

Implementation of 'rarely cover' from September 2009:

Summary of changes to be made to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and Guidance on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (subject to formal consultation round)

The main provisions needed are set out here but there are other detailed consequential amendments needed. The purpose of the excerpts is to show how 'rarely cover' will operate. Paragraph reference numbers may change in the 2009 Document.

New Section 2

Current 60.4.4 Management of staff

- ensuring that there is in place a clear policy and robust system that does not require teachers or the headteacher to provide cover other than rarely. A robust system would be expected to deal with all foreseeable events and should take into account the school's historic patterns of absence. A robust system would not be expected to deal with events that are not foreseeable.
- ensuring that the provision of cover for the person who has been timetabled to take a particular class or group is shared equitably among all teachers in the school (including the headteacher), taking account of their teaching and other duties and of the need to ensure that teachers and the headteacher may be required to cover only rarely, in the case of circumstances that are not foreseeable.

Current 60.24 Teaching

- participating, to such extent as may be appropriate having regard to his leadership and other functions and duties, in the teaching of pupils at the school, including the provision of cover but to no greater extent than if he were a teacher to whom paragraph 75.9.2 applies.



department for
children, schools and families



Uywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Association
of School and
College Leaders



the education union



The Association for School Leaders



The Teachers' Union

NEOST



the union



the public service union



The union for education professionals

Current 75.9.1

- Subject to sub-paragraph 9.2, supervising and so far as practicable teaching any pupils where the person timetabled to take the class is not available to do so.

Current 75.9.2

- Teachers should be required to cover only rarely, and only in circumstances that are not foreseeable.

Proposed 75.9.3

- 75.9.2 does not apply to teachers who are employed wholly or mainly for the purpose of providing such cover.

New Section 3

Current Paragraph 164

The relevant body should ensure that, with effect from 1 September 2009, they consult with all staff and their union representatives on an annual calendar which includes the teaching timetable, staff meetings, parental consultations and other activities.

New Section 4

2004 and 2009 changes COVER

Background

The National Agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' signed in January 2003 provided the basis for work by schools to create time for teachers and headteachers to focus more of their time on teaching, and leading teaching and learning, including through:

- progressive reductions in teachers' overall hours; and
- changes to teachers' contracts, to ensure all teachers and headteachers have a reduced burden of providing cover for absent colleagues;
- deployment of support staff to enable teachers and headteachers to focus on teaching and learning.

Purpose of the provisions

Progress on raising standards for pupils relies upon schools having in place policies and systems to free teachers and headteachers from excessive and inappropriate workload.

Cover for absence is not an effective use of teachers' time.

In the past, many teachers have borne a heavy burden of cover for absent colleagues. However, in accordance with the provisions set out in Section 2, teachers may cover only rarely in circumstances which are not foreseeable.

'Foreseeable circumstances' for the school include events that are foreseeable on the basis of historic experience; events that are foreseeable in the normal local experience; and events that may be expected as part of the evolving pattern of provision.

Implementation

Schools are required to ensure that teachers and the headteacher may be required to cover only rarely from 1 September 2009.

The contractual provision applies to all teachers and the headteacher at a school, including teachers on the leadership spine and ASTs whether on permanent, fixed-term or temporary contracts and pro-rata to teachers on part-time contracts.

The Document contains a duty for headteachers to ensure that cover is shared equitably among all teachers in the school (including the headteacher), taking account of their teaching and other duties and of the need to ensure that teachers and the headteacher may be required to cover only rarely, in the case of circumstances that are not foreseeable. The guaranteed PPA time of teachers at a school forms part of the legal conditions of employment and cannot be used for cover.

Definition of absence

Absence occurs when the person who has been timetabled to take a particular class or group is absent. The type of 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 types of absence should be carefully managed to minimise the impact on teaching and learning for the pupil.

Teachers, including the headteacher, should cover only rarely, for absences which are not foreseeable.

Management

Every school should have in place a clear policy and robust system that does not require teachers or the headteacher to provide cover other than rarely.

School Calendar

To ensure the system for managing cover is robust, every school should publish a calendar for each school year, in accordance with the provisions of para 164 of section 3, following consultation with staff and their union representatives.

The school calendar will also provide for the school's annual teaching timetable for every teacher. Teaching timetables are not frozen in time and there may be in-year variations in timetabled teaching arrangements and variations from year to year.

Schools may need to review/revise their timetables during the year in light of significant changes (e.g. a long term absence or other significant educational development) and should do so well in advance and in consultation with staff and their union representatives. Changes to the calendar should not be a frequent occurrence.

Pupil standards are paramount.

The absence of the person who has been timetabled to take a particular class or group is the trigger for cover.

Cover supervisors and higher level teaching assistants are for short-term absences only and should not be used as the remedy for the medium or long term absence of a teacher.

Medium and long-term absences should be covered by a teacher, possibly through a fixed term appointment or supply teacher.

Each school will need to consider the appropriate deployment of a supply teacher in the case of long term absence and may wish to revise the agreed timetable if there are good educational grounds for doing so. Such revisions should be subject to consultation with staff and their union representatives.

The school should monitor and analyse patterns of absence (planned and unplanned) and levels of cover and manage these appropriately.

The member of the support staff administering the cover arrangements should keep a record of the amount of cover undertaken by each teacher. It is also advisable to maintain records of cover undertaken by other staff whose contract and job description specifies that a proportion of their time is/will be available to provide cover supervision.