

Advanced Skills Teachers

Promoting excellence

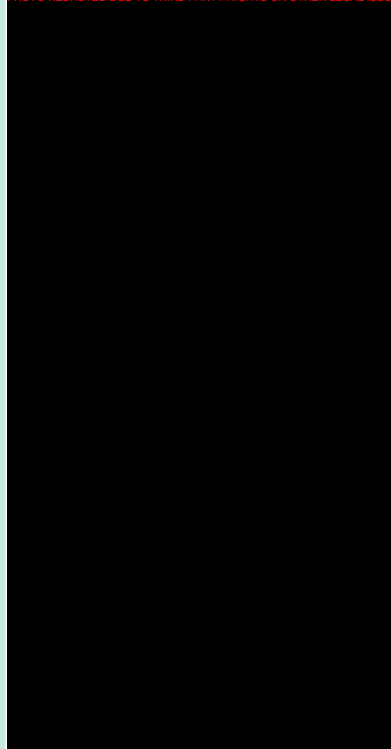
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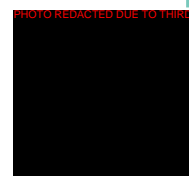


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1 General information

What is an Advanced Skills Teacher?

An Advanced Skills Teacher is an excellent teacher who achieves the very highest standards of classroom practice and who is paid to share his or her skills and experience with other teachers. AST posts can be based in all types and phases of maintained schools and normally involve some outreach work. In order to take up an AST post a teacher must first have been assessed as meeting AST standards.

Why do we need Advanced Skills Teachers?

We need to recognise and retain the best teachers. Until the introduction of ASTs, promotion into management was the typical career route for most excellent teachers. The Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) pathway offers teachers who want to stay in the classroom an alternative career route with the potential to earn a salary equivalent to that of many leadership posts. Together with the performance threshold, the fast track programme and the planned new Excellent Teacher posts it is widening career progression opportunities and rewards for the best teachers.

AST posts concentrate on good teaching and learning and benefit the profession by helping to raise achievements and spread excellent practice both within and beyond the teacher's school. The creation of an AST post can provide a focus for and leadership in the development of teaching and learning across the school as well as the contribution they make to the development of individual colleagues.

The AST outreach role also supports networking between schools and encourages collaboration.

The AST role benefits

- their own school by retaining their services as a classroom teacher, spreading their excellent practice through the school and building on the good ideas they bring back from other schools;
- other schools through the outreach contribution the AST is able to make and the potential for building collaborative links with other schools which they provide;
- the LA by sharing good practice across schools and raising standards overall;
- the AST by broadening experience and providing new challenges;
- the profession by providing another career option;
- pupils and students through the AST's special contribution to raising teaching and learning standards.

What advice would you give to a teacher interested in becoming an AST?

Speak to as many existing ASTs as you can. Ask them about their role and about the assessment process. Find out how outreach work is managed in your LA. Consider with your line manager how your skills match AST standards and what areas you may need to work on to provide the evidence for assessment. Talk to your headteacher and LA AST co-ordinator about the likelihood of any AST posts becoming available.

ASTs talking about their role...

'My main reason for becoming an AST was that I felt I had come to the end of my normal teaching career and I was looking for a new challenge. I knew that I didn't want to become a headteacher at this point in my career. What I do best is stand-up and teach and being an AST still enables me to continue fulfilling my potential as a teacher. I also wanted to be recognised as being very good at what I do.'

Zoe Fletcher, Advanced Skills Teacher, ICT - Roundhill Primary School, Nottingham



2 Creating an AST post

Situations which could lead to the creation of an AST post

Any maintained school can create one or more AST posts at any time, although a teacher can only be appointed to a post if they have been successfully assessed against AST standards. There are various situations in which a school might decide to create an AST post; for example:

- as a career developmental opportunity for its teachers;
- the school decides it needs an AST post in its staffing structure (perhaps because it already has an outreach or networking responsibility or wishes to strengthen a particular department);
- the LA's strategic development of the AST grade suggests the need for an AST in a particular subject or location which fits with the school/teacher;
- in response to a general invitation from the LA to create AST posts with the offer of funding;
- a network or other collaborative group of schools decide to create one or more AST posts to work within the network;
- an organisation or agency with an interest in using AST outreach approaches the school with a proposal;
- central government proposes the use of ASTs to deliver or support the development of specific policies or programmes.

Many LAs will have central arrangements for the creation and funding of AST posts. Schools wishing to create an AST post or teachers interested in applying to become an AST are advised to check first with their local AST co-ordinator to find out if any special local arrangements apply.

Decisions to take prior to appointment of an AST

In creating a post - or deciding to fill an existing post when the current AST moves on - the school will need to consider:

- whether recruitment will be internal or external;

- how the post will be funded;
- what the AST's role will be within their own school;
- how their outreach work will be decided;
- what their pay will be;
- who will be their line manager;
- what the contractual arrangements will be.

Guidance on all these issues is contained in the rest of this booklet.

Internal or external recruitment and advertising

To some extent the decision as to whether to appoint internally or to recruit externally will depend on the reason for the creation of the post.

Individual schools do sometimes advertise for ASTs in the national press. In other cases, a LA might send out an invitation to apply directed at all teachers, or at teachers in a particular subject or location, or a school might invite expressions of interest from teachers within the school wishing to become ASTs. Whatever approach is adopted it should comply with good equal opportunities practice.

In some cases schools advertising externally invite applications from teachers who have not yet been assessed against AST standards. It is possible for more than one application for assessment against AST standards to be accepted in relation to a single post and teachers can be assessed in their current schools. In other cases the advertisement will open recruitment to potential ASTs on the basis that they will take up the post as a classroom teacher and then work towards AST status once appointed. In this situation schools must not place a teacher on the AST pay spine until they have passed AST assessment.

How are posts funded?

The Standards Fund in 2005-2006

What is the Standards Fund Grant?

Up to March 2006 most AST posts were funded by the dedicated AST Standards Fund Grant 4. The purpose of the Standards Fund is to help LAs and schools achieve national and local priorities to raise standards

2 Creating an AST post

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.

The AST grant normally involved matched funding from the local authority. Half of the costs were met by DfES and the other half by the LA. The grant was for the additional costs of the post i.e. salary enhancement and cover for outreach and an amount towards the LA costs of supporting and managing AST outreach.

How the Standards Fund Grant 4 for ASTs was allocated to LAs

Since April 2004 the AST Standards Fund grant has been designed to support the number of AST posts in each LA which were 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 were 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. In addition the total allocation to the LA included £300 per AST post (with a minimum of £5000) towards the cost to the LA of co-ordinating AST outreach work, supporting ASTs and monitoring the AST programme.

How did LAs calculate the amount of funding to pass on to schools?

The LA normally passed on to schools the full amount for outreach, but it generally only passed on actual salary costs. Eligible expenditure which could be paid to the school included:

- the additional salary paid to the AST;
- the cost of any threshold grant which the school lost on making the appointment;
- the cost of any allowance previously paid to the AST which was transferred to another teacher.

Where the AST retained management or other responsibilities and these were 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 was it designed to provide for any on-costs related to the additional salary.

While this was the recommended methodology for calculating the payment of the grant to each school; individual LAs could agree a different approach with their schools.

AST grant funding 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.

Allocations to schools will be based on the amount they received from the predecessor grants in 2005-06 with a per pupil based increase each year 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 support a new post in another school.

How is the funding for AST posts generated?

If a school wishes to create a new AST post funded via the School Development Grant they should first contact the LA 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 LA. 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.

Funding is delivered to LAs 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).



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Alternative methods of funding AST Posts

If schools and LAs wish to create additional AST posts beyond the number which can be supported through 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 LAs 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.

Funding for AST performance pay progression

The Government makes a separate contribution towards discretionary payments to enable ASTs to move up their pay range.

Funding for performance related movement up the pay range for ASTs, as for teachers paid on the leadership and upper pay spines, is included in the Teachers' Pay Grant rather than the School Development Grant. It is for local authorities with their Schools' Forums to decide on the distribution methodology to schools. Guidance on this can be found at www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolsforum/

Contracts

It is important that contracts setting out the requirements of the post are available to new ASTs so that they know what their posts entail, who they report to, what they will be paid and the scope of their responsibilities. The existence of AST contracts will also reassure colleagues about the position of the AST and how they fit into the broader educational team. To date different schools have applied different approaches depending on their circumstances and preference:

- Long term or permanent contracts;
- Short term contracts, backed up by guarantees of continuing employment as a teacher;
- Use of a contract variation or secondment model.

