دائـــرة رأس الخيمـــة للمعرفـــة
RAS AL KHAIMAH
DEPARTMENT OF KNOWLEDGE

LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANT GUIDANCE HANDBOOK

For private schools in Ras Al Khaimah



Practice guidance aligned with current RAK DOK policy requirements

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Contents

To refresh the page numbers below, select the table of contents and press F9 in Microsoft Word.

1. Purpose and Scope 3
1.1 Key Terms 3
1.2 Principles for Practice 4
2. Determining when an LSA may be required 4
2.1 Evidence Required for Decision-Making 4
2.2 Circumstances That May Indicate a Higher Level of Need 4
2.3 The Decision Process 5
2.4 Grounds That Are Not Sufficient on Their Own 5
3. Recruitment and Appointment 6
3.1 Minimum Eligibility and Selection Considerations 6
3.2 Required Documentation Before Deployment 7
3.3 School-Funded and Parent-Funded Arrangements 7
4. Role and Responsibilities 8
4.1 Core Responsibilities 8
4.2 Responsibilities That Remain with Teachers and the Inclusion Team 8
4.3 What the LSA Must Not Do 9
4.4 Mainstream Class Attendance and Alternative Provision 9
4.5 The Daily Practice Cycle 10
5. Annual Professional Development 10
5.1 Recommended Annual Learning Programme 10
5.2 Supervision and Performance Review 11
6. Implementation Checklists 11
6.1 Inclusion Team Decision Checklist 11
6.2 Pre-Deployment Checklist 11
6.3 Annual Review Questions 12
7. Status of This Guidance 12
8. References 12

1. Purpose and Scope

This handbook provides a practical framework for deciding when a student may require an individual Learning Support Assistant (LSA), for recruiting and inducting the assistant, for defining the role, and for planning annual professional development. It applies whether the assistant is funded by the school or by the parent. In either arrangement, the school retains responsibility for safeguarding, supervision, educational quality, role clarity and regulatory compliance.

The central principle is that one-to-one adult support is a targeted provision, not an automatic response to a diagnosis or to low attainment. It should be recommended only where evidence shows that reasonable adjustments, adaptive teaching and ordinarily available support are insufficient to secure the student's safe access, participation, progress or growing independence.

This handbook is operational guidance. It supports, and does not replace, the RAK DOK policies listed in Section 8.

1.1 Key Terms

Table 1: Key terms used in this handbook

Term	Working definition
Learning Support Assistant (LSA)	An individual or one-to-one assistant assigned to support a named student. RAK DOK policy also uses the terms Individual Assistant, Shadow Teacher and 1:1 Support Assistant for this function.
Inclusion Team	The school's designated team that oversees identification, assessment, planning, provision and review for students with additional learning needs. Under the Inclusive Education Policy it typically comprises a senior leader, the Head of Inclusion or SENCO, the Social Worker and the Inclusion Teacher.
Individualised Education Plan (IEP)	An individualised plan setting out agreed goals, accommodations, adaptations, support strategies, responsibilities and review arrangements.
Modified curriculum	A pathway in which the expected learning outcomes or content are changed, rather than access being supported through accommodations alone.
Students of Determination (SOD)	Students who experience long-term physical, cognitive, intellectual, emotional or sensory differences requiring adjustments to ensure equitable educational access.

Note on terminology. The Inclusive Education Policy uses the term Learning Support Assistant in two places and with two different emphases: the definitions table describes a parent-funded person providing personal care or non-academic assistance, while the staffing table groups the Learning Support Assistant with the Individual Assistant, Shadow Teacher and 1:1 Support Assistant. This handbook adopts the broader staffing-table meaning, so that the same safeguarding, supervision and training expectations apply however the post is funded or titled.

1.2 Principles for Practice

- Presume inclusion and access to the full school curriculum, adapting content and activities where required.
- Use the least intrusive level of adult support that is both effective and safe.
- Plan support to build participation, communication, self-regulation and independence rather than adult dependence.
- Base decisions on multiple sources of evidence and review them at least annually, or sooner where circumstances change or a modification is required.
- Ensure that accountability for teaching, curriculum design and assessment remains with qualified teachers and the Inclusion Team.

2. Determining when an LSA may be required

The school's Inclusion Team should decide whether to recommend an LSA only after an individual assessment has been completed and a specific area of need has been identified. A clinical diagnosis may inform that decision, but it should neither automatically trigger nor automatically rule out one-to-one support. The team should consider how the student functions across a range of lessons, transitions, social times, break times and other relevant school contexts.

