



## **SCHOOL COVER POLICY**

### **Introduction**

The school policy for cover was developed from the Infant school Pupils & Personnel sub-committee of the Governing Body and has the full agreement of the Ambleside Primary working group Governing Body. The policy was approved and ratified by the working group during the summer term 2006.

This policy reflects the contractual changes to the teachers' contract with regard to cover effective 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005.

Both the school and the Local Education Department supports the core aims of the National Agreement on raising standards and tackling workload to free teachers to focus on teaching and learning.

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004, the STPCD placed a limit on each individual teacher of 38 hours of cover that he/she can be required to do in each academic year.

This document reflects the guidance issued by Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) on cover supervision, and the guidance accompanying the Section 133 Regulations issued under the Education Act 2002, accessed via [www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/remodelling/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/remodelling/) and the contractual provisions of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2003 (STPCD), accessed via [www.teachernet.gov.uk/paydoc/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/paydoc/)

### **Purpose of the provisions of the National Agreement and the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2003**

Cover for absence is not an appropriate use of the time of teachers at a school. In the past, many teachers have borne a burden of cover for absent colleagues, but this should increasingly be unusual. Ambleside Primary school aims to provide a downward pressure on cover, to achieve the objective of the National Agreement that teachers at a school should only cover for absent colleagues in exceptional circumstances.

### **Definition of absence**

Absence occurs when the teacher normally responsible for teaching a particular class is absent from the classroom during the time they have been timetabled to teach. The absence could be for a variety of reasons, including internal or external activities as well as sickness.

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004, the existing provisions on cover were removed and two new contractual changes came into effect:

- A limit on the amount of cover that can be provided by an individual teacher;

- An amended duty for the Head Teacher to ensure that cover for absent teachers is shared equitably among all teachers in school, taking account of their teaching and other duties and of the desirability of not using a teacher at the school until all other reasonable means of providing cover have been exhausted.

The contractual changes apply to all teachers at our school, including teachers on the leadership spine, on permanent, fixed term or temporary contracts and pro rata to teachers on part-time contracts.

### **Reducing the burden of cover**

From the academic year 2006/2007, the limit of 37 hours of cover per individual teacher will not be exceeded. No weekly or termly limit within the 37 hours has been identified within the contractual limit. As a school we will seek to ensure, as far as practicable, an even spread of cover throughout each term. The thirty-seven hours will then decrease further on an academic yearly basis.

Ambleside Primary school applies the detriment clause, that if teachers do less than 37 hours, e.g. 33, they are protected by the STPCD to only do a maximum of 32 the following academic year.

All cover for absence undertaken by teachers at our school counts towards the limit.

The Governing body retains the right that if the school unfortunately gets to the stage whereby all teachers have reached the limit on cover, for the first two days of a colleagues absence, then 'Cover Supervision' will be carried out by the named members of staff who meet the criteria to the satisfaction on the Head Teacher.

The guaranteed Preparation, Planning and Assessment (PPA) time of teachers at our school forms part of the legal conditions of employment from September 2006 and will not / can not be used for cover.

### **Educational Visits**

Educational visits are planned activities. Where teachers are absent due to participating in such activities as a cohort, the absence is most appropriately covered by supply teachers or by using cover supervision. If a teacher at school is used to cover for such an absence the amount of cover will count towards the limit.

Where a teacher requires non-contact time in the timetable as a result of a class or group they would normally have taught being absent on an educational visit, then the guidance for gained time should apply. Activities to be undertaken by teachers in gained time must be planned well in advance of the visit.

### **Exceptions**

The only exceptions to the application of the contractual limit are teachers employed wholly or mainly to undertake cover.

### **Strategies for managing cover**

Ambleside Primary School has devised a clear and well-tailored school policy for dealing with cover. Absence is dealt with in a managed way to ensure that all possible steps are taken to enable pupils to continue to learn effectively. The strategies for managing cover will need to take account to the type of absence. For example, long-term sickness, or

maternity leave, will be more predictable and, therefore, more manageable than sudden illness. In order to protect pupil standards, absences after two days and longer-term absences will be covered by a qualified teacher (supply).

Ambleside Primary School has a range of options for providing cover, including through supply teachers, and support staff suitably qualified and trained to undertake 'specified work' (see guidance accompanying Section 133 Regulations issued under Education Act 2002).

Cover for short term absences may be provided by persons who are not qualified teachers. However, it should be stressed that teachers and suitably skilled support staff are not interchangeable. Accountability for the overall learning outcomes of a particular pupil will rest with that pupil's qualified classroom teacher and, to that end, the National Agreement states that each class or group for timetabled core and other foundation subjects and for religious education must be assigned a qualified teacher to teach them (subject to the unqualified teacher provisions in the Regulations).

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that a support staff member has the appropriate skills, experience and expertise to carry out 'specified work'. Where 'specified work' is undertaken by a support staff member, and particularly where they are working with whole classes, the Governing Body strongly recommended that the head teacher should have regard for the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) Standard in determining whether those staff have the necessary level of skills and expertise.

### **Teachers employed wholly or mainly for the purposes of cover**

Ambleside Primary School has chosen not to employ an additional teacher specifically for the purposes of cover due to financial planning implications.

### **Supply Teachers**

Supply teachers are used to cover for all types of absence from the third day onwards. Where supply teachers are providing cover, they should, be actively teaching and not mainly used for cover supervision or occupying children.