LAs and schools will need to ensure that contracts are in line with local policies on contracts of employment; given recent developments in the application of legislation affecting short and fixed term contracts. This legislation generally provides protection to fixed term employees from less favourable treatment than comparable permanent employees, without an objective justification. They also have the effect of giving fixed term employees who have been on one, or a succession of fixed term contracts, for more than four years the right to be treated as if they were on a permanent contract. This does not prevent an LA or school appointing an AST on a temporary variation to their substantive contract but it adds an additional set of legal considerations.

ASTs will want to consider how the form of contract will affect the timing and conditions under which they will eventually leave the AST grade.

For more information about the regulations contact the LA Personnel Department or visit the Employers Organisation for local government website at www.lg-employers.gov.uk

3 Application, assessment and appointments

Who can become an Advanced Skills Teacher?

The grade is open to all qualified teachers in maintained schools who want to stay as classroom practitioners, are prepared to take on AST professional duties including outreach work and can meet AST assessment standards. This includes part-time and peripatetic staff. Existing heads, deputies or assistant heads can also apply.

There are no requirements relating to length of service and a teacher does not have to have passed the threshold in order to apply for an AST post. However, a candidate will need to have been teaching for long enough to be able to provide evidence to support their application against each of the six AST standards.

The key requirement is for excellent teaching practice and credibility with a wide range of colleagues inside and outside the school.

What are the AST standards?

The following bullets outline the areas against which teachers will be assessed. The national standards, which all Advanced Skills Teachers must meet, are described in more detail in Annex A.

- Excellent results/outcomes;
- Excellent subject or specialist knowledge;
- Excellent ability to plan;
- Excellent ability to teach, manage pupils and maintain discipline;
- Excellent ability to assess and evaluate;
- Excellent ability to advise and support other teachers.

NB: The AST standards described here will be subject to review in 2006. Applicants are advised to check the AST website www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast for the latest position on the development of new standards.

Applications

Completing the application form

An application for assessment against AST standards can only be accepted in connection with an application for an existing or agreed AST post. Applicants for AST posts who have not previously been assessed as meeting the AST standards should complete the application form AST 1, a copy of which is included in this pack. Alternatively, the AST 1 form can be downloaded from the AST website and completed electronically. In either case the form must be submitted in hard copy as set out below.

What to do once the application form has been completed

When the candidate has completed the application form he or she should pass it to his or her headteacher to complete comments on the applicant's performance in relation to each of the six AST standards.

External applications

The candidate's headteacher then sends the form to the headteacher or LA personnel department advertising the post. They will draw up a short-list of candidates, which may include both those who have already been successful at AST assessment and others who need to be assessed before appointment. The application forms of the short-listed candidates who need to be assessed should be sent to the

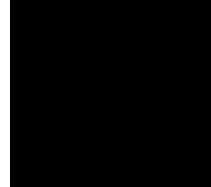
▶ ASTs talking about their role...

'I have to say that I found the AST assessment to be very humbling, because teaching is a very isolated career, so usually when you get any feedback it's on one or two lessons and not the overall impact and effect that you are having. But here I had respected colleagues, children, and parents all willing to stand-up publicly and being extremely positive about me. It makes you feel good, because you feel valued.'

Ruth Tansey, Advanced Skills Teacher, Design and Technology, The Grove School, Newark



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3 Application, assessment and appointments

nationally appointed assessment agency, VT Group Plc (VT) whose address can be found on page 10 of the application form. Before the form is sent to VT either the school or the LA should complete the funding declaration confirming there is an agreed post. VT will arrange the applicant's assessment and notify the headteacher or LA of the outcome. The appointing body will then interview their shortlist of candidates who have been successfully assessed and appoint to the post.

Because there is an additional stage in the recruitment process for ASTs who are to be externally assessed, LAs and schools will need to allow plenty of time between the placing of an advertisement and the contractual resignation date for any applicants who would have to move to a new school. A candidate who has already been assessed as meeting AST standards can be considered for appointment without further assessment.

Internal appointments

Where posts are for internally advertised appointments, the process is the same except that the candidate's own headteacher should send the completed form(s) to the assessment agency once he or she has completed their section of the form, including the funding declaration, if relevant. If the post is to be funded through the LA, for example from the AST Standards Fund grant, the application form should be sent via the LA so that they can complete the funding declaration. Teachers who have passed the assessment, but have not been appointed to an AST post can apply for other advertised AST posts without having to be reassessed.

Unattached teachers and other candidates

Where the candidate does not have a headteacher, for example an unattached teacher, there is provision for the candidate's employer to designate a line manager to carry out the role of a headteacher.

Candidates who are not employed as teachers in the maintained sector when they make their application should normally pass their application form for completion to the headteacher at the maintained

school at which they were most recently employed, but it can also be completed by their current headteacher if this is more appropriate.

A candidate who is simultaneously employed at two or more schools should pass the application to a designated headteacher who would normally be the head of the school where the teacher works the most hours or, if all headteachers agree, any one of them. The designated headteacher should consult all the other headteachers before completing the application form.

Headteachers and/or line managers should complete their section of the application form within 20 working days of receiving it.

Assessment

Who carries out the assessment?

The DfES has appointed a national agency, VT Group Plc (VT), to arrange the assessment of candidates against national AST standards. The assessors available to VT are suitably qualified and experienced persons, many of whom are registered inspectors.

What is the timescale for assessment?

AST assessments are normally carried out by the assessment agency within six weeks of receiving the AST application form. If there is a particular reason why a speedier assessment is needed it is often possible to arrange this - please phone VT to discuss the possibilities. There may be instances in which it is difficult for the school to arrange for an assessment within the six week period. However, if there is any delay the agency will make every effort to ensure that the candidate is not disadvantaged - this is a particular risk in the case of an application for an external post. If a candidate is moving schools to take up an AST post, the school raising the post should take into consideration the normal periods of notice time that will be required during the application and assessment process. There are no fixed dates nationally for the creation of AST posts. However, schools and/or LAs may set their own local deadlines.

3 Application, assessment and appointments

What is the assessor looking for?

Candidates will need to satisfy the assessor through the information they provide in their application form, their performance on the day and collection of evidence, that they can meet all the national standards for Advanced Skills Teachers. These are set out in **Annex A**.

What does an assessment process involve?

On receipt of the completed application form the assessor will consider the application and take account of the headteacher's view of the candidate's suitability. The candidate should not send the assessor examples of supporting evidence; only the application form is required in advance of the assessment day. However, candidates should ensure that their full collection of evidence is ready by the time the assessment date has been agreed. Guidance on how to collect and present examples of evidence can be found in **Annex B**.

All applicants must then undergo a one day assessment in their school by an external assessor which will include:

- two classroom observations;
- an interview;
- a discussion with the candidate's headteacher and any other staff familiar with the candidate's work, as well as parents and students;
- a review of documentary evidence including the completed application form, the candidate's evidence against each of the standards and any additional information as required. (see Annex B for further guidance).

While the assessor will be expected to carry out the activities described above it is the responsibility of the candidate to identify and provide evidence in support of their application, including identifying and making arrangements for external contributors to attend on the day.

The assessor will contact the school in advance of the assessment day to agree a programme for the day with the headteacher.

An example of a typical assessment day is included in **Annex C**.

How are assessment results announced?

The assessor will give feedback at the end of the assessment day including their judgement on whether the teacher meets the AST standards and the evidence to support this judgement.

The assessment agency will formally notify the candidate of this decision, in writing, within three working days. A written feedback will be sent to the candidate and the headteacher at the host and post school within three working weeks. Where the candidate has fully met AST standards, this will be no longer than one side of A4 in length. Where the candidate has not fully met the standards, the report may be longer and will outline the areas which need further evidence.

Can a candidate who has not met the standards re-apply?

Candidates who do not fully meet the standards first time round may re-apply for assessment, once they have addressed the points in the report and can provide additional evidence that they now fully meet each of the standards. Supporting evidence from their headteacher will be required. The second assessment will be a complete assessment against all of the standards. There is no specific timescale for reapplication but it is unusual for sufficient new evidence to be available to support a second assessment until at least two terms have elapsed since the original assessment.

Can a candidate challenge the outcome of an assessment?

A candidate can ask for their assessment to be reviewed. An application for a review should be on the basis of one or more of the following criteria:

- the original assessor did not take proper account of relevant evidence;
- the original assessor took account of irrelevant or inaccurate evidence;
- the original assessor was biased, or unlawfully discriminated against the candidate.

Full details of the review procedure are provided in **Annex D**.



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3 Application, assessment and appointments

Reassessment

The original AST guidance included a requirement that ASTs would need to be reassessed by the national assessment agency after a period of five years in the grade. This was intended to ensure the continuing quality of the AST grade. However, following the introduction of performance management procedures for all teachers including ASTs, the need for reassessment as a mechanism for quality assurance has been removed.

