**Advanced Skills Teachers**

**Teachers, Headteachers, Governors and LEAs**

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**Induction Handbook**

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1. Introduction

The role of Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) was devised to reward excellent teachers who wished to remain in the classroom and 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.

As such, ASTs are in the vanguard of people driving forward educational practice and each AST is usually faced with a number of completely new challenges at the start of their career.

While in many instances there is no one “right way” to do things, most of these challenges have already been tackled by other ASTs and their managers so the aim of this induction guide is to help newly appointed ASTs, Headteachers, Governors and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) avoid having to re-invent the wheel by consolidating and sharing some of the good practices, procedures and protocols that already exist. These can be adapted to suit individual situations or provide a stimulus to the development of fresh approaches.

It is vitally important that LEAs and Headteachers, Governors and Line Managers play their part in supporting ASTs, both in order to help them perform their role of improving teaching practice and raising standards, and to ensure that their experience as an AST is a fulfilling and satisfying one.

2. What is an AST?

One of the areas in which the greatest confusion can arise is when trying to answer the question "What is an AST?" So, detailed below are outlines of what the role involves and what is (and is not) acceptable work for an AST.

**2.1 The role of the AST**

The key characteristics of an AST are as follows:

**AST Top Tip**

“ASTs need to be seen by colleagues to be at the forefront of new learning methods and initiatives. To help establish yourself as an authority on the latest thinking create a notice board at school with relevant articles from the newspapers, the TES, research, and periodicals.”

**Jackie Beere OBE | AST**

* 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. They are not ”super teachers”, as there are many other teachers with excellent classroom practice who do not undertake the additional duties of an AST.
* 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 or work with ITT/HE institutions. Any other areas of expertise of an AST can also be used as appropriate.
* ASTs complement the work of others involved in raising the standards of teaching and learning such as Advisers for Teaching and Learning, Literacy and Numeracy Consultants, Key Stage 3 consultants and Leading Teachers for Literacy, Numeracy and ICT.

*\* 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.*

**2.2 The responsibilities of the AST**

The main duty of an AST is to provide excellent classroom teaching. They will normally work for 80% of their time as classroom teachers and spend 20% of their time on outreach. This will usually involve sharing their skills and expertise with teachers from other schools (please see below for a list of typical AST activities and Appendix 3 for details of the exceptions to the 80%-20% split). However, ASTs working in schools in special measures or causing serious concern do not have to undertake outreach and can use their outreach time with teachers in their own school.

The time that ASTs spend on inreach activities, supporting teachers in their own school, does not normally count towards their 20% on outreach. 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. 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 these exceptional circumstances they can use some of their 80% classroom time or some of their outreach time to undertake these activities.

**AST Top Tip**

“Make it very clear to schools at the earliest opportunity that you are not an advisory teacher or an inspector. In other words, you are not there to provide information or discipline people, but purely to provide support for teachers. You might even include something along these lines on the top of your objective setting pro-forma.”

**Frances Suc-Diamond | AST**

ASTs that are taking up their first post are not compelled to spend 20% of their time on outreach straightaway but they are expected to start working on some outreach soon, and should be hitting the 20% mark by the end of their first year.

The variations to the 80%-20% split will be the exception rather than the rule and will normally need to be agreed with the LEA AST Co-ordinator when the post is supported through the Standards Fund.

In outreach (or inreach) work an AST can reasonably be expected to undertake any of the following activities:

* Producing high quality teaching materials
* Disseminating materials relating to best practice and educational research
* Providing ‘model’ lessons to a whole class, or a target group of pupils eg. G & T, SEN, EAL etc., with staff observing
* Supporting a subject leader with regard to schemes of work, policies or management skills

**AST Top Tip**

“Try to be open and share the outcome of your outreach work with other staff in your school, either through a newsletter or on the school web site. It may also encourage them to get more involved or even look at the possibility of becoming an AST themselves.”

**Barbara Perkins | AST**

* Observing lessons and advising other teachers on classroom organisation, lesson planning and teaching methods
* Helping teachers who are experiencing difficulties
* Participating in the induction and mentoring of newly qualified teachers
* Leading professional learning groups
* Supporting professional development.

An AST **should not** be asked to act as a supply teacher.

Schools using the services of an AST should also consider the following points:

* ASTs are recognised as teachers with excellent classroom practice, but they should not be expected to solve classroom difficulties in outreach schools immediately. They will offer support and guidance to help reach solutions collaboratively.
* During OFSTED inspection the outreach work of the AST may continue, but it needs to be agreed with the AST and head of the outreach school and the AST’s status needs to be made clear to OFSTED inspectors.

3. Headteachers

**AST Top Tip**

“Before starting any outreach assignment, make sure that you have a meeting with the school to establish the objectives of the work, agree who is to be supported, identify any contentious issues and set the timescales. Not only is this less threatening for the department involved, but it also gives you clear parameters within which to work and evaluate your effectiveness.”

**Frances Suc-Diamond | AST**

It can sometimes be overlooked that the AST role is likely to be as new to Headteachers as it is to the ASTs themselves. This section offers some advice on the role that Headteachers have to play in the AST programme.

**3.1 The relationship between Headteachers and ASTs**

Headteachers can and should have a large influence on the success of the AST role. There must be a close and open liaison about what activities are undertaken by the AST both within their school and with others and what the expected results of those activities are.

**AST Top Tip**

“Ensure that you maintain good working relationships with colleagues in your school and keep your Headteacher informed about what you are doing as it is very important to have their support. Essentially you need to give them due respect and show that you are the same person you were before becoming an AST and still a team player.”

**Barbara Perkins | AST**

However, it is equally important that the AST is given sufficient freedom to explore new areas and/or examine particular issues in as much detail as they deem necessary.

The Headteacher should give sufficient authority and support to the AST. They should expect to receive sufficient standing in the school by virtue of being an AST. There is no need to bolster their position by requiring them to undertake a management function and we strongly recommend that ASTs should not undertake a specific management role.

But this does not mean that ASTs cannot have a leadership role. On the contrary we recommend that ASTs have access to the senior management team so that they can raise issues, comment on and propose policy, and act as a focus for discussions on teaching and learning. It also offers them a forum through which to feed in the good practice and the excellent ideas they have identified from visits to other schools.

Where ASTs have to undertake specific management roles, Headteachers should seek to minimise the burden placed on them by delegating duties which do not fit within the AST role, perhaps by using this as an opportunity to develop other teachers. The AST role is important and challenging in its own right and Headteachers should ensure that they do not overburden their ASTs.

**3.2 The effect on other teachers**

One of main concerns that Headteachers have before appointing an AST is the potential negative effect it may have on the morale/team spirit of other teachers in the school. However, evidence from schools with ASTs indicates that their appointment does not have this effect as ASTs are generally already well regarded by their colleagues.

Nevertheless, it is good practice for the Headteacher to ensure that every member of staff is informed about the aims and working practices of the AST in order to avoid any confusion or unnecessary worry. It can also help the AST to feel that other members of staff recognise their role.

**AST Top Tip**

“Giving advice to your colleagues can be tricky. Respect their experience, and the fact that you are not the resident expert, but also recognise when you have something to offer and don’t be afraid to share it.”

**Jacqui Newsome | AST**

# 3.3 Job description

Job Descriptions are key management tools. A good job description will provide a concise outline of responsibilities and accountabilities. It should set out what is expected of the AST and how they will perform against these expectations.

