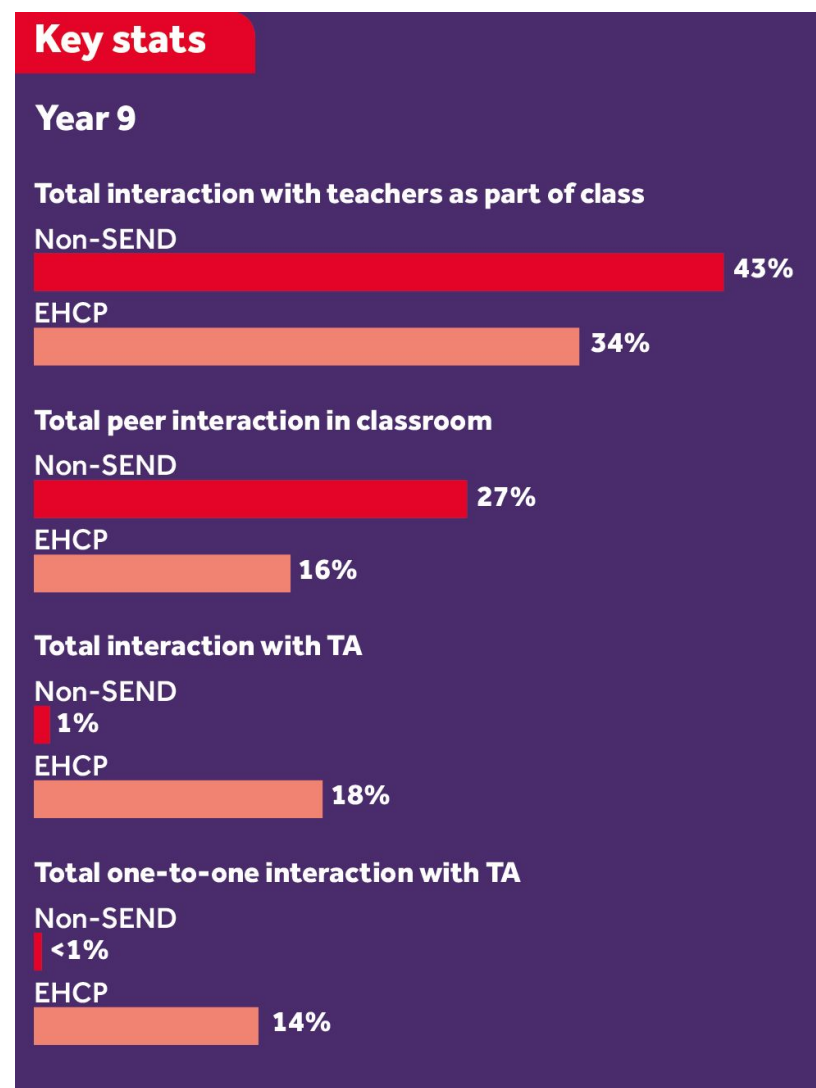
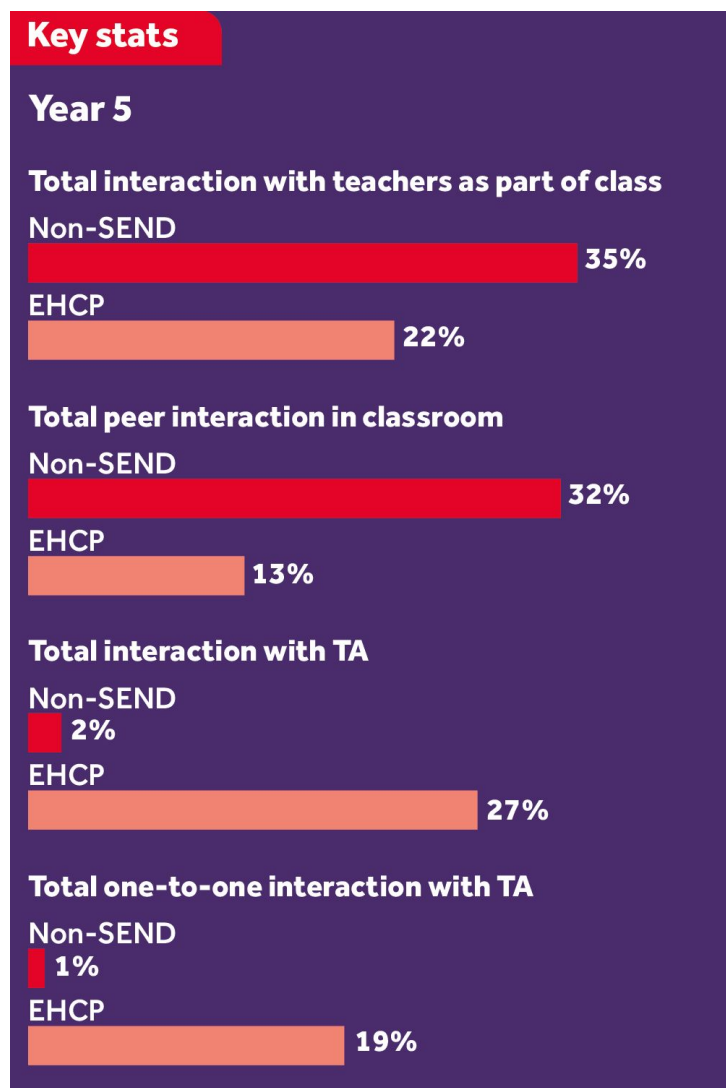
Introducing the MAST and SENSE studies

