

Handsworth Grange Community Sports College

Cover Policy



Current Policy as of: September 2018

LT Responsibility: Nick Parker

Governor Committee: Teaching, Learning and Pupil Outcomes

HGCSC COVER POLICY

1. BACKGROUND

The school will manage sickness and other absences effectively, and in accordance with its policies, in such a way that provides appropriate support to staff but also ensures minimal impact of teacher absence on pupil progress and wellbeing.

From September 2009 schools are required to have in place *a robust system* which ensures that teachers are required to cover for absent colleagues only rarely. This contractual provision applies to all teachers and the Headteacher at the school, including teachers on the leadership spine and ASTs whether on permanent, fixed-term or temporary contracts and pro-rata to teachers on part-time contracts. It does not apply to teachers employed specifically for the purposes of providing cover.

The **School Teachers Pay & Conditions Document 2008 (STPCD)** states that '*Cover*' refers to any situations where the teacher normally responsible for teaching a particular class is absent from the classroom during the time he or she has been timetabled to teach. Section 4, Para 50 pg 184 of the STPCD states:

"Schools should expect to implement the objective that teachers should only 'rarely cover' from 1st September 2009."

'*Rarely cover*' does not mean '*never*' and it should be interpreted as meaning a teacher will normally only be asked to cover in circumstances that are *unforeseeable* i.e. sickness, emergency meetings. *Foreseeable* circumstances refer to occasions where absences are known about in advance e.g. CPD activities, fieldwork. Teachers *would not normally* be asked to cover these types of absences.

Unforeseeable or emergency cover will be shared equitably among all teaching staff having regard to their other commitments.

Teachers PPA time is part of their contractual entitlement and cannot be used for cover.

2. Links

Also see the HGCSC Cover Work Code of Practice and Cover Lesson proforma; Professional Support Assistant job (PSA) descriptions in addition to section 9 of this policy.

3. AIMS

The primary aims of the HGCSC Cover Policy are:

- a)** To provide the highest quality of teaching and learning for all pupils and to ensure at all times that teaching and learning is delivered by appropriately trained and competent staff.
- b)** To raise standards by freeing teachers and Head Teachers from tasks which do not require professional skills and expertise, and which enables them to focus on the core function of teaching and leading and managing teaching and learning.
- c)** To provide opportunities for the professional development of Support Staff colleagues e.g. supporting progression to HLTA 3 and 4 or as a means of acquiring experience and expertise to gain a teacher-training placement.

d) To establish a 'robust system' which meets statutory requirements and conforms with the spirit and intention of the Workforce Agreement

4. In determining specific arrangements for teacher cover, the Head Teacher will use their professional judgement taking into account:

- Whether the cover needed is for ***short term absence, at HGCSC this is normally defined as a 2 week period*** or whether medium or long term cover is needed e.g. for long term illness or maternity leave.
- The extent to which continuity of learning can be maintained.
- The length of time pupils would be working without a teacher.
- The particular needs of the classes concerned.
- Whether *cover supervision* is required *OR* someone to deliver *specified work*.
- The skills and experience of appropriately trained Teaching and Learning Support Staff capable of providing *cover supervision* and/or *specified work*.

A. Cover supervision occurs where no active teaching (*i.e. no specified work*) is taking place and, under the supervision of a member of support staff, pupils undertake pre-prepared work. Colleagues undertaking cover supervision would still be expected to present and explain work provided for pupils, to support pupils attempting to do the work, to manage pupil behaviour, to ensure the health and safety of pupils etc.

Cover supervision is suitable for short-term absence but it is not an appropriate way of covering medium to long-term absence or of dealing with a class when a teacher is not timetabled to teach them. The National Joint Council (NJC) national profiles recommend that, in a four-tier career structure, cover supervision is a level 3 activity.

B. 'Specified work' involves:

- i) Planning and preparing lessons and courses for pupils;
- ii) Delivering lessons to pupils. This includes delivery via distance learning or computer-aided techniques;
- iii) Assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils;
- iv) Reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils.

