

ALDERMAN PEEL HIGH SCHOOL

COVER FOR TEACHER ABSENCE

1. Background and Context

- 1.1** The National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload, signed on 15th January, 2003, agreed contractual changes to teachers' pay and conditions with most of the trade unions representing school employees. The contractual changes were introduced over a three year period from 2003 onwards and incorporated in Section 4 of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document issued on an annual basis. Although Section 4 constitutes statutory guidance, this means that changes made annually have a statutory basis.
- 1.2** The changes in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document include circumstances under which support staff may undertake 'specified work', including providing short term cover for teacher absence as set out under Section 133 of the Education Act 2002. The changes with regard to cover took effect from 1st September, 2004 and apply to all teachers, including teachers on the leadership spine and Advanced Skills teachers, whether on permanent, fixed term or temporary contracts and pro-rata to teachers on part-time contracts. The only exceptions to the application of the contractual limit are teachers employed wholly or mainly to undertake cover.

2. Aims

- 2.1** The term 'cover' refers to any occasion where the teacher normally responsible for teaching the class is absent. One of the aims of the National Agreement was to reduce the amount of cover for absent colleagues provided by teachers employed on contracts at the school (other than those employed wholly or mainly to undertake cover). This is because providing cover is not generally viewed as the most productive use of teaching time. A second aim is to find ways to give greater continuity of learning to pupils.
- 2.2** From September 2004 the requirements have been as follows:
- an initial contractual limit of 38 hours per year was in place with the aim that, eventually, teachers rarely provide cover for absent colleagues at all;
 - Headteachers must ensure that cover for absent teachers is shared equitably among all teachers (including the Headteacher), taking account of their teaching and other duties and of the desirability of not using a teacher at the school.
- 2.3** A 'no detriment' clause in the Document in 2004 stated: 'Where the burden of cover is already less than 38 hours, no steps should be taken in

advance of the introduction of the contractual limit which would result in a worsening of current working conditions. Once the limit has been introduced it is not appropriate for schools to seek to increase the amount of cover to the limit.' This applied to the whole school, rather than on an individual basis.

- 2.4** In the past, many teachers have borne a heavy burden of cover for absent colleagues. However, in accordance with the provisions set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2009, from September 2009 teachers may cover only rarely in circumstances which are not foreseeable. Foreseeable circumstances for the School include events that are foreseeable on the basis of historic experience; events that are foreseeable in the normal local experience; and events that may be expected as part of the evolving pattern of provision.
- 2.5** The Headteacher and Governing Body have discretion to make decisions on the nature of both long and short term cover policy for the School. The new legislation requires **all** schools to find different ways of managing cover. In formulating the policy for this School, note has been taken of the [WAMG \(Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group\) Rarely Cover Implementation Process Guidance](#).

3. Cover for Absence - Overview

- 3.1** The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2009 describes absence as occurring "when the person who has been timetabled to take a particular class or group is absent". The type of absence could be for a variety of reasons, including internal and external activities as well as sickness. It could be short term or long term. All types of absence should be carefully managed to minimise the impact on teaching and learning for the pupils.
- 3.2** Arranging cover is a key element of the School's whole approach to providing high quality education for all pupils in the absence of teaching staff. *The member of the support staff administering the cover arrangements should keep a record of the amount of cover undertaken by each teacher. It is also advisable to maintain records of cover undertaken by other staff whose contract and job descriptions specifies that a proportion of their time is/will be available to provide cover supervision.*
- 3.3** The following sections summarise the policy the School will adopt in respect of short and long term absence. More extensive details are contained in Section 4 of this policy.

3.4 Long Term Absence

Medium and long term absences, such as maternity leave or long term illness, tend to be predictable and are therefore more manageable. The standards of teaching and learning for pupils are paramount and absences of this kind will normally only be covered by a qualified teacher.

In the event of a period of long term absence, the School's normal approach will be as follows:

Possible options for Headteacher and governors to consider (not shown in order of preference):

- *short term arrangements for days 1 and 2 (see 3.5)*
- *use of floating teacher*
- *use of shared teacher (between clusters of schools)*
- *from the third day supply teaching provision, supported by the LA's sickness or school's own insurance scheme (if applicable)*
- *where appropriate a fixed term appointment will be made (particularly suitable for maternity cover)*

3.5 Short Term Absence

The School defines 'short' term absence as follows:

- *absences known in advance, e.g. professional development/ medical appointment (if this cannot be arranged outside of the working day)*
- *Staff sickness when at least 24 hours notice has been given*

Depending upon the timetable of the absent teacher, it is likely that cover supervision will become 'specified work' within 5 days and active teaching would be required. In such circumstances the Headteacher will ensure teaching and learning take place by one or more of the following means:

Possible suggestions (not shown in order of preference):