- Making a Statement (MAST) study, 2011/12
- SEN in Secondary Education (SENSE) study, 2015/16
- Little known about long-term experiences of education of pupils with Statements/EHCPs
- Cross-sectional: Year 5 and Year 9 in mainstream schools
- Longitudinal: tracking cohort of pupils after transition
- Funded by Nuffield Foundation

Looking in classrooms using systematic observation

- Valuable insights through minute-by-minute snapshots
- Class size; grouping; composition of adults; pupil interactions
- Compare experiences of pupils with and without SEND
- Very few studies in secondary schools
- UK's largest observation study of pupils with SEND
 - 1,649 lessons
 - 1,340 hours. 80,492 minutes (data points)

The separation effect for pupils with EHCPs



Source: The myth of inclusion, TES, 30 June 2017
maximisingtas.co.uk/research/research-blogs-articles.php

How do pupils feel about receiving TA support?

“I don’t like feeling that I need help and that everyone else thinks I need help when I don’t. It’s just sort of embarrassing.”

“TAs sometimes write in my book, which I don’t like so much. I do write really slowly, but they [TAs] make me feel rushed when they take over some of the writing at times. I think the teacher thinks that it looks like I haven’t done my own work. It feels like cheating if they are writing down everything for me.”

Further reading

MAST and SENSE study research reports, summaries and papers:

www.maximisingtas.co.uk/research.php

The myth of inclusion, TES

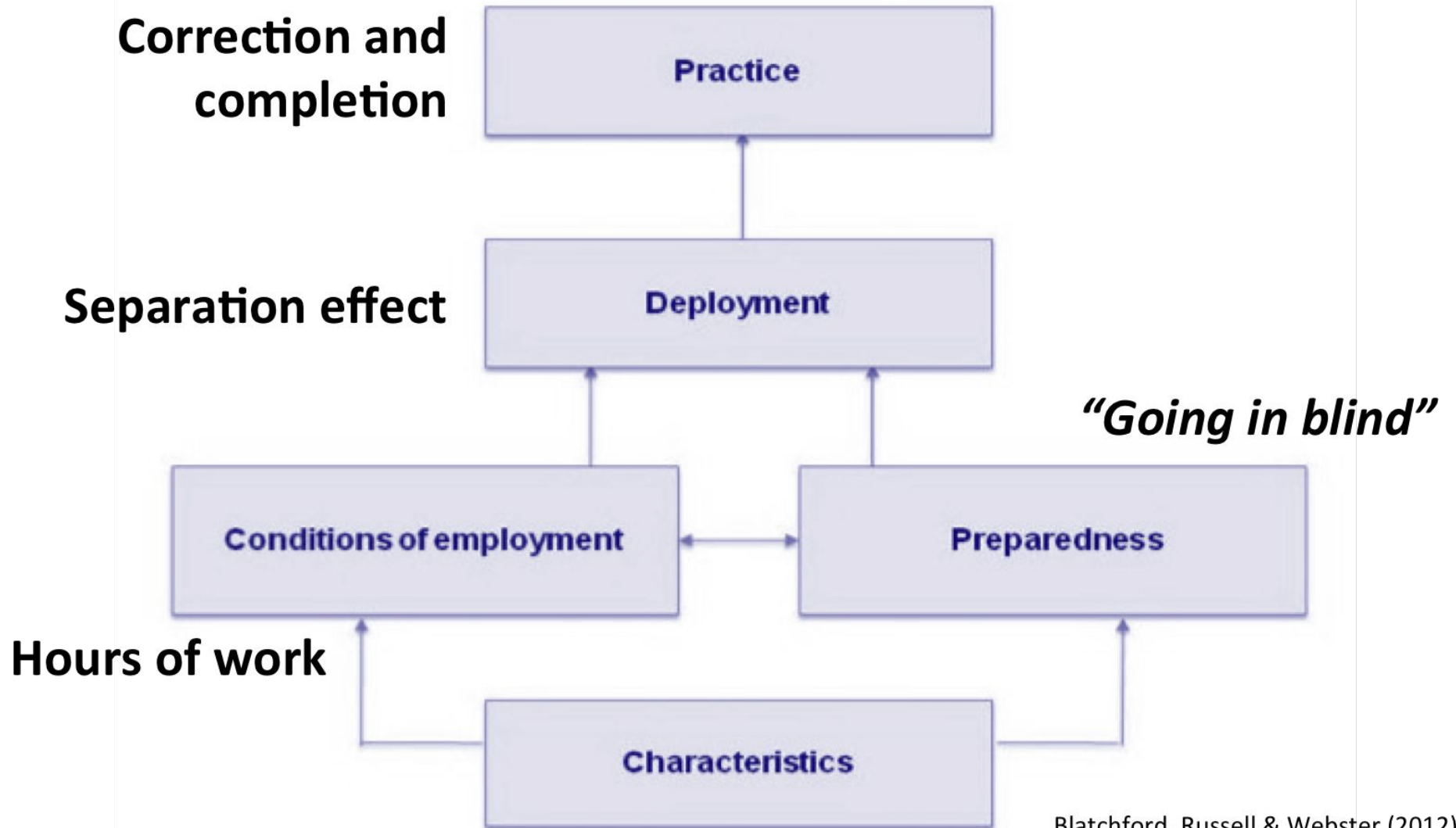
www.maximisingtas.co.uk/research/research-blogs-articles.php

What research tells us

- Good evidence that pupils make progress in literacy and numeracy as a result of structured interventions delivered by TAs (Sharples, 2016; Slavin, 2016)
- The situation is different in relation to pupils who receive classroom based support (Webster et al., 2012)

Explanations?