C. Specified work should be delivered by a teacher. However, appropriately trained Support Staff may carry out specified work subject to a number of conditions.

- They *should be* trained to HLTA standard.
- They must carry out the '*specified work*' in order to assist or support the work of a qualified teacher in the school;
- ***They must be subject to the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher*** in accordance with arrangements made by the Head Teacher of the school;

- The Head Teacher must be satisfied that they have the experience, skills and expertise to carry out the *'specified work'*.
- There must be a system of supervision in place and support for staff delivering specified work.

The central principle is that pupil standards are paramount and that absence requiring specified work to be delivered will be covered by a qualified teacher *OR* by a Support Staff colleague who has the requisite training and skills to provide specified work

In a situation where medium to long term cover is required the Head Teacher should consider employing a supply staff colleague on a contract. The colleague should be regarded as temporary member of the department and would be expected to participate fully in all aspects of the teaching of the subject e.g. assessment, liaison with Heads of Year and parents, attendance of meetings etc.

5. Gained Time

The term *'gained time'* is used to describe situations where teachers are released from their timetable as a result of pupils undertaking examinations, or a teacher's class or group are absent on an education visit.

Teachers may be directed to use gained time to undertake the following activities, directly relevant to teaching and learning for example:

- Developing/revising departmental/subject curriculum materials, schemes of work, lesson plans and policies in preparation for the new academic year; identifying or developing appropriate materials for use by supply staff and/or cover supervisors; assessing, moderating and standardising teacher assessed work.
- Assisting colleagues in appropriate, planned team teaching activities; team teaching; cross-curricular projects.
- Taking groups of pupils to provide additional learning support; booster classes; providing additional staff for targeted groups.
- Supporting selected pupils with coursework; academic coaching.
- Undertaking planned activities with pupils transferring between year groups or from primary schools; transition visits; transition plans for specific children or groups; transition lessons for Y9 pupils commencing KS4 courses.
- Gained Time may also be used for activities such as where the school has a policy to release staff for CPD during school sessions: Staff study leave; new staff induction; business or school placements; peer lesson observations; skills development; development of Support Staff especially those in the Teaching and Learning category.

6. COVERING ABSENCE

All types of absence will be carefully managed to minimise the impact on teaching and learning for the pupil.

A teacher's absence from their timetabled teaching commitments may be planned (*e.g. training course*) or unexpected (*e.g. sickness*). However, the principles described below apply equally to both types of cover.

Cover will be undertaken only by staff:

6.1 Who have been assessed as competent to undertake the role;

6.2 For whom all relevant employment safeguarding checks have been undertaken;

6.3 Who have been inducted into the school's policies and procedures, particularly child protection, behaviour management and health and safety.

7. HGCSG provides cover in the following ways:

7.1 Professional Support Assistants (PSAs)

The school will employ PSAs to provide short-term cover for absent teachers. This will be either cover or specified work depending on their training and expertise.

7.2 Other support staff

Support staff with specialist skills and knowledge (e.g. HLTAs, Subject Technicians) may provide cover for absent teachers on a short-term basis.

In both the above cases the Head Teacher may decide, through negotiation and agreement with relevant colleagues, to invite the Support Staff colleague to provide specified work for a longer period of time provided the Head Teacher is assured the colleague has the relevant expertise and experience to do so. In such situations the Support Staff colleague must work under the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher. The Head Teacher may also apply for a variation of contract to ensure the Support Staff colleague is paid appropriately unless the terms and conditions of their contract already take this into account.

7.3 Teachers who are timetabled to do cover lessons.

The school has identified staff who are below their quota of lesson allocations. With their agreement, such staff have been allocated '*cover lessons*' where they may be used to cover for absent colleagues if required. This may be cover or specified work depending on the requirements of the lesson.