2.1 Evidence Required for Decision-Making

Decisions about the level of LSA support a student requires should rest on triangulated evidence drawn from appropriate sources. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. medical, clinical, therapy or psycho-educational reports, where available and relevant;
2. baseline, diagnostic, curriculum-based and standardised assessment results;
3. classroom observations showing patterns of access, engagement, behaviour, communication and independence;
4. progress data and documented responses to previous interventions and reasonable adjustments;
5. input from teachers, the Inclusion Team and relevant specialists; and
6. risk assessments, care plans, behaviour support plans or personal emergency evacuation plans, where applicable.

2.2 Circumstances That May Indicate a Higher Level of Need

An LSA may be particularly appropriate where one or more of the following are significant, persistent and evidenced.

Table 2: Indicators that may point to the need for individual support

Area of need	Examples of indicators
Severe or complex disability	Substantial barriers to mobility, communication, sensory access, cognition, personal care or safe participation that require frequent individual assistance.
Complex behaviour or regulation needs	Frequent or high-risk dysregulation, absconding, self-injury, aggression or behaviour that significantly restricts access, despite a documented positive behaviour support approach.
Significant attainment and access gap	A substantial difference between the curriculum expectations of the enrolled grade and the student's current functional attainment, requiring sustained individual scaffolding within an agreed personalised or modified pathway.
Health or personal care needs	Ongoing support required to follow an authorised health or personal care plan. Tasks must remain within the assistant's training, the consent obtained and school policy.
Communication and interaction	A need for consistent implementation of an agreed communication system, or for structured support to participate with adults and peers.

2.3 The Decision Process

- Identify the specific barrier to access, participation, safety or progress.
- Document the adaptive teaching, accommodations and targeted interventions already attempted, including their duration and impact.
- Gather and review multiple sources of evidence with the student and parents, where appropriate.
- Define the precise functions an LSA would perform, and explain why these cannot be met through existing provision.
- Record the decision, funding arrangement, supervision line, intended outcomes, timetable and review date in the student's plan.
- Register the assignment in Al Manhal, or in any other system required by RAK DOK, as the Inclusive Education Policy requires.
- Review the arrangement at least annually to confirm whether the support remains appropriate or requires adjustment.

2.4 Grounds That Are Not Sufficient on Their Own

A recommendation for one-to-one support should not rest solely on:

- a diagnosis, without evidence of functional need in school;
- a parental request alone;
- low attainment, without evidence that adaptive teaching and targeted intervention have been implemented;
- a wish to manage staffing shortages or routine classroom behaviour; or

- an assumption that continuous proximity to an adult is always beneficial.

3. Recruitment and Appointment

The same suitability, safeguarding and professional standards should apply whether the school or the parent recruits and funds the LSA. A parent-funded arrangement does not create an independent employment or supervisory relationship inside the school: the assistant must work within the school's authorised structures, policies, timetable and professional direction. The school should document contractual responsibilities clearly and review them with its leadership and human resources function.

3.1 Minimum Eligibility and Selection Considerations

The RAK DOK Staff Appointment Policy links this role to the Inclusion Assistant eligibility profile: a high school certificate together with either one year of relevant experience or 25 hours of internal school training, or alternatively a diploma in special education. For the Shadow Teacher, Learning Support Assistant, 1:1 Support Assistant and Individual Assistant posts, the policy additionally requires a recommendation from the Inclusion Lead or the School Senior Leadership Team. Schools must check the current policy before each appointment, as eligibility profiles are subject to annual review.

Appointment letters

The School Staff Appointment Policy lists the POD Support Assistant and Shadow Teacher among the roles that require an appointment letter issued by RAK DOK. No individual may practise in an educational activity in a private school in Ras Al Khaimah without that appointment notification. Schools should confirm the appointment status of every LSA, including parent-funded assistants, before deployment.

- Confirm that qualifications, experience, language proficiency and role-specific competence match the student's assessed needs and current RAK DOK requirements.
- Complete all required identity, reference, background, safeguarding, eligibility and employment checks before the assistant has unsupervised access to students.
- Use a structured interview and practical scenarios covering dignity, confidentiality, behaviour support, communication, professional boundaries and the promotion of independence.
- Where personal care, manual handling, feeding, medication administration, communication systems or behaviour support is required, verify the relevant training before duties begin.
- Avoid appointing a person whose relationship with the family or the student could compromise professional boundaries, confidentiality or school accountability, unless the risks are formally assessed and managed.

