This briefing note summarises findings from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project on the impact of all support staff on teachers, and in particular, the effect of teaching assistants (TAs) on pupil outcomes. The increase in the number of TAs and the expansion of their roles can be seen to have beneficial effects for teachers, in terms of their workload, stress and classroom control. However, despite the assumption that TAs help to raise standards for all pupils, the DISS project found that the support provided by TAs had a negative effect on pupils’ academic progress.

**Aim of the DISS project**
To analyse the impact of TAs and other support staff on teachers, teaching and pupils’ learning and behaviour

**Impact: data collection methods and responses**

- **Teacher survey**: 4,091 responses from individual teachers
- **Systematic observations**: 686 pupils across 49 schools. 34,400+ observations of TA-to-pupil interactions
- **Main pupil support survey**: 8,200 pupils, in 7 year groups, across 153 primary and secondary schools

**Impact on teachers and teaching**

26 tasks: teachers’ routine administrative duties

At Wave 3 (2007/08), administrative staff performed half of the 26 tasks (e.g. collecting money, photocopying), many of which were previously undertaken by teachers in Wave 1 (2004/05)

**Teachers’ job satisfaction, stress and workload**

- Positive effects of support staff on job satisfaction and stress
- Less pronounced reductions in workload, but still positive
- Results consistent at each wave (Wave 2 results below)

![Satisfaction, Stress, Workload graph]

**Impact of support staff on teaching**

Findings from teacher surveys showed that TAs in particular had a positive impact on teaching in terms of:

- Bringing specialist help
- Allowing more teaching
- Affecting the range of curriculum, tasks and activities offered
- Removing administrative and routine tasks
- Taking on specific pupils
- Allowing more teacher time for planning and preparation

**Systematic observations** showed TAs in classrooms led to:

- Better classroom control in primary and secondary classes
- More individualised attention for pupils, but less overall interaction with teacher, in primary classes
- More overall teaching, but less individual attention and less interactions with teachers, in secondary classes

**Impact on pupils’ learning, behaviour and progress**

**Impact of TAs on pupils’ learning and behaviour**

Findings from teacher surveys showed that TAs in particular had a positive impact on pupils’ learning and behaviour in terms of:

- Taking on specific pupils
- Bringing specialist help (e.g. technology skills, counselling)
- Pupils’ behaviour, discipline, social skills and/or behaviour
- Allowing individualisation and differentiation of tasks
- Improving pupils’ attitudes and motivation
- General positive and/or indirect effect on learning and behaviour

**Systematic observations** showed TAs in classrooms led to:

- More active pupil role in interaction with adults in primary classes
- More classroom engagement for primary-aged pupils without SEN
- More active pupil role in interaction with adults, and more classroom engagement, for pupils with SEN in secondary classes

**Impact of TAs on pupils’ attitudes and academic progress**

Little evidence TA support received by pupils over a school year improved their Positive Approaches to Learning, expect in Year 9

**The more TA support pupils received, the less academic progress made.** Effect of support did not vary for pupils with and without SEN

![Yearly Impact Table]

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