

DEVELOPING THE TEACHING PROFESSION FROM WITHIN

THE CROYDON LEA STRATEGY FOR PARTNERSHIP WITH ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHERS - JUNE 2003

1.0 Introduction

1. The role of the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) was devised by the government to reward excellent teachers who wished to remain in the classroom for the time being. ASTs spend the equivalent of one day a week supporting other teachers in developing their skills and experience through the sharing of best practice, ideas and approaches.
2. The following information seeks to clarify the systems and protocols used within Croydon LEA for the appointment, induction, deployment and evaluation of ASTs and their work.
3. Croydon LEA recognises that ASTs are employed by the governors of their schools and it is here that their ultimate responsibility and accountability lie. The systems and protocols outlined here have been developed and agreed collaboratively between schools, LEA and ASTs. This document does not attempt to replicate the guidance given by the DfES publication 'Advanced Skills Teachers - Promoting Excellence'. Copies of this document can be obtained from the LEA AST co-ordinator, Richard Harris, on 0208 686 4433 extension 2176 or from the QDI website.

2.0 The rationale behind the AST scheme

4. *'The AST's role is to provide pedagogic leadership within their own and other schools. They play a key part in raising teaching and learning standards through the quality of their own teaching and by supporting the professional development of their colleagues'. (DfES)*
5. An AST is an excellent teacher who achieves the very highest standards of classroom practice and who is paid to share their skills and experience with others.

3.0 What is the LEA strategy for the deployment of ASTs?

6. The London Borough of Croydon views its ASTs as being in the vanguard of professionals driving forward educational practice. AST posts are created by schools who believe that a teacher with excellent classroom teaching skills can not only raise the level of achievement of their own pupils, but those of their colleagues and the school itself.
7. Croydon recognises the need to identify and retain its best teachers. Until recently, promotion into management has been the typical career route for many. The AST pathway offers teachers who want to stay in the classroom a new career route. AST posts concentrate on good

teaching and benefit the profession by helping to raise standards more widely, both within and beyond the teacher's school.

8. The key characteristics of a Croydon AST are as follows:
 - ASTs are teachers who have been recognised through external assessment as having excellent classroom practice. They are given *additional payment and non-contact time** to share their skills and experience with other teachers and learn from them.
 - ASTs specialise in teaching and learning and their skills in this area are used within their own school and with teachers from other schools through agreed outreach work.
 - ASTs may also contribute to activities such as central LEA training, running courses in their own schools and working with ITT/HE institutions. Any other areas of expertise of an AST can also be used, as appropriate.
 - Ideally, ASTs work alongside teachers who have self-selected to receive support. However, headteachers are often placed in the best position to know where such support can result in the best impact in their schools. Similarly, a request may come via LEA personnel. An initial meeting between all parties involved (usually the staff to be supported, the headteacher of the host school, the AST and the LEA co-ordinator) will be arranged prior to any outreach work taking place.

** There is a separate pay spine for holders of AST posts and their conditions of service are different from those of classroom teachers. Details about AST duties and rewards are contained in the most recent School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.*

4.0 How are Croydon ASTs appointed and what are their responsibilities?

9. After an initial discussion with the LEA, schools usually advertise for potential ASTs by a process of internal selection. Until now the LEA has agreed to fund each post through the Standards Fund (unless a school decided to fund it from its own budget). Candidates then have to pass a national AST assessment procedure. This is carried out by external assessors who evaluate the evidence.
10. Schools can also be in a position to obtain 100% funding from the DfES, if they are seeking to appoint an AST in one of the special project areas identified by the government:
 - teaching in a 'School in Challenging Circumstances';
 - supporting Initial Teacher Training;
 - supporting special curriculum project areas in music, modern foreign languages, citizenship and the support staff scheme.

