

Class Cover Policy



Agree Date	Review Date	Person Responsible
September 2025	September 2027	Mr. Smith

1 Introduction

The school cover policy has been created based upon the guidance in TNC 2024/2 - Workload Agreement available at :<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/TNC%202024-2%20%20Workload%20Agreement.pdf>. It 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.

3 Allocation of Cover

A Teacher may not be required to teach in any week for more than 25 hours per week.

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

A designated officer Mr. Smith is responsible for the day to day operation of the cover policy.

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.

As far as possible Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) employed on long term or permanent contracts will only be required to undertake cover if no other teaching staff member is available.

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 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 appropriate grievance may be used.

If the issue is impacting a number of Teachers in the school then the Teachers and/or the Trade Union Representative (or representatives) may raise the issue with the Principal on a joint basis. Where this does not resolve the issue the Teachers may utilise the appropriate grievance procedure.

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 no later than the day before the commitment if possible.

In the event that no Teacher is available to provide cover, the Vice Principal or Learning Support Co-ordinator will provide cover if not teaching their own class.

4 Procedure for Planned Absence Cover

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.

The absent Teacher is expected to provide details of the work to be undertaken by the pupils during the lessons to be covered (this work is to be email to the Principal and Vice Principal the Friday preceding the week in which the cover is required).

Cover duties will normally be allocated and notified to each internal Teacher no later than the Friday preceding the week in which the cover is required. 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

A Teacher should inform the Principal of any unplanned absence as soon as possible by telephone. The school office is open from 0750 each day.

Where possible, resources should be available which 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 most senior teacher in that key stage in conjunction with either the Vice Principal or Principal. Principals should be mindful of the provisions of the Teacher Attendance Procedure TNC 2008-2 in the event of having to contact Teachers when absent.

The Principal or Vice Principal 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

A system which is transparent and fair will be put in place to record and monitor the allocation of cover to ensure this does not exceed Teachers' contractual obligations. 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.

Mr. Smith 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.

7 Supervision

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

Where a Teacher is not required to supervise at morning or afternoon break, or where this is done on a rota basis, this period must still be defined as directed time.

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.

Unless employed under a separate contract as a mid-day supervisor, a Teacher shall not be required to undertake mid-day supervision.

8 The Legal Position

Teachers' (Terms and Conditions of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987 (as amended).

(9) Supervising and teaching any pupils whose teacher is not available provided that:

(a) in schools with an average daily enrolment of 222 pupils or less, in primary 1 and primary 2 classes in schools with an average daily enrolment greater than 222 pupils, and in nursery classes in primary schools a teacher other than a supply teacher shall not be required to provide such cover;

(b) in schools with an average daily enrolment greater than 222 pupils a teacher other than a supply teacher shall not be required to provide such cover after the second day on which a teacher, other than a teacher of a primary 1 or primary 2 class or of a nursery class in a primary school, is absent or otherwise not available, or from the first day if the fact that the teacher would be absent or otherwise not available for a period exceeding 2 days was known to and agreed by the employing authority in advance;

The above named Regulations set out the hours a Teacher may be required to teach as distinct from supervise pupils.

In addition, the professional duties of a Principal include “ensuring that the duty of providing cover for absent teachers, as set out in paragraph 3 (9) of Schedule 3 is shared equitably among all teachers in the school, taking account of their teaching and other duties” and “participating, to such extent as may be appropriate having regard to his other duties, in the teaching of the pupils at the school, including the provision of cover for absent teachers”.

9 Review

This Workload Agreement will be reviewed by the Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee at the end of the first academic year of operation, and biennially thereafter.