

Ysgol Aberconwy



Cover for Teacher **Absence**

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THIS POLICY HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE FULL GOVERNING BODY

Signed:

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YSGOL ABERCONWY

POLICY: COVER FOR TEACHER ABSENCE

Cover for Absence – Overview

The School Teachers' Pay & conditions Document 2004 describes absence as occurring "when the teacher normally responsible for teaching a particular class 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.

Arranging cover is a key element of the School's whole approach to providing high quality education for all pupils in the absence of teaching staff. The headteacher and governing body believe it is inappropriate for a teacher's absence to be covered by anyone other than a qualified teacher for more than 5 consecutive days unless the circumstances are exceptional. This is consistent with the *Education (Specified Work and Registration, England) Regulations*. The final judgment on the maximum length of time rests with the headteacher.

Cover Strategies

The Governing Body has agreed that a range of strategies should be available to the Headteacher when dealing with teacher absence. This is intended to allow the Headteacher to deal with teacher absence in a way that is compatible with the National Agreement and the best use of the school's resources. 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 pupils would be working without a qualified teacher.
- The particular needs of the class concerned.
- The skills and experience of the teacher/teaching assistant/cover supervisor/supply teacher etc concerned.

The strategy employed will depend on the length and nature of the staff absence. Strategies can be identified using the following outlines :

Short Term Absence

The school defines 'short' term absence as follows:

- Absences of less than 5 days known in advance e.g. professional development/medical appointment (if this cannot be arranged outside of the working day).
- 1 - 5 days' unplanned absence e.g. staff sickness.
- School visits, activities, sporting fixtures.

Depending on the timetable of the absent teacher, it is likely that cover supervision will involve students completing 'specified work' during short term absence. In such circumstances the headteacher will ensure teaching and learning take place by one or more of the following means (not shown in order of preference):

- Employing a supply teacher.
- Directing a L3/4 Teaching Assistant to take the class (if available).
- Using a cover supervisor.

- Re-organising the year group, or individual classes, so that each class is 'supervised' for part of the day and taught for the majority. This decision will be made between by the Head teacher and the HOD.

Long Term Absence

Long term absences, such as maternity leave or long term illness, tend to be predictable and are therefore more manageable. The standards of teaching and learning for pupils are paramount and absences of this kind will normally only be covered by a qualified teacher. In the event of a period of long term absence, the school's normal approach will be as follows (not shown in order of preference):

- Short term arrangements for days 1 to 5.
- From the sixth day specialist supply teaching provision.
- Possible reorganisation of classes to prioritise provision for examination classes.
- Where appropriate a fixed term appointment will be made (eg: for maternity cover).

Roles and Responsibilities

As indicated above the school, at the headteacher's discretion, currently uses an approach which includes a mixture of cover by support staff, use of external supply teachers and use of cover supervisors. None of our teachers will provide cover for absent colleagues, in line with the national agreement towards "rarely cover" (implemented in September 2009), except in extreme circumstances (such as during critical incidents) or through prior agreement as part of a teacher's annual timetable. In particular, PPA time will never be used for cover supervision.

1. Cover Manager

The cover manager will arrange cover on a daily basis as directed by the headteacher. They will :

- Receive notifications of sickness absence from teaching staff.
- Manage the provision of cover as set out in the guidance of this policy and through agreement with the headteacher as necessary.
- Liaise with supply agencies to ensure that safeguarding requirements are met.
- Provide cover as a 'cover supervisor'.
- Provide support and training to all involved in the provision of cover, as indicated below.
- Organise a system of 'exempts' for planned absence and training activities.
- Liaise with the LA with regard to HR and pay related issues.
- Receive 'sick' notes and inform headteacher accordingly.
- Maintain a record of all cover duties in SIMs cover manager, including any non-contact periods specifically designated for cover.
- Complete other, associated tasks as directed.

2. Supply Teachers

Where supply teachers are to be deployed, the school will only use people who are suitably qualified. Agencies will be required to specify whether supply teachers hold QTS status.

