

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

## Teaching assistants

Independent research shows that, on average, teaching assistants add an additional four months of pupil progress over the course of a year



## New toolkit highlights positive impact of teaching assistants

**UNISON has never doubted the hugely positive impact that teaching assistants make in schools, whether in pupil attainment, pastoral support or enabling teachers to focus on teaching.**

Every year UNISON's Stars in Our Schools' celebrations collect hundreds of examples of their extraordinary work. But, for a long time, little independent research was carried out examining their impact.

Indeed a toolkit produced by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), a leading independent organisation that focuses on research in education, even claimed that, while TAs bring value to school communities, they did not make significant improvements to pupils' educational progress.

As a union for TAs, with a wealth of its own findings to the contrary, UNISON met with EEF and raised significant concerns about this message.

Citing examples such as a survey of school leaders, where 95% headteachers said that TAs added value to learning and appreciated their role in structured and targeted interventions, UNISON highlighted the decimation of government funding for support staff training and development and called for more detailed research to be done.

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Now, after answering UNISON's call, the EEF has updated its [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#).

The toolkit covers 30 approaches for improving learning outcomes, such as the use of feedback, reducing class size and TA interventions. Each strand is summarised by its average impact on attainment, the strength of the evidence and its cost.

The update incorporates the finding that, on average, TAs add an additional four months of pupil progress over the course of a year. Furthermore, research which focussed on TAs who provide one-to-one or small group targeted interventions showed an even stronger benefit of between four and six additional months, on average.

Overall, the impact is brought down by studies which suggest that TA effectiveness is diminished when they are deployed generally rather than in structured or targeted interventions, but this fails to consider the other positive impacts TAs have in pastoral support and helping with teacher workloads.

They also found that the training and development of staff is key. The most effective approaches considered were those interventions which involve high-quality support and training for TAs and often the success of an intervention was not down to the intervention itself, but the quality of the delivery and the quality of the people delivering it.

Speaking of the research and the updated toolkit, UNISON national officer for education Joanna Parry said: "Of course, we welcome the growing evidence base into what works and it has been clear for many years that the way in which TAs are deployed is key.

"However, what we need to see now is large-scale investment into support staff pay, training and development. UNISON will continue to make this case to government and claims this week from the Prime Minister about levelling up and wage increases will ring hollow for teaching assistants who face dramatically rising energy bills this winter."

UNISON has its own website dedicated to professional development for school support staff - [Skills for Schools](#) - and played a key role in developing [professional standards for teaching assistants](#).