We recommend that as a minimum a job description should have the following:

**Job Title:** This should list the main responsibilities. In most cases ‘Advanced Skills Teacher’ will be quite sufficient, but where the AST has other responsibilities they should be included.

**Accountable to:** this will include a named Line Manager in the School, and in the majority of cases, a designated contact in the LEA who will be responsible for co-ordinating their outreach activities. In many cases this will be the AST Co-ordinator but some LEAs with large numbers of ASTs may have developed a broader structure to manage their ASTs that would allow them to name another appropriate contact such as the relevant subject adviser.

**Job Purpose:** This should explain briefly the purpose of their Job within the school and their role in supporting teachers both in their own school and in support of neighbouring schools as part of their outreach work.

**Key Tasks:** This will provide clear concise statements explaining teachers’ broad responsibilities covering both their normal classroom duties and their outreach responsibilities.

**AST Top Tip**

“Discuss your job description with your Headteacher in detail. It is crucial that you understand what is expected of you, where you fit into the school and who you are answerable to. You should also explain what you want to get out of the role.”

**Alison Anderson | AST**

Job descriptions should be clear but they do not need to detail every minor aspect of the job. They should set out clearly the responsibility of the AST and care should be taken not to set objectives outside the AST’s responsibilities.

**3.4 The role of Governors**

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.

**AST Top Tip**

“Do presentations to your stakeholder groups, including the Governors, parents and Friends of the School, so that they are kept informed about what you are doing. You may also be able to obtain extra funding or resources by gaining support.”

**Jackie Beere OBE | AST**

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 leadership posts for the best teachers. Governors can also adjust the salary scale of an existing AST to take into account threshold payments available to other staff in the school or an increase in responsibilities.

**3.5 Pay**

ASTs are paid on a five point pay range drawn from the 27 point pay spine. Movement up the range depends upon performance. In setting the pay range and determining which point on the scale they are placed the Governing Body should take into account: the nature of the work to be undertaken, including work with teachers from other schools; the scale of the challenges to be tackled; the professional competencies required of the post holder; and any other considerations that they consider relevant. They may also take into account:

* + the status of the grade as an alternative to a leadership group post for the best teachers who wish to stay in the classroom;
	+ the need for an appropriately substantial pay increase in relation to the appointee’s previous post
	+ any recruitment and retention considerations

In setting the pay range, the Governing Body needs to remember that ASTs are not eligible for Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments or any other allowances.

**3.6 Contracts**

While the majority of ASTs are likely to have a permanent contract some schools and LEAs have adopted a different approach, for example, using a temporary variation of an existing contract. Schools are advised to consult their LEA Human Resource or Personnel Department when considering the most appropriate form of contract for a new AST.

**Secondments**

There is another option that schools and LEAs may wish to consider if an AST post is being established for a fixed period. Where a teacher with a permanent contract at another school applies to be an AST it may be possible to agree with the original school that the AST appointment is on a secondment basis. This will provide the AST with the security they would be able to return to their original post.

Such an arrangement is of course dependent on the Governing Body of the original school being able and willing to support the secondment, but they may consider it in their best interests to do so - perhaps seeing in it the potential to retain an excellent teacher over the longer term.

Making it clear

Whatever employment arrangements are made they should be set out clearly and confirmed in writing as early as possible, and no later than 12 weeks after the job commences, as with any other contract of employment. In Community and Voluntary Aided schools the contract of employment is with the LEA as the employer for the school (although the Governing Body determines the basis of the employment). In a Foundation or Voluntary Controlled school it is with the Governing Body of the school as the employer.

**3.7 Managing an AST's activities**

The successful management of ASTs is dependent on establishing a good partnership between all parties involved which can include the school, the AST, the LEA and the outreach schools.

It is good practice that requests for AST assistance are channelled through the LEA AST Co-ordinator, who can 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 Co-ordinator as to whether the assignment can be undertaken (based on the other commitments of the AST and the availability of teaching cover).

In some LEAs ownership of ASTs’ outreach is shared between a cluster of schools.

In this situation the role of the LEA may vary but the essential message, that all relevant parties should be involved in agreeing and planning AST outreach work still applies.

**3.8 Organising cover for outreach**

Without doubt one of the biggest challenges faced by Headteachers is organising teaching cover for when an AST is working on outreach, particularly for primary schools where parents (as well as Headteachers) will often be reluctant to 'lose' a good teacher for one day a week. Effective pre-planning and communication with both teachers and parents about the AST role is essential.

How each school arranges teaching cover will also depend upon how each AST undertakes their outreach work - either on an ad-hoc basis, or on a particular day of each week, or in large concentrated blocks of time. However, most schools/ASTs tend to favour specifying a particular day of each week for outreach as it is then easier to schedule outreach work and to arrange consistent cover teaching, and the ASTs also have clear parameters within which to manage their work.

Schools that already employ ASTs have developed a number of innovative approaches to provide consistent teaching cover and ensure that the education of their children does not suffer. These include:

* Re-deployment of existing resources to cover periods regularly allocated for outreach
* The employment of a new teacher with complementary/overlapping skills
* Use of part-time staff, such as recently retired colleagues (who already know the school, its procedures and pupils)

**3.9 Measuring performance**

When an AST is appointed, the Governing Body, Headteacher, AST and LEA should agree the AST’s objectives, including their outreach objectives, and establish arrangements for monitoring their work.

**AST Top Tip**

“Make sure you keep records of all your outreach and inreach work, including details of visits to your school and presentations you have made, to help in your performance evaluation.”

**Jackie Beere OBE | AST**

It is vital that the AST collects evidence of their work. Typically, this will include a termly report of all AST related activities (see Appendix 13 for example form) to assess the proportion of their time spent working on AST professional duties and an analysis of the feedback provided by outreach schools in the AST outreach evaluation form (see Appendix 12 for example form), which indicates their level of satisfaction with the AST’s performance and work.

The responsibility for performance management of the AST, including their outreach work, lies with the AST’s Line Manager and Headteacher. Where the LEA or a cluster of schools are involved in the organisation of AST outreach, the cluster or LEA AST co-ordinator will wish to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for feedback on outreach and to ensure that this is provided appropriately.

**3.10 Allowing time for professional development**

ASTs need to remain at the forefront of educational practice. Therefore, sufficient time and emphasis must be given to their own continuing professional development, which will require the full support of their Headteacher and LEA AST Co-ordinator. Consequently, it makes sense to include the particular needs of ASTs within the whole school training and development plan.

4. ASTs

**AST Top Tip**

“Don’t forget that your outreach and inreach work is a two way process - you’re sharing your expertise, but you should also be gaining experience in new areas.”

**Jacqui Newsome | AST**

**4.1 Networking with other ASTs**

ASTs can sometimes feel rather isolated when they first take up post and this can leave them feeling uncertain, vulnerable to excessive demands, and at the mercy of misunderstandings about the AST role, particularly regarding the aims and purpose of outreach work.

Contact with other ASTs is consistently cited by ASTs as vital in helping to get to grips with the new role. The LEA should help newly appointed ASTs establish contact with other ASTs working in their local area with whom they can discuss issues, raise queries or simply share ideas and experiences. Good LEAs will also arrange meetings at least once a term to enable all of its ASTs to get together and discuss their experiences and share feedback. Such meeting can also provide an opportunity for professional development for all the ASTs.

These face-to-face meetings can be complemented by the effective use of Information and Communication Technology. Swapping e-mail addresses is one simple way of enabling ASTs to get in touch with each other. Many LEAs are also using ICT to help co-ordinate the activities of ASTs. And the DfES has its own website which contains policy guidance and the latest information on developments in AST policy. There is also a Discussion Forum for ASTs which can be accessed through the talk2learn online community hosted by the National College for School Leadership. From the homepage you need only click on the talk2learn button to access the logon screen for the AST community. The address is:

**www.ncsl.org.uk**

**4.2 Dealing with outreach requests**

In most LEAs the LEA AST Co-ordinator is responsible for establishing a mechanism for filtering and managing requests from schools for AST assistance. By the time a request reaches an AST it should already have been matched to the known skills/experience of that AST.

**AST Top Tip**

“Good communication skills are a must in your relations with other colleagues and the local authority. You need to return calls and e-mails as soon as possible, even if it is only a few words of acknowledgement. This will help you to establish relationships and get a lot back in return.”

**Barbara Perkins | AST**

The AST will then have any opportunity

to evaluate the request and discuss it with their Headteacher and/or the nominated contact from the other school.

It is essential that any issues or “grey areas” be clarified at this point, so that everyone has a clear understanding of the objectives, delivery methods and follow-up processes for the outreach work.

**4.3 How not to become overburdened**

**AST Top Tip**

“Be able to say ‘No’. After all, you still have control of a class for four days a week, so you have to ensure that their needs are properly met. Effectively you have got to keep the big picture in mind and recognise the limits on how much you can actually do effectively.”

**Barbara Perkins | AST**

The AST will have a good idea of how much work is required for each assignment. That is why the outreach work programme should be developed by the LEA AST Co-ordinator in close consultation with the AST and the Headteacher and take into account the nature of requests for AST assistance received from relevant schools and their own school improvement programme. The work programme should be determined as far as is possible in advance. Performance measures for the outreach work should be determined at the same time and reflect the content of the programme. The work programme should be realistic and achievable in the context of the nature of AST work.

Part of the 20% outreach time can be used for preparation beforehand and any reports at the end of the day.

ASTs should not be required to undertake a project if for any reason eg. lack of time, they cannot provide a 100% commitment to achieving the project’s objectives. The AST scheme is all about promoting best practice, not “nearly best” practice.

**Case Study Extract**

“At the beginning of each project we take a small pro-forma and identify the expected timescales, resource implications, the best person to undertake the work and the objectives, which we encourage ASTs to set before starting any work. It is not possible to achieve a good outcome if objectives are not set and I will not agree to a project unless this has been done.”

**Barry Blades | Deputy Headteacher**

**Deacon’s School**

**(See Appendix 7 for full case study)**

**4.4 Working in outreach schools**

There are a number of generally accepted protocols that ASTs are expected to abide by when working in outreach schools: The following are examples of some of the more common areas of agreement:

* ASTs will follow the outreach school’s procedures for registering visitors in the school and wear identification as required by the outreach school.
* ASTs are visitors in the school and will report any concerns about health and safety, pupils’ behaviour etc to their contact or a senior member of staff in the school. They will not deal with the issue themselves.
* ASTs should not normally be left alone with pupils. ASTs should not cover lessons in the outreach school, but may be required to provide demonstration lessons or parts of lessons for staff with whom they are working.
* Visitors will respect the confidentiality of any information gained during their work in another school.
* ASTs will complete a brief record of visit form after each school visit, leave a copy for the link person at the school and provide a copy to the AST Co-ordinator.

Similarly, there are a number of generally accepted protocols that ASTs can expect from outreach schools:

**AST Top Tip**

“Your school should make provision for you to be free to spend 20% of your time on outreach work. Make sure that all of your AST outreach work is done within this time.”

**Frances Suc-Diamond | AST**

* The outreach school will be responsible for any reasonable costs (eg. photocopying, computer disks, etc.) incurred by the AST in providing support to the school.
* The outreach school will provide a senior member of staff as a liaison point regarding implementing the objectives of the AST’s work.
* The outreach school will be responsible for informing staff as to the objectives of the AST’s work and the protocols and procedures for their work with staff.
* The outreach school will provide an AST with relevant copies of school documentation appropriate to their work.
* The school will not have an unreasonable expectation on the AST to work before or after the school day. The outreach school will provide appropriate planning time for the staff receiving AST support. This may include providing cover to allow them sufficient time.
* The outreach school will set up an initial meeting with the AST and senior member of staff to discuss:
	+ background to the request for support
	+ relevant policies and procedures within the school
	+ resources available including photocopying facilities
	+ success criteria and exit strategy
* If the teacher with whom the AST is working is absent, the outreach school should inform the AST before the visit and arrange an alternative time. If the absence is long term, the work of the AST should be re-negotiated.

**AST Top Tip**

“Pace yourself and think things through. Not everything has to be done immediately.”

**Jacqui Newsome | AST**

* The link person in the outreach school will be asked to complete an evaluation form after the AST’s work is complete

(see Appendix 12 for example form).

**4.5 Working with visiting teachers in your school**

There are a number of generally accepted protocols that visiting teachers to the AST’s school are expected to abide by. Visiting teachers:

* will follow the AST’s school’s procedures for registering visitors in the school and wear identification as required by the outreach school.
* will report any concerns about health and safety, pupils’ behaviour etc. to the AST or a senior member of staff in the school. They will not deal with the issue themselves.
* should not normally be left alone with pupils.
* will respect the confidentiality of any information gained during their visit.
* will be asked to complete a brief record of their visit (see Appendix 11 for example form), leave a copy for the link person at the school and provide a copy to the AST Co-ordinator.

**4.6 Videoing and observing lessons**

In the course of an AST’s work there will almost certainly be occasions where they will be required to take the classes of other teachers in order to give demonstration lessons which could be either observed or video recorded. This is often an extremely valuable means of illustrating best practice teaching behaviour. In order to gain the maximum benefit the following protocols could be observed:

**AST Top Tip**

“When other people come into a classroom the whole class can change dramatically. So I video tape lessons and use these to show other teachers and parents exactly how I work.”

**Robert Deacon | AST**

* All observations of ASTs are with their agreement. The AST needs to be given ample prior notice, before a lesson observation.
* If a copy of the lesson plan is required by the observer(s), the AST needs to be given prior notification.
* Time needs to be provided for discussion before and after the lesson.
* The observation needs to cause as little, if any, disruption to the AST’s pupils in terms of:
	+ the content of the lesson
	+ the number of observers
	+ the late arrival of the observer(s) to the lesson.

If an AST needs to observe a teacher as part of the support then the AST should follow similar reciprocal guidelines.

If a lesson is to be videoed or recorded then:

* An agreement needs to be reached between the AST/Headteacher and videoing person as to the purposes and use of the video.
* There needs to be prior agreement between the AST and the person doing the video taping previous to the lesson to discuss procedures that will take place eg. classroom layout, the involvement of the students, what the camera needs to be filming and when etc.
* The AST’s name and position needs to be credited on the video.
* The AST needs to have a veto on aspects or content that can be included in the final video.
* The Headteacher and AST need to see the final video before giving approval for it to be used/distributed.
* Protocols on filming children should be observed.

**4.7 Maintaining a work log**

As ASTs are normally required to spend 20% of their time on outreach duties it is helpful to maintain a log of all activities and produce a termly report of all such work (see Appendix 13 for example form).

**Case Study Extract**

“One of the first things that ASTs usually need to develop is their observation skills, as this is not a normal teaching practice. Plus they need to understand the protocols of going into another school, and we have produced a list of tips to help them with this. Another key area is managing behaviour and how to deal effectively with disruptive children in a school that is not their own.”

**Eva Tutchell | Education Consultant and AST Mentor**

**Gloucestershire LEA**

**(See Appendix 4 for full case study)**

**4.8 Training/Self-development**

The AST role is a discrete one. It is not that of an LEA Adviser and ASTs are not Trainers or Inspectors. The perspective they offer is that of the excellent practitioner, working alongside and supporting other teachers in numerous ways. Inevitably, this involves dealing with other adults and this has been identified by many new ASTs as a significant change in their role. The AST standards ensure that they have the skills to carry out this work, but ASTs may need help in enhancing their skills and confidence in this area in order to apply them in the new context, so, for example, they can feel confident in providing feedback to other teachers, particularly those who are struggling or feeling vulnerable.

Most newly appointed ASTs will also benefit from undertaking some additional training or development to build their skills in more functional areas that are key to the role.

Training and development subjects that should be considered in particular include:

* Assertiveness (particularly in coping with excessive demands)
* Presentation skills
* Time management
* Lesson observations and feedback
* Interpersonal skills, including dealing with senior management and/or dealing with adults on a one-to-one basis or in groups.

While ASTs should expect to receive induction training or development from their LEA, once established in the role they should discuss any ongoing requirements with their Headteacher and AST Co-ordinator as part of their continuing professional development.5. LEAs

**AST Top Tip**

“Try to be innovative and take risks that push you outside your normal comfort zone. As a lead learner you need to test and evaluate new techniques, so that you can share the experience and results with others.”

**Jackie Beere OBE | AST**

The LEA clearly has a key role to play in supporting and encouraging the spread of good practice in relation to ASTs. In the majority of cases the LEA will be active in managing AST outreach. However, the way that they approach their role will vary, in some LEAs ASTs will be locally managed within clusters or networks of schools rather than centrally directed; but even where the AST post is paid for and outreach work directed by the school, there is still scope for co-operation with the LEA and for the LEA to provide advice to the school and support for the AST.

**5.1 Supporting ASTs**

Each LEA should develop its own locally agreed guidelines for the appointment and development of ASTs; however, the following points may provide a good starting point:

**AST Top Tip**

“Support from your LEA is very important, so be proactive and get to know your LEA Co-ordinator, as well as other ASTs in your area.”

**Alison Anderson | AST**

* ASTs will be an integrated part of the broader LEA community responsible for school improvement, supporting and developing teaching and learning across local schools.
* The main criteria for supporting the appointment of ASTs will be their generic qualities as teachers with excellent classroom practice. But some AST posts will be created in order to provide a range of specialist skills (subject, aspect or phase) that match the needs of local schools.
* The LEA may seek to ensure a reasonable spread of ASTs across local schools.
* ASTs will support priorities set in school development plans, the LEA education development plan and national initiatives.
* ASTs will have opportunities for both innovation and support, working with the best teachers to develop and share best practice, as well as with those teachers who are inexperienced or facing difficulties.
* ASTs will be used in the most efficient way possible in order to raise standards across local schools.
* The LEA will provide central co-ordination, support and management for the outreach work of ASTs.
* The LEA will promote and sustain a community of ASTs.
* ASTs will be provided with professional development in their specialisms and in providing effective outreach.
* ASTs will provide ‘outreach’ through:
	+ hosting teachers in their own schools
	+ visiting other schools
	+ working with groups at the teachers’ centre or elsewhere.

**5.2 The role of the LEA AST Co-ordinator**

The LEA AST Co-ordinator is pivotal in turning the LEA’s guidelines for the appointment and development of ASTs into reality. Typically, they will have responsibility for:

**Case Study Extract**

“The LEA is uniquely placed to play a key role in coordinating AST activities, while helping to enable the sharing of ideas and dissemination of best practice. The LEA is now acting as a sort of broker matching ASTs’ skills and experience both at a subject and school level.”

**Tim Lomas | Principal Inspector**

**Lincolnshire LEA**

**(See Appendix 5 for full case study)**

* Promoting and developing the AST programme
* Supporting the appointment of ASTs, including liaison with prospective ASTs, their schools, the DfES, the national assessment agency, the Standards Fund Co-ordinator, other local funding managers, personnel and payroll
* Arranging an induction programme for the ASTs
* Maintenance of an ongoing AST support network
* Ensuring that ASTs share, and present, a service wide view about school improvement
* Liaising with the AST’s Headteacher and Governing Body on the work of the AST
* Establishing performance criteria for outreach and evaluating the work of the ASTs
* Setting up systems by which schools can request AST support
* Acting as a gatekeeper between schools and/or advisers requesting support and the AST/their school.
* Linking AST work with HE
* Ensuring that ASTs have time to focus on their continuing professional development.

**5.3 Induction of new ASTs**

Although teachers have a lead role in their own continuing professional development the induction of new ASTs is a shared responsibility of the AST Co-ordinator and existing ASTs.

When ASTs are appointed the LEA should provide them with a list of all local ASTs, together with contact numbers and subject specialisms.

ASTs should also be made aware of the online ***talk2learn*** AST Discussion Forum at:

**www.ncsl.org.uk**

**5.4 Induction training**

**Case Study Extract**

“The overall aim of the induction training is to try and get things right from the very start, so that our ASTs are much clearer about their role and, consequently, are more confident when going into other schools. It also means that the LEA isn’t inundated with an ongoing stream of calls and questions about these sort of things.”

**Monica Tomkiss | AST Co-ordinator**

**Education Leeds**

**(See Appendix 4 for full case study)**

To help newly appointed ASTs get off to a good start, good LEAs provide induction training once or twice a year. This should ideally be held at “peak” times of the year to minimise any delay in receiving training eg. if induction training took place in October it would include those who started between April and September.

See section 4.8 for details of training and development subjects that should be considered in particular.

**5.5 AST meetings**

It is recommended that LEAs host regular meetings of its ASTs, at least once a term, to allow the sharing of ideas and approaches, support collaboration and encourage the development of a self-support network.

Where there are only a few ASTs in a given area, the LEA should consider working with neighbouring authorities to hold joint AST meetings and enable them to establish networks across authority boundaries.

**5.6 Promoting the availability of ASTs**

ASTs can only be effective if schools are aware of their existence, so it is important that the LEA actively promotes their availability.

It is good practice for LEAs to maintain personal profiles for all ASTs, detailing their skills, expertise and current focus, and circulated these to all schools at regular intervals (see Appendix 8 for example form).

**5.7 Managing AST work allocation**

**Case Study Extract**

“The really positive element is to make (the networking meetings) informally formal, so that discussion and new ideas are stimulated. Which is why it is important to have someone organising the events who understands the AST role and the unique challenges it brings.”

**Ann Bridgland | Senior Adviser**

**East Sussex LEA**

**(See Appendix 6 for full case study)**

The role of the LEA is to match both the skills and the availability of their ASTs with the requirements of schools.

Different LEAs will adopt different approaches, but a useful model is that schools wishing to use ASTs for support do not approach them directly, but rather complete an AST outreach request form (see Appendix 11 for example form) and send it to the LEA Co-ordinator to request the services of an AST.

The AST Co-ordinator will then be responsible for negotiating the use of the AST with all concerned and formalising the arrangements using the AST outreach agreement form (see Appendix 10 for example form).

Where requests for the use of AST time are greater than their availability, the LEA AST Co-ordinator will need to prioritise the work with the AST and decline or postpone any that cannot be completed in the near future.