- *employing a supply teacher*
- *using a floating teacher*
- *using a shared teacher (based on clusters of schools)*
- *directing the Higher Level Teaching Assistant to take the class*
- *using a suitably trained cover supervisor*
- *using a learning centre under the overall supervision of a qualified teacher*

4. Cover Strategies

4.1 The Governing Body has agreed that a range of strategies should be available to the Headteacher when dealing with short term absence. This is intended to allow the Headteacher to deal with teacher absence in a way that is compatible with the National Agreement and the best use of the School's resources. Details of the possible options the Headteacher may utilise are set out in Section 5. As a School, our key considerations will be as follows:

- the extent to which continuity of learning can be maintained
- the length of time the pupils would be working without a qualified teacher
- the particular needs of the class concerned

- the skills and experience of the teacher/teaching assistant/cover supervisor/supply teacher/floating teacher/etc. concerned.

4.2 Future Cover Arrangements

The Headteacher or senior manager will use his/her professional judgment to determine the precise responsibilities of staff carrying out cover for absent colleagues. This will be discussed with the whole School staff. Where necessary a member of the School's senior management team will clarify the interpretation of this policy in individual circumstances.

The School's intention is simply to ensure that, wherever possible, pupils are supervised by staff known to them; staff who are familiar with the School's policies and procedures; and staff who can provide continuity until the teacher returns.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

As indicated above, the Headteacher has discretion to deploy any or all of the following in order to cover for teacher absence:

5.1 Supply Teachers

Where supply teachers are to be deployed, the School will only use people who are suitably qualified. Agencies will be required to specify whether supply teachers hold QTS status.

When a qualified supply teacher is employed to provide cover, the School will ensure that, as far as is reasonably possible, they will be delivering teaching and learning, not simply supervising the pupils.

In order to make the most effective use of supply teacher time, the School will ensure that the following materials are available for use by each supply teacher:

- Staff handbook, setting out key policies, e.g. on behaviour management
- Clearly explained lesson plans that define the teaching expectations, the resources to be used, the demands that should be made of the class and the homework to be set
- Information about the abilities and prior attainment of the pupils
- Access to relevant CPD (for longer term appointments).

5.2 Teaching Assistants

The primary function of teaching assistants is to support and assist qualified teachers to deliver effective teaching and learning. The Teaching Assistant role carries its own professional responsibilities and this School recognises the Norfolk County Council Modern Reward Strategy framework for the employment of teaching assistants.

Teaching assistants may be deployed as one of the possible options for delivering cover supervision, provided they carry out work specified in the regulations specified under Section 133 of the 2002 Act under the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher. This does not always require the Teaching Assistant to be supervised or directed by a teacher sharing the same classroom.

The School recognises the value of the continuity of the learning experience teaching assistants can bring for short term cover purposes, in relation to the experience offered by a supply teacher who is less likely to be aware of the needs of the pupil group. The Headteacher will seek to balance their regular use in this way against the educational desirability of removing them from other planned activities with the teachers with whom they normally work.

5.3 Cover Supervisors

Cover supervision by effectively deployed support staff with appropriate skills and training will form part of the School's short term cover strategy. Cover supervisors may be wholly or mainly employed to undertake this role, *(for example a suitably trained technician or administrator already working in the school might also be employed as a cover supervisor)*. Job descriptions, person specifications and salaries will be in line with the LA's standards and pay and grading structure.

Cover supervision is a responsible role and the School will ensure that staff undertaking such cover will:

- have an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau;
- be familiar with the full range of school policies, particularly those regarding Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and Special Needs;
- have the necessary skills to manage classroom activities safely;
- understand and be able to use a range of strategies to deal with classroom behaviour as a whole and also individual behavioural needs;
- understand the line management structure and their role in relation to other adults in the classroom (e.g. volunteer helpers).

Different arrangements may need to be made reflecting the age and organisation within the School but core activities will be:

- short term supervision of work that has already been set as part of the normal curriculum in accordance with School policy. Teachers will not be expected to prepare additional material specifically for cover supervisors to use during their absence. They will, however, be expected to act professionally in preparing material as part of normal lesson planning, which could be used by other staff undertaking cover duties as appropriate;
- managing the behaviour of pupils in line with School policies whilst they are undertaking this work to ensure a constructive environment;

- whilst there is no active teaching taking place, responding to pupils' questions, for example about process and procedures;
- dealing with any problems or emergencies according to the School's policies and procedures;
- collecting any completed work after the lesson and returning it to the teacher;
- reporting back as appropriate using the school's agreed referral procedures on the behaviour of pupils during the class and any issues arising;
- marking work where this can be undertaken by reference to an answer grid, e.g. in multiple choice questions.

The School will agree strategies for setting work so that this does not place excessive burdens on a teacher's planning, preparation and assessment.

Cover supervisors, whether currently employed or future recruits, will be an integral part of all staff development and will receive specific training for their role. The support system for these staff will be as follows:

Suggestions:

- *supervision and management*
- *professional development (CPD)*
- *school's own mentoring system*
- *appraisal and performance management system.*

Training materials could include those used to assist teaching assistants e.g.