11. Sometimes, where a school is experiencing serious difficulties, the LEA will seek to appoint ASTs from within such a school to perform inreach work.
12. In Croydon, the main role of an AST is to provide excellent classroom teaching. The AST's role is to provide pedagogic leadership within their own (inreach work) and other schools (Outreach work). Along with LEA Consultants, Leading Teachers, Beacon Schools and other members of the LEA School Improvement Team, they play a key part in raising teaching and learning standards through the quality of their own teaching and by supporting the professional development of their colleagues.
13. ASTs will normally work for 80% of their time as classroom teachers and spend 20% of their time on outreach work. This will usually involve sharing their skills and expertise with teachers from other schools. However, ASTs working in schools in special measures or causing serious concern do not have to undertake outreach work and can use their outreach time with teachers in their own school.
14. The time that ASTs spend on inreach activities, that is supporting teachers in their own school, does not count towards their 20% on outreach, unless this is agreed with the LEA co-ordinator. ASTs are not subject to teachers' working time conditions and are expected to conduct 'inreach' in other time that they can access, such as twilight hours. However, this will need the addition of some non-contact time. In practice this may not always be achievable, for instance because other staff are not available, or where AST developmental activity is subject to the timing of an external event. In such exceptional circumstances ASTs can use some of their 80% classroom time or some of their outreach time to undertake these activities. A consideration also needs to be made about an AST's own professional development to ensure they remain up-to-date with current research and debate.
15. ASTs who are taking up their first post do not have to spend 20% of their time on outreach immediately, but they are expected to start working on some outreach as soon as possible, and should be hitting the 20% mark by the end of their first term. The variations to the 80% - 20% split will be the exception rather than the rule and will be normally need to be agreed with the ASTs line manager (HT) and the LEA AST co-ordinator.

5.0 What is the usual range of outreach (or inreach) work in Croydon?

16. *ASTs can:*

- Produce high quality teaching materials
- Disseminate materials relating to best practice and educational research

- Provide 'model' lessons to a whole class, or a target group of pupils eg gifted and talented, special educational needs, English as an additional language etc., with staff observing
- Support a subject leader with regard to schemes of work, policies or management skills
- Observe lessons and advise other teachers on classroom organisation, lesson planning and teaching methods
- Help teachers who would welcome support with professional development and who are committed to self-improvement
- Participate in the induction and mentoring of NQTs
- Lead professional learning groups
- Support professional development.

17. **ASTs should not be asked to:**

- provide references for staff they are working with
- act as supply teachers by either covering absences or by taking repeated 'demonstration lessons'
- take part in activities designed as part of either performance management of a teacher or as part of capability procedures

6.0 What is the role of the supported teacher(s) or member(s) of staff?

18. As far as possible, those members of staff entering into the AST support programme should self-select, with agreement of their school's headteacher. Before entering into the partnership with the AST, staff should be familiar with the protocol and be willing to give additional time, where appropriate, to ensure the success of the support.
19. Staff should identify their own areas for development and be clear about what they want to gain from support.
20. Staff should be committed to professional dialogue, be in learning mode by being reflective, self-evaluative and proactive, as well as being prepared to take risks to improve further their teaching.
21. Staff should be prepared to develop professional relationships and to work closely with the AST, sometimes alongside.

7.0 What is the headteacher's role?

22. Both the host headteacher and the AST's own headteacher have a major influence on the success of the AST role. Both headteachers' roles are key to the success of a placement.
23. One of the main challenges faced by an AST's own headteacher is organising teaching cover for when an AST is working on outreach. However, how each school arranges teaching cover will depend upon how each AST undertakes their outreach work.

24. There needs to be a close and open liaison about what activities are undertaken by the AST in the host school and what the expected outcomes of those activities are. These are agreed between the host school, the host headteacher and all staff, the AST and the LEA co-ordinator, prior to the start of any outreach work.

25. It is helpful if all staff and the Chair of the host school's governing body are informed of the AST's work prior to the commencement of the placement in order to ensure good communications.

26. The AST's own headteacher needs to ensure that the following are in place for an AST:

27. Job descriptions:

Job descriptions are key management tools. ASTs require a good quality job description that provides a concise outline of both responsibilities and accountabilities. It should set out what is expected of the AST and how they will perform against these expectations. The DfES has taken the decision that a school's performance management (PM) arrangements will provide evidence of ongoing effectiveness of an AST. Consequently, ASTs will not have to undergo any external reassessment. It is recommended that an AST job description should include, as a minimum, the following:

28. Job Title:

This should list the main responsibilities. In most cases 'Advanced Skills Teacher' should be quite sufficient, but where the AST has other responsibilities they should be included. Job descriptions should be clear, but they do not need to detail every minor aspect of the job. Whilst they should set out clearly the responsibility of the AST, objectives should not be set outside of the AST's responsibilities.

29. Accountable to:

This should include a named Line Manager in the School (usually the AST's own HT) and the designated LEA co-ordinator.

30. Job Purpose:

This should explain briefly the purpose of the job within the school and the headteacher's role in supporting teachers in both their own school and host school(s).

31. Key Tasks:

This should provide clear, concise statements explaining teachers' broad responsibilities covering both their normal classroom duties and their outreach responsibilities.

