

# Raising Achievement Through Teaching Assistants, Tutors and Other Adult Instructors

*Simple, Practical Insights that Improve Practice. Includes Key Points Observation Sheets for Line Managers.*

## Communication

Communication is more than the sum total of spoken words. In fact, studies have suggested that non-verbal expression plays a major role in human communication. Similarly, the tone of the voice will often overshadow the actual words being spoken. In short, never underestimate the role of body language and voice tone when communicating with students.

Having emphasised the above, it is still vital to select spoken vocabulary that the students are familiar with and always plan carefully when and how you introduce new vocabulary; especially when it relates to new concepts.

How many times has someone given you too much information too quickly and left you uncertain and confused? It goes without saying; it is much easier to confuse a student with too much detail. Keep your instructions/guidance simple and within the context of their learning.

We have all sat through boring mono-tone lessons/lectures in our time. Effective communication should motivate and inspire, it is about humans engaging and connecting emotionally as well as on an intellectual level. A tutor that purposely incorporates facial expression and controlled animation will certainly bring life to the most down to earth content.

Body language alone can encourage or discourage a student in your care and influence behaviour. A stern look with folded arms will bring about a different response to relaxed and open body language accompanied by a smile. There are times when both the latter and the former may be appropriate.

## Clarity

So many poor lessons are as a result of unclear objectives. Always be sure of what your expected outcomes should be. Inspectors often downgrade lessons because of lack of clarity and for students not being sure of the learning intentions. You should always discuss behaviour management with your line manager so there is consistency regarding sanctions and rewards from the outset. Students quickly recognise unfairness and inconsistencies in practice. This can de-motivate and/or have a negative effect on attitude/behaviour.

It is good practice to scan the whole group (if it is a large one) at regular intervals to ensure appropriate behaviour throughout the classroom. A stern look and/or a quiet word may be all that is needed to keep other students in check.

## Teaching/Learning

The three key ways in which we learn are through seeing, hearing and doing: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic stimulus. Most educators believe that the most effective learning takes place when all three elements are present within a teaching/learning experience. Similarly, some students have a stronger learning bias towards just one of the above elements, so being aware of individual learning styles can enable you to plan your teaching more effectively to cater for the differing styles of learning.

Awareness of learning styles and being flexible in your teaching/presentations can enable students to learn and engage more effectively leading to higher motivated and more confident learners. It is one thing catering for differing learning styles, but another to ensure expectations are appropriate.

A lesson that ticks all the boxes for excellence can still be a failing lesson if expectations are too low.

Ask yourself constantly: In my lesson am I challenging all the students? If not, why not?

Even in a small group, students will have had different experiences and different levels of knowledge. Therefore it may be necessary to differentiate the work. Sometimes differentiation tactics can be achieved through activities that vary in difficulty or simply through outcomes, i.e. the expectations of what each completed piece of work should look like for each individual learner. Whatever way differentiation is managed, it will have an impact on the way you organise resources. Think it through very carefully.

Appropriate expectations, differentiation and catering for a variety of learning styles, starts with sound planning and preparation this is a pre-requisite to effective teaching and learning.

## Relationships

Students consistently believe that the most important qualities a teacher should possess are consistency in approach to behavioural management and fairness. This should be of no surprise, because even as adults these are the traits we hope for in our line managers and bosses.

Students also put humour high on the list for desirable characteristics of teachers. Humour can create a positive atmosphere, relieve tension and put students at ease. Used wisely, it adds another dimension to a learning situation. Likewise, secure and safe environments also enhance students' learning. Recent studies on the brain have shown that being fearful can block key learning pathways to the brain. However, good group dynamics within effective surroundings (as discussed above) will not only produce powerful learning but also a stimulating and exciting environment in which to work.

## Key Points Observing Classroom Assistants/Tutors

### Communication

1 = ineffective/inappropriate

5 = very effective/appropriate

Language (words)	1	2	3	4	5
Tone of voice	1	2	3	4	5
Voice volume	1	2	3	4	5
Pace of instructions etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Animation	1	2	3	4	5
Body language	1	2	3	4	5
Body positioning	1	2	3	4	5

## Clarity

1 = unclear

5 = very clear

Intended objectives	1	2	3	4	5
Expected outcomes	1	2	3	4	5
Tutor's/TA's role in achieving above	1	2	3	4	5
How to manage individual/group behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness of pupils beyond focus group	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness of teacher's role	1	2	3	4	5

## Relationship

1 = not very

5 = very

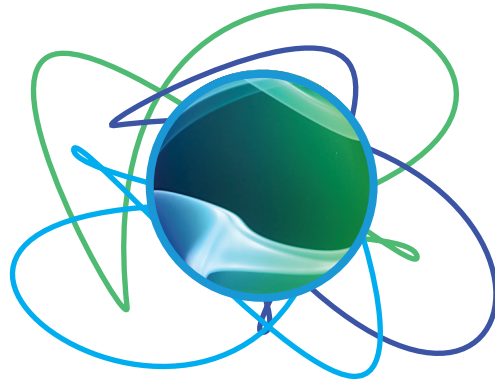
Fair to all pupils	1	2	3	4	5
Consistency in approach	1	2	3	4	5
Good use of humour	1	2	3	4	5
Secure/safe working environment	1	2	3	4	5
Caring atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
Good group dynamics	1	2	3	4	5

## Teaching

1 = no evidence

5 = substantial evidence

Caters for visual learners	1	2	3	4	5
Caters for auditory learners	1	2	3	4	5
Caters for kinaesthetic learners	1	2	3	4	5
Motivating pupils	1	2	3	4	5
Instils confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate expectations	1	2	3	4	5
Challenges pupils	1	2	3	4	5
Differentiates work	1	2	3	4	5
Organising resources	1	2	3	4	5
Planning links to teaching	1	2	3	4	5
Uses initiative	1	2	3	4	5



# KB Concepts

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