

COVER POLICY

Section 4, Paragraph 50 page 184 of the School Teachers' Pay & Conditions Document (STPCD):
"Schools should expect to implement the objective that teachers should only 'rarely cover' from 1st September 2009".

Limits on cover for teachers are set out in paragraph 75.9.1 and 75.9.2 of the STPCD 2008.

INTRODUCTION

Since the start of the national agreement, time for standards, the school has been working towards reducing the hours of "cover" provided by teachers. We are aware of the need to continue to reduce the amount of cover for absent teachers provided by our teaching staff to fulfil the objective that teachers should only ever rarely cover for absent colleagues. This policy has been developed in accordance with the conditions outlined in the school teachers' pay and conditions document 2008 and applies to all teaching staff in the school that are not wholly or mainly employed to provide cover. Our school is committed to introduction of the 'rarely cover' condition by September 2009.

DEFINITION OF "RARELY COVER"

'Cover' refers to any situations where the teacher normally responsible for teaching a particular class is absent from the classroom during the time he or she has been timetabled to teach.

There is no definition of what constitutes "rarely cover". It could be interpreted that "rarely cover" should mean not at all under normal circumstances and that schools should plan with the assumption that teaching staff do not cover for absent colleagues. WAMG (Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group) state that "when devising strategies to implement 'rarely cover' schools should bear in mind that 'rarely' does not mean 'never'."

At Melbury our interpretation of 'rarely cover' is:

- Providing lesson cover in an emergency situation where without doing so, the health, safety and well-being of students and/or staff are at risk
- Exceptional absence of staff that cannot be pre-determined
- When all our strategies for providing cover for absent teachers has been exhausted (cover teacher deployed, all support staff deployed and agency supply teacher not appropriate or suitable person not available)

AIMS & PURPOSE

Benefits to Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistent approach from staff in terms of behaviour management ▪ Familiar staff who know the ethos and routines of the school ▪ Pupils are more likely to be in receipt of properly planned work during cover lessons ▪ Properly planned work will contribute to pupil progress.
Benefits to Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appropriate use of teachers' time ▪ Reduction of teacher absence and turnover ▪ Improved morale and work life balance ▪ Enables teachers to use non-contact time in the way they have planned to use it
Benefits to School Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School leaders have time to focus on leadership and management and strategic activity rather than stepping in to deliver cover ▪ Head teachers have better opportunity of achieving their dedicated time ▪ A proactive plan in place for cover management

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers are able to focus on their professional responsibilities ▪ Reduction in time spent on crisis management
Benefits re: Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved monitoring of the content of planned work during cover lessons. ▪ Planned work should link to the curriculum and programme of teaching and learning
Benefits re: Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Costs of cover can be planned for in advance ▪ Teacher supply costs reduced ▪ Opportunity to remodel deployment of staff to reduce direct supply costs, bearing in mind the no-detriment clause in the STPCD

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. Absence could be for a variety of reasons, including internal and external activities as well as sickness. It could be short-term or long-term. All absence needs to be carefully managed to minimise the impact on teaching and learning for the pupil

‘Short term absence’ incorporates both planned and unplanned absence. The Manual of Personnel Guidance defines short-term absence as:

“Cases where an employee has periods of absence, usually on health grounds, interspersed by periods at work or where an employee has odd days off, reported as sickness but uncertified by a doctor. From monitoring records, absences may or may not reveal a pattern.”

‘Long term absence’ incorporates both known long-term absence (i.e. maternity) and unplanned long-term absence (i.e. serious illness). The Manual of Personnel Guidance states:

“Whilst each absence case must be viewed individually, a long-term absence may generally be considered to be a continuous absence of four weeks or more. It can usually be traced to an underlying condition or a specific reason.”

STRATEGIES FOR PLANNED AND UNPLANNED ABSENCE

We recognise that providing cover is not an effective use of teacher time and we are committed to exhausting all other reasonable strategies for providing cover before having asking a teacher to cover. Teachers’ PPA time forms part of the legal conditions of employment so cannot and will not be used for cover, but may have to be rearranged to a different time/day of the week and in exceptional circumstances rolled over to the next week.

We believe:

- Splitting a class of children is disruptive for the children concerned and the class that they are split to, we have decided that this should only be used as a last resort. To reduce disruption and provide worthwhile activities if we do have to split, each class teacher will provide a pack of relevant work that can be photocopied by a Teaching Assistant on the day. This will be clearly labelled and kept in the school office. Where necessary levels 3 and 4 teaching assistants will teach the class instead.
- Our behaviour policy includes using a paired class to send children for 'time out'. As this is part of our behaviour policy and is effective behaviour management of children and supportive for staff, having extra children in these circumstances will not be deemed as providing cover.
- Children who are unable to swim with their class or who are unable to take part in a trip with their class will join another class for the period that their class is away. This works effectively, does

not happen on a regular basis and is supporting the work of other colleagues. Accordingly, this will also not be deemed as providing cover. In the event of this happening, children must be sent with appropriate work and staff would appreciate as much notice as possible for organisational reasons.

- As Leadership and Management (L&M) time can be flexible and given at another time, it was decided that in the event of one person having planned L&M time and another person being ill - staff would not take their L&M time and it would be allocated at a later date, wherever possible. Where necessary levels 3 and 4 teaching assistants will teach the class.
- Staff have a right to professional development and only attend courses when they are relevant to new government initiatives or to the School Development Plan. It was decided that in the event of one person being ill and another already on a course - staff would not be recalled from the course, unless it was absolutely necessary. Cancelling courses is not cost effective and can restrict professional development.
- When arranging courses the Deputy Headteacher will look carefully at cover implications. If it is already planned for someone else to be absent on that day, then permission for a second course and absence may not be granted, as this could involve splitting a class. Knowing that a class will have to be split in advance of booking a course is not acceptable cover arrangements, however important the course. However if money is given for cover by the course provider, then we will attempt to find suitable external supply cover.
- The Deputy Headteacher will be responsible for organising cover arrangements and a Cover Log will be kept recording the amount of cover undertaken by each teacher, plus details of all cover that has been provided for absent teachers

POTENTIAL COVER STRATEGIES

PPA Teacher – Deploying a ‘PPA teacher’ means having a qualified teacher, whose principal role is to meet cover requirements by teaching classes. This allows the delivery of specified work to pupils. Continuity of pupils is also good, as they would be taught by a familiar member of staff. However, there are considerable cost implications, therefore, whilst this would always be the preferred option, the budgetary implications may mean it is not always possible.

Level 3/4 TA’s – The deployment of cover supervision by appropriately trained support staff is in line with the aims and requirements of the National Agreement and provides continuity for pupils in the case of short-term absence.

External Supply teacher - Supply teachers can be used to cover for all types of absence. However, it is important that they are managed properly and effectively, with regard to their teaching and developmental needs. With this in mind we have adopted the following practice when using of supply teachers:

POLICY MONITORING & EVALUATION

This policy will be formally reviewed annually in the Summer term.