▶ ASTs talking about their role...

'In my career as a teacher I've never really liked to stand still for too long - I'm always looking for a new challenge. The one consistent thing has been my enjoyment of being in the classroom teaching. I also relish having the opportunity to talk to other teachers about what they are doing and sharing ideas, because as teachers we do have a tendency to be quite insular within our own classrooms.

I hope that being an AST will have a significant impact on my own personal and professional development. After all, the day that I stop learning about teaching or doing things better will be the day that I don't want to do the job any more. I'm always looking for new ways to share ideas and good practice. This in itself has a direct benefit for my own school in that I can bring back the ideas that I glean from other schools and share them with my colleagues, through things like the forum of sixth form teachers that we've just set-up.

That's not to say that I consider myself to be any more able or special than my colleagues. There are many who could do the role. It's a career option like any other, so if you enjoy talking to other teachers and helping them improve it could be the right job for you.

I have no long-term career plans. I'm just going to try out the AST role and if I enjoy it and continue to teach well, I'll keep doing it. In fact, our West Berkshire science consultant is so positive and brimming with ideas that when you talk to her you can't fail to come away feeling very positive and motivated yourself. Her enthusiasm is extremely infectious and that is what I hope to achieve as an AST!

Emma Baker, Advanced Skills Teacher, ICT - The Downs School, West Berkshire recently accredited AST

What parents say.....

The appointment of an AST within a school brings with it a mixture of emotions, for the teacher, their pupils, colleagues - and parents. On the one hand it is a clear recognition of a teacher's professional achievements and capability, but it also means that those very same skills now need to be shared with other schools.

Discussing the recent appointment of Emma Baker as an AST at The Downs School, parent Tracy Cole says, "It's true that I was worried when Emma Baker was appointed as an AST, because I simply do not want to lose her! She is such a good teacher, I don't think you can better what Emma does at the moment. But then I can see how other schools will gain so much from having Emma even for just one day a week - it will be one of the best things that can happen to them."

Fellow parent Lyn Stride agrees, "Emma is the best type of teacher, and has been absolutely brilliant with my own two daughters. She is so obviously committed to communicating her subject to pupils and takes her role very seriously. She prepares well and makes sure that pupils work hard, because they realise that everything that she does is for their benefit. Rather than worrying about 'losing' her for a day a week we should be celebrating the sharing of good ideas, so that everyone benefits in the long-term."

Parents - Tracy Coles and Lyn Stride, The Downs School

3 Application, assessment and appointments

Appointments

Notification of appointment

Once an appointment has been made, the appointing headteacher should notify the assessment agency using Form AST 2 (included in this pack). This ensures that the appointment is entered on the national AST database. A copy should also be sent to the LA AST co-ordinator in order to generate AST grant payments if