**5.8 Outreach “sign-off”**

It is recommended that each outreach project undertaken by an AST be concluded with an AST outreach visit summary form (see Appendix 11 for example form), completed by the AST, and an AST outreach evaluation form (see Appendix 12 for example form), completed by the school visited.

**5.9 Measuring performance**

It is the responsibility of the AST’s Line Manager and the Headteacher to ensure that the appropriate performance management arrangements are in place. The AST’s objectives and the criteria against which the AST will be judged will need to be agreed with the AST and the governing body (although in practice this is likely to be delegated to the Headteacher). The performance management cycle should be in line with that of other teachers.

In order to ensure that the outreach functions are assessed appropriately, when an AST post is established all parties including, where appropriate, the LEA, the school and the AST should agree what the AST’s outreach work should consist of and establish arrangements for monitoring their work.

Typically, this will include a termly report of all AST related activities (see Appendix 13 for example form) to assess the proportion of their time spent working on AST professional duties and an analysis of the feedback provided by outreach schools in the AST outreach evaluation form (see Appendix 12 for example form). This information can then be passed to the Line Manager, Headteacher and Governing Body so that it can be fed into performance management.

Appendices

**AST Top Tip**

“Be positive! Don’t let things get you down, as there will inevitably be a solution to the problem. Sometimes it is just a case of recognising that ASTs are not ‘super teachers’, but simply have certain key skills and a desire to work and share with others. So don’t be afraid to seek help when you need it.”

**Barbara Perkins | AST**

Appendix 1 - Questions and Answers

FIRST THINGS

**Q. As a new AST what are the first things I should do?**

A. Give careful consideration to your objectives, job description and contract and discuss them with your Headteacher and LEA AST Co-ordinator. This should normally be finalised within the first month.

**Q. As a Headteacher what are the first things I should do?**

A. Complete the AST2 form (which provides details of the appointment and pay) and send it to the national assessment agency and copy to your LEA AST Co-ordinator. This form is sent to the Head following the assessment but it can also be found in the AST Application Pack or on the AST website. It is important that this form is completed carefully as it enables the DfES both to keep an accurate record of the numbers of ASTs in post and, perhaps of more concern to Heads, it will ensure that the correct amount of funding is released. Even if the post is paid for by the school, returning the AST2 form will ensure that the new AST receives relevant information from the LEA and DfES. You should also let other teachers know what is happening and discuss with the AST their job description and contract, involving and seeking advice from the LEA as appropriate.

**Q. As the LEA Co-ordinator what are the first things I should do when new ASTs are appointed?**

A.Get in touch with the Headteacher. You can offer advice about job descriptions, contracts and, in particular, on the outreach role. You should also obtain the contact details of the AST and incorporate them into the AST network, providing details of meetings, induction events and so on. Arrangements also need to be made for the AST to attend the LEA’s induction training course(s).

OUTREACH

**Q. Does the AST have to start working 20% of their time on outreach straight away?**

A. Teachers should start working on outreach as soon as possible as it is an integral part of their role. We do recognise, however, that this is a new role and, therefore, allow some flexibility when ASTs first take up a post. But they should be working quickly towards meeting the normal 20% outreach activity (which includes time for preparation and feedback and so on) and should certainly have achieved this by the end of their first year.

**Q. As the LEA Co-ordinator, should I discuss the role with the AST and their Headteacher?**

A. Yes, it is important that outreach is a partnership that both builds on the strengths of the AST and also takes into consideration their own development needs. As excellent classroom practitioners the ASTs will have a good idea of what they can bring to the post and so it is important to involve them in the discussion about the outreach work that they undertake. The Headteacher will also have an invaluable input into this, as well wanting to discuss the practicalities of outreach planning.

Q. As the LEA Co-ordinator what type of factors should I take into account when determining outreach objectives?

A. This will vary according to the needs of the LEA. A good starting point is the EDP objectives and the broader school improvement programme. But there is a wide range of activities that ASTs can undertake and they will have some ideas themselves about what they have to offer. You will also need to take into consideration the timetabling needs of the Headteacher. This is one reason why it is important to involve the Headteacher and AST.

Q. If the AST spends a day a week working in another school or with other teachers, do they have to spend the whole of the designated outreach time in the school in question or with other teachers?

A. They do not have to spend the whole of the time in the school or with other teachers. Part of the 20% of outreach time can be used to prepare work, plan lessons for or with others, write up observations, report back and so on. AST outreach work can also take the form of the development of teaching materials.

MANAGEMENT ROLES AND ASTS

**Q. If I have a management role am I compelled to give it up on becoming an AST?**

A. We strongly recommend that ASTs do surrender their management role on taking up an AST post, but they are not compelled to do so. The AST role has been devised as an alternative career route without management responsibilities and the practicalities of combining an AST role with a management role may entail work pressures that make it difficult to undertake the AST role effectively.

**Q. But there are no suitably experienced staff to undertake the management role held by the AST?**

A. Headteachers should consider carefully whether there is someone else who can undertake the role. Where it is not possible to do this immediately they should look to share some of the administrative burden of a management role and consider if there are aspects of the role that could be passed on to other teachers, perhaps as a way of grooming them to undertake a management role.

**Q. As an AST I feel that without a management role as well I will not have sufficient weight to have any influence?**

A. The AST role offers an alternative career route to people who might otherwise have taken on a leadership post. As an AST you are part of the leadership of the school and your status should not have to be bolstered by undertaking a management role. We recommend that ASTs have access to the senior management team to provide input, particularly on issues concerned with teaching and learning.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

**Q. Who has responsibility for performance management arrangements?**

A. It is the responsibility of the Line Manager and the Headteacher to ensure that suitable performance management arrangements are in place. The performance management cycle should be in line with that of other teachers.

Q. But how can Headteachers and Line Managers comment on outreach performance, should that not be the responsibility of the LEA?

A. The LEA and the outreach schools do have a very important role to play here and can suggest the wording of the outreach objective, but the ultimate responsibility rests with the Headteacher. The LEA should ensure that all outreach activity is properly monitored and evaluated so that this can be fed into performance management. They can produce pro formas for completion by the Headteachers of the school where outreach is conducted. The AST should keep copies of these and build up a portfolio of evidence for performance management purposes.

**Appendix 2 – Funding for Advanced Skills Teachers**

Part 1 The Standards Fund in 2005-2006

**How AST posts are funded**

Currently most Advanced Skills Teacher posts are funded by a Standards Fund grant. The purpose of the Standards Fund is to help LEAs and schools achieve national and local priorities to raise standards by means of grants directly targeted at specific areas such as improvements in literacy and numeracy, Key Stage 3, the Excellence in Cities Programme, and tackling social exclusion.

In the case of most Advanced Skills Teachers, the LEA provides matched funding. So about half of the costs are met through the Standards Fund and the other half is met by the LEA. The grant covers the additional costs of the post i.e. salary enhancement and cover for outreach and an amount towards the LEA costs of supporting and managing AST outreach. AST funding is delivered under Grant 4.

**How the Standards Fund for ASTs is allocated to LEAs**

Since April 2004 the Standard Fund grant has been designed to support the number of AST posts in each LEA in existence at the start of that financial year. Nationally this represents just over 1 per cent of the teaching workforce.