Explaining the DISS project results



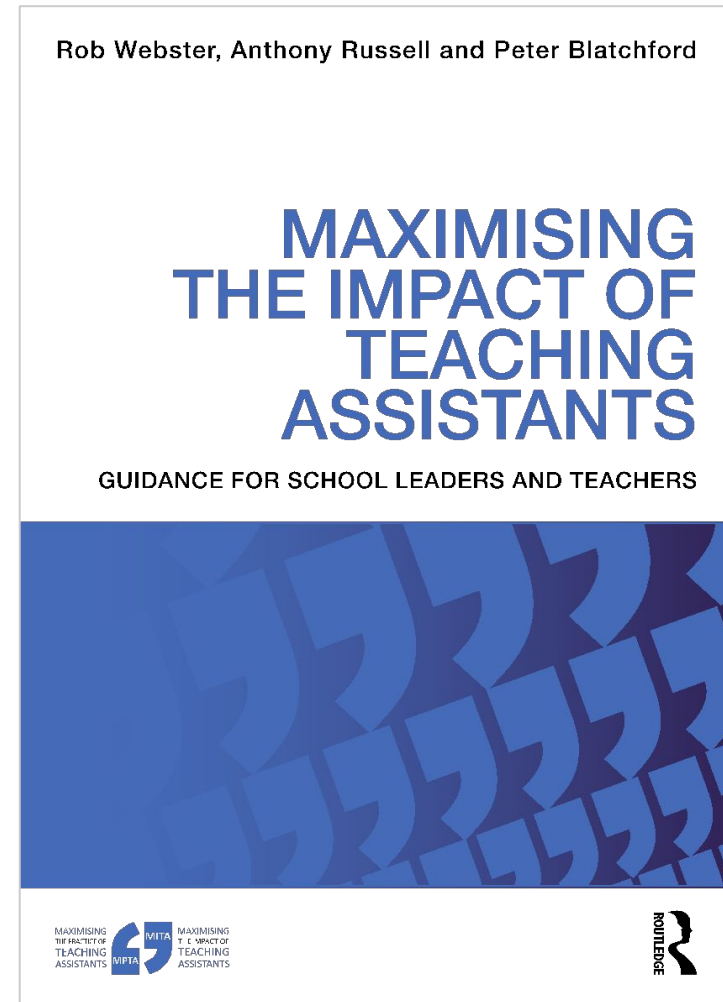
Making the best use of TAs is a leadership issue

“Addressing the current situation is a school leadership issue”.

“School leaders must rigorously define the role of TAs and consider their contribution in relation to the drive for whole school improvement”.

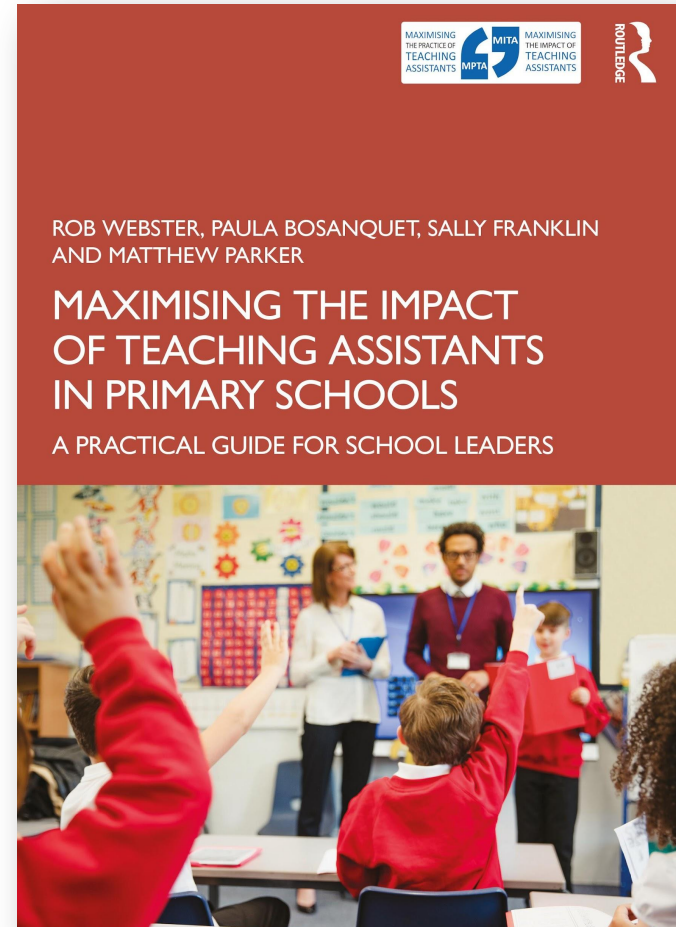
Sharples, Webster & Blatchford (2018)

Summary of the evidence and how to act on it





- No quick fix
- Impact on pupil engagement
- No short term impact on reading – longer term?
- Implementation is key for successful changes in practice





The effective use of TAs under everyday classroom conditions

1

TAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low attaining pupils



The evidence on TA deployment suggests schools have drifted into a situation in which TAs are often used as an informal instructional resource for pupils in most need. This has the effect of separating pupils from the classroom, their teacher and their peers.

