



Woolwich Polytechnic School

PolyMAT

Whole School Cover Policy

Approved by Governors: 31 October 2016

Due for review September 2017

Policy Statement

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 under the 'rarely cover' system.

Woolwich Polytechnic School is committed to providing the highest quality of teaching and learning for all its pupils and will ensure at all times that teaching and learning is delivered by appropriately trained and competent staff.

The school will manage sickness and other absences effectively and in accordance with its Policies, in such a way that provides appropriate support to staff but also ensures minimal impact of teacher absence on pupil progress and wellbeing.

1. Introduction

The National Agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' (2003) provided the basis for work by schools to create time for teachers and Head Teachers to focus more of their time on teaching and leading teaching and learning. From September 2009 teachers, including the Head Teachers at a school should only rarely cover for absent colleagues, for absence which is not foreseeable.

It is worth remembering however that **rarely does not mean never**.

2. Definition of Rarely Cover & Cover

2.1 'Rarely cover' is interpreted as meaning a teacher will only be asked to cover in circumstances that are not foreseeable.

2.2 The need for cover occurs when the person who has been timetabled to take a particular class or group is unexpectedly absent. The absence could be for a variety of reasons, including internal and external activities as well as sickness. It could be short or long-term. All types of absence are carefully managed to minimise the impact on teaching and learning for the pupils. 10% Planning Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time is a contractual entitlement for all teachers with timetable teaching time and cannot be used for cover purposes.

2.3 Staff who have a fully loaded timetable will not be used for cover – unless under exceptional circumstances to ensure the safe supervision of the students.

Staff who are under their expected loading will be used for cover when:

- cover supervisors have been utilised to their full capacity
- agency supply teachers have been utilised to their full capacity and

- there are no members of SLT available
- the number of lessons requiring cover exceeds the number of cover supervisors and supply teachers available

2.4 When teachers are required to cover a lesson, it is assigned based on a ranking system within SIMS. This list of available teachers uses actual and planned loading, as well as how often and how recently they have already been used for cover to determine how high up the list a teacher will appear.

The person arranging cover will endeavour to prioritise using SLT members to provide cover where possible before assigning other members of staff. They will also avoid giving staff with 5 timetabled lessons on any particular day, an additional cover lesson.

A lesson will only be defined as Cover if it is in addition to a teacher's planned loading based on their job role. This allows the school the flexibility to use the ranking system.

2.5 Teachers may be assigned to supervise a lesson in lieu of one of their normal timetabled lessons. For example, if a whole year group goes out on a trip and you were timetabled to teach them that day, you may have to supervise a lesson of another teacher who has gone on the trip. This will not be deemed as cover.

3. Definitions

3.1 Definitions of short term absence

Short term absence will normally be no longer than three days but the definition for the purposes of determining cover arrangements may vary according to:

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

3.2 Definitions of planned absence

Any absence that has been arranged before the day that it is to be taken such as:

- CPD
- Maternity/Paternity/Adoption leave
- Hospital appointments
- Interview
- Funeral

3.3 Procedure for Planned Absence Cover

3.3.1 A teacher who is planning to be absent will be required to submit a LoA request at least 14 working days before the planned absence to enable cover arrangements to be put in place.

3.3.2 Staff should understand that there may be instances where a LoA is not approved or that it may be approved without pay.

3.3.3 The absent teacher is expected to provide details of the cover work to be undertaken by the pupils during the lessons to be covered and this should be uploaded to the gateway.

3.4 Unforeseeable Events

The following are examples of what would generally be considered as not being foreseeable absences:

- All staff illness other than accompanied by a certificate
- Member of staff involved in a major accident on the way to work
- Emergency hospitalisation
- Early start to maternity leave due to complications
- Major road closure due to serious accident
- Extreme weather conditions, not previously forecast
- Member of staff injured while at work
- Compassionate leave

3.5 Procedure for Unplanned Absence Cover

3.5.1 Staff should inform the school of any unplanned absence by telephone, leaving a message which clearly states name and reason for absence before 7am. This procedure should be repeated for each day of absence unless you have provided a sickness certificate. Staff should also inform their line-leader of their absence.

