

School Rarely Cover Policy

Name of school: The Grange School

Date of Policy: 17th June 2010

Member(s) of staff

Responsible: Mrs J Thomas

Review Date: June 2012

'Rarely Covering' is an integral part of the overall package of contractual change set out in the National Agreement '*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*', which was signed in January 2003. Following the decision in 2007 to implement this objective from 1 September 2009, advance notice was provided in both the 2007 and 2008 editions of the STPCD. It is designed to raise standards by freeing teachers and headteachers from tasks, which do not require their professional skills and expertise, and enabling them to focus on their core function of teaching and leading and managing teaching and learning. It should not be seen in isolation from the rest of the National Agreement.

It is clear that there is no definition of the number of cover periods that constitutes 'rarely cover'. Downward pressure has been placed on cover, and one should understand that 'rarely cover' is not linked to the *number* of covers per year that a teacher is directed to provide – it is directly related to the reasons why a cover period may occur. If the policy is adhered to, the number of teacher-covered periods will, *de facto*, be reduced and rare in nature. Teachers should only be required to cover rarely and only certain circumstances and that are not foreseeable (STCBD 75.9.2). Ultimately, all foreseeable absence should be covered by staff *other than teachers* as part of their contractual obligations. Only timetabled periods not designated for teaching, PPA or Leadership and Management time should be used for cover. Obviously, this requires the school to reduce further the need for lessons to be covered – this is an aspect of the drive to raise standards. There will be a need to ensure that leave of absence, illness, lessons lost through meetings/CPD will be reduced.

This policy, produced in consultation with the staff and Trade Union Representatives, and with due adherence to the '*Rarely Cover Implementation Process Guidance*' (May 2009), sets out the following in relation to the Grange School:

Definition of Absence

1. Absence Policy (to include the 'Caring about Sickness Absence' policy).
2. Cover Strategies.
3. Requests for Cover.
4. Reduction of Cover Required.
5. Calendar and Timetable.

1. 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.

2. Absence Policy for Reasons other than Sickness

To include the 'Caring about Sickness Absence' policy (Appendix B).

As a school we are paying due regard to the agreed 'Rarely Cover' guidance that states:

"Schools should seek to ensure that their policy reflects that the fact that Teachers and Headteachers have fixed term times and cannot book annual leave throughout the year in the same way as many other workers".

The school will adopt Shropshire Council's 'Special Leave' (Appendix A) procedures as its protocol for the granting, or otherwise, of leave that constitutes absence. This protocol has therefore been agreed with all of the professional associations and trade unions that are within the social partnership. The procedures cover:

- Absence returns
- Paid special leave
- Unpaid special leave
- Unforeseen absence

These procedures will be included within this Rarely Cover Policy as an Appendix. Areas covered within these procedures that may be granted as paid include:

- Illness of relatives (a crucial area in relation to children) – it is reasonable to expect that once a child can no longer be viewed as a baby or very young child a judgment will be made regarding whether it is reasonable for the parent/s to make normal childcare arrangements.

“It is not intended that the leave entitlement should be interpreted by staff as enabling them to take leave every time their child is ill whatever the reason. Where there is doubt, and cases are borderline, it may be desirable to consider unpaid leave of absence as an alternative”. (Appendix A page 3).

Allied to this, one would expect that where possible, even when unpaid leave has been agreed that the care of the children is shared between parents/relatives.

- Deaths, funerals and inquests
- Jury or witness service
- Interviews
- Change of residence
- Public duties
- Adoption, paternity and parental leave
- Pre-retirement courses
- Examinations
- Approved educational and national conferences
- Weddings
- Election duties
- Other special leave

These procedures will be included within this Rarely Cover Policy as an Appendix. Areas covered within these procedures that may be granted as unpaid include:

- Compassionate leave
- Religious circumstances
- Time off for dependent emergencies
- Other special leave

Staff should also ensure that they are familiar with Shropshire Council's *Caring about Sickness* Policy. Again, these procedures have been agreed by the professional associations and trade unions involved within the social partnership. In the case of teachers who have had three or fewer days' absence due to illness, in one spell, it is vital that

colleagues submit a Self Certification of Sickness form to the Headteacher's Personal Assistant upon return to work. Should any member of staff find that their absence record places them on the Council's Sickness Trigger Report, this may result in a referral to the Council's Occupational Health Service. Further details regarding this particular aspect of short-term sickness absence may be found on page 15 of the *Caring about Sickness* Policy.

3. Cover Strategies

The school employs Cover Supervisors, has its own register of self-employed Supply Teachers, and for longer-term absence employs fixed-term teachers to cover absence. For short periods of cover, such as registrations, the school also directs Teaching Assistants. The school also employs current part-time teachers on the days or periods when they are not in school. The order of cover provision is:

- Cover Supervisors
- Self-employed supply staff
- Part-time teachers on a supply basis
- External supply agencies

Where appropriate notice is given, and this should be reflected in the school timetable, a planned variation of the school timetable will also be employed as cover strategy. Staff will be aware about potential timetable variations when the calendar is published.

4. Requests for Cover

All requests for cover should be made to the CPD Assistant Head or Headteacher – this includes ALL known absence as well as short-term notification. The request will either be approved or refused. It is clear, under the current regulations short notice requests that cannot be covered by the School's cover strategies may be denied. Until the request has been confirmed the employee should not assume that their absence from the classroom has been accepted. Written confirmation of this decision will be forwarded to the member of staff. Once our lines of cover are exhausted we may be in the position of refusing requests.

5. Reduction of Cover Required

A crucial part of ensuring that Rarely Cover is successfully implemented is a reduction in cover required. It is clear that absence due to ill health is always a contributory factor, hence the *Caring about Sickness* Policy (intended to reduce illness and support colleagues). However, illness accounts for 38.8% of cover required, whilst meetings and other

requests account for 43.5% of cover required (CPD accounts for the remaining 17.7%). Therefore, though much of the 'other' category cannot be reduced (as this includes Performance Management), there is a clear need to reduce meetings and other activities which could conceivably be conducted at times that do not require cover – for example, meetings with parents, external agencies and educational and cultural visits should be looked at carefully. Staff should be aware that when booking a meeting that requires cover they should liaise with CLT/cover admin staff to ensure it is a day on which the cover can easily be implemented using existing lines of cover. Once our lines of cover are exhausted we may be in the position of refusing requests.

6. Calendar and Timetable

The school calendar will 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. We may need to review/revise 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. There must be at least four working weeks notice of a variation in timetable.

Consultation

Please ensure that you do read this draft policy in conjunction with Appendices A and B, both of which can be found on the Shropshire Learning Gateway home page under 'Policies' – Staff Absence Policy, Caring About Sickness and Special Leave Procedures. Please submit any comments to the Headteacher or EJ, CAP or ACP (Union Representatives) or both no later than 3 July 2009. Responses that you submit will usually be shared. Should you wish your response to remain confidential mark your response as such.

Signed.....I Walshaw..... on behalf of the Governing Body

Date.....17.6.10.....

Signed.....J M Thomas..... on behalf of the School

Date.....18.6.10.....