7.4 Supply teachers

The school will endeavour to engage the services of a specialist Supply teacher to cover for teachers whose absence exceeds 2 weeks. A supply teacher may be engaged to cover for certain subjects, lessons or teachers sooner than 2 weeks as deemed appropriate by the school management. The school will seek always to engage the service of a qualified teacher capable of providing cover or specified work depending on the requirements of the lesson.

7.5 Specialist lessons

No person shall provide cover for PE or other specialist lessons unless, with reference where appropriate, to the AOTT (*Adults Other Than Teachers*) Guidance;

- They hold the relevant qualifications/training; and,
- A risk assessment has been carried out by a qualified teacher where deemed appropriate by the Subject Leader or delegate.
- An activity is undertaken which does not require the skills or training of a qualified specialist.

8. MANAGING COVER:

It is the responsibility of the teacher being covered and/or the Subject Leader or other delegated team members, to ensure continuity and appropriate learning activities for groups that need covering. See the *HGCSC Cover Code of Practice* for clarification and advice.

- Where the absence is planned, teachers must provide details of the work to be undertaken by pupils during the lessons to be covered along with other relevant materials.
- In the cases of unplanned absence, teachers should, if possible, provide details of cover work e.g. via telephone or email.
- The SL and team should have a bank of suitable work available for all groups in every year.
- The Subject Leader, or other delegated team members, should supervise and monitor the setting of cover work or should provide appropriate cover work if an absent colleague has not provided cover work.
- The Subject Leader, or other delegated team members, should provide appropriate support to those colleagues covering lessons in their subject area.

8.1 The school will expect supply/cover teachers, wherever possible, to engage in active teaching during cover lessons.

8.1.1 In the case of short-term cover this will include delivering provided lesson plans and then providing feedback to the teacher or Subject Leader as appropriate.

8.1.2 In the case of medium/long term cover, the supply/cover teachers will be expected to undertake 'specified work' i.e. planning, preparation, delivery, assessment, recording and reporting (*see section 4 above*).

8.2 PSAs and other support staff providing cover will be expected to:

- Supervise whole classes or groups during lesson time;
- Give instructions for the lesson as provided;
- Maintain good order with reference to agreed policies and procedures;
- Respond to questions and keep pupils on task
- Provide feedback to the teacher using formal and informal procedures;
- Work under the professional direction of teachers.

PSAs and other support staff will not be expected to undertake 'specified work' unless appropriately trained and qualified which should include an assessment as meeting the appropriate HLTA standards. The school is committed to ensuring all such assessments are through an external assessment process.

8.3 Where support staff are deployed to provide cover, the Head Teacher will:

- Have regard to the suitability of the task to the member of staff's current role;
- The impact on their workload and whether sufficient time is available, or could be freed up;
- Consider any additional training needs;

- Ensure that if additional paid working hours are required this is agreed with the member of staff;
- Ensure job descriptions are revised to reflect agreed changes and additional responsibilities;
- Ensure pay and grading reflects any revised roles and responsibilities.

8.4 All staff providing cover are expected to:

- Provide written feedback e.g. completing the evaluation section of the cover lesson proforma for the most appropriate person in the curriculum area where they have completed a cover. Complete any other relevant paperwork. Collect in equipment, materials, work and store or pass these on as instructed.
- Plan, prepare and assess *where* appropriate i.e. in relation to their training, expertise, experience and role.

8.5 Monitoring

To fulfil its commitment to ensure the short, medium and long term quality of teaching and learning for all its pupils, cover will be recorded, monitored and evaluated as follows:

- The overall amount of cover required (*planned and unplanned*);
- The number of individual teacher's lessons requiring cover;
- The number of lessons covered in each year/subject group;
- The number and quality of lessons covered by each qualified teacher and other staff;
- All those providing regular and/or medium/long term cover will be observed on a *termly* basis.
- All staff completing a short-term cover lesson where work has been set by the absent teacher or appropriate team member should complete evaluation details on the HGCSC Cover Lesson Proforma. A copy should go to the SL who will resolve any issues that arise as necessary with the colleague and a copy should go to the members of LT responsible for teaching and learning quality assurance – currently Nick Parker and Katie Reynolds.