3.5.2 When staff are returning to work after an absence, they must inform the school by telephone, leaving a message which clearly states name and intention to return to school before 7am of that returning day.

3.5.3 If a member of staff needs to leave the premises for any reason during school time they should:

- ❖ Contact the Business Manager and the Cover Manager so cover can be arranged
- ❖ Sign out using the school system.

4. Gained Time & Educational Visits

4.1.1 Where teachers are released from their timetable as a result of pupils undertaking examinations, or a teacher's class or group is absent on an education visit, such time is known as "Gained time". During the exam period, the school operates a 'quid pro quo' policy whereby staff and departments give time to each other to support the smooth running of the different exams. This will be arranged by departments as in previous years. When the exam period finishes then gained time begins for all. This ensures fairness so that colleagues are not discriminated against by having late exams.

4.1.2 Teachers may be directed to use gained time to undertake the following activities, directly relevant to teaching and learning:

- ❖ Developing/revising departmental/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 pupils transferring between year groups or from primary schools. Where the school has a policy to release staff for CPD during school sessions, Gained Time may be used for such activities.
- ❖ To provide internal assessment/testing/exam cover.
- ❖ In such weeks when activities may take place, teachers remaining at the school will teach; either the same groups as usual or different ones. This will not count as cover.

5. School Calendar

To ensure the system for managing cover is robust, the school will publish a calendar for each school year following consultation with staff and their union representatives. The school calendar will also provide for the school's annual teaching timetable for every teacher. The school may need to review/revise its timetable during the year and from year to year, in light of significant changes (e.g. a long term absence or other significant educational development). Any such revisions will be planned well in advance and in consultation with staff and their union representatives and will be a rare occurrence.

6. The Cover Process

All allocated cover periods will be published on the gateway to allow for transparency and fairness at all times.

The process for choosing staff to cover lessons will be based on the following criteria:

- Cover Supervisors
- Teachers who are under their agreed loading
- Members of SLT
- Teachers that are free

Each period of the week will have a list of available staff in order of ranking so that colleagues know the likelihood of them being asked to take a cover lesson. Where one or more members of SLT are available, they will always be at the top of the list.

Each day and period of the week will be rated as to how critical it is for cover – for example, days where staff absence is more likely or where the number of available colleagues is fewer will be ranked as more critical than days where there are many colleagues available and absence is less likely. This will inform the likelihood of LOA being granted and will allow colleagues to judge the likelihood of cover being allocated (see Section 11).

7. Cover Supervisors

Cover Supervisors are required to cover lessons during the short term absence (a period of fewer than 20 days, inclusive of weekends and holidays) of the normal teacher who will have set suitable work for the duration. The role of the Cover Supervisor is to supervise the class whilst they complete tasks set by the teacher. This requires no active teaching, marking, planning etc. Cover supervision does not involve carrying out 'specified work' as outlined in the Education (Specified Work and Registration).

The school employs Cover Supervisors and/or other Support Staff who have undergone particular training and/or who have particular skills/knowledge, such that they are judged competent to undertake specified work in the short term (as defined previously) for specific lessons.

8. The Role of the Cover Supervisor

Cover Supervisors will be required to supervise groups of around 30 students independently and to appropriately deliver the work set to a high standard, answering any questions to the best of their ability that students may have surrounding the tasks set. They will be expected to:

