

The status of specialist staff

The vast majority of teachers of EAL have trained as teachers, have subsequently worked for several years as class or subject teachers and have made a conscious decision to specialise in EAL. They may also have additional specialist qualifications. For this reason, these teachers have a clear knowledge and understanding of the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language. They are skilled at identifying and delivering teaching and learning strategies to address those needs. Schools which recognise and utilise these specialist skills effectively are schools which promote an ethos of equality of opportunity. If specialist language teachers are considered of less importance than class or subject teachers, this will have an impact on the perceptions of the pupils who are supported by those teachers. If teachers of EAL and class and subject teachers have clearly defined roles, which are perceived of equal importance, all pupils will benefit.

Within the revised guidance (TDA, 2007) collaboration is endorsed and tutors are also asked to consider whether trainees '*recognise, value and utilise the knowledge and expertise brought to the classroom by colleagues undertaking a range of roles across the children's workforce*'. Schools that have addressed the potential marginalisation of specialist teachers of EAL by insisting on partnership teaching have seen standards of attainment rising steadily since the introduction of these initiatives (OfSTED, 1999). However, trainees may encounter negative perceptions of specialist staff involved in working with EAL learners and inequalities in status. (Creese, 2001)

Some commentators have argued that the previous [TTA Standards for QTS](#) reflected a somewhat marginalised subject status by not including a standard in 'Knowledge and Understanding' relating to EAL despite specific references to other subjects, phases or aspects such as SEN (Barwell, 2004). Within the 2007 standards, those related to EAL, achievement and diversity are clearly located within professional knowledge alongside, for example, literacy. However, some commentators are dismayed that knowledge about pupils learning English as additional language is closely linked in the text to knowledge about pupils with special educational needs.

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References

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Training and Development Agency for Schools (2007) *Guidance to accompany the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)* London Retrieved 29th July, 2007, from http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/doc/q/qts_standards_guidance_2007.doc

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