Although this has happened with the best of intentions, this evidence suggests that the status quo is no longer an option.

School leaders should systematically review the roles of both teachers and TAs and take a wider view of how TAs can support learning and improve attainment throughout the school.

2

Use TAs to add value to what teachers do, not replace them



If TAs have a direct instructional role it is important they add value to the work of the teacher, not replace them – the expectation should be that the needs of all pupils are addressed, first and foremost, through high quality classroom teaching. Schools should try and organise staff so that the pupils who struggle most have as much time with the teacher as others. Breaking away from a model of deployment where TAs are assigned to specific pupils for long periods requires more strategic approaches to classroom organisation. Instead, school leaders should develop effective teams of teachers and TAs, who understand their complementary roles in the classroom.

Where TAs are working individually with low attaining pupils the focus should be on retaining access to high-quality teaching, for example by delivering brief, but intensive, structured interventions (see Recommendations 5 and 6).

3

Use TAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning



Research has shown that improving the nature and quality of TAs' talk to pupils can support the development of independent learning skills, which are associated with improved learning outcomes. TAs should, for example, be trained to avoid prioritising task completion and instead concentrate on helping pupils develop ownership of tasks.

TAs should aim to give pupils the least amount of help first. They should allow sufficient wait time, so pupils can respond to a question or attempt the stage of a task independently. TAs should intervene appropriately when pupils demonstrate they are unable to proceed.

4

Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom



Schools should provide sufficient time for TA training and for teachers and TAs to meet out of class to enable the necessary lesson preparation and feedback.

Creative ways of ensuring teachers and TAs have time to meet include adjusting TAs' working hours (start early, finish early), using assembly time and having TAs join teachers for (part of) Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time.

During lesson preparation time ensure TAs have the essential 'need to know':

- Concepts, facts, information being taught
- Skills to be learned, applied, practised or extended
- Intended learning outcomes
- Expected/required feedback

The effective use of TAs in delivering structured interventions out of class

5

Use TAs to deliver high quality one-to-one and small group support using structured interventions



Research on TAs delivering targeted interventions in one-to-one or small group settings shows a consistent impact on attainment of approximately three to four additional months' progress (effect size 0.2–0.3). Crucially, these positive effects are only observed when TAs work in structured settings with high quality support and training. When TAs are deployed in more informal, unsupported instructional roles, they can impact negatively on pupils' learning outcomes.

6

Adopt evidence-based interventions to support TAs in their small group and one-to-one instruction



Schools should use structured interventions with reliable evidence of effectiveness. There are presently only a handful of programmes in the UK for which there is a secure evidence base, so if schools are using programmes that are 'unproven', they should try and replicate some common elements of effective interventions:

- Sessions are often brief
- (20–50 mins), occur regularly (3–5 times per week) and are maintained over a sustained period (8–20 weeks). Careful timetabling is in place to enable this consistent delivery
- TAs receive extensive training from experienced trainers and/or teachers (5–30 hours per intervention)
- The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives
- TAs closely follow the plan and structure of the intervention
- Assessments are used to identify appropriate pupils, guide areas for focus and track pupil progress. Effective interventions ensure the right support is being provided to the right child
- Connections are made between the out-of-class learning in the intervention and classroom teaching (see Rec 7)

Integrating learning from work led by teachers and TAs

7

Ensure explicit connections are made between learning from everyday classroom teaching structured interventions



Interventions are often quite separate from classroom activities. Lack of time for teachers and TAs to liaise allows relatively little connection between what pupils experience in, and away from, the classroom. The key is to ensure that learning in interventions is consistent with, and extends, work inside the classroom and that pupils understand the links between them. It should not be assumed that pupils can consistently identify and make sense of these links on their own.

Area for action: Deployment

The effective use of TAs under everyday classroom conditions

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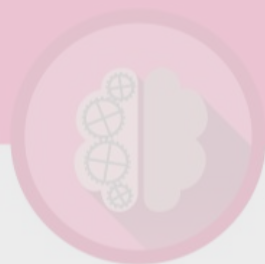
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Use TAs to add value to what teachers do, not replace them



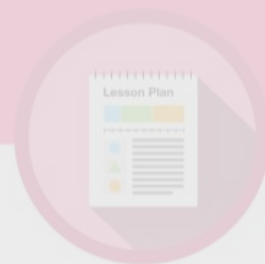
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Use TAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning



4

Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom



Area for action: Deployment (Recs 1 & 2)

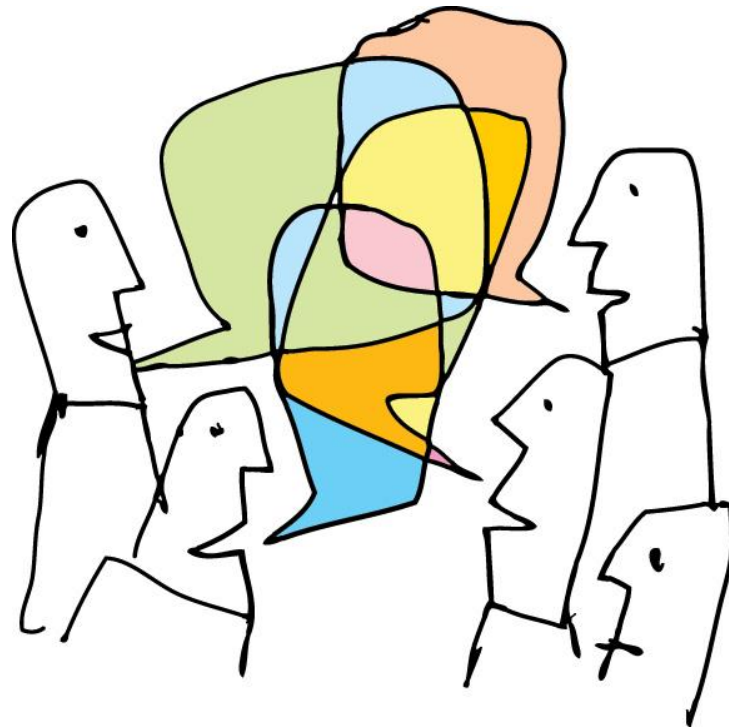
- Least effective model of TA deployment and pupil support
- Separation effect: reduces time with teachers and peers
- Decisions *about* TAs, not by TAs
- Supplement, not replace
- Adding value

Reflection – your setting and context

Discuss your setting and context.

To what extent might TAs lead the learning for **some** pupils in your school?

What might the reasons for this be?



Review and rethink

- Systematically review teaching and support roles for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND
- Take a wider view of how TAs can support learning throughout school
- Strategic rethink of TAs' role, purpose and contribution
- Clear and shared notions of 'support'
- Review TA structure and job descriptions (chapter 4, MITA)

Towards better TA deployment in classrooms

- High quality teacher-led teaching is first line of defence
- Struggling pupils get *at least* as much time with teacher
- Classroom organisation: physical layout; peer supports
- Teacher-TAs partnerships
- Free up teachers
- Contribute to lesson delivery
- Does school culture allow this?



Area for action: Interactions with pupils

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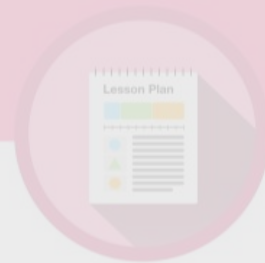
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Use TAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning



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Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom

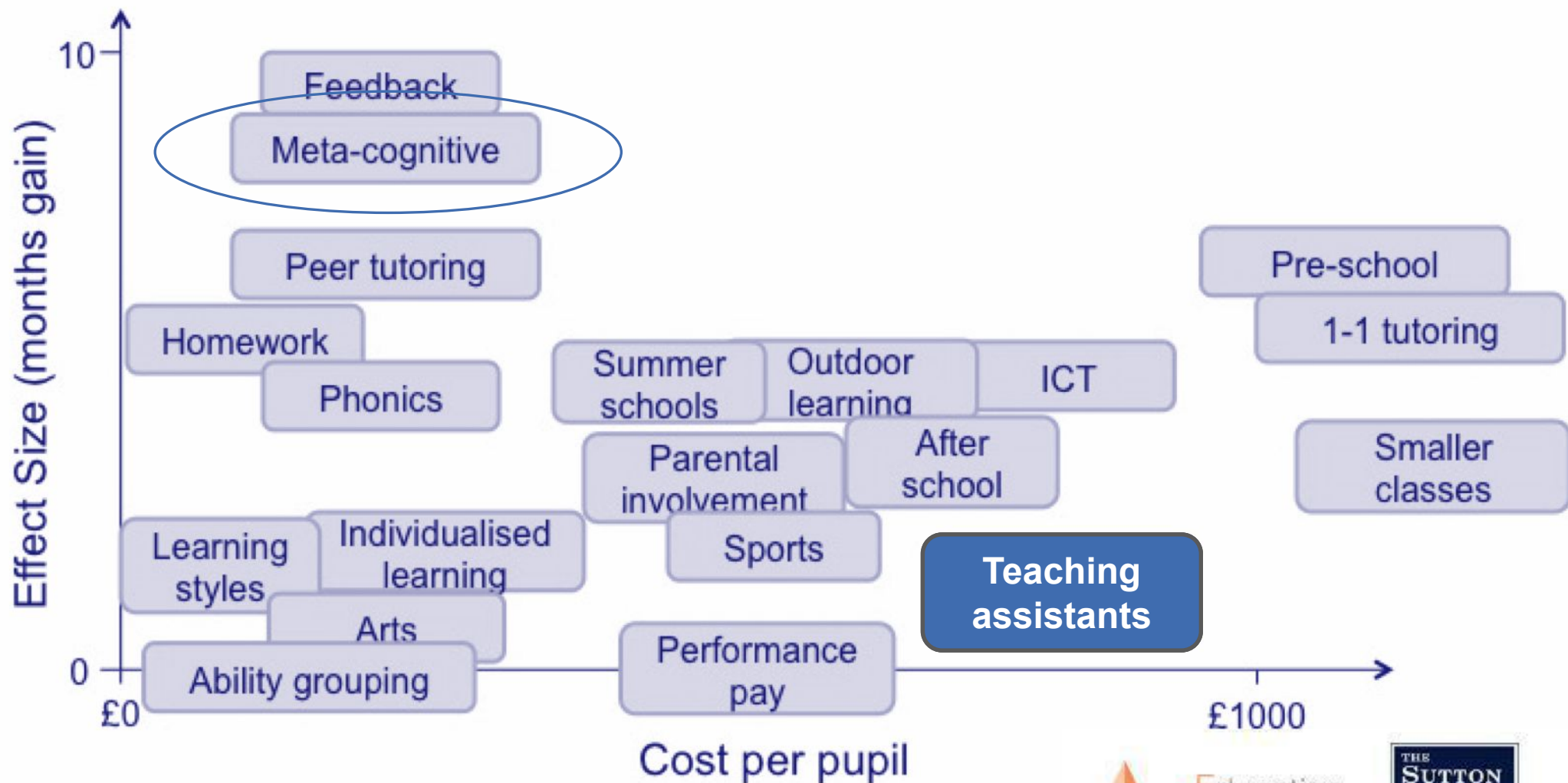


Area for action: Interactions with pupils (Rec 3)