3.2 Required Documentation Before Deployment

Table 3: Documentation required before an LSA is deployed

Document or action	Minimum expectation
RAK DOK appointment letter	Confirms that the individual is authorised to occupy the role in the school, in line with the School Staff Appointment Policy.
Written contract or service agreement	Identifies the employer or funding party, remuneration, hours, leave, insurance, termination, confidentiality and compliance obligations.
Job description	States duties, limits of authority, reporting line, supervision arrangements, performance expectations and prohibited tasks. The LSA signs to confirm understanding.
Student support brief	Summarises agreed outcomes, support strategies, communication methods, risk controls and independence targets, without disclosing unnecessary information.
Policies and code of conduct	The LSA reads and acknowledges the school's inclusion, safeguarding and child protection, anti-bullying, behaviour, confidentiality and data protection, health and safety, emergency, attendance and complaints policies.
Induction record	Confirms completion of school orientation, safeguarding reporting routes, emergency procedures, role-specific training and key contacts.
Review arrangement	Sets dates for supervision, probation, performance review and the review of the student's provision.

3.3 School-Funded and Parent-Funded Arrangements

Funding does not change where authority and accountability sit. The following table summarises the position in both arrangements.

Table 4: Lines of authority in school-funded and parent-funded arrangements

Requirement	School-funded LSA	Parent-funded LSA
Educational direction	School and Inclusion Team	School and Inclusion Team
Safeguarding authority on site	School	School
Curriculum planning accountability	Teacher and Inclusion Team	Teacher and Inclusion Team
Daily task allocation	Authorised school line manager	Authorised school line manager
Family communication	Through agreed school channels	Through agreed school channels, with no parallel reporting arrangement

Requirement	School-funded LSA	Parent-funded LSA
Performance concerns	School human resources and line management process	The school raises concerns through the agreed contract protocol and may restrict access where safeguarding or suitability requires it

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The LSA works under the direction of qualified teachers and the Inclusion Team. The purpose of the role is to enable the student's access, participation, wellbeing and growing independence by implementing agreed plans. The LSA does not act as a substitute teacher, therapist, behaviour specialist or curriculum planner.

4.1 Core Responsibilities

- Implement the strategies, accommodations, adaptations and interventions specified in the IEP, behaviour support plan, care plan and the teacher's lesson plan.
- Support the student to understand instructions, organise materials, communicate, engage with peers and complete appropriately adapted tasks.
- Prepare or adapt resources as directed by the teacher or the Inclusion Team, and share practical observations that help teachers refine their planning.
- Use prompts systematically and fade them as soon as it is appropriate to do so, in order to build independence.
- Facilitate peer interaction and belonging, and avoid becoming a barrier between the student, the teacher and classmates.
- Collect concise, objective data linked to agreed goals, and report progress or concerns to the designated teacher or the Inclusion Lead.
- Support positive behaviour using the agreed proactive and de-escalation strategies, record incidents factually and follow reporting procedures.
- Maintain dignity, confidentiality, professional boundaries and the student's right to make choices.
- Follow safeguarding, child protection, health and safety, emergency and data protection procedures at all times.
- Participate in relevant meetings, training, supervision and reviews when invited.

4.2 Responsibilities That Remain with Teachers and the Inclusion Team

Table 5: Division of responsibility between teaching staff and the LSA

Teachers and the Inclusion Team lead on …	The LSA contributes by …
Curriculum design, modification and sequencing	Sharing observations and implementing the agreed programme.

Teachers and the Inclusion Team lead on …	The LSA contributes by …
Lesson objectives, teaching approach and assessment decisions	Preparing directed resources, providing prompts and recording responses.
IEP development, approval and formal review	Providing objective evidence and practical feedback.
Modified timetables and decisions about push-in or pull-out provision	Following the agreed timetable and reporting whether it is effective.
Communication of formal progress and educational decisions to parents	Using authorised school channels and avoiding independent promises or changes.
Referral to specialists and interpretation of professional reports	Implementing strategies within the limits of training and escalating concerns.

4.3 What the LSA Must Not Do

The LSA must not:

- independently create or approve a modified curriculum, timetable, IEP, set of learning objectives or assessment pathway;
- replace the teacher as the student's primary educator, or routinely remove the student from the classroom because the mainstream task is not accessible;
- teach unsupervised as a substitute for planned teacher instruction;
- diagnose a condition, provide therapy, restrain a student, administer medication or perform specialised care, unless explicitly authorised, trained and covered by school policy;
- share confidential information, or communicate formal decisions directly to parents outside agreed school procedures;
- complete assessed work on the student's behalf, over-prompt, or maintain unnecessary constant proximity; or
- use behaviour-management practices that the school has not approved.

4.4 Mainstream Class Attendance and Alternative Provision

Students of Determination should have access to the full school curriculum, including core subjects, specialist subjects and extracurricular activities, with content and activities adapted where necessary. Targeted pull-out teaching or a modified timetable may be appropriate where it produces a clear educational benefit and is agreed through the student's planning process. The school should record the purpose, the responsible teacher, the intended outcomes, the location, the duration and the review date. The LSA implements support within that plan; the LSA does not decide which lessons the student attends, nor independently determine what will be taught.

