**Introduction**

The need for cover arises when a teacher is absent from a lesson that they are timetabled to teach.

This policy sets out how [name of school/college/trust] will organise cover for absent teachers to ensure it can be arranged in a speedy and appropriate manner. [Name of school/college/trust] believes that there should be a fair, equitable and appropriate distribution of cover duties amongst its staff.

[Name of school/college/trust] acknowledges the importance of having an effective cover policy that establishes a strategy for dealing with planned and unplanned absences of teachers, as well as defining the roles and responsibilities of support staff members who may be asked to provide cover from time to time.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all staff employed by [name of school/college/trust], including fixed-term, temporary and/or agency staff, except for teachers who are employed wholly or mainly for the purpose of providing cover.

**Equalities**

[Name of school/college/trust] is committed to complying with all relevant employment and equalities legislation and regulations.

A Workload and Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) may be undertaken to ensure that the application of this policy does not disadvantage any group with a protected characteristic(s), as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

**Principles**

[Name of school/college/trust] supports the drive to achieve a better work-life balance for all staff and recognises that the intention of the provision is to reduce teacher workload and will, therefore, respect the spirit as well as the letter of the statutory provisions.

[Name of school/college/trust] undertakes not to request that teaching assistants, Cover Supervisors and HLTAs work beyond their contractual role.

[Name of school/college/trust] recognises that providing cover is not an effective use of a teacher’s time and is committed to exhausting all other reasonable strategies before, exceptionally, asking a member of the teaching staff to cover.

[Name of school/college/trust] will ensure that proper and appropriate cover is arranged for its teaching staff when required, irrespective of any financial difficulties such arrangements may present.

[Name of school/college/trust] will seek to ensure that cover is only undertaken by qualified teachers. In circumstances where this is not reasonably possible and there is a severe shortage of qualified teachers, [Name of school/college/trust] will ensure that cover is only undertaken by support staff with appropriate levels of skills, status, and experience, and that the staff are appropriately remunerated.

[Name of school/college/trust] will not undermine any existing contractual and agreed arrangements for leave of absence when arranging cover.

**Definition of ‘Rarely Cover’**

As per the STPCD, [Name of school/college/trust] acknowledges that teachers should be required to provide cover only rarely, and in circumstances that are not foreseeable (this does not apply to teachers who are employed wholly or mainly for the purpose of providing such cover).

Most events which prompt a need for cover are foreseeable. For example, it is probable that cover will be required when teachers are absent from school due to other work commitments such as school trips, external meetings, or training.

Furthermore, it is foreseeable that there will be a certain level of sickness absence at any one time and that this may increase at certain times of the year e.g. during the UK winter season.

No fixed hours cover limit will be set by [Name of school/college/trust] as this is incompatible with cover being undertaken only rarely and in exceptional circumstances.

Where the class of an absent teacher is split and shared between other classes, this constitutes cover and should occur only ‘rarely’ and when other strategies for providing cover have failed.

**Short-term absences**

[Name of school/college/trust] defines short-term absence as a period of absence lasting between 1-5 days which might be known in advance (for example, where a teacher has a medical appointment or is undergoing professional development) or unexpected (for example, absence due to illness).

In these circumstances, Cover Supervisors and HLTAs will only be used to cover whole classes for up to five consecutive days. After that period, the absence will no longer be classed as short-term.

Where short term absences are to be covered using Cover Supervisors, this will be carried out by staff appointed to a permanent post as Cover Supervisor, with a specific job description and salary grading.

**Medium and long-term absences**

[Name of school/college/trust]’s measures for providing cover for medium and long-term absences (e.g. maternity leave, long-term sick leave, etc.) should be applied in the following order:

1. Deploy either:

1. A cover teacher from within the schools’ complement,
2. A fixed-term contract (FTC) teacher, specifically recruited to cover the absence, or
3. A supply teacher (directly engaged by [Name of school/college/trust]).

(NB: this approach is essential for medium and long-term absence, though it can also be used wherever possible in the case of short-term absence too.)

1. Where a cover, FTC or supply teacher is genuinely unavailable, HLTAs may be used but only for the shortest possible time until a qualified teacher is available again.
2. Where the above options are not available, Cover Supervisors may be deployed to cover for the shortest possible time until a cover or supply teacher is available. [Name of school/college/trust] accepts that cover supervision entails no active teaching taking place and that pupils carry out, under supervision, work which has been prepared in advance.
3. Only in exceptional emergency situations, where none of the above options are available, will teachers be directed to cover. Any requirement to cover will be shared equitably among all teaching staff, including the SLT.

**PPA time**

[Name of school/college/trust] agrees with the provision of the STPCD that PPA time cannot be used for cover, and that teachers cannot be directed to undertake any other duties during their PPA time.

Additionally, [Name of school/college/trust] agrees that HLTAs will not be used to predominantly cover teacher PPA time, and that Cover Supervisors will not be used to fill gaps in the timetable created by teacher PPA time.

**Pay for cover**

[Name of school/college/trust] will ensure that a teaching assistant who substitutes for a Cover Supervisor or a HLTA, or a Cover Supervisor who covers for a HLTA, will be appropriately remunerated for the lessons covered. If such cover is being provided on a regular basis, then a grading enhancement should be considered.

**Setting cover work**

Teachers will not routinely be required to set or plan additional lessons for use by cover staff. The exception to this would be during gained time where teachers may be directed to identify appropriate materials for use by supply staff, HLTAs and/or cover supervisors.

Teachers may be directed to use gained time to cover for a colleague, however this should only happen on rare occasions.

Teachers who are absent due to sickness or any unplanned absence will not be required to set cover work.

**Timetabling**

[Name of school/college/trust] will not timetable a HLTA or Cover Supervisor to take lessons, as such cover would clearly be expected on a medium or long-term basis and would therefore be inappropriate.

Re-timetabling/in-year changes to the teaching calendar and timetable will only occur for sound educational reasons e.g. a long-term absence or significant educational development.

**Review and monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually, in consultation with the recognised unions, to ensure consistency, fairness, and effectiveness, and to reflect any changes in employment legislation.

[Name of school/college/trust] will monitor, review and report on the outcomes and impact of this policy on an annual basis, in line with the Equality Act 2010.