- Dependency and 'outsourcing'
- Completion and correction
- Stereo-teaching. Thinking time
- Developing independence
- Least help first
- Metacognition



Rethinking TAs' interactions with pupils



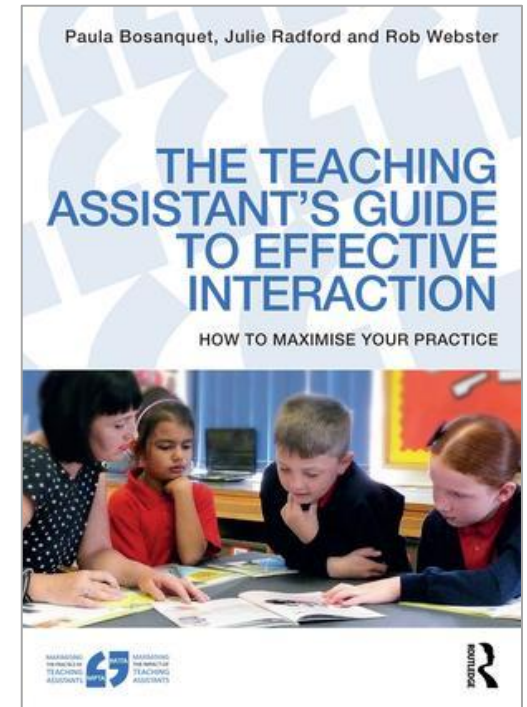
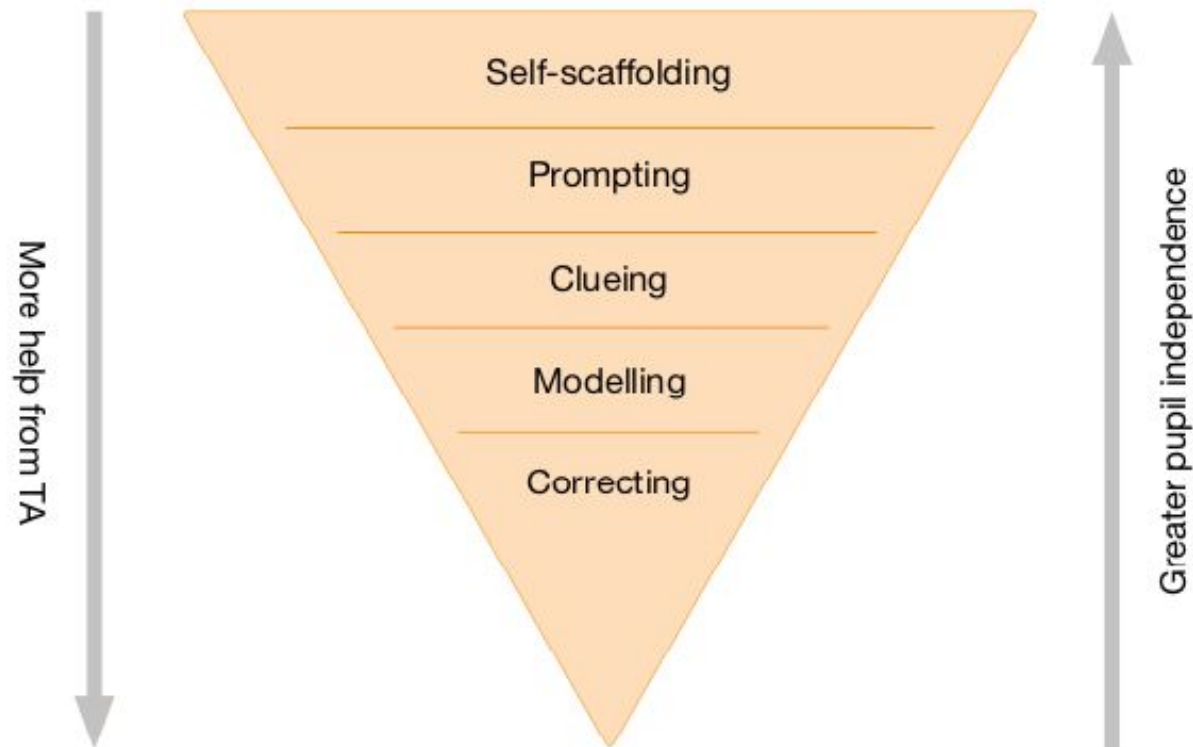
Source: Sutton Trust/EEF's *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*



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Towards more effective TA-pupil interactions



- Core and extended training for TAs
- maximisingtas.co.uk >> courses >> [MPTA](#)

Area for action: Preparedness

The effective use of TAs under everyday classroom conditions

1

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2

Use TAs to add value to what teachers do, not replace them



3

Use TAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning



4

Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom



Area for action: Preparedness (Rec 4)

“There is an assumption you should just know. You come into a classroom, you listen to the 20 minutes of teaching, and from that – if you didn’t know, you should know now. And then you’re to feed it to the children. It’s scary”.