Internally advertised posts

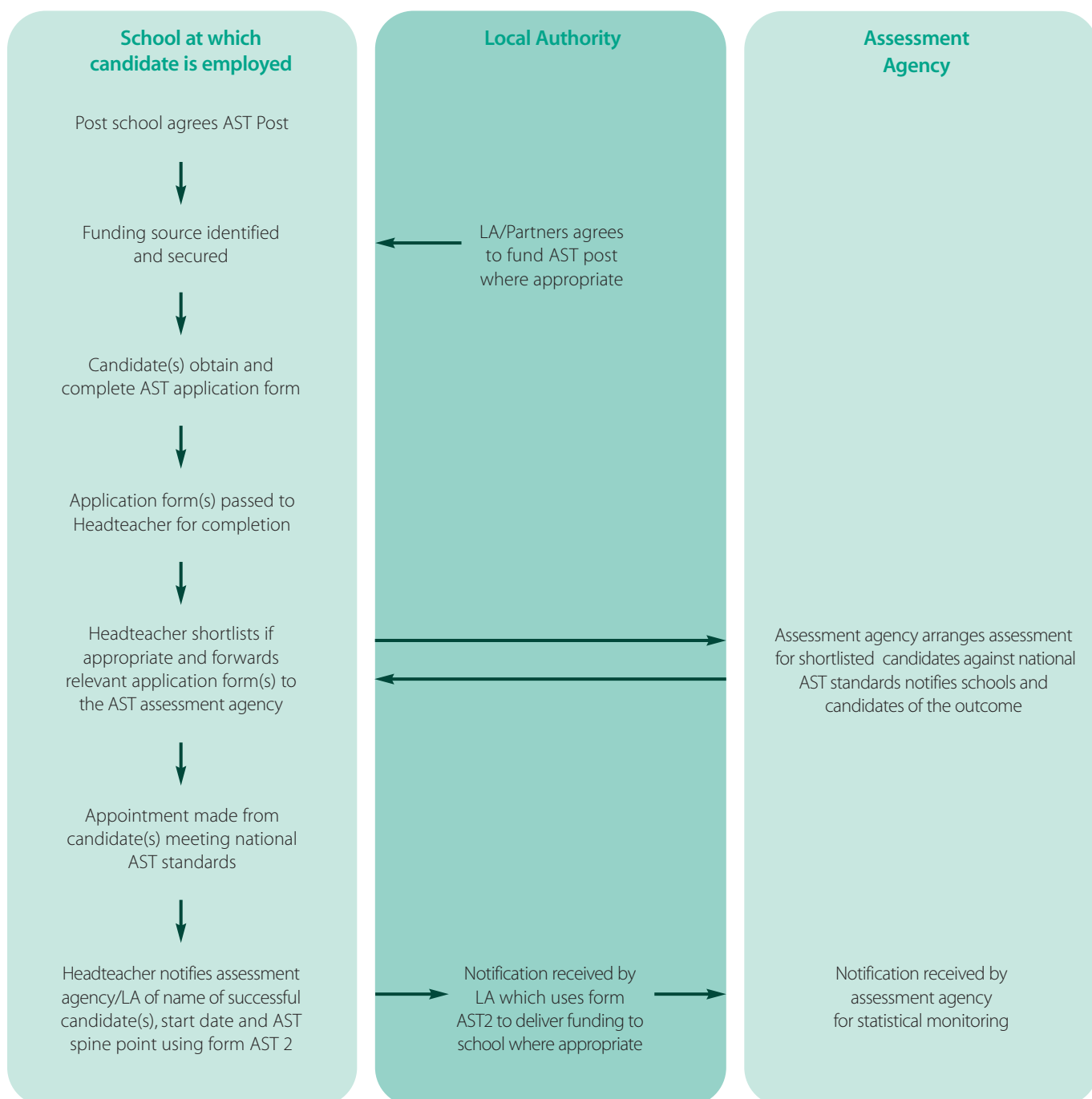


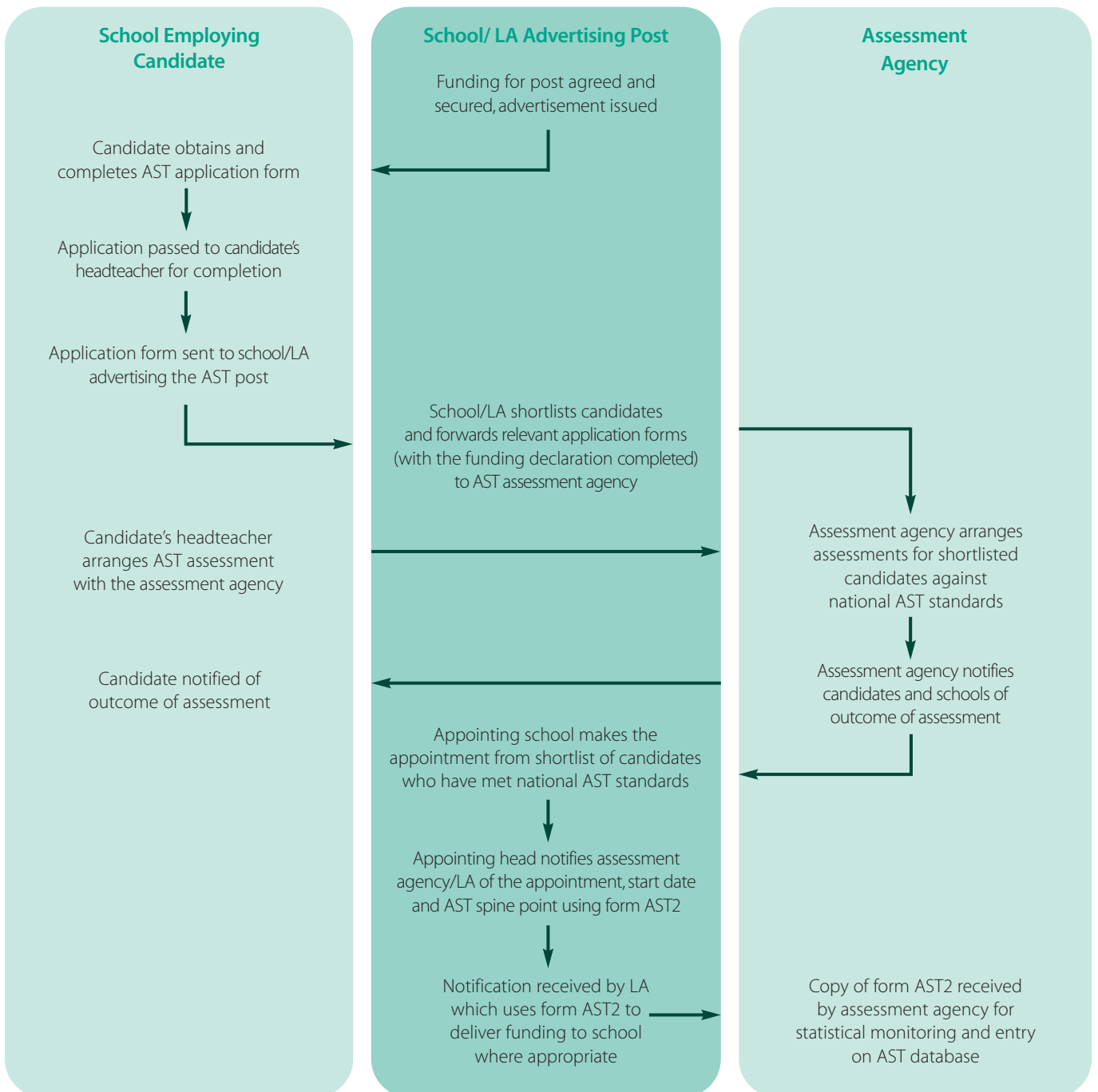


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3 Application, assessment and appointments

the post is being supported through the Standards Fund or in any other way by the LA. Notification also ensures that the AST receives relevant information and invitations to events and networking opportunities which will support their role and professional development and may also be of benefit to the school.

Externally advertised posts



4 Pay and performance management

What is the pay scale for ASTs?

To recognise their particular contribution there is a separate pay spine for holders of AST posts. Up to August 2006 this spine consisted of 27 points but from 1 September 2006 a new pay spine will be introduced for ASTs which mirrors the first 18 points of the leadership spine.

From September 2006 AST pay will range from:

£34,083 to £51,819 nationally,

£35,025 to £52,761 in the London Fringe,

£36,789 to £54,525 in Outer London, and

£40,527 to £58,266 for those in Inner London.

The current AST pay scales can be found in full on the AST website www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast

How is the pay of individual AST posts determined?

The pay for each AST post will be set individually by the relevant body – normally the school's governing body. This individual pay range reflects the fact that each AST post will have its own distinctive mix of duties and responsibilities and each AST will bring their own strengths, abilities and experience to the role.

Governing bodies (or LAs in the case of centrally employed ASTs) will select a five point pay range within the overall pay spine which will allow for appropriate pay increases. For example, an AST starting at point 11 on the AST pay spine has the opportunity to progress to point 15 on the AST pay spine.

An AST will normally start on the first point of the five point range and movement up the range depends on performance. In setting the pay range the Governing body should take into account:

- the nature of the work to be undertaken; including any work with teachers from other schools;
- the scale of the challenges to be tackled;
- the professional competencies required of the post holder;
- any other recruitment consideration that they consider relevant.

They should also have regard to the following:

- 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;
- whether the post would or might otherwise have attracted an allowance - for example for SEN;
- any recruitment considerations; and
- whether the appointee is a teacher of a shortage subject or a subject where there is a particular need to raise the quality of teaching and learning.

ASTs are not eligible for additional allowances, such as management or SEN allowances or teaching and learning responsibility payments, on top of their AST pay. However, schools do have the discretion to give teachers, including ASTs, a recruitment or retention incentive or benefit where appropriate.

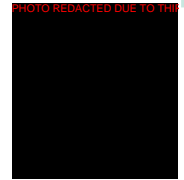
ASTs talking about their role...

'And that's the beauty and power of being an AST: it's so flexible because you're not tied down to one area and you have the time to start and finish projects. It has changed my view on teaching from totally enjoying it to absolutely loving it. In fact I've never been busier or more challenged! I don't know where it's going to take me, because being an AST is a platform to go anywhere. All I do know is that it will be an exciting journey.'

Kevin Hogston, Advanced Skills Teachers PE and Creativity Latchmere Junior School, Surrey



4 Pay and performance management



Movement up the pay range

An AST's pay should be reviewed each September. However, as for all post threshold and leadership posts, any salary progression up the pay range for ASTs will be discretionary and will be managed in line with the school's overarching pay policies.

Movement up the pay range is possible only if there has been a sustained high quality of performance by the AST in the light of the previously agreed performance criteria. In making these judgements it is important to have regard to the contribution made by the AST during any outreach work.

Information on funding for AST pay progression can be found in Section 2 on page 4.

There is no restriction on the number of performance points an AST can receive in any one year. However, if a large increase is being contemplated because the demands of the post have changed, it might be more appropriate to move the teacher onto a higher pay range.

Review of an AST pay range

As well as agreeing performance related movement up the individual pay range of an AST, a governing body can also review the range itself. This might be appropriate, for example, if:

- there is a significant change in the responsibilities of the AST such as leading a large whole school or LA project to improve an aspect of teaching and learning;
- where there are changes to the schools situation which lead to a wider review of salaries.

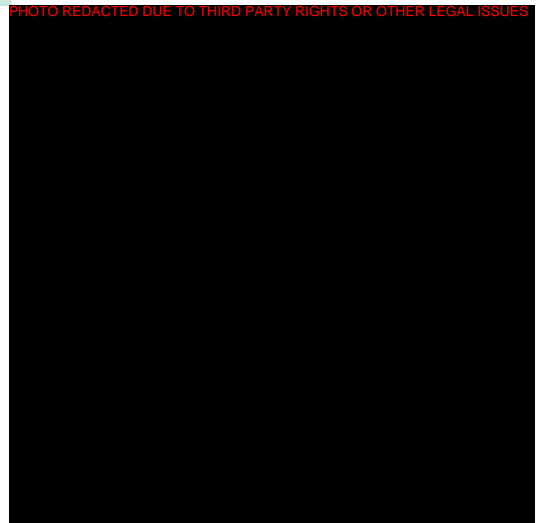
ASTs and threshold and reversion to the upper pay spine

ASTs do not receive a separate threshold payment as the AST grade provides access to a higher pay spine. Governing bodies will, however, wish to take account of the threshold payment and upper pay spine rates

available to other staff when determining individual AST pay ranges.

ASTs that leave an AST post to revert to classroom teaching are deemed to have crossed the threshold and will revert to an appropriate point on the classroom teacher upper pay spine.

If a teacher is successfully assessed but does not take up an AST post he or she will only be deemed to have passed the threshold if and when they also fulfil the other threshold eligibility criteria (i.e. they reach M6 of the classroom teachers' pay scale).



Performance management

All teachers have a designated line manager for performance management. In the case of ASTs this is likely to be either the headteacher or a deputy headteacher. The governing body has a responsibility to agree annual performance criteria with the AST and to review AST pay in the light of performance against those criteria every year. While in most respects AST performance management will mirror that of other teachers, schools may need to establish specific arrangements to ensure that the AST's 20 per cent outreach commitment is also taken into consideration.

4 Pay and performance management

Consideration of outreach work in performance management

The approach to this will depend on how the AST's outreach commitment is managed. Where the school makes arrangements for outreach work directly with other schools, it should include the provision of feedback on the AST's performance and evaluation of their impact in the agreement for the outreach provision. It is not unusual for there to be some external co-ordination and management of AST outreach work. This can be within a partnership of schools but currently is most often the case where LAs are adopting a strategic approach to the deployment of ASTs, which involves active management of and support for their outreach work. Where external co-ordination of outreach applies the LA or other managing partner may contribute to the wording of the AST's outreach objective. In this situation there should also be central arrangements for the evaluation of the ASTs' contribution and schools with ASTs need to be sure that they have access to any such information which may be relevant for performance management purposes.

Even where there are other partners involved in managing AST outreach work, the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that arrangements are in place for outcomes to feed into performance management rests with the headteacher.