When a qualified supply teacher is employed to provide cover, the school will ensure that, as far as is possible, they will be delivering teaching and learning, not simply supervising the pupils. It is the responsibility of the relevant HOD to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

In order to make the most effective use of supply teacher time, the school will ensure that the following materials are available for use by each supply teacher covering a long term absence or maternity leave :

- School induction pack, setting out key policies, e.g. on behaviour management
- Clearly explained lesson plans that define the teaching expectations, the resources to be used, the demands that should be made of the class and the homework to be set
- Information about the abilities and prior attainment of the pupils
- Access to relevant CPD (for longer term appointments)

3. Cover Supervisors and Teaching Assistants

Cover supervision by effectively deployed support staff with appropriate skills and training will form part of our short term cover strategy. Cover supervisors may be wholly or mainly employed to undertake this role, (for example a guidance mentor or teaching assistant already working in the school might also be employed as a cover supervisor). Job descriptions, person specifications and salaries will be in line with the LA's standards and pay & grading structure.

Cover supervision is a responsible role and the school will ensure that staff undertaking such cover will:

- Have an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau
- Be familiar with the full range of school policies, particularly those regarding Health & Safety, Equal Opportunities and Special Needs
- Have the necessary skills to manage classroom activities safely
- Understand and be able to use a range of strategies to deal with classroom behaviour as a whole and also individual behavioural needs
- Understand the line management structure and their role in relation to other adults in the classroom (e.g. volunteer helpers).

Different arrangements may need to be made reflecting the age and organisation within the school but core activities will be:

- Short term supervision of work that has already been set as part of the normal curriculum in accordance with school policy. Teachers will not be expected to prepare additional material specifically for cover supervisors to use during their absence. They will, however, be expected to act professionally in preparing material as part of normal lesson planning which could be used by other staff undertaking cover duties as appropriate.
- Managing the behaviour of pupils in line with our policies whilst they are undertaking this work to ensure a constructive environment
- Whilst there may be no active teaching taking place, responding to pupils' questions, for example about process and procedures
- Dealing with any problems or emergencies according to the school's policies and procedures
- Collecting any completed work after the lesson and returning it to the teacher
- Reporting back as appropriate using the school's agreed referral procedures on the behaviour of pupils during the class and any issues arising
- Marking work where this can be undertaken by reference to an answer grid, e.g. in multiple choice questions.

The school will agree strategies for setting work so that this does not place excessive burdens on a teacher's planning, preparation and assessment.

Additional Considerations

1. Curriculum Learning Resource Centres

Cover supervision can be particularly beneficial where work has been carefully pre-set or where pupils can undertake effective self-directed study. Using a learning resource centre to support self-directed study might work well where ICT-based learning is employed. Any arrangements to be made must avoid placing burdens on teachers, but it may be feasible for some subjects to develop banks of appropriate materials which could be supported by other staff in a learning resource centre setting.

2. Educational Visits

Educational visits are planned activities when a teacher may be absent in order to participate in another class's activity. If a member of the teaching staff is used in a cover capacity on the visit, i.e. by effectively committing non-contact time to school visits, this will count towards the cover lesson total.

3. Gained Time

During the academic year, particularly in the summer time, teachers who take examination classes or groups are often released from some of their timetabled teaching commitments as a result of pupils being on study or examination leave. Such time is known as 'gained time'.

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 head teacher to direct teachers to undertake. A list of typical activities is as follows:

- Developing/revising departmental/subject curriculum materials, schemes of work, lesson plans and policies in preparation for the new academic year.
- Assisting colleagues in appropriate, planned team teaching activities
- Taking groups of pupils to provide additional learning support
- Supporting selected pupils with course work
- Undertaking planned activities with pupils transferring between year groups or from primary schools

Teachers will not be expected to cover for absent colleagues during gained time, unless by prior agreement or in exceptional circumstances.

4. Priority of events

The school recognises that the need for cover can be many and various. In order to minimise disruption on any given day, whilst attempting to meet all reasonable requests for cover, we will apply the following order of priority where necessary:

1. Illness/agreed paid absence
2. CPD activities (external)
3. Internally arranged KS4/5 Assessments (eg Oral examinations etc)
4. External trips
5. Internal trips/activities
6. CPD activities (internal)
7. Unpaid leave

Monitoring

The Governing Body will ensure that a log is maintained of the hours provided for cover purposes by each teacher, including those worked by the Headteacher. The Headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of provision and reporting annually to Governors in his report.

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 judgement 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