9. Professional Support Assistants (PSAs)

Cover supervision by effectively deployed support staff with appropriate skills and training is a fundamental part of our cover strategy. At HGCSC cover supervisors are known as Professional Support Assistants (PSAs). Job descriptions and pay and grading structure are in line with Children & Young People's Services guidelines. It is a highly responsible role and the school will ensure that staff undertaking such cover should:

- Have an enhanced disclosure from Criminal Records Bureau.
- Be familiar with the full range of school policies, particularly those regarding Health & Safety, Child Protection, Equal Opportunities and Special Educational Needs.
- Have the necessary skills to manage safely classroom activities.

- Understand and be able to use a range of strategies to deal with classroom behaviour as a whole, and also individual behavioural needs.
- Have sufficient expertise, skills and experience to deliver cover work (*i.e. meet TA Level 3 standards*) and, *where possible*, to carry out specified work as defined in section 4 above (*i.e. a colleague who has gained HLTA status*).
- PSAs who have not gained HLTA status are only trained to provide cover supervision. They are not trained teachers and should not routinely be treated as such. However, they may voluntarily go beyond merely supervising with the agreement and support of their Line Manager and the respective SL/Teacher in relation to their own professional development, interests and aspirations.

The Role of PSAs

The Support Staff Cover Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Head Teacher or the appropriate member of the Leadership Team, will prioritise the use of PSAs in order to have the maximum impact on relieving teachers from doing cover and on ensuring that a high quality of learning, and where possible, teaching, will be maintained.

PSAs can only be 'booked' individually, or as a team, through the Cover Co-ordinator. The list below outlines the role of PSAs – it is not definitive. Subject Leaders wishing to use PSAs for activities not covered below should discuss such requests with the PSA Line Manager.

- PSAs are principally allocated to faculties or clusters of subject areas based on school needs, their interests, aspirations, skills, knowledge and understanding. This is to enable them to develop a more local knowledge, understanding and expertise. However, it does not mean that they do not work outside of these areas. As stated above, the first priority of the use of PSAs is to have the maximum impact on relieving teachers from doing cover across the school.
- PSAs can be used to replace a teacher for off-site work.
- PSAs can be used to facilitate lesson observations, PMR process, mentoring etc.
- PSAs could be used to facilitate on-site training, coaching or moderation.
- PSAs will be expected to contribute to whole school activities e.g. take part in lunch time duties and bus duties, contribute to lunch time and after school clubs and activities.
- PSAs are expected to work in their designated subject areas when not being used for cover e.g. in helping with display, production and preparation of resources and equipment.
- PSAs should receive 3 lessons of non-contact time. This is not fixed on the timetable although it will include one timetabled common period to meet with their Line Manager.
- PSAs may re-allocate cover amongst the team to facilitate the aim of each receiving 10% non-contact time and to ensure that the total of cover lessons is distributed fairly amongst the team. This may mean that a PSA will be working in an area to which they have not been officially linked.

Training

The PSAs, both currently employed and future recruits, will be an integral part of all staff development and performance management processes. They will receive specific training as needed. Training opportunities may include the following:

- Training materials including those used to assist Teaching Assistants, including Higher Level (HLTAs) to meet occupational standards. The school aims to have all PSAs trained to meet the HLTA standards.
- Teacher Assistant: Induction Training and Support Staff Introductory Training.
- Children and Young People's Services/Private Organisation Training.
- The school's in-house training programmes and processes.
- Linked Department/Faculty training.
- The school will facilitate additional training opportunities for PSAs to develop their experience and expertise further e.g. to act as coaches or mentors for pupils, to assist with pupil academic or behavioural intervention, to support pupil pastoral work.

Training will form part of a developmental career structure for the staff concerned.

The school will seek the advice of the Children & Young People's Services to ensure adequate grading, pay and training. Job descriptions are in line with Children & Young People's Services guidelines, reflecting role and responsibility.



Approved by

Governor: **Date:**

Signature: