

Rarely Cover policy

Summary

The objective of progressive movement towards a position where teachers may only be asked to cover rarely for absent colleagues was set out in the National Agreement 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload', which was signed in 2003. The decision was made in 2007 to implement this objective from 1st September 2009.

'Rarely covering' is an integral part of an overall package of contractual change set out in the National Agreement, and 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.

Woodham Academy is committed to ensuring that all students and staff are able to achieve their potential and beyond, within an ethos of unconditional mutual respect as reflected in our school mission statement "Achievement for All".

This Rarely Cover policy recognises that the task of providing students with learning experiences which will engage and enthuse them, thus allowing them to achieve their potential in the widest sense is every teacher's key role. Our belief is that staff absence should be as low as possible to ensure that student learning is of the highest quality.

Date first adopted: September 2009

Review date: Annually

Last reviewed: September 2020

1. Principles

Woodham Academy is committed to ensuring that all students and staff are able to achieve their potential and beyond, within an ethos of unconditional respect as reflected in our school mission statement "Achievement for All". We recognise that the time