



POLICY ON COVERING FOR TEACHER ABSENCE

**Presented to
Trustees
4 April 2017**

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Date reviewed:	9 November 2010 Personnel Committee
Date of next review:	Autumn 2018

¹ This is the date the policy was approved by the meeting

² This is the date the policy was reviewed prior to its approval above

³ This is the date as set by the policy review clause or the date approved plus two years

Footnote:

- Headteacher also means Head of College and Principal
- School also means College, Academy or Academies
- MAT refers to Multi-Academy Trust

Scope

This policy applies to all schools within the 4Cs Multi-Academy Trust

1. Cover for Absence - Overview

- 1.1 The National Agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' and the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document describe absence as occurring '*when the teacher normally responsible for teaching a particular class or group is absent from the classroom during the times they have been timetabled to teach*'. The absence could be for a variety of reasons, including internal and external activities, as well as sickness and could be long or short term.
- 1.2 Arranging appropriate cover is an important part of the school's approach to providing high quality education for all students in the absence of teaching staff. Maintaining the quality of the students' learning experience is paramount.
- 1.3 From September 2009 onwards, teachers in schools within the 4Cs Multi-Academy Trust will only rarely be asked to cover the duties of absent colleagues. This does not mean that teachers will never be asked to provide cover as it must be acknowledged that the Headteacher cannot predict every possible set of circumstances. However, teachers will only be asked to provide cover where the circumstances were unforeseeable (*unless they are employed wholly or mainly to undertake cover*).
- 1.4 These changes are contractual and are specified in the current School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. The School's intention is to ensure that, wherever possible, students 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.
- 1.5 The School's approach is in line with the Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations, which define 'specified work' as:
 - a) planning and preparing lessons and courses for students;
 - b) delivering lessons to students;
 - c) assessing the development, progress and attainment of students; and
 - d) reporting on the development, progress and attainment of students.
- 1.6 The following sections summarise the policy the School will adopt in respect of short and long term absence.

2. School Calendar

- 2.1 To ensure that the system for managing cover is robust, the School will publish a calendar for each academic year.
- 2.2 Each member of the teaching staff will also receive an annual teaching timetable. It is accepted that teaching timetables cannot be 'set in stone', so there may need to be variations to the timetable during the year in light of significant changes that arise (eg a long term sickness absence, or a change in practice which is required by statute). The Headteacher will, however, make every effort to minimise the need for changes to individual timetables in the best interests of learning. It will be important to ensure that, in the rare circumstances where changes have to be made to a teacher's timetable during the year, this is not for reasons that compromise the spirit and intention of the National Agreement.

There will be some variation days.

3. Cover Strategies

3.1 The Trust Board has agreed that a range of strategies should be available to the Headteacher when seeking to cover the absence of a member of the teaching staff. This is intended to allow the Headteacher to deal with teacher absence in a way that is compatible with the National Agreement and makes the best use of the School's resources. Details of the possible options the Headteacher may use are set out in Sections 4 and 5.

3.2 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 students would be working without a qualified teacher
- the particular needs of the class concerned
- the skills and experience of the cover person.

4. Long Term Absence

4.1 The Headteacher and the Trust Board will provide the best cover possible to maintain learning in the event of long term absence. The final judgment on the maximum length of time rests with the Headteacher, who will take into account the issues contained in section 6 below.

4.2 The standards of teaching and learning for students are paramount and absences of this kind will normally **only** be covered by a teacher.

4.3 In the event of a period of long term absence, the School will explore all possibilities to support learning:

5. Short Term Absence

5.1 The School defines 'short' term absence as follows:

Possible options for the Headteacher and Trustees to consider (not shown in any order of preference) (see also Appendix 1):

- *foreseeable absences eg professional development days / medical appointment (if this cannot be arranged outside of the working day);*
- *unforeseeable absences e.g. compassionate leave for family emergencies;*
- *1 or 2 days' unplanned absence eg short term sickness.*

5.2 The School accepts that requests for serving teachers to undertake cover duties must be rare and therefore limited and may only be made where the circumstances of the absence were unforeseeable, eg a genuine emergency that requires a teacher to leave work during the School day. The Headteacher will apply alternative cover strategies in all but the most exceptional cases, so that teachers are not asked to cover for the absence of their colleagues.

5.3 The application of the cover policy will be monitored and the Headteacher will report to the Trust Board on the number of times teachers, including the Headteacher, are asked to provide cover each year.

5.4 The application of the cover policy will be monitored and views will be sought from the local staff representatives before reporting to the Trust Board on the number of times teachers, including the Headteacher, are asked to provide cover each year.

5.5 For the purposes of this policy:

- leadership and management time can be used but will not be used disproportionately;
- guaranteed PPA time will not be used for cover purposes.

