

## MODEL SCHOOL COVER POLICY

### 1. Introduction

The school cover policy aims to provide a framework for the arrangements for cover during periods of teacher absence and promotes a fair and equitable distribution of cover duties amongst teaching staff.

The policy reflects the provisions set out in the Teachers' (Terms and Conditions of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, as amended by the Teachers' (Terms and Conditions of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1988.

The policy relates to cover arrangements for planned and unplanned short term teacher absence, within the requirements for a teacher other than a supply teacher to provide such cover as set out in the 1988 Amendment Regulations, Regulation 2, sub para (1) (a), (b) and (c).

The policy includes monitoring arrangements to ensure that fair and equitable distribution of cover duties amongst teaching staff is achieved and maintained.

### 2. Definition of Cover

The term 'cover' refers to any occasion where the teacher normally responsible for teaching the class is absent and a teaching colleague is required to teach the class.

Teaching occurs when a qualified teacher delivers a lesson to pupils who are engaged in activities which contribute to their active learning.

Supervision occurs when a teacher is asked to engage in activities outside of the classroom where there is no active teaching taking place e.g. morning and afternoon breaks, wet break times, arrangements for the arrival and departure of pupils, bus supervision, school assembly, examinations, etc.

Supervision, as distinct from teaching, may on occasions take place in the classroom if a teacher is asked to supervise pupils whose teacher is absent but is not required to deliver a lesson. It is recognised that classroom supervision is not an effective use of a teacher's time however, in exceptional circumstances, a teacher may be required to supervise, as distinct from teach, the class of an absent colleague.

### 3. Allocation of Cover

#### 3.1 A teacher may not be required to teach in any week for more than:

- 25 hours per week in a primary or special school
- 23.5 hours per week in a post-primary school.

#### 3.2 The Principal is responsible for ensuring the cover policy is implemented and managed in a fair and equitable manner amongst all teaching staff.

- 3.3** A designated officer (insert as appropriate) is responsible for the day to day operation of the cover policy.
- 3.4** A teacher who is not timetabled to teach in any period during the school day is considered to be available to be called upon to provide cover duties, taking into consideration any time allocated for management responsibilities and for planning, preparation or assessments, not exceeding the maximum teaching hours in any week.
- 3.5** As far as possible Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) employed on long term or permanent contracts will only be required to undertake cover in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.6** If a teacher has a concern about the level of cover allocated to them they should raise the matter, in the first instance with the line manager responsible for cover arrangements or with the Principal. The teacher may seek support from their recognised trade union to resolve the situation.

It is hoped that the guidance and written policy and procedures will avoid disputes in relation to teacher cover. Any teacher who has a concern in respect of cover arrangements should raise the matter, in the first instance with the line manager responsible for cover arrangements or with the Principal. If necessary the teacher should seek support from their recognised trade union to resolve the situation. It is hoped that such issues will be resolved without recourse to formal procedures. In circumstances, however where a teacher is not satisfied with the outcome the Grievance Procedure for Teachers (TNC 2008/3) may be used.

- 3.7** A teacher who is not timetabled to teach and is not available to provide cover on any particular day due to an unforeseen work commitment such as a meeting with a parent, should inform the Principal or designated officer (insert as appropriate) no later than the day before the commitment if possible.
- 3.8** In the event that no teacher is available to provide cover, the Vice Principal and/or Principal (insert as appropriate) will provide cover where possible.

#### **4. Procedure for Planned Absence Cover**

- 4.1** A teacher who is planning to be absent, (e.g. hospital appointments which cannot be made outside school hours, professional development courses, other approved discretionary leave) should inform the Principal, where possible at least 5 working days before the planned absence to enable cover arrangements to be put in place.
- 4.2** The absent teacher is expected to provide details of the work to be undertaken by the pupils during the lessons to be covered.
- 4.3** Cover duties will normally be allocated and notified to each teacher no later than the Friday preceding the week in which the cover is required (insert detail of how this will be done e.g. staff memo, e-mail, notice board, etc.). Where this is not possible the teacher being asked to provide cover will be given as much advance notice as possible.

**5. Procedure for Unplanned Absence Cover**

- 5.1** A teacher should inform the Principal of any unplanned absence as soon as possible in accordance with absence reporting procedures (insert details of relevant procedures).
- 5.2** The absent teacher, where possible, should make available their planning notes to provide an indication of work to be undertaken by the pupils during the lessons to be covered. If this is not possible suitable work for the pupils will be identified and provided by the appropriate coordinator (amend as appropriate) or Principal.
- 5.3** The Principal or designated officer (insert as appropriate) will identify a suitable, available teacher to provide cover, taking into consideration any time allocated for management responsibilities and planning, preparation or assessment, and the level of teaching already undertaken in any week, and advise the teacher accordingly.

**6. Monitoring and Reviewing the Policy**

- 6.1** A system will be put in place to record and monitor the allocation of cover to ensure this does not exceed teachers' contractual obligations.
- 6.2** The allocation of cover duties to each teacher will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure fair and equitable distribution of cover duties amongst teachers is achieved and maintained. In the event that a teacher is found to have undertaken more cover than the recommended, this will be offset against any future cover allocation to this teacher to ensure the maximum teaching hours are not exceeded.
- 6.3** The Principal/SMT (amend as appropriate) will carry out an annual review of the cover policy in consultation with the recognised trade unions' representatives in the school and will update the policy when required.