It is also important that they are managed properly and effectively, with regard to their teaching and development needs. Long term and regular supply have appropriate access to CPD to maintain their standards of subject knowledge, pedagogy and behaviour management skills. Ambleside Primary School has adopted good practice in the use of supply teachers. These include:

- Careful inductions into the school using materials that are matched to their period of employment;
- The provision of simply structured and clearly explained medium-term and short-term plans that also define the teaching expectations, the resources to be used, the demands that should be made of the class and the homework that should be set;
- The provision of information about the abilities and prior attainment of the pupils in the class;
- The provision of information about any children who have specific medical or special needs;
- Effective management so that all involved understand what is required and the professional standards that must be met;
- Opportunities for CPD such as attending school INSET training days.

Please note that supply teachers, who fail to educate and move children on during their teaching, are not invited back to the school. Their supply agency used is informed of this so that they don't return.

### **Health and Safety**

The head teacher must be satisfied that those undertaking cover, who are required to teach or provide cover supervision, are suitably competent and qualified and are able to do so in a safe environment.

### **Definition of Specified work**

Specified work occurs if one or more of the following activities is being undertaken:

1. Planning and preparing lessons for pupils
2. Delivering lessons for pupils
3. Assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils
4. Reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils

Occasions where this would occur are planned CPD Professional Development release, NQT 10% release time, Leadership and Management duties and PPA.

Existing members of staff taking on this role, have an additional a job description including details of the 'specified work' they are asked to do within the school.

The Governors have agreed that at Ambleside Primary school, teachers with qualified teaching status will conduct the majority of specified work, for the academic year 2006/2007. Due to budget constraints this will be reviewed on a financial yearly basis for the future year.

### **Definition of Cover Supervision**

The term 'cover supervision' occurs when there is no active teaching taking place. Pupils would continue their learning by carrying out pre-prepared exercises/tasks under supervision. Cover supervision does not involve carrying out 'Specified Work' as outlined in the Education (Specified Work and Registration) Regulations 2003, which can be accessed via <http://teachernet.gov.uk/management/remodelling/>. Full guidance provided by the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group on 'Cover Supervision' can also be accessed via this website address.

Cover supervision will be used to assist in the delivery of PPA release time for teaching staff by providing cover by two teaching assistants at Level 2 and above, during the Registration period, and transfer of classes to and from external providers such as the Sports Development team.

Cover supervision will only be used for short-term absences on the first two days a teacher is absent on exceptional occasions. These might be known in advance for example, where a teacher has a medical appointment or unexpected such as absence due to illness. Longer term absence – e.g. due to long term sick or maternity leave is covered by a supply teacher.

The Head Teacher has responsibility for exercising their professional judgement in determining what should be regarded as "short-term" absence. The key considerations are:

1. The extent to which continuity of learning can be maintained;
2. The length of time a particular group of pupils would be working without a teacher;
3. The proportion of the total curriculum time affected in a specific subject over the course of a term.

Those providing cover supervision will be existing members of staff working at Level 2 or above, which include cover as one of their key functions on a separate additional job description. Staff undergoing this will be appropriately remunerated as recommended by the LA and union agreement, paid at scale 5, points 22-25. The actual hourly point will be two points higher than their normal salary point. This will be written into the additional job description.

The head teacher will ensure that any persons used in this way have been appropriately trained, particularly in pupil behaviour management and standards expected from the children.

**Responsibilities and duties within cover supervision include:**

- To supervise a pre-set learning activity, in the absence of a teacher, in accordance with this policy.
- To organise and manage an appropriate learning environment and resources.
- To liaise with the designated member from the Leadership team to understand what the pre-prepared exercise for the class will be and what resources may be given to the pupils to facilitate learning.
- To explain to pupils what is required and what pre-prepared task/exercise they will be expected to undertake.
- To answer any general questions the pupils have in relation to the work, which they have been given on processes and procedures.
- To manage the behaviour of pupils whilst they undertake the pre-prepared exercise/task to ensure a constructive environment is maintained, by using a range of strategies to deal with classroom behaviour as a whole and also individual behavioural needs.
- To collect the completed work from pupils and return this to the designated teacher.
- To report back to the designated class teacher as appropriate on any issues arising.

**Skills, knowledge and training – for cover supervision**

Cover supervision is a responsible role, involving as it does taking sole charge of a class/group of pupils. In particular, staff undertaking cover supervision should:

1. Be familiar with the full range of school policies, particularly those regarding health and safety, equal opportunities and special educational needs (SEN);
2. Have the necessary skills to manage safely classroom activities, the physical learning space and resources for which they are responsible;
3. Understand and be able to use a range of strategies to deal with classroom behaviour as whole and also individual behavioural needs.

**Terms and Conditions for Support Staff**

Where support staff are undertaking cover supervision duties formal recognition is given to the change in their role through their contract and job description for these specific duties, which are to be reviewed on a termly basis. An additional contract will be agreed in advance with the member of staff. Factors, which are considered, include the suitability of the task to the member of staff's current role and experience, the impact on their workload, additional and/or specific training required and remuneration.

### **Maintaining a record of cover**

A record is kept of cover undertaken by the Head Teacher, for all of the time cover supervision has been provided.

### **Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities**

Every individual has equal access to the curriculum regardless of their gender, age, culture, religion, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. Ambleside Infant and Nursery school is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.

