

#mathscpdchat 2 April and 16 April 2019

How can Teaching Assistants best support mathematics teaching and learning?

Hosted by [Martyn Yeo](#)

*This is a brief summary of both discussions combined – to see all the tweets, follow the hashtag **#mathscpdchat** in Twitter*



Some of the areas where discussion focussed were:

- that Teaching Assistants (**TAs**) can be a teacher's 'eyes and ears', providing regular feedback to the teacher about which pupils require special support with which mathematical ideas or procedures;
- TAs can **observe closely pupils' methods** ... e.g. how they use their fingers efficiently in counting ... and pass that information to the teacher;
- TAs often work (one-to-one or in small groups) with **pupils with special educational needs**, and with those with **English as a foreign language (EAL pupils)**;
- in large classes with many pupils who need special support, **TAs may work with those who need minimal support** while the teacher helps those who need most support;
- **multilingual TAs** helping EAL pupils access necessary vocabulary;

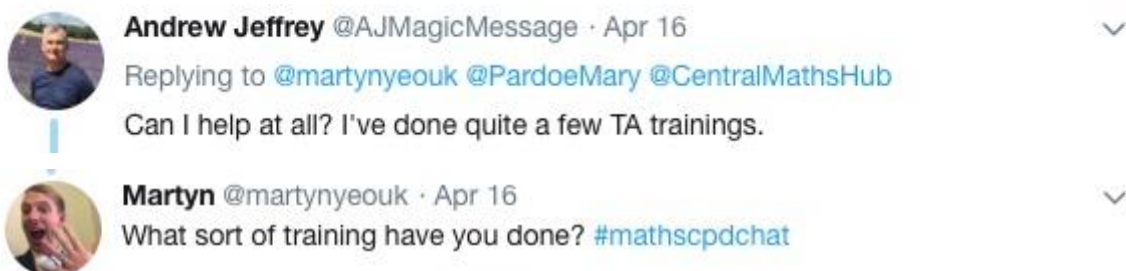
- using the **NCETM glossary** to help TAs with ‘difficult’ terminology;
- what the **full range of scenarios that TAs will be part of** in lessons is;
- that it is helpful to **provide each TA with their own pack of resources** ... such as counters, hundred squares, laminated number lines, lists of key words ... what a teacher’s ‘dream pack’ of resources for each TA would include ... e.g. a fraction wall, a clock with movable hands, place value charts, Cuisenaire rods, Dienes (hundreds tens units) materials;
- that many TAs express their desire/need to **play a part in the planning of lessons**;
- how well the **needs described in the HMI report of April 2002**, *Teaching Assistants in Primary Schools: An Evaluation of the Quality and Impact of their Work*, have been met during the past 17 years;
- providing TAs with **CPD that enables them to support children without the TAs feeling out of their depth**;
- that the **professional development of TAs** should focus on **both subject knowledge and pedagogy** ... for example, how and when to ask questions, developing TAs confidence in ‘not asking or telling too soon’;
- providing **training for TAs in using particular ‘intervention programmes’** ... not only providing the TAs with pupil-tasks, but also focussing on how pupils learn;
- that TAs might use **the NCETM Self-evaluation tools**.








In what follows, click on any screenshot-of-a-tweet to go to that actual tweet on Twitter.

An interesting ‘conversation’ of tweets, about helping pupils ‘to fly’ by developing both their subject knowledge and pedagogy, followed from this tweet by [Martyn Yeo](#):



including these from [Andrew Jeffrey](#) and [Martyn Yeo](#):



-  **Andrew Jeffrey** @AJMagicMessage · Apr 16 ▼
Mainly subject knowledge and CPA. Purely maths though.
-  **Martyn** @martynyeouk · Apr 16 ▼
That sounds great! What sort of impact have you seen?
[#mathscpdchat](#)
-  **Andrew Jeffrey** @AJMagicMessage · Apr 16 ▼
Replying to @martynyeouk @PardoeMary @CentralMathsHub
Most of the TAs started crying and throwing things. [#mathscpdchat](#)
-  **Andrew Jeffrey** @AJMagicMessage · Apr 16 ▼
More seriously, I do get the lovely "I wish you'd been my teache" or "Why did nobody explain it like that" or "It's so easy to see when you use the stuff" - that kind of thing.
-  **Martyn** @martynyeouk · Apr 16 ▼
Replying to @AJMagicMessage @PardoeMary @CentralMathsHub
Haha! In your experience is it the subject knowledge that TAs feel they need support with?
[#mathscpdchat](#)
-  **Andrew Jeffrey** @AJMagicMessage · Apr 16 ▼
Yes, but also the pedagogy; how and when to ask questions. They tend to give more information than required and needed the confidence to not ask/tell so soon.
-  **Martyn** @martynyeouk · Apr 16 ▼
So what do you think is most important for effective use of TAs?
Subject knowledge or pedagogy?
[#mathscpdchat](#)
-  **Andrew Jeffrey** @AJMagicMessage · Apr 16 ▼
I'd say each is a wing. Bird can't fly without both.

(to read the discussion-sequence generated by any tweet look at the 'replies' to that tweet)

Among the links shared were:

[MPTA MITA \(Maximising the Practice and Impact of Teaching Assistants\)](#) which is the website of a team located at the Centre for Inclusive Education, UCL Institute of Education. The team provide school improvement and training services (concerning Teaching Assistants) that are based on their internationally-recognised research and guidance. It was shared by [Martyn Yeo](#)

[Teaching Assistants and intervention programmes in primary mathematics](#) which is an article by Jenny Houssart, Institute of Education, London, published in the *Proceedings of the British Society for Research into Learning Mathematics* 32(2) June 2012. It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)

[What Do The Best Schools Do to Make Effective Use of Their Teaching Assistants](#) which is a blog by John Dabell published in March 2019. It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)

[Mathematics Teaching Self-evaluation Tools](#) which are self-evaluation pages on the NCETM website that focus on *Mathematics Content Knowledge*, *Mathematics Specific Pedagogy* and *Embedding in Practice* for all stages from Early Years to Adult Education (spanning Key stages 1-5). Teaching Assistants can use it to check their knowledge and understanding and to explore ideas on how to develop their practice. It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)

[Mathematics glossary for teachers in Key Stages 1 to 3](#) which is a glossary that was developed by the NCETM to support the publication of the 2014 National Curriculum for Mathematics. It was shared by [Martyn Yeo](#)

[Who do I involve in CPD in my School? Teaching Assistants](#) which is a page on the NCETM website providing a summary of needs identified in the HMI report *Teaching Assistants in Primary Schools: An evaluation of the Quality and Impact of their Work* (2002). It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)