

## Model Policy for Covering Teachers' Absences

The Governing Body of \_\_\_\_\_ School has adopted this policy for covering teachers' absences from the School and will make it known to employees and parents of pupils. It has based the principles of this policy on the provisions of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and former statutory guidance, together with the model policy and guidance from the local authority, with particular reference to the conditions of service applicable in that authority.

### Guiding principles

The strategies to be used in this School when teachers normally responsible for teaching a particular class are absent during the time they have been timetabled to teach are based on the following principles:

- Teachers' absence will be dealt with in a managed way to ensure that all possible steps are taken to enable pupils to continue to learn in spite of the absence of their normal teacher. The Governing Body accepts the principle that pupils' standards are paramount.
- The strategies adopted by the Governing Body will be in line with 'Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement' (January 2003), and the provision in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document that teachers should be required to provide cover only rarely and only in circumstances which are not foreseeable.
- The Governing Body will follow the provisions of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and will comply with the terms and conditions of employment of employees in the school and without detriment to those or other locally agreed arrangements for cover. In particular the Governing Body notes that cover supervisors and higher level teaching assistants are for short-term absences only and should not be used as the remedy for the medium or long term absence of a teacher. Medium and long term absences should be covered by a teacher.
- Cover for absent teachers will be planned within the school calendar and the overall arrangements for meeting the curricular and pastoral needs of pupils in the school and the professional development of employees. It will be an integral part of the school development plan.
- The principal role of teaching assistants in schools is to support teachers and thereby enhance teaching and learning. Their use for short-term class supervision in the absence of a teacher will be kept to a minimum in order to limit the effect on the normal programme of education.

### Definition of cover

The Governing Body acknowledges that historically cover has been defined as teaching pupils in the absence of the teacher timetabled to teach them. It recognises that in the context of the national workload agreement of 2003 cover has also been used to mean supervision of pupils, not involving teaching, by an employee who is

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not a teacher, and specified work with pupils by a suitably trained and qualified employee who is not a teacher.

The Governing Body also acknowledges that teachers allocated time during the pupil day for assessment, planning and preparation in accordance with past practice or the provisions of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document are not absent from their classes, because they have not been timetabled to teach the class during that time. However, it recognises that the organisation of the school to accommodate the statutory guaranteed time for assessment, planning and preparation can inform the way in which the school deals with cover for planned absences of teachers.

This policy is intended to distinguish between teaching cover, and class supervision in which no teaching takes place.

## Strategies for cover

### **(a) Cover provided by teachers employed wholly or mainly for the purpose**

1. The Governing Body will seek to employ or engage enough teachers, whether as part of the establishment of the school, as temporary teachers, or on a casual basis, to meet the cover needs of the school. It will usually make arrangements separately for

- covering the absence of a teacher for several weeks or months (for example, on maternity leave or long-term sickness), when the employment of a temporary, substitute teacher may be supplemented by acting arrangements and redistribution of some duties within the school; and
- short-term absences of teachers, which it will try to cover wherever possible with teachers employed specifically for cover purposes. In making these arrangements all reasonable efforts will be made
- to use teachers qualified and experienced in the appropriate phases and subjects and preferably on the regular staff of the school, recognising that in certain specialist subjects, especially those with extra health and safety requirements (for example, chemistry, physical education, technology), a teacher without the necessary training in the subject cannot replace the normal teacher and will either have to teach a lesson in a subject which he or she is competent to teach or supervise written work or private study;
- to cover, where the school does not employ regular teachers specifically for short-term cover duties, short-term absences with supply teachers who know the school and particularly the pupils whom they are to teach and who have relevant subject experience, making arrangements for their induction and continued support within the school.

### **(b) Other cover arrangements for teachers' absence**

2. For long-term absences when no suitable qualified cover teacher is available the Governing Body will consider the employment of a teacher on the

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employmentbased teacher training scheme or, failing that and subject to the regulations applying to the employment of unqualified teachers for limited teaching duties, an overseastrained teacher or instructor.

3. For very short periods of absence when no suitable qualified cover teacher is available the method of cover will be the best available means of enabling pupils to continue to learn in the absence of their normal teacher. It will also depend on the duration of the absence and the extent to which work can be set for pupils in the teacher's absence. The following strategies will be used according to how they best match the needs of the pupils in the school and the availability of appropriate staff in the school.

- For some short, planned absences of the classroom teacher a higher level teaching assistant (level 4), subject to the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher or nominated teacher in the school and in accordance with the local agreement on classroom based support staff, may be asked to give, for no more than six sessions a week once the governing body has adopted the Single Status scheme, lessons which assist or support the work of such a teacher, with support from another suitable adult where lessons or activities have been planned on the assumption that more than one adult will be present.
- In an emergency and in accordance with the local agreement on classroom based support staff a teaching assistant (level 3 and above, i.e. including any higher level teaching assistant employed in the School) will be expected to supervise the whole class for a short time (normally for a period of less than a whole lesson) until the teacher returns or alternative arrangements are made. •

When there is to be a short period of planned absence a teaching assistant (level 3) may be asked to supervise the whole class, in accordance with the local agreement on classroom-based support staff for no more than two sessions a week in total and in return for the payment of a responsibility allowance. (A session is defined as a morning or an afternoon.) A higher level teaching assistant may also be asked to undertake such supervision but only when no suitable alternative is available.

- For some short, planned absences of a teacher a suitably trained and supported cover supervisor may be asked to supervise the class or group of pupils, for whom a qualified or nominated teacher has set work in accordance with arrangements made by the head teacher of the school and with the national guidance.
- Teachers should be required to cover only rarely, and only in circumstances that are not foreseeable, and provided that such cover is shared equitably among all teachers in the school (including the head teacher), taking account of their teaching and other duties, by applying the school's detailed rota arrangements (on which the head teacher will have consulted with the school representatives of the recognised teachers' associations and then with all teachers in the school) for sharing equitably the burden of cover amongst teachers in the school in circumstances that are not foreseeable. The allocation of all such cover will be recorded and available for consultation by individual teachers and by their professional associations.

## Policy and system for cover

[DETAILED POLICY TO BE INSERTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY]

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