Performance management role of external co-ordinator of AST outreach

The LA or whoever is co-ordinating the AST's outreach work should ensure that all outreach activity is properly monitored and evaluated so that this can be fed into performance management. For example, it is good practice to have clear agreed objectives for outreach work, for evaluation methods to be built into the outreach agreement and for feedback proformas to be available for completion by the headteachers of the schools where outreach is conducted. The external co-ordinator should also be able to provide feedback for performance management in relation to any work the AST has undertaken outside individual schools; such as cross LA projects;

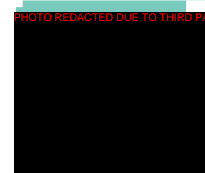
AST role in including outreach work in performance management

The AST should keep copies of any feedback or evaluation forms and other relevant information as part of their collection of evidence for performance management purposes.

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5 The AST role



What is the purpose of the AST grade?

The distinctive function of the AST grade is to provide pedagogic leadership within their own and in other schools driving forward improvements and raising standards in teaching and learning.

What are the conditions of service?

ASTs are expected to work flexibly under the direction of their headteacher. This includes commitments outside normal school time - the working time provisions for classroom teachers in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document do not apply as ASTs are not classified as classroom teachers. Full details of AST pay and conditions can be found in the Document.

AST professional duties

The main focus of the AST's role is excellent classroom teaching. In terms of time, ASTs spend most of their week teaching their own classes.

In addition the AST grade has specific professional duties which ASTs carry out in their own and other schools. The duties include a provision that ASTs will normally spend 20 per cent of their time carrying out their professional duties in other schools. This is usually referred to as outreach work.

The commitment to outreach is the distinctive feature of the Advanced Skills Teacher grade. Outreach gives ASTs the opportunity to have an impact in the wider educational community. Outreach work does not include the use of ASTs as teachers in the outreach school apart from specific instances such as giving a demonstration lesson which fall within professional duties.

The following are the AST professional duties with examples of how they may be carried out.

Working with other teachers on classroom organisation and teaching methods/providing model lessons

- leading continuing professional development activities;
- holding workshops on classroom management, differentiation, pace and challenge;
- matching teaching approaches to pupil learning styles;
- making a video of model lessons;
- acting as a consultant to teams developing strategies for pupils experiencing difficulties;
- supporting the operation of the literacy and numeracy hours.

Disseminating best practice based on educational research

- identifying educational research to enhance existing practices;
- acting as a link with the LA in implementing strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour and promoting inclusion;
- co-ordinating the assessment and analysis of results and developing action planning;
- co-ordinating the assessment and analysis for targeting underachievement and reducing disaffection.

Producing high quality teaching materials

- updating existing schemes of work and supporting their introduction;
- leading the introduction of new technologies, such as video conferencing, white board technology, the use of the National Grid for Learning and the Internet;
- developing resource packs to support existing teaching.

Advising on professional development

- designing and delivering professional development activities;
- participating in the planning and delivery of focused in-service training days;
- identifying CPD activities needed to support local processes for improving teaching and learning.

5 The AST role

Participating in the performance management of other teachers

- contributing to the development and introduction of the school's performance management policy;
- developing a code of good practice in the observation of teaching;
- undertaking observations and feedback in schools (not the AST's).

Helping teachers experiencing difficulties

- observing and feeding back on the teaching of colleagues experiencing difficulties;
- providing a structured programme of advice and support.

Mentoring newly qualified teachers

- providing a weekly discussion and overseeing personal action planning;
- formulating a handbook to provide support across the school.

Initial teacher training

- providing exemplar lessons for trainee teachers;
- contributing to the assessment of students' teaching practice;
- participating in the training of teachers within teacher training institutions;
- acting as mentor to trainee teachers;
- leading the development of a School Centred Initial Teacher Training Scheme.

In addition, the AST's excellence as a classroom teacher will enable them to be very effective in supporting school priorities. They may, for example:

- provide workshops for pupils on key borderlines;
- provide targeted support for disaffected or more able pupils;
- support or lead strategies for helping particular groups such as underachieving boys.

ASTs are not expected to do all of the above at once but over time could be expected to work on particular projects and on completion move onto others.

Outreach work

The challenge of outreach is the challenge of "making a difference" within the education system in a far broader way than is normally possible.

The Government sees outreach as an exciting opportunity to find imaginative and innovative ways of sharing good practice, including through the use of new communications technology. Schools that have received outreach have spoken warmly of the benefits. Increasingly schools are joining together into networks to share resources and activities and to provide mutual support to enable all schools to improve. ASTs, with their commitment to outreach work, can play a central role in such networks.

How does outreach work in practice - time and cover for outreach work?

Many ASTs are given a whole day a week off timetable in order to carry out their 20 per cent outreach commitments. This is certainly the best approach in areas where outreach work may involve travelling some distance. In other cases, the time may be broken down into two half days or consolidated into a block, for example a whole week out of every five weeks. Some ASTs find it more effective to have the same day for outreach each week, and in some LAs this is the norm for all ASTs to allow for networking and other joint activities. There are also ASTs who prefer to vary the days they are available for outreach in order to be able to be flexible in meeting the developing needs of the other teachers with whom they are working. Different approaches will meet different situations. The important thing is that the time should be identified and available.

In deciding on the pattern of outreach time schools will also need to take account of the way in which they are providing cover for the AST's own classes. In many cases a regular day will allow for the use of the same teacher to provide the cover ensuring continuity for the class. If an AST post exists when timetables are being planned it is also possible to reduce an AST's teaching commitment using the outreach funding to contribute to the cost of any necessary additional staff. There is no single right approach.



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5 The AST role

Process of managing outreach work

For outreach to be effective the following arrangements need to be in place:

- ASTs must have identified time for outreach work;
- There should be systems for identifying needs which are best met through AST outreach;
- Arrangements for filtering requests for outreach support and directing them to suitable ASTs;
- Schools receiving outreach support must enter into a clear agreement as to the objectives for the exercise and the conditions within which the AST will operate;
- There should be systems for monitoring and evaluating AST outreach work.

Who controls outreach?

The way in which AST outreach work is managed often reflects the funding arrangements - a school which is funding its own AST post is likely to expect to have control over the AST's outreach work while an LA may play a more active role in directing the outreach of posts funded centrally, for example, through the Standards Fund. If a group or network of schools is jointly funding an AST post to work within the group they will expect to share ownership of the 'AST's' outreach objectives.

In practice, the best outcome will come through partnership. A school directing its own outreach work will still need to be aware of what is happening elsewhere in the LA to avoid duplication. LAs will need to have the agreement and co-operation of schools if they are to co-ordinate AST outreach. Equally, ASTs themselves will need to be involved in decisions on outreach work to ensure that it is within their competencies and in line with their development objectives.

The important thing is to ensure that outreach work is well managed and that it is effective.

Central co-ordination of outreach

There are specific advantages in the central planning and co-ordination of AST outreach work. It provides a focus for AST work ensuring that it supports the priorities identified in the LA's Education Development Plan and helps raise standards in its schools. This could involve, for example: targeted support to schools experiencing difficulties, including those in special measures; or

co-ordinated activity to raise achievement in a particular subject or group of pupils across all schools in an area. Central management of outreach can also stimulate group-working amongst ASTs. Pilots run in several LAS have demonstrated that using ASTs together as a team doing outreach in the same school or on a shared project can be a very effective way of deploying them.

An example of one LA's approach to the management of its ASTs can be found in **Annex E**.

Points for headteachers and LAs:

It is recommended that outreach activities be discussed with the LA before funding is sought, and then agreed with the AST once he or she is in post. This gives the headteacher a realistic picture of how a teacher's time might be used by the authority and gives him or her time to talk to other members of staff about the AST role and to organise lesson timetables accordingly. Feedback from ASTs show that either a full day off timetable or two half days are the most effective use of their time. However, other models such as weekly blocks or a month out of school have also worked well.

*For more information on outreach and the Headteacher/LA role please see the **AST Induction Handbook** – at www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast*

When is outreach not a requirement?

There are some exceptions to the requirement for ASTs to spend 20 per cent of their time on outreach work. For example where an AST is employed in a school that is subject to special measures or causing serious concern and where their activities are clearly related to the school's and/or LA's plans for removing the school from this category. In this situation the AST may spend all their "outreach" time working to support improvements in teaching and learning in their own school.

However, even in this situation it is still better for the ASTs' own professional development if they can spend some time on outreach work. This can also be of benefit to the school in that they will be able to bring back to the school examples of good practice and other ideas they have picked up from the schools they are working in.

5 The AST role

A new AST taking up post may also need time to establish their outreach role. It can be particularly difficult if the appointment starts mid-year when timetables have already been set. In this situation the AST could build up an outreach commitment over time but there would be an expectation that they would be working the full 20 per cent by the end of a year.

There are also a few other exceptional circumstances in which AST outreach can fall below the normal 20 per cent of their time. These other exceptions can be found in the AST Induction Handbook.