Where a pathway may not lead to UAE equivalency, the Inclusive Education Policy requires the school to inform parents in writing and to obtain a signed acknowledgement.

4.5 The Daily Practice Cycle

Table 6: The daily practice cycle for an LSA

Before learning	During learning	After learning
Review the lesson objective and the planned adaptations with the teacher. Prepare the directed materials. Clarify the level of prompting to be used and the data to be collected.	Position support flexibly. Allow processing time and prompt only as needed. Encourage interaction with peers and the teacher. Apply agreed strategies consistently.	Record brief evidence linked to the target. Share significant progress, barriers or safeguarding concerns through the correct channel. Note the prompts that can be reduced.

5. Annual Professional Development

The Inclusive Education Policy specifies a minimum of 20 hours of approved training each year, delivered through local or international training providers, for an Individual Assistant, including a Learning Support Assistant or 1:1 support assistant. The school should build these hours into a documented annual development plan, retain evidence of completion, and evaluate how the training changes practice and student outcomes. Mandatory induction should be completed before, or immediately upon, deployment, and should not be treated as a substitute for continuing development.

5.1 Recommended Annual Learning Programme

Table 7: Recommended annual professional development programme for an LSA

Priority area	Suggested hours	Expected application
Safeguarding, child protection and professional boundaries	3	Recognise concerns, report them promptly, and maintain safe conduct and confidentiality.
Inclusive education, IEPs and adaptive practice	4	Understand plans, implement adaptations and support access without replacing the teacher.
Positive behaviour support and de-escalation	4	Use proactive, respectful and data-informed strategies aligned with the student's plan.
Communication, interaction and student voice	3	Apply agreed communication systems and enable meaningful choice and peer participation.
Promoting independence and prompt fading	2	Reduce adult dependency and monitor independent performance.
Student-specific health, safety or care competence	2	Demonstrate safe performance of authorised, role-specific procedures.
Observation, data and reflective practice	2	Collect objective evidence, protect records and use feedback to improve support.

Priority area	Suggested hours	Expected application
Total	20	Meets the minimum annual requirement set out in the Inclusive Education Policy.

The balance between these areas should be adjusted to reflect the LSA's prior competence and the student's changing needs.

5.2 Supervision and Performance Review

The Inclusion Lead or a delegated line manager should provide regular supervision. Review should consider safeguarding compliance, fidelity to agreed plans, quality of interaction, objective record-keeping, teamwork, punctuality, confidentiality and progress in fading support. Performance review should never rest solely on whether the student appears calm or completes more work; it should also assess participation, dignity, skill development and independence.

6. Implementation Checklists

6.1 Inclusion Team Decision Checklist

☐ The barrier and the functional need are clearly described.

☐ Evidence comes from more than one source.

☐ Previous adjustments and interventions, and their impact, are documented.

☐ The proposed LSA functions and intended outcomes are specific.

☐ Alternatives and less intrusive support models have been considered.

☐ The views of the student and parents have been obtained, where appropriate.

☐ Funding, supervision, timetable, data collection and review arrangements are recorded.

☐ The assignment is recorded in the system required by RAK DOK.

6.2 Pre-Deployment Checklist

☐ Eligibility and qualifications checked against the current School Staff Appointment Policy.

☐ RAK DOK or Ministry of Education appointment letter obtained for the role.

☐ Required safeguarding, identity, background, reference and employment checks completed.

☐ Written contract or service agreement approved.

☐ Job description issued, explained and signed.

☐ School policies issued and acknowledgement recorded.

☐ Safeguarding reporting routes and emergency procedures understood.

☐ Student-specific strategies and risk controls taught, and competence checked.

☐ Line manager, communication protocol, supervision cycle and first review date confirmed.

6.3 Annual Review Questions

☐ Is one-to-one support still necessary across the same contexts and times?

☐ What evidence shows improved access, participation, progress or safety?

☐ Has adult prompting reduced, and has independent performance increased?

☐ Could any element of the support be delivered through adaptive teaching, group support, assistive technology or environmental adjustment?

☐ Does the timetable still provide broad and balanced access to the curriculum?

☐ Are role-specific training and safeguarding requirements current?

☐ What should be maintained, adjusted, reduced or withdrawn, and by when?

7. Status of This Guidance

> *This handbook is operational guidance. It is not a substitute for RAK DOK policy, UAE law, professional advice or the school's own approved policies. Schools should verify the latest regulatory requirements before any appointment or renewal and should resolve any conflict in favour of the governing requirement.*

8. References

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