Area for action: TA-led interventions

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Ensure explicit connections are made between learning from everyday classroom teaching structured interventions



Area for action: TA-led interventions (Recs 5 & 6)

“The area of research showing the strongest evidence for TAs having a positive impact on pupil attainment focuses on their role in delivering structured interventions in one-to-one or small group settings”

Sharples, Webster & Blatchford (2018)



Talk partners ✓✓✓

In-class (Teacher plan TA-Led interventions) ✓

Catchup Literacy ✓

Dynamo Maths ✓✓

Precision Teaching ✓✓✓

Speech and language Toolkit Intervention (Barnet) ✓

Numbershark + Wordsshark ✓✓✓

Social skills/stories ✓✓✓✓✓

Barnet Motor Skills programme ✓✓

BBC Dance mat Typing ✓✓

Nessie Fingers ✓

Wordblaze

Power of 2 + 1 ✓

Toe by Toe ✓✓✓✓✓

Fun Friends

Shine (Rising Stars) Maths

ELKAN ✓✓✓

Power of 2/1 ✓✓

Talkboost ✓✓

Reading Eggs

→ Numicon ✓✓✓✓

Occupational Therapy Programme ✓✓✓

'Writing without tears' ✓

Talking Boxes (SALT)

Art Therapy/Dramatherapy

Peer learning ✓

Family Learning Interventions (PLIC) ✓

SMILE (SLT) ✓

Read & Write Inc. ✓✓ (secondary)

~~800~~ Talk about ✓✓✓

Lexia ✓

Accelerated Reader ✓✓✓

P.A.T.

Level Up (Maths)

SEA Reading La

Spell zone

Durtwo Group

SALT Vocab gr

Stairway to Spelling

Jungle Memory

Write Dance

London Phonics

Premiership Readers

Better Reading Support Partners

Reading Boxes

Sound linkage

Project X Code ✓

1st Class at Number

1st Class at Number 2

Success at Arithmetic

1st class at writing

Early Talk Boost ✓

Rapid Maths

Rapid Read ✓

Project X ✓

Chatterbox

Reading with phonology

5 Minute Box, 2nd 5 Min Box

Number box

2 Simple 2 Type

Word Aware ✓

Beat Dyslexia

We need to talk
about
interventions...

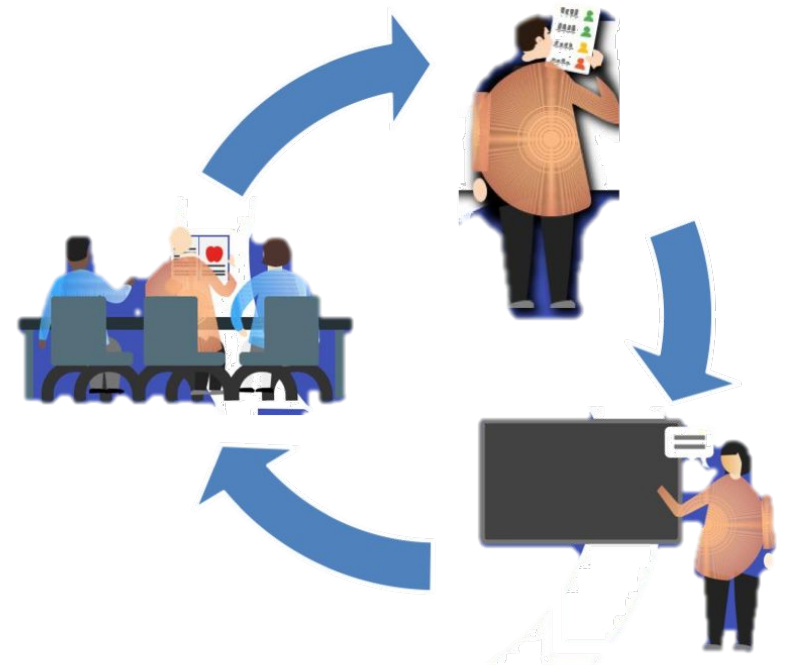
Characteristics of effective interventions

- Brief (15-30mins) and regular (3-5 times per week)
- Maintained over a sustained period (8-20 weeks)
- Carefully timetabled; minimise time out of class
- Extensive training and on-going coaching from experienced trainers/teachers. Close monitoring
- Structured supporting resources and lesson plans, followed closely

Explicit connections between interventions and classroom teaching (Rec 7)

“The key is to view the intervention from the pupils’ point of view, so when they return to lessons, teachers can ask questions that help them apply, demonstrate and consolidate new learning”

Sharples, Webster & Blatchford (2018)