ASTs' work in their own schools - inreach

In addition to their classroom teaching and outreach work ASTs can also work to promote improvements in teaching and learning and support colleagues in their own school. Such work is usually known as inreach. AST professional duties do not specify any particular time allocation for this activity. ASTs are not subject to teacher's working time conditions and the expectation is that they will normally conduct work within their own school in other time that they can access, such as twilight hours rather than taking time away from their own classroom teaching.

ASTs and management responsibilities

When the AST grade was created there was a clear understanding that it offered an alternative career route for teachers who did not wish to take on management responsibilities. Teachers taking up an AST post were not expected to combine it with a management role.

In practice there have been situations, particularly in small primary schools, with only a few teachers to share management roles, where this approach has been very difficult to achieve.

The purpose of the restriction was to ensure that ASTs continued to spend the majority of their time in

the classroom. One of the underpinning reasons for the success of AST outreach work is that they have high credibility within the profession because other teachers know that they are primarily working as classroom teachers.

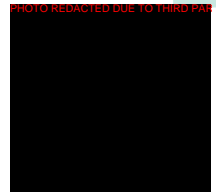
However, ASTs do also have the potential to act as leaders of improvements in teaching and learning and it may be appropriate in some schools for this role to be recognised within the staffing structure. In this situation we recommend that any administrative or management duties which are not compatible with the AST role are delegated to other staff. There are instances, for example, where schools have appointed ASTs to act as Heads of Department but in doing so have stripped the posts of elements which are not compatible with AST professional duties, such as responsibility for the management of staff and resources, moving these duties to others. These redesigned posts allow the ASTs to act as the leaders of teaching and learning in their subject areas.

In designing any AST post it is important that schools are aware of and avoid any danger that the AST will be overloaded.

What might a typical AST post description look like?

Every AST post will be different although all will be based on classroom teacher work and AST professional duties and most will involve some outreach work. The wide range of potential responsibilities is recognised by the long AST pay spine. In carrying out their AST professional duties some teachers will concentrate on their subject areas while others may take a more generic approach to improvements in teaching and learning. Some ASTs may mostly do one to one work with individual teachers, while others carry out whole school or cross LA projects or they may have a mix of roles, or develop specialisms over time. Clearly each post should both build on the AST's current strengths and offer the opportunity to stretch them and encourage them to develop in the role.

Annex F contains an example of one AST's job specification.



Annex A

AST assessment standards

1. Excellent results/outcomes

As a result of aspiring ASTs' teaching, pupils show consistent improvement in relation to prior and expected attainment; are highly motivated, enthusiastic and respond positively to challenge and high expectations; exhibit consistently high standards of discipline and behaviour; show a consistent record of parental involvement and satisfaction.

2. Excellent subject or specialist knowledge

Aspiring ASTs must keep up to date in their subjects or specialism(s); have a full understanding of connections and progressions in the subject and use this in their teaching to ensure pupils make good progress; quickly understand pupils' perceptions and misconceptions from their questions and responses; understand ICT in the teaching of their subject or specialism(s).

3. Excellent ability to plan

Aspiring ASTs must prepare lessons and sequences of lessons with clear objectives to ensure successful learning by all pupils; set consistently high expectations for pupils in their class and homework; plan their teaching to ensure it builds on the current and previous achievement of pupils.

4. Excellent ability to teach, manage pupils and maintain discipline

Aspiring ASTs must understand and use the most effective teaching methods to achieve the teaching objectives in hand; display flair and creativity in engaging, enthusing and challenging groups of pupils; use questioning and explanation skillfully to secure maximum progress; develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills as appropriate within their phase and context; are able to provide positive and targeted support for pupils who have special educational needs, are very able, are from ethnic minorities, lack confidence, have behavioural difficulties or are disaffected; maintain respect and discipline and are consistent and fair.

5. Excellent ability to assess and evaluate

Aspiring ASTs must use assessment as part of their teaching to diagnose pupils' needs, set realistic and challenging targets for improvement and plan future teaching; improve their teaching through evaluating their own practice in relation to pupils' progress, school targets and inspection evidence.

6. Excellent ability to advise and support other teachers

Aspiring ASTs must provide clear feedback, good support and sound advice to others; are able to provide examples, coaching and training to help others become more effective in their teaching; can help others to evaluate the impact of their teaching on raising pupils' achievements; are able to analyse teaching and understand how improvements can be made; have highly developed inter-personal skills which allow them to be effective in schools and situations other than their own; provide a role model for pupils and other staff through their personal and professional conduct; know how to plan and prioritise their own time and activity effectively; are highly respected and able to motivate others.

NB: AST standards described here will be subject to review in 2006. Applicants are advised to check the AST website www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast for the latest position on the development of the new standards.

Annex B

Guidance on evidence for assessment

It is recommended that candidates bring together the best examples of evidence for each of the standards in a form that is succinct and easily accessible to the assessor. Most teachers will already have identified and collected relevant material as part of their performance management and to underpin their professional development.

Collections of evidence can be arranged in different ways, but the most effective are arranged in sections, one for each standard. Assessors also find it helpful if the applicant addresses each of the 'subsets' within each standard. A clear index, allowing easy access to each section is also useful.

Applicants should be selective and choose the best examples they have for each standard, it is not necessary to include a complete record of achievement although this should be available in the event that the assessor requires additional information. It is particularly useful when the candidate has collected relevant documentation and recorded relevant activities over a period of time. The evidence presented may provide a sample and then a reference to other documents.

There are no set rules on what can and cannot be included in a collection of evidence, however, below are some examples of documentation which could be used to support each standard:

To support excellent outcomes:

- external assessment results with value added analysis;
- individual, departmental and whole school analysis, graphs, trends;
- results from student questionnaires showing satisfaction with the course and/or letters from parents;
- a copy of a report to governors about standards and progress.

To support subject knowledge:

- a list of professional development activities, with attendance certificates from courses;
- letters testifying to the quality of subject knowledge conveyed during support.

To support excellent teaching:

- OFSTED teaching profiles;
- reports from school/departmental monitoring.

For assessment and planning:

- samples of schemes of work;
- summer school plans;
- plans for modules, assessment criteria and methods of recording;
- examples of pupil's work with assessment comments.

Ability to work with others:

- descriptions of help provided;
- letters from LA advisers, from students, from course participants, from examination boards if working as examiner and training others.

In order to meet AST standard six - working with others; candidates need not have worked outside their own school, but must be able to demonstrate through written evidence that they have highly developed interpersonal skills.

Specimen

Here is an example of one candidate's evidence collection, which included some helpful information for the assessor about the school and the AST post.

Overview

Table of contents

Schedule for AST Assessment

Section 1: Profile of teacher

Teachers goals

AST Application

Continuing Professional Development

Rationale for wanting to be an AST

Section 2: AST roles and responsibilities

Job description and other information on the proposed AST role (This information is not required by assessors, but can be useful)



Annex B Guidance on evidence for assessment



Section 3: Information about the school

Most recent OFSTED report summary
School Development Plan summary
Departmental Action Plan

Section 4: References, testimonial & parent letters

Information and testimonials could be provided from the candidate's line manager, parents' of pupils, Governors and head of University Education Department. This can include information about liaison with a feeder primary school, work with Business Education Departments, support for pupils with special educational needs, training for teachers on ICT use in the classroom.

Section 5: Teaching quality

This section could provide reports/information on lesson observations carried out by such persons as LA adviser, headteacher and head of department.

Section 6: Performance & assessment data

Value added data showing the progress made by pupils taught by the teacher, and showing the improving trend in examination results over time. This is particularly relevant to teachers working in school's facing challenging circumstances and in special measures.

Section 7: Examples of outcomes of teacher's activities

This section should include the main accomplishments of the teacher, such as courses run for other teachers, departmental web site supporting distance learning, schedule for extra-curricular work.

Section 8: Information on lessons to be observed

Lesson plans
Extracts from schemes of work
Information about the two classes to be observed

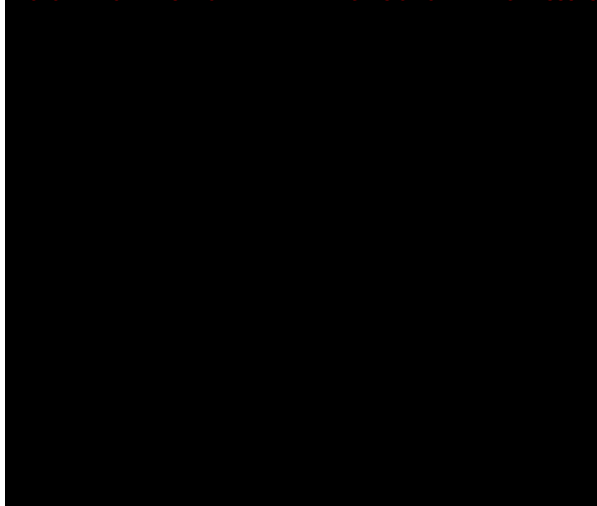
Appendix

Any additional information, for example, ICT Development plan.