8.0 What is the role of the Governing Body?

32. Governors have an important role to play in the AST process. The governing body, together with the headteacher will decide whether to have an AST in their school and what the AST's responsibilities are in raising the standards of teaching and learning in their school. Governors will also decide with the headteacher and the AST where the AST will be placed on the salary scale as set out below. This should allow for an appropriate pay increase, having regard to the status of the grade as an alternative to management posts for the best teachers, while maintaining appropriate differentials within the school. Governors are also in a position to adjust the salary scale of an AST to take into account threshold payments available to other staff in the school. However, in setting the pay range (5 points drawn from the 27 point pay spine), the governing body needs to remember that ASTs are not eligible for management, special educational needs or recruitment and retention allowances. In Croydon, as with the national government, we have a long-term commitment to the AST programme and are endeavouring to encourage as many schools as possible to put forward teachers as potential ASTs.

9.0 What is the role of the LEA co-ordinator?

33. Outreach work represents 20% of the ASTs time. The role of the LEA co-ordinator is to help plan the outreach work, ensuring that it is planned, delivered, monitored and evaluated. This ensures that the AST post supports the priorities identified in the LEA's EDP to raise standards in Croydon schools. However, where an AST is involved in inreach work because of special measures or serious weaknesses, such work will be usually be related to the school's or LEA's plans for removing the school from this category. However, some outreach work is recommended in order to extend and develop the ASTs skills and confidence. Where a school funds the post from its own budget, outreach is encouraged, but is not a requirement.
34. The successful management of ASTs is dependent on establishing a good partnership between the LEA, schools and the AST. Requests for AST assistance should be channelled through the LEA AST co-ordinator, who is best placed to match the requests with the available AST resources. Having identified a suitable match, the LEA AST co-ordinator can then discuss the proposed assignment with the relevant AST and headteacher. Agreement should then be reached between the AST, headteacher and LEA AST co-ordinator as to whether the assignment can be undertaken. A typical proforma for an AST contract is given in the appendix.

35. The LEA has an agreed protocol with the schools that are supported by ASTs. This is as follows:

**L B of CROYDON ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHER PROTOCOL &
DEFINITION OF WORK**

(for use as an agenda during the AST's preliminary meeting at the outreach school)

The DfES defines the role of the AST as ' providing pedagogical leadership within their own school (inreach) and other schools (outreach) and by playing a key part in raising teaching and learning standards through the quality of their own teaching and by supporting the professional development of colleagues'.

What sort of work do ASTs do?

ASTs carry out outreach work in host schools for one day a week. They work towards a closely defined improvement programme which is agreed with the school prior to the start date. Their work is supported and monitored by the host school's headteacher and further monitored and evaluated by a senior education inspector.

Their work could involve the following:

- *ASTs can work with other teachers on classroom organisation;*
- *ASTs can work with other teachers on teaching methods;*
- *ASTs can provide 'model' lessons;*
- *ASTs can disseminate best practice based on educational research.*
- *ASTs can produce high quality teaching materials;*
- *ASTs can advise on professional development and initial teacher training or the mentoring of NQTs;*
- *ASTs can participate in the performance management of other teachers by supporting them towards the achievement of performance targets.*

ASTs do not:

- *carry out outreach work in schools experiencing serious difficulties;*
- *work with teachers experiencing serious difficulties;*
- *carry out outreach work for more than one day per week.*

The contract (attached) between the school and the AST can be ended by either party if it is considered to be desirable; alternatively, it can also be extended by agreement with the LEA co-ordinator.

The Protocol is as follows:

1. *ASTs carry out support work with their outreach schools within the AST remit and for one day each week. A copy of the AST in terms of supporting school improvement has been sent to the headteacher.*
2. *All staff of the outreach school need to receive a clear definition of the AST's role in their school- in the first instance by the circulation of the 'protocol' and any other relevant documentation by their headteacher. This needs to be followed up asap by an individual initial meeting with staff who have agreed to be supported by an AST and a staff meeting, where this is*

appropriate. This should help to ensure that the AST is directly involved with teachers' continuing professional development and should ensure that staff see the AST as a support to their work. It should also avoid the AST being seen in an inspectorial capacity.