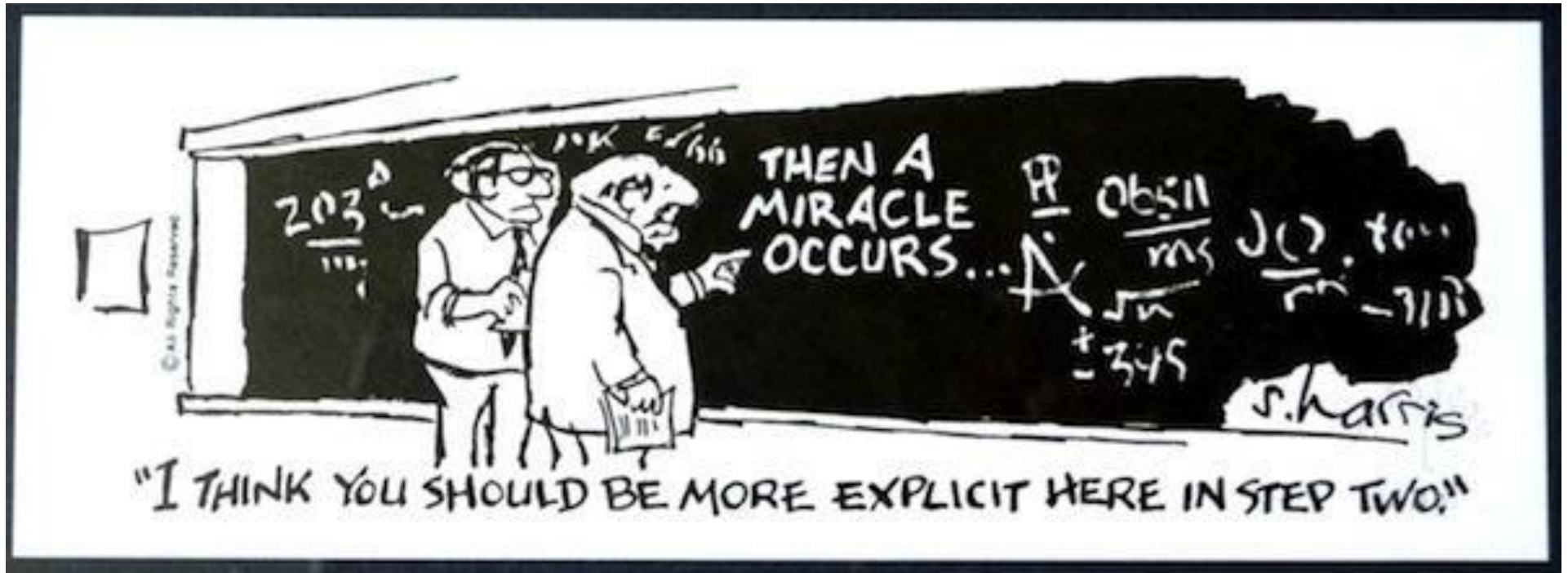
Explicit connections between interventions and classroom teaching (Rec 7)

- Are teachers asking appropriate questions?
- Are teachers marking and monitoring work from interventions, and ensuring it informs planning?
- Are teachers setting appropriate consolidation work or practising tasks linked to learning in interventions?
- Is progress in interventions valued and celebrated?

Putting it all together

- A 'tight, but loose' approach
- Use MITA principles as a basecamp
- Contextualise for your school and your pupils
- Common, meaningful language
- Faithful adoption, intelligent adaptation
- **The implementation challenge:** the 'how' + the 'what'

For now, focus on where you are and where you want to get to



Review of current practice

- Review current practice with RAG rating document
- Consider your evidence
- Identify areas of strength and improvement priorities
- Run MITA staff survey: maximisingtas.co.uk/apps.php
- TA skills audit: qualifications, training, expertise and talents
- Learning walk; observations; book looks; review job descs.

Create a shared vision

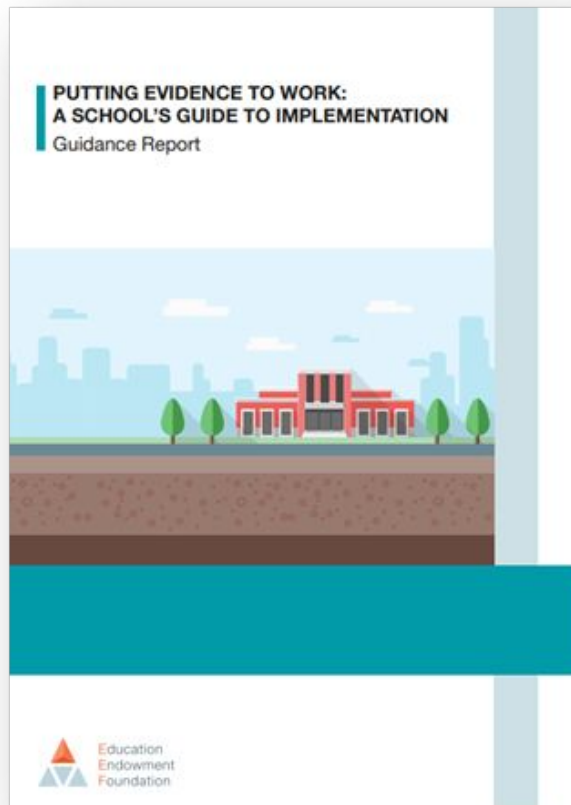
- Start with the end in mind
- The sights and sounds that indicate successful implementation

Teachers	TAs
<p><i>Where do you want to be in September 2023?</i></p> <p>What will you see more and less of in two years' time?</p> <p>Pupils</p> <p>Others (e.g. parents)</p>	

Some guiding principles

- Keep pupils at the heart
- TAs should supplement, not replace, teachers
- Be sensitive; lens for judgement
- Focus on what works for 90% of people 90% of the time
- Keep it containable and achievable. Don't over-reach
- Coordinate action (e.g. teacher training on SEND)

Leading evidence informed improvement



Email to follow with links to resources

www.maximisingtas.co.uk | @MITAproject

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