Thanks to Richard Young for the structure of this example.



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Annex C

A typical assessment day

The contents of a typical day are given below:

The assessor will arrive at the start of the school day, and will meet with the headteacher and the candidate. This first meeting will be used to explain the procedures for the day and answer any questions.

This will often be followed by a short meeting with the headteacher and/or deputy.

Early in the day, the assessor will study the collection of evidence produced to support the candidate's application.

The assessor will need to observe two lessons. In primary schools, one of the lessons will normally be either literacy or numeracy. In secondary schools, lessons will normally be from different key stages, and from different ability groups, where appropriate.

The assessor will hold interviews/discussions with the following people:

- at least one interview with the candidate to discuss their work;
- other members of staff within the school who can provide evidence to support the application;
- the appropriate LA adviser or colleagues from another school, where the candidate has worked with other schools within the LA;
- a group of 4–8 pupils who know the candidate well;
- a small group of parents whose children have been taught by the candidate.

The assessor may wish to have lunch with the candidate, or may wish to use lunch time for further study of the evidence.

During the day, the assessor will need some time to make notes and check whether there are any gaps in the evidence. If further evidence or clarification is needed, the assessor will discuss this with the candidate or the headteacher.

At the end of the day, the assessor will feed back the judgement on whether the candidate fully meets all the criteria to the headteacher and the candidate. The assessor will then provide brief feedback on the reasons for the judgement, highlighting particular strengths, or, where not all the standards are fully met, the reasons why. This feedback will normally take between 15 and 30 minutes.

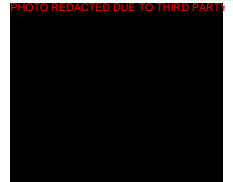


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Annex D

Procedures for the review of an AST assessment



1. Candidates assessed to become Advanced Skills Teacher but not granted certification can if they wish apply to have that decision reviewed. A decision not to certify a candidate as an AST can only be reviewed if:
 - The original assessor did not take proper account of relevant evidence;
 - The original assessor took account of irrelevant or inaccurate evidence; or
 - The original assessor was biased, or unlawfully discriminated against the candidate.

2. To have the assessment reviewed the candidate should apply in writing to:

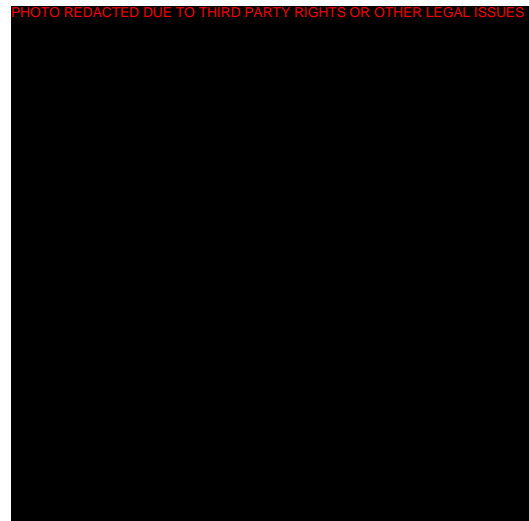
The Review Co-ordinator
AST Administration
VT Group Plc
Bay Tree Avenue
Kingston Road
Leatherhead
Surrey, KT22 7UE

Applications for review must be received within 40 working days of receiving the assessor's decision. Candidates should explain why they think their assessment should be reviewed, and should indicate what evidence they have that at least one of the three grounds for review in paragraph 1 applies to their case.

3. The Review Co-ordinator will give the original assessor an opportunity to comment on the application for review, and will pass the case to a second assessor, or Review Officer.
4. The Review Officer will consider all the available evidence. He or she may ask to see the original assessor's records of the assessment. He or she may

ask for comments from the candidate, head teacher or line manager, or from the original assessor. The Review Officer may repeat any of the steps the original assessor took, such as conducting a classroom observation or interviewing the head teacher. He or she may also look at other evidence, including interviewing the candidate's colleagues or parents of pupils they teach, which the original assessor may not have considered.

5. If the Review Officer is satisfied that the candidate would have been certified as an AST had the original assessment been properly conducted (according to the criteria in paragraph 1), he or she will certify the candidate as an AST. Otherwise, the original assessment will stand. The Review Officer will notify both the candidate and the assessor of the decision, giving reasons for it, within 40 working days of receiving the application for a review. The Review Officer will also inform the candidate's headteacher, and the headteacher of the school offering the AST post, of his or her decision.



Annex E

Local authority role

A LA that has agreed to support ASTs post in their Authority will normally have defined the parameters in which they wish them to operate. The following bullets show how one Authority, guided by a steering group of head teachers and others, has defined its principles and criteria for the appointment and development of ASTs.

- The LA will encourage the appointment of ASTs in educational fields and geographical areas where there is a need;
- In collaboration with schools the LA will seek to ensure a reasonable spread of ASTs across the LA;
- The LA will generally support not more than one AST per primary and three ASTs per secondary school;
- The 'outreach' function of ASTs should be co-ordinated by appropriate members of the LA advisory service;
- ASTs should have the opportunity to support a range of different schools including those where there is innovative curriculum development as well as those schools where there are weaknesses;
- ASTs will support schools and teachers where development needs have been negotiated and agreed with the school;
- The planned programme of support for the AST's school should be agreed each term with the AST's headteacher.

LAs may also want to include their policy on the time allocation for outreach work and its location.

LAs should appoint someone to co-ordinate AST work within the authority and to be a contact for schools and the DfES. This may be a different role from that of the person who deals with Standards Fund grant applications and claims.

One LA'S approach to co-ordinating outreach

Each AST has a responsibility to contribute to the LA's CPD programme in support of the local development plan. The LA centrally has negotiated a protocol with schools which sets out the expectations of the ASTs and how they will work in outreach schools and also identifies how the school will treat them and what it can expect of an AST.

For Primary ASTs the outreach role will be co-ordinated by the School Development Adviser who will:

- identify and make contact with the ASTs in their district;
- identify particular strengths (Key Stage, subject, etc) of the AST;
- establish, through discussion, which schools in the district need support in teaching and learning;
- identify and establish for the schools needing such support opportunities for teachers to observe the AST in their school;
- identify and establish for schools "A" and "B" in need of support opportunities for the AST to visit those schools so that they can work alongside teachers in the classroom;
- involve ASTs in the curriculum development projects being set up in the district;
- involve ASTs in Continuing Professional Development activity;
- ensure appropriate links are made with curriculum advisers.

The School Development Adviser will hold regular termly meetings with ASTs to discuss and monitor overall progress. LAs will normally use monitoring and evaluation forms to collect feedback on the effectiveness of the ASTs work and to inform the performance management process.

In this authority the outreach role for secondary ASTs is co-ordinated by the relevant subject adviser who also ensures that appropriate emphasis is given to cross-curriculum issues by ASTs.

Increasingly LAs are using ASTs working in teams with other ASTs or in wider professional groupings.

This example of one AST's job description is just an illustration of how it worked for one AST and should not be taken as a template.

Annex F

Specimen AST job description



Job specification

1. Teaching

- a) Curriculum: develops; carries out general teaching duties as specified in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document;
- b) Contributes to the school's tutorial, extra-curricular and residential programme as laid down in the job specification of all full-time teaching staff.

2. NQT induction

- a) Assists in planning the induction year for all newly qualified teaching staff. In accordance with the school policy document and the DfES regulations and the LA programme, arranging regular meetings with them and undertaking classroom observation, as appropriate;
- b) Works with the LA Advisory Service to support NQT induction across the Authority under the direction of the relevant Advisor.

3. ITT programme

- a) Participates in the training programme of students on the school initial teacher training (ITT) course, and the delivery of non-subject-specific aspects of that training, in co-operation with the ITT Professional Link Tutor;
- b) Contributes to the assessment of the students' teaching practice.