3. It will be important to alert the Chair of the governing body to the work of the AST within the school.
4. To be most effective, it is important that ASTs work with enthusiastic teachers- where possible staff should self-select. When recommending staff to work with an AST, the headteacher should consider the person's willingness:
 - a/ to develop their own practice and
 - b/ to continue to develop and to ensure full impact on the school when the work of the AST is completed. To ensure this, regular evaluations of progress need to be made by the host headteacher and supported staff. Sometimes this will involve the AST and, at particular points in the placement, the LEA co-ordinator. The LEA co-ordinator will also be involved in a final evaluation towards the very end of the placement.
5. Each outreach day should allow for maximum time to be spent working directly with participating teachers whether in their classrooms, or if appropriate at the AST's own school, planning each next step directly with them. A visit to the AST's school is deemed essential and planned as early as possible in the placement. However, this needs to be negotiated with both headteachers. It is essential that some non-contact time is available during the outreach day for the AST to meet with staff involved in the programme. This should enable quality professional dialogue to take place. At the end of each outreach day, wherever possible, the AST should meet briefly with the headteacher and supported staff to discuss progress and next steps. It is assumed that there will be on-going dialogue between teacher/s and their headteacher about how their work with the AST is impacting on their class teaching. It greatly assists the process if the headteacher is actively interested in the strategies being used and the activities being undertaken by the classteacher(s) and the AST. Any AST feedback to the headteacher needs to avoid the AST being viewed as an inspector.
6. The preliminary meeting will be held before the AST begins work at the school. Planned review meetings and evaluation sessions should include the staff concerned, the AST, the headteacher and the LEA co-ordinator. It may also include, by negotiation with all parties, another AST to develop the concept of peer support and to assist the process of induction, training and consistency for ASTs.
7. As the AST also has her/his own class responsibilities, planning time (for lessons and staff meetings for example) needs to be built into the programme of each outreach day. It is helpful to all concerned if adequate notice is given of any preparation required.

8. There is no reason why links, once established, between the AST and teachers within the outreach school, should not continue informally for as long as is necessary or desirable, if considered mutually convenient.
9. The LEA co-ordinator will be involved in monitoring the success and whole school impact of the outreach programme and in the eventual evaluation at the end. This requires that clear aims are set for the programme at the outset and progress is regularly reviewed by all concerned. Time on specific outreach days will be set aside for this to take place.
10. ASTs will need early sight of and access to the school's key documents such as:
 - teaching and learning policy;
 - planning and assessment systems;
 - teachers' planning and records;
 - the school's behaviour policy;
 - the SIP;
 - any action plans related to the focus of the AST's work eg ICT action plan etc.

Providing the AST with such documents assists understanding of the school's context and provides immediate ways in to help to support and develop staff.

11.0 How are schools informed of AST availability?

37. In the summer term, or earlier if an AST becomes available, the LEA AST co-ordinator writes to all schools informing them of the number of ASTs within the LEA, their areas of expertise and confirming the procedures for requesting support.
38. Schools requests are then considered by the LEA co-ordinator, in partnership with ASTs, and schools' needs and ASTs' skills are, as far as possible, matched.
39. In addition to this formal route, there are several informal means of communication, such as a direct request from schools and from the LEA's Head of School Improvement.

12.0 How is an AST's performance in a particular placement measured and evaluated?

40. When an AST is assigned to a school on outreach work, the host headteacher and staff, AST and LEA co-ordinator should agree the objectives for the placement and establish arrangements for monitoring the work. Monitoring of outreach is usually undertaken by the LEA's AST co-ordinator in partnership with the AST and headteacher and staff of the host school. However, it is vital that ASTs collect evidence of their work. Typically, this will include a diary showing the amount of time devoted to outreach work and the main priorities for each visit to a

host school, plus a termly analysis of impact against the prior agreed objectives. Host headteachers and supported staff are expected to carry out regular interim evaluations of the impact of the placement.

13.0 The LEA's commitment to the professional development of ASTs

41. ASTs need to remain at the forefront of educational practice. Consequently, as well as general training that might be provided from time to time by the LEA, individual schools also need to include the particular needs of their ASTs within their whole school training and development plan.

42. The LEA is committed to an AST Network. Network meetings will be organised to facilitate both cross-phase and phase-specific developments. The Network will meet termly and be led and managed by the LEA AST co-ordinator. It will enable ASTs to:
 - exchange experiences and provide mutual support;
 - identify and share effective practice in innovative approaches to teaching, learning and management;
 - raise and discuss key issues;
 - collaborate on developmental work, as appropriate;
 - highlight and address continuing professional development needs;
 - influence and respond to DfES initiatives for ASTs;
 - ensure that the AST/LEA Strategy is working in practice; and
 - focus on the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of their work.