- Provide cover for morning registration

- Supervise where the normal cover has been left, to a high standard with limited preparation time and on occasion at short notice
- Manage the behaviour of pupils effectively, whilst undertaking the work set, to ensure a constructive and ordered learning environment, addressing unacceptable behaviour or lack of focus before it escalates, following agreed school policies/procedures
- Respond to questions from pupils about process and procedure of the work set and provide general support
- Deal with any issues, whether behavioural or otherwise, in the appropriate manner
- Provide pupils with a positive learning environment to aid pupil progress
- Provide brief pro-forma led feedback to teachers on the delivery of the covered lesson
- Self-monitor your own progress in achieving targets, evaluating the effects of your supervision and using this analysis for improvement
- Be involved in identified initiatives and their monitoring and evaluation
- Ensure opportunities are taken to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- Where possible, students should carry out tasks in their workbooks. Where workbooks are not available, worksheets will be collected from the room by the Head of Department.
- Sign any Behaviour Sheets noting those who worked well or caused problems
- Be able to resolve any problems/queries with cover, speak with the Cover Manager or other staff members or provide additional tasks yourself of suitable quality
- Evacuate your class from the building during a fire alarm and take students to the designated assembly point at the rear of the school. Should you be responsible for a tutor group register them at the assembly point, otherwise inform the Cover Manager that you are present

On occasions when cover is light such as at the beginning of terms, Cover Supervisors may also be required to carry out the following tasks:

- Offer departments support
- Carry out administrative tasks
- Provide exam invigilation support

9. Managing Cover

9.1 All covered lessons will be managed in such a way that all pupils continue their learning. It is expected that where the absence is planned, teachers will provide details of the work to be undertaken by pupils during cover lessons. This work will be marked by a teacher. In the absence

of this and in the cases of unplanned absence, such information will be provided by the relevant Head of Department.

9.2 The school will expect supply/cover teachers/cover supervisors to engage in active delivery of provided material, where possible, during cover lessons.

9.3 In the case of short-term cover, this will include delivering provided lesson plans and recording and feedback to the teacher and Head of Department as appropriate.

9.4 In the case of medium/long term cover, the supply/cover teachers will be expected to undertake 'specified work' i.e. planning, preparation, delivery, assessment, recording and reporting.

To continue with teaching and learning:

- all cover work will be completed in pupil's books
- all cover work being left is to be written on the cover work template which is available to all teaching staff electronically in Teacher Resources.

10. Monitoring

10.1 To fulfil its commitment to ensure the short, medium and long term quality of teaching and learning for all its pupils, the school will record, monitor and evaluate cover as follows:

- the overall amount of cover required (planned and unplanned)
- the number of individual teacher's lessons requiring cover
- the number of lessons covered in each year/subject group
- the number and quality of lessons covered by each qualified teacher and other staff
- all staff that provide cover will be informally observed by the Cover manager

All those providing regular and/or medium/long term cover will be observed on a termly basis.

11. Leave of Absence Process

Historical sickness will be evaluated and where trends of high levels are identified, leave of absence should be avoided (e.g. January, February and May, which tend to be times of higher sickness levels). Exceptional circumstances will be dealt with on an individual basis.

The request for leave of absence (LOA) procedures will be revised in the following ways:

- All LOA will go directly to HoD/ line leader for approval in the first instance. This will only be referred to the Cover team if the HOD has approved.

- All LOA must be requested at least two weeks in advance. Exceptional circumstances will be dealt with on an individual basis.
- The LOA form will be redesigned and some fields will be compulsory. If these are not completed it will not be possible to submit the form.
- Data regarding booked absence will be published on the gateway in advance. This will aid staff wishing to book further LOA – i.e. staff will be able to see if a day is already light or heavy.
- There will be a maximum level of booked absence that is permitted on any single day. Once this level is reached, further requests will be denied. This applies to all types of absence including CPD and educational visits.

The levels are as follows:

Monday and Thursday, a maximum of 1 member of staff that generates cover

Tuesday and Wednesday, a maximum of 2 members of staff that generate cover

Friday, no pre-booked absence except in an emergency

Staff should note that any absence that has been approved, may be cancelled by the school on the day if levels of unplanned absence are exceptionally high.

The priority list for LOA will be as follows:

- Funeral of a family member
- Hospital appointment
- Pixl meeting
- CPD
- House move
- Interview
- Any other absence

This is not an exhaustive list and each LOA will be judged on its own merit.

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed at the end of each term for the first year in order to ensure that transparency and fairness is achieved for all staff.