- Teaching Assistant Induction Training
- Support Staff introductory training
- LA/Private organisation training
- School's own training
- HLTA training as appropriate.

5.4 Higher Level teaching assistants

The primary function of Higher Level teaching assistants (HLTAs) is to support and assist teachers. They may be deployed to release teachers for guaranteed PPA time, provided that they carry out work specified in the regulations made under Section 133 of the 2002 Education Act under the direction and supervision of a teacher.

In addition, HLTAs may be used for short term cover, but their deployment in this way should be balanced against the educational desirability of regularly removing them from planned activities with the teachers to whom they are normally assigned.

5.5 Floating Teacher

Where a floating teacher is employed, the School will specify the basis on which the floating teacher is employed and how s/he may be deployed. If his/her duties are specifically designed to cover for the absence of other colleagues, the rarely cover limit will not be applicable. In all other cases the rarely cover limit will apply.

5.6 Shared Teacher

This option will only apply in certain areas, where schools have chosen to share the costs of employing a teacher on a shared (cluster) basis as a resource for all. Typically, the teacher will be employed on the payroll of one of the schools, but a service level agreement or a protocol will need to be in place to ensure a fair distribution of the available teaching time. If the teacher is employed solely to cover the absence of other colleagues, the rarely cover limit on cover duties will not apply. It would be feasible to use the shared teacher to develop a bank of learning resources for other staff to draw on in the event of staff absence. Care should however be paid to the teacher's professional development.

5.7 School calendar and timetable

To ensure the system for managing cover is robust, the School will publish a calendar for each school year, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 179 of Section 3 of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2009, following consultation with staff and their union representatives.

The school calendar sets out the School's activities scheduled to take place in the academic year, for example, learning outside the classroom, meetings, parental consultation evenings and Inset days.

The timetable sets out the School's provision for teaching and learning in the School's timetabled teaching week (as defined in sub-paragraph 46.1.1 of the Document).

The pattern of the School timetable may vary across the year. For example, the School may accommodate activities during the year by having a timetable that follows the same pattern for 36 weeks and a different pattern for 2 weeks. Teaching timetables are not frozen in time and there may be variations from year to year.

In-year changes to the calendar and timetable may be made, but this will be only for sound educational reasons – for example, a long term absence or significant educational development. Such changes during the year should not be a frequent occurrence, and the School will:

- Consult with staff and union representatives;
- Plan any changes well in advance;
- Deploy staff appropriately, according to their skills, experience and qualifications.

5.8 Learning resource centre

Cover supervision can be particularly beneficial where work has been carefully pre-set or where pupils can undertake effective self-directed study. Using a learning resource centre to support self-directed study might work well where ICT-based learning is employed. Any arrangements to be made must avoid placing burdens on teachers, but it may be feasible to develop banks of appropriate materials which could be supported by other staff in a learning resource centre setting.

5.9 Teaching Loads

Newly Qualified Teacher

Full time teacher with no additional responsibility 44

Head of Department / Director of Learning 41

Part time staff at a ratio of 6 teaching periods to 1 PPA

6. Learning Outside the Classroom

Learning outside the classroom is an important part of the curriculum and provision for it will be included in the School's calendars and timetables. Appropriate arrangements will be included in the timetable for both the staff and pupils who will be participating in learning outside the classroom and for those who are not.

Whatever timetabling pattern may pertain, it is the absence of the person who has been timetabled to take the class or group that is the trigger for cover.

The extended roles for support staff, which are an integral part of the remodelling agenda, provide the opportunity for the School to consider the use of appropriate adults, other than teachers, to undertake educational visits.

7. Gained Time

7.1 During the academic year, particularly in the summer term, teachers who take examination classes or groups are often released from some of their timetabled teaching commitments as a result of pupils being on study or examination leave. Such time is known as 'gained time'.

7.2 There are activities directly relevant to teaching and learning for which it would be appropriate and desirable to use gained time and which it would be reasonable for the Headteacher to direct teachers to undertake. An agreed list of these activities is as follows:

- Developing/revising departmental/subject curriculum materials, schemes of work, lesson plans and policies in preparation for the new

academic year. This may include identifying appropriate materials for use by supply staff and/or cover supervisors

- Assisting colleagues in appropriate, planned team teaching activities
- Taking groups of pupils to provide additional learning support;
- Supporting selected pupils with course work
- Undertaking planned activities with pupils transferring between year groups or from Primary schools, and
- Where the school has a policy for all staff to release them for CPD during school sessions, gained time may be used for such activities.

8. Monitoring

- 8.1** The Governing Body will ensure that a log is maintained of the hours provided for cover purposes by each teacher, including those worked by the Headteacher. The Headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of provision and reporting annually to Governors in his/her report.