- 5.6 Depending on the timetable of the absent teacher, it is likely that cover supervision will very quickly become 'specified work' as defined in section 1.5 above. Active teaching will therefore be required in the best interests of the students. Where this is the case, the Headteacher will ensure teaching and learning takes place by one or more of the following means:

Possible suggestions (not shown in order of preference):

- employing a suitably qualified supply teacher
- using a suitably qualified 'floating' teacher
- using a suitably qualified shared teacher (working for a cluster of schools)
- deploying a Higher Level Teaching Assistant to take the class
- using a suitably trained cover supervisor to supervise pre-planned activities
- using a learning centre under the overall supervision of a qualified teacher
- reorganising the Year Group so that each class is 'supervised' for part of the day and taught for the majority of it, for example in relation to a planned event.

6. Delivering supply cover

6.1 Timetabled cover

As indicated earlier serving teachers will only rarely be asked to provide cover for absent colleagues. This means that teachers will only be asked to cover in unforeseeable circumstances, for example a colleague becoming ill during the day and being sent home, or in the event of a parent arriving unexpectedly to deal with an emergency situation. Even in these circumstances, the Headteacher will make efforts to provide cover by some other means. However, where this improves impossible, the following will apply:

- a member of the teaching team will be asked to undertake cover duties, carrying out active teaching;
- teachers will normally only be asked to cover within their own subject area, in order to encourage active teaching to take place;
- leadership and management time can be used for cover but should not be used disproportionately;
- the requirement to 'rarely cover' applies equally to all teaching staff, including the Headteacher;
- guaranteed PPA time will not be used for cover purposes.

6.2 Other

The School to determine but it is recommended that the Headteacher seeks advice from the School's personnel provider before including other categories in the policy.

7. Leave of Absence Policy

- 7.1 The School has a clear Leave of Absence Policy, which sets out the circumstances, criteria and procedures that will apply when staff wish to take paid or unpaid leave of absence. Any changes to the policy will take into account the nationally agreed criteria set out in the Burgundy Book and any local agreements made following consultation with the teacher associations and support staff unions. The policy will be kept under review in the light of the requirement that teachers should only rarely provide cover for absent colleagues.

8. Educational visits

- 8.1 Educational visits are planned activities when a teacher may be absent in order to participate in the activity of another class. These will be planned well in advance, as part of the School calendar, so should form part of the timetable for any teacher who is accompanying the group. Arrangements for covering the teacher's own class or group will also feature on the timetable. As visits are planned

events which can be readily foreseen, the absence of a teacher accompanying a group of students will not be covered by other contracted teaching staff, unless they have been specifically employed to do so.

9. Gained time

9.1 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 students being on study or examination leave. Such time is known as 'gained time'.

9.2 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. A list of typical activities is shown below:

- developing or revising departmental or 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 coursework;
- undertaking planned activities with students who are 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.

9.3 Gained time will not be used for providing cover but should be clearly accounted for in the teacher's timetable.

10. Monitoring

10.1 The Headteacher will ensure that a record is maintained each year, showing the hours of cover worked by each teacher, including those s/he has worked personally. This will allow the Headteacher and the Trust Board to analyse patterns of absence, whether planned or unplanned, and identify the levels of cover required, in order to inform the review of the cover policy each year. In turn, this will allow the Headteacher to identify the supply cover budget for the year based on sound evidence.

10.2 The Headteacher has overall responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the cover provision and reporting annually to the Trust Board. The cover policy will be reviewed during the summer term each year and will be discussed with the School staff and their representatives. The revised policy will then be published with the School calendar each year.

11. Review

11.1 The Trust Board (or responsible committee) will review this policy in line with the procedure for policy review.

11.2 Date for Review

If no other reason for review (see policy review procedure) this policy will be reviewed in April 2017.

Appendices :

Appendix One: Situations where cover may be required

Appendix Two: Reference sources

Appendix One

Possible situations where cover may be required.

The following list is not intended to be exhaustive and the Headteacher will use his/her judgment on whether additional reasons for absence should be included within the spirit and intention of this policy.

- Short term illness
- Attendance at meetings (internal and external)
- Medical appointments (where these cannot be arranged outside School hours)
- Professional development activities (CPD)
- Domestic reasons (for which compassionate leave may have been granted)
- Parental leave (unpaid)
- Religious observance
- Educational visit
- Long term illness
- Bereavement
- Maternity/paternity/adoption leave
- Unfilled teaching post
- Other

Appendix Two

The following sources of information may assist the Headteacher and the Trust Board in setting the cover policy for the School.

- WAMG guidance for schools on implementing 'rarely cover', available via www.teachernet.gov.uk, or www.socialpartnership.org
- School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document 2016, available via www.teachernet.gov.uk/pay
- Role of Support Staff : www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/teaching_assistants/