In 2005-06 the funding allocations are based on an average annual cost for each AST post of £15,500 made up of £6,200 for outreach costs and £9,300 for salary related costs. The LEA normally passes on to schools the total for outreach but it will normally only pay the actual costs for the enhancements to the salary, although LEAs can reach a local agreement with their schools on the distribution methodology. In addition the total allocation to the LEA includes £300 per AST post (with a minimum of £5000) towards the cost to the LEA of co-ordinating AST outreach work, supporting ASTs and monitoring the AST programme.

**How is the funding for ASTs posts generated?**

If the school wishing to create a new AST post funded via the Standards Fund they should first contact the LEA AST co-ordinator to ensure that funding is available. Once such a post has been raised and filled by the school, the next step will be to generate payment of the funding. To do so schools should complete form AST2. The AST2 form should be sent to the national assessment agency and copied to the LEA. This form contains details about the AST, the school they will be teaching at and the salary point on which they have been placed on the AST pay spine. Eligible expenditure which can be paid to the school includes: the additional salary paid to the AST; the cost of any threshold grant which the school loses on making the appointment; and the cost of any allowance previously paid to the AST which is transferred to another teacher. Where the AST retains management or other responsibilities and these are reflected in their AST salary range, the Standards Fund grant would not cover the cost of that element of the salary previously awarded as a management allowance or other responsibility payment. Neither is it designed to provide for any on-costs related to the additional salary. While this is the recommended methodology for calculating the payment of the grant to each school individual LEAs may agree a different approach with their schools.

Funding is delivered to LEAs in regular scheduled streams in June, September, December and March.

Schools have the freedom to spend their grant allocations over 17 months (to 31 August of the financial cycle).

Part 2. The Standards Fund: 2006 - 2008

In 2006-07 and 2007-08 the AST Standards Fund grant will be incorporated into the new School Development Grant (SDG). The allocation of the School Development Grant for each local authority will be calculated by adding together the 2005-06 allocations for each predecessor grant with the addition of a per pupil increase each year.

Each school will be guaranteed, each year, a per pupil increase on the total amount they received from the predecessor grants in 2005-06, at the level of the minimum funding guarantee. This will enable schools to continue to support existing AST posts.

Where the individual school’s SDG allocation includes funding for providing a service across schools, such as an AST, receipt of that funding should still be conditional on that service being provided. So if an AST at one school were to leave their AST post and the school did not replace them with another AST, then the local authority will be able to switch funding from that school to a new post.

Part 3. Alternative Methods of Funding AST Posts

If schools and LEAs wish to create additional AST posts beyond the number which can be supported through the Standards Fund in 2005-06 and the School Development Grant in 2006-08, there are various options available.

**Posts funded through local formula**

Changes to school funding regulations in 2004 enable LEAs to direct delegated funding to support AST posts. Schools Forums should be consulted about any such proposals. The outcome can be that the existence of an AST in a school becomes a factor in the local funding formula and funding for AST salary and outreach costs can be included in the school’s budget share.

**School funded posts**

Increasingly schools are funding their own AST posts. This is often in order to use the ASTs to help fulfil the school’s overall outreach commitments – for example those associated with specialist school status.

**Group funded posts**

Groups or clusters of schools can combine to support one or more shared AST posts. This may be particularly useful for networks of small primary schools where an AST may teach in two or three schools and do outreach work across the network.

Appendix 3 - Guidelines on the use of AST time

ASTs will normally work for 80 per cent of their time as a classroom teacher with a minimum of 60 per cent in exceptional circumstances.

ASTs will normally spend 20 per cent of their time on outreach work with a minimum of 10 per cent and a maximum of 40 per cent in exceptional circumstances

Inreach work will normally be carried out within the additional time ASTs can access because they are not subject to teachers’ working time conditions

ASTs own professional developmental activities will normally take place within their time as classroom teacher. However, CPD specific to the outreach element of an AST’s role can be carried out during allotted outreach time.

ASTs working in schools in special measures or causing serious concern are not obliged to work outside their own schools but can use their outreach time to carry out AST professional duties in their own school.

The exceptional circumstances in which the normal 80-20 per cent split can be varied are:

1. where it is not possible to carry out inreach outside normal teacher hours - for example; because other staff are not available
2. where it is not possible to undertake AST developmental work within normal classroom teacher hours - for example; because of the timing of external events and activities
3. when additional outreach work is undertaken in connection with a specific Departmental or National Assembly for Wales initiative; (where this is applicable it will be made clear when the initiative is announced)
4. where the AST is new and inexperienced.

Appendix 4 - Case study: AST Training and Development

Like any other teacher ASTs should have access to regular training as part of their continuing professional development. However, given the unique status of the post, it is also essential that they receive a timely induction into the scope and mechanisms for performing their day to day duties, and, in the longer term, receive more detailed training and development to enhance their interpersonal and organisational skills that are key to operating effectively in the role.

Education Leeds has devised a number of innovative ways of catering for both the induction and ongoing training needs of its ASTs.

Monica Tomkiss, AST Co-ordinator, Education Leeds, says, “When ASTs are first appointed they are provided with induction twilight sessions to learn about the practicalities of being an AST, this covers every aspect of the job from what they are expected to do when on inreach or outreach, to what constitutes reasonable work in given timescales, how their performance will be managed and assessed, right down to what the LEA’s procedures are for things like travel expenses.

“By addressing many of the practical issues at an early stage the overall aim of the induction training is to try and get things right from the very start, so that our ASTs are much clearer about their role and, consequently, are more confident when going into other schools. It also means that the LEA isn’t inundated with an ongoing stream of calls and questions about these sorts of things. In addition we hold termly cross phase meetings to provide ASTs with the opportunity to network, share good practice and be updated on any key educational issues.”

In developing its own AST induction programme Gloucestershire LEA has identified a number of key skills that all of its new ASTs now receive training on, as Eva Tutchell, Education Consultant and AST Mentor, Gloucestershire LEA, explains, “One of the first things that ASTs usually need to develop is their observation skills, as this is not a normal teaching practice. Plus they need to understand the protocols of going into another school, and we have produced a list of tips to help them with this. Another key area is managing behaviour and how to deal with disruptive children in a school that is not their own.”

Geraldine Atkins, Good Practice Co-ordinator, Gloucestershire LEA, adds, “We try and use our more experienced ASTs to run some of the induction sessions, because the advice that they can give is much more valuable than anything we could say. All of the ASTs enjoy it and tend to learn more.”

The ongoing training needs of ASTs in Gloucestershire are addressed as part of the LEA’s regular, half-termly AST networking meetings, in which previous training is reviewed in order to identify what else may be needed to help the AST advance still further. To capitalise on their experience and skills all of the ASTs also work with an LEA Adviser in their own specialist subject to help in running training courses for other teachers.

While Gloucestershire LEA currently undertakes much of its training in-house, Education Leeds has developed a partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU), which has created and now delivers a broad range of courses specifically for ASTs.

Monica Tomkiss explains, “Education Leeds approached LMU about developing the AST training as it was already providing training for our teaching advisors, so this was the logical next step. If the LEA had had to develop the courses from scratch it would have taken considerable time and effort, which we would have had to charge for, and diverted our attention away from our core functions. By contrast, the University could tailor courses that it already provided to other organisations and deliver the service much more cost-effectively. And because these are University courses ASTs taking part also get credits towards a Masters Degree.”

Appendix 5 - Case study: Support for ASTs

The role of AST is so different from any other educational post that it has brought with it a set of unique challenges. In the early days of the AST programme much of the onus was placed on ASTs to develop the methods and procedures necessary to establish their position and manage the role. However, most LEAs are now putting in place more formal mechanisms to support ASTs and to foster the exchange of views and ideas.

Tim Lomas, Principal Inspector, Lincolnshire LEA, says, “Lincolnshire was one of the first LEAs to appoint ASTs and, while we have always recognised the importance of providing AST induction and getting ASTs together to discuss common issues, exchange information and provide feedback to the LEA, it is probably fair to say that the support we offered in the early days was fairly ad-hoc and informal.”

Neil Spencelayh, formerly an AST, but now Headteacher of Grantham Spitalgate

C of E Primary School, comments, “I was the first Primary School AST in Lincolnshire, so there was no real support system in place. While I initially worked with the LEA to script the role, it was still pretty much left up to the AST and their Headteacher to generate new school contacts by word of mouth, determine what work was undertaken and then do their own follow-up and evaluation. However, a lot has been learnt since those days and a range of improvements have been put in place by the LEA, such as a termly meeting of ASTs, a directory for schools of all ASTs and their areas of specialism, and an induction programme outlining the requirements of the job, explaining the key tasks and providing training in key skills such as observation, coaching and providing INSET.”

Other initiatives that are being put in place by Lincolnshire LEA include the use of more than one AST to collaborate on outreach assignments and the preparation of teaching materials, a greater focus on addressing the needs of schools facing challenging circumstances, and the linking of ASTs by their chosen subject areas. In addition, joint working relationships are being formed with nine other LEAs from the East Midlands in order to co-operate on a whole range of school improvement initiatives.

The LEA is also trying to apply a much more coherent approach to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) uniting the work of ASTs, Beacon schools and Training courses, as Tim Lomas explains, “It is very important that ASTs link into what else is going on in order to avoid the danger of duplication and also ensure that we are all working in the same direction towards school improvement. However, ASTs also need to be treated well. Just because they are excellent practitioners their own professional development shouldn’t be ignored.”

“Basically,” continues Neil Spencelayh, “there is now a clear strategy being put together that wasn’t there at the start and we are heading towards the position where the LEA is providing a strategy ‘umbrella’ under which people can not only play to their strengths, but also extend their capabilities. While ASTs should continue to have a certain degree of freedom to add their own professional input, it will certainly help them to feel part of the LEA’s overall school improvement strategy when they know that they are being channelled to where their skills are most needed.”

This need for professional freedom is also mirrored in the schools employing ASTs. Ros Gulson, Headteacher, Walton Girls' High School, says, “We work very closely with the LEA to plan and co-ordinate AST activities as this has to be a two-way process, but the big plus of Lincolnshire LEA is that it then allows us manage the day-to-day work of our ASTs, including outreach, as we see fit. This is the beauty of the scheme - it’s not too prescriptive.”

As another of the first ASTs to be appointed, Pete Bennett, History AST, Giles Secondary School, knows only too well the confusion that can surround the role. He explains, “It was difficult at first as you were left to your own devices and other schools were not sure what ASTs were or how to use them. Some even thought that it would cost them money to use an AST. So, I began by visiting my own personal contacts and things developed from there. Once the ball starts rolling you become much more confident about contacting schools as you have examples of work that you can show and discuss with them, so that they understand what you can achieve - and they also realise that you are not there to observe or judge and have no hidden agenda.

“By providing a more formal structure for the induction and networking of ASTs the LEA is helping to pool their experience and ideas so that you don’t feel isolated. And this is essential for AST effectiveness, especially if you've only been teaching in the area for a year or two and don’t have an existing network of teaching contacts. However, it is still important to maintain a certain degree of informal networking as this can take away a lot of the anxiety of going into schools and also leads to a good deal of useful and productive work.”

In conclusion Tim Lomas adds, “We have found ASTs to be a well motivated and extremely valuable resource that has a key role to play in school improvement. However, without some form of co-ordination their efficiency can be compromised. The LEA is uniquely placed to play a key role in co-ordinating AST activities, while helping to enable the sharing of ideas and dissemination of best practice. The LEA is now acting as a sort of broker matching ASTs’ skills and experience both at subject and school level.”

Appendix 6 - Case study: AST Networking

As a number of LEAs have now discovered, the importance of facilitating communication and interaction between ASTs cannot be over emphasised. Without it there is a real danger of ASTs becoming isolated and directionless.

Ann Bridgland, Senior Adviser, CPD, East Sussex School Improvement Service, who has been developing the East Sussex AST Network during the past year, says, “In partnership with our ASTs, we agreed that we needed a mechanism that would allow ASTs to discuss their teaching and learning brief, and which would also show the School Improvement Service’s support for them and their work and our overall commitment to working in partnership with schools, teachers and Headteachers.”

A regular programme of termly meetings, complemented by email links and other informal contact, has now been operating successfully for four terms to enable a two-way exchange of information, to promote the sharing of ideas, good practice and celebrating good practice. The AST Network meetings comprise national and local updates, as well as case study presentations from ASTs themselves alongside workshop sessions to support the AST’s own CPD. “Future Sight” for example was a focus for the summer 2005 meeting.

East Sussex ASTs contribute to the publication of the East Sussex Strategy which was consulted on with headteachers and published a year ago.

Based on long standing experience of operating AST networking over a number of years Ann Bridgland feels that ASTs enjoy coming together to focus on particular topics and to review and reflect on practice as well as feeding back ideas to the Service. AST network meetings must be held regularly, with a clear agenda, which ASTs can contribute to and examples of practice invited to be submitted to the School Improvement Service dissemination website.

Another really positive element is to make such meetings informally formal, so that discussion and new ideas are stimulated. Which is why it is important to have someone organising the events who understands the AST role, and the unique challenges it brings, and who can also enable other colleagues to keep in touch with the ASTs, supporting and monitoring the impact of their work.

Gloucestershire LEA has developed a similar strategy of half-termly meetings for its ASTs, reflecting its commitment to the success of the AST scheme. The meetings held by Gloucestershire LEA cover both cross-phase and phase specific issues, and ASTs are encouraged to lead some of the sessions in order to share their experience and provide advice on practical issues such as “How to handle inreach” and “How to assess your own success”.

However, Gloucestershire LEA has also recognised the importance of striking a balance between the formal and informal aspects of the meeting as Geraldine Atkins, Good Practice Co-ordinator, Gloucestershire LEA, explains, “The atmosphere of the meetings is very important. We have created a very supportive ethos in Gloucestershire, because we recognise that ASTs have to cope with some extremely varied attitudes towards their role and they can often feel guilty about travelling to other schools when they would normally be in a classroom. Which is why we believe that it is very important to start our meetings with a lunch, in a pleasant location, so that the ASTs can relax and do some informal networking before we begin the formal proceedings.”

Gloucestershire also encourages a lot of informal networking between its ASTs, and one of its most successful activities has been a networking group for science related teachers that was initially established by three science ASTs. Eva Tutchell, Education Consultant and AST Mentor, Gloucestershire LEA, says, “Where there are a number of ASTs with similar interests, this type of subject specific network has proved to be extremely useful, and works particularly well when covering cross-phase activities. The fact that the very first meeting of the science networking group attracted 50 teachers, and the latest has 70 scheduled to attend, really proves that the AST scheme is now starting to reach into areas and generate benefits that we just would not have initially thought of thanks to the networking of ASTs.”

Appendix 7 - Case study: AST Management

One of the most challenging aspects of the AST programme has been the question of how do Headteachers or Line Managers manage ASTs? For example, what is their role in ensuring that the outreach work of their AST is successfully fulfilled? How should ASTs fit into the school structure? What kind of things should an AST be doing in their own school?

Exactly these questions, and many more, have been faced by Barry Blades, Deputy Headteacher of Deacon’s School in Peterborough, who says, “Headteachers can have very different motives for appointing ASTs, ranging from retaining the best teachers in school to raising its local and national profile, but the fact is that you can’t just parachute ASTs in and expect them to work miracles. You have to get the culture right, with improving teaching and learning being recognised as a whole school initiative. ASTs also have to have the full support of the school’s management, otherwise they can be seen as people being paid more, but doing less teaching.

“For example, in Deacon’s School we have been undergoing a fairly radical transformation of our culture to focus on how we can improve standards of teaching and learning. As part of this process we have developed a model for sharing good practice called ‘What Deacon’s knows’. Within this environment ASTs are key enablers and recognised as the best people to talk about what actually goes on in classrooms and the implementation of good practice.”

Given the significant role that ASTs can play in shaping teaching and learning practices their services can be very much in demand and schools have to manage the ASTs activities carefully. Barry Blades continues, “Ensuring that ASTs are deployed effectively requires ongoing communication and coordination with the LEA, and someone in the school has to manage that. However, at Deacon’s we decided not to have line managers. Instead, we have encouraged our ASTs to see themselves as senior staff with responsibility for managing their own activities. All I do is act as a broker for the requests received from the LEA and from individual schools directly, which I discuss with the ASTs to decide who is best equipped to handle them based on their experience and other commitments.

“That having been said, one of the things that we do watch very closely is that the core business of the school is not affected by the ASTs outreach work. After all, they became ASTs because they are excellent teachers and their standards of achievement are exemplary, so we try and avoid using supply teachers to cover during their absence, preferring instead to build time for outreach into the timetable. Essentially we have enhanced our staffing rather than supplemented it by bringing in supply cover.

“Another point to consider is that sometimes a request for assistance may not actually require an AST. For example, previously we have had a request for science support, but it was clear that other members of our staff, rather than the AST, were best suited to help. Not only does the other school then get the best possible assistance, but it is also brilliant experience for the teacher, who may be putting a portfolio together to become an AST.”

Deacon’s School has also recognised the need for clear outreach objectives and evaluation, as Barry Blades explains, “When teaching in our own school we tell the children at the beginning of each lesson what they are going to learn and then we check at the end to see if we have achieved our aim. We have adopted exactly the same approach in our AST activity. At the beginning of each project we take a small pro-forma and identify the expected timescales, resource implications, the best person to undertake the work and the objectives, which we encourage ASTs to set before starting any work. It is not possible to achieve a good outcome if objectives are not set and I will not agree to a project unless this has been done.

“On the back of the form is an ‘Evaluation by partner institution’, which is used to gather immediate feedback on the impact of the completed work, whether or not it made a difference and to identify the next steps. This is absolutely essential, not only because we are accountable for the funds that we use, for the deployment of ASTs and for allowing some of our best teachers to be away from the school, but because it is part of the culture of Deacon’s School of evaluating before moving on. Without it you learn nothing.”

This culture of performance evaluation is also very much in evidence in the setting and review of each AST's overall objectives. Barry Blades says, “Our AST objectives are always focused around three main areas: the need to maintain or improve their level of performance in their own classroom; what impact they have internally on ‘What Deacon’s knows’; and the effectiveness of their outreach work. Then, at the end of each year, we’ll meet to review these objectives and determine if they have met their targets and, if so, what pay increase they will receive. It’s an achievement and reward culture - if you’re good you get paid more.”

GUIDANCE IN THE USE OF SUPPORT FORMS

These forms are only examples and are intended to provide a stimulus to schools and LEAs to develop their own mechanisms. It is open to schools and LEAs to devise their own forms but they can also use or adapt these as they deem appropriate. Forms should be completed immediately following the end of the activity or phase of support provided.

Appendices

8 **AST Profile form.** This provides information for the LEA from the AST about their specialisms, so that the LEA Adviser is better placed to utilise their skills for outreach activity.

9 **Outreach request form.** This is a form Headteachers who would like AST support could complete and forward to the LEA AST Co-ordinator. The form can be used to set out the reason for AST support, provide some information about the teacher to be supported and the form this might take, for example, lesson planning, observations etc. and estimates of expected timescales and outcomes.

10 **AST outreach agreement form.** This sets out agreed objectives, which should include the focus of the AST support, timescales and details of visits. It is important that all parties sign up to these agreements and keep a copy for their records.

11 **AST outreach summary form.** This could be used by the AST to note any successes or where appropriate the need for any further support.

12 **AST outreach evaluation form**. The Headteacher or a Line Manager from the outreach school would complete this form. It asks for information about whether the objectives were met and the outcome of the outreach. It notes any difficulties in completing the work, what the quality of the input from the AST was like and if there is any way of improving AST support. The completed evaluation form should be returned to the AST.

13 **Termly summary of AST activities.**

 Appendix 8 - AST profile form

Appendix 9 - AST outreach request form

**ASTs with <LEA NAME>**

Name:

School:

Date commenced as an AST:

Areas of expertise, experience, skills and knowledge:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Any additional information:

Availability for 2002/2003:

Autumn Term:

Spring Term:

Summer Term:

**Please note, all requests to use of ASTs must go through the LEA’s AST Co-ordinator:**

**<NAME>**

**<TELEPHONE NUMBER>**

Appendix 10 - AST outreach agreement form

**AST Outreach Request Form**

Name of School:

Name of AST requested (if known):

Type of support requested (please state objectives of the support):

Length of time requested (please specify in half day units):

Staff with whom AST would be working:

Senior member of staff for AST to report to:

Type of report required from AST after completion of the school placement:

Signature: Date:

Headteacher of requesting school:

For office use only

Date requested received by LEA:

Placement agreed by: AST Yes/No Date:

School Yes/No Date:

Outreach school Yes/No Date:

Report received Yes/No Date:

**AST Outreach Agreement Form**

Name of AST:

School of AST:

Outreach School:

Agreed objectives of outreach work:

Agreed dates and timescales for outreach work:

Agreed reporting procedures for AST:

Outreach School

AST Line Manager

LEA AST Co-ordinator

This is an agreement between:

AST Date

AST Line Manager Date

Outreach School Date

LEA AST Co-ordinator Date

Appendix 11 - AST outreach summary form

Appendix 12 - AST outreach evaluation form

**AST Outreach Summary Form**

Name of School:

Name of AST:

Date of visit:

Length of visit:

Staff seen:

Activities undertaken:

Issues/feedback/targets set (if any):

Type of report provided after completion of the school placement:

Date of next visit (if scheduled):

Appendix 13 - Termly summary of AST Activities

**AST Outreach Evaluation Form**

Name of School:

Name of AST:

Senior staff contact:

Date of visit: Length of visit:

Agreed objectives of outreach work:

Outcome(s) of outreach work:

Difficulties encountered in completing outreach work (if any):

Effectiveness of AST in achieving the agreed objectives (please circle one):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Excellent | Very Good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor |

Additional comments (if any):

Suggested improvements to AST support (if any):

Other comments (if any):

Advanced Skills Teacher Termly Log

Autumn / Spring / Summer Term 200 \_\_\_\_\_\_ (please underline term as applicable)

Each session = approximately ½ day. This will allow you 26 sessions per term

## Name of AST: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| Session 2: |

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| Session 3: |

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| Session 4: |

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| Session 5:  |

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| Session 6:  |