4. Curriculum

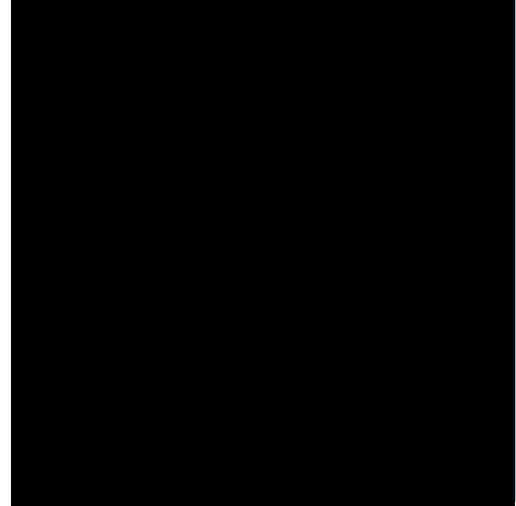
- a) Develops high quality teaching materials and strategies for Advanced GNVQ courses, especially in Leisure and Tourism;
- b) Develops and delivers methods of assessment for Advanced GNVQ courses.

5. Balance of college and outreach role

The post-holder will work an 80 per cent timetable in school and 20 per cent on "out-reach" activities.

The job specification should also include the performance criteria against which the AST's progress would be assessed.

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Case Studies

ASTs - A headteacher's view



Mo Brennan

Headteacher

Hillcrest School and
Community College

"When I joined Hillcrest the school was in a terrible state: our results were down to 17% and it was just about to go into special measures. It was obvious that we needed to reform everything to do with teaching and learning in the school, but you don't do that through meetings and management presentations - you do it through day-in, day-out quality teaching.

So, the aim in introducing ASTs into the school was to try and keep our best teachers teaching. They were our lead learners and excellent practitioners, and had crafted the art of teaching down to the minutiae and were more than capable of sharing good practice with their colleagues.

We now have five ASTs, and while most of them came from the school, we have also recruited externally, including a brilliant retired Head of English who now works part-time for us and has been completely re-energised by the post. Their appointment has never been divisive, because all of our staff work hard and play hard together, so we celebrate the achievement of others as much as they do.

From the parents' point of view, having ASTs in the school is a win:win - even if they are doing a day a week on outreach. Parents just want good teachers, so I'm a pragmatist and say if you want good teachers this is the way to get them.

Our ASTs have led the way in areas such as "thinking skills", "inter class variance" and "what makes a good lesson". After all, it's not my role as Head to keep coming up with ideas. But then why should I when we now have a group of ASTs that cover all curriculum areas, have vast experience, and have their feet firmly on the floor because they deal with pupils everyday? They all spark off each other and between them they have promoted a growing culture of teaching and learning, just based on good quality teaching, which has seen our results increase up to 43% through year on year improvement.

However, if you are focused purely on your own school you can have a lack of perspective, so the AST role is a phenomenal professional development opportunity. Wherever our ASTs go they will always come back with good ideas. This has a knock-on effect for my other staff, because they are coached by and use the modelling of our ASTs, so the level of teaching is just going up and up as we spread a culture of teaching and learning.

The impact on the ASTs work within the school was particularly good for our OFSTED, which led to Hillcrest being described as "outstanding" by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. I think part of the reason for that is that when you create an AST post you put the emphasis on the classroom, rather than form filling.

What it also does is enable you to grow better staff, because we now have a research base in the school. In just four years we've gone from being a school in special measures to a training and leading edge partnership school.

In the future I'll be looking to appoint more ASTs. I know that some people may ask how I can afford it, but I say how can I afford not to? I have to attract the best teachers that I can get for our children and the AST scheme has enabled us to attract very high quality staff. For this school it has been one of the best things that we could have done."



ASTs - talking about their role



Jacqui Newsome

Advanced Skills Teacher
Assistant Principal

Hillcrest School and
Community College, Dudley

“As the former Head of Science at Hillcrest I was already actively involved in sharing good practice and training other staff. So, becoming an AST was an opportunity to formalise what I was doing, while also gaining some personal recognition as being a good practitioner.

In my role as an AST I’ve worked on staff training, looking at effective teaching and learning methods and learning styles that are at the cutting edge of pedagogy. I’ve also conducted

lesson observations with quality feedback, run demonstration lessons for trainees, NQTs and GTPs and visitors to the school, as well as undertaking work with colleagues experiencing difficulties. Underlying all of this work is the philosophy that all staff can improve as professionals - in most cases, it’s just a matter of having the opportunity to address any issues and then move forward.

In a way, it’s really an opportunity to talk as professionals about teaching and learning - in a two-way conversation, as opposed to being told what to do. Not only does this instill confidence in the teacher, but ultimately the children benefit from being on the receiving end of quality teaching and learning.

Working closely with other teachers also has an impact on your own skills. I’ve not stopped learning since I started teaching, but being an AST gives you an opportunity to do that in a practical way, because your beliefs and techniques are constantly refined or reinforced. By going into other schools you also get a real insight into what’s out there.

While I have recently become an Assistant Principal, being an AST has been a very positive experience - both in terms of getting recognition for your own work and sharing your knowledge and experience. It also adds a real breadth to what you do, because you are part of the bigger educational picture and helping to move the profession forward.”

“For several years before I became an AST I was actively looking to move into a Headship role, but the feedback I was receiving showed that I needed to improve my knowledge of other schools and the AST role offered me an opportunity to broaden my horizons.

The work that I have been doing on outreach includes helping local schools to ensure that Information & Communications Technology (ICT) is being effectively deployed across the curriculum. I’ve also been invited by the LEA’s ICT Adviser to work with a local group on a pilot project called IBM Kidsmart, to increase the use of ICT in Nurseries. And I’ve been involved in School Centred Initial Teacher Training to show teaching graduates, who know a lot about ICT, but don’t have much school experience, how to utilise various technologies as part of the classroom curriculum.

It’s great to see people switched on to what you’re doing. In particular, spontaneity has a magic quality, so, for example, when some children whose poetry I had used to create presentations spontaneously clapped at the end of the class it reminded me of why I became an AST. An infectious pride had spread across the classroom and their joy was my joy. I felt that I had given them something and they had given me something.

Funnily enough, I’m not really worried where the role goes. I had done my NPQH training because I wanted to run my own regime, but I’m less inclined to do that now. Instead I just want to develop my subject in an ever-widening circle across the county. It’s just that kind of role - it is what you make it. Sure, it involves challenges and risks, but that’s real life. From my point of view, being an AST has set me free to chase the things that I enjoy doing.”



Jeremy Northcott

Advanced Skills Teacher
Primary ICT

Wadebridge Primary
School, Cornwall

ASTs - talking about their role



Rebecca Poole

Advanced Skills Teacher
Modern Foreign Languages
Hendon School, Barnet,
London

"I first thought about becoming an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) when I reached a point in my career where the only way forward was to go through the traditional school hierarchy and become an Assistant Head. But I really loved being in the classroom with pupils, because I live and breathe teaching. While the assessment process was one of the most stressful things that I have ever gone through, when I passed it was the highlight of my career.

The real benefit of becoming an AST is that it effectively gave me the go ahead to be as creative as I can, coupled with the permission to take risks in teaching. It was like being given wings to take off and fly. It has also made me stronger at coaching and supporting other teachers and better at delegating, because I can be a bit of a control freak, but I've had to learn to take a step back.

For the school the effect has been a steady improvement in the standards of teaching and learning, particularly within my own faculty. It has also enabled us to push back the boundaries of what we do as teachers. For example, we're currently piloting a very interesting cross-fertilisation approach to teaching in which we collaborate with other departments to teach some areas of their subject through MFL, such as a geography weather module taught in Japanese.

If I was to advise anyone thinking of becoming an AST I would say "Go for it" if you want to be a better teacher or to help others. After all, that's what we're all there for at the end of the day - watching children love your subject more and more, because of what you are doing with other teachers to make it better."

"Even though I was very familiar with the AST role, because my father is one, I didn't think I would be eligible to apply as I'd only been teaching for five years. However, the school's Deputy Head encouraged me to apply and I really liked the idea of going out and helping others and doing something completely different, but I didn't want to leave the classroom and go down the management route yet as I absolutely love teaching.



Peter Hamlyn

Advanced Skills Teacher
Mathematics
Carbeile Junior School,
Torpoint, Cornwall

Being an AST has given me a lovely balance of time with the children and a day where I can do what I can to help others - and be passionate about my subject. I love meeting new people, putting my ideas across and working on areas that I wouldn't normally have the opportunity to, so I'm pretty lucky. Even if I leave a classroom having gained or imparted just one idea I consider that to be a success. Being an AST has also raised my school's profile and meant that when other teachers come in to see me they get to experience and enjoy the school and see how fabulous it is!

Above all I'm ever so proud on getting the AST position, because I thought I'd be seen as too young or inexperienced. But what I've discovered is that there are lots of young ASTs, which just goes to prove that experience isn't always everything, as young people can often bring in new ideas and approaches. What you actually need is the right attitude. If you've got buckets of enthusiasm and want to teach then being an AST could be the thing for you. As far as I have seen there are no flaws to the role and there are not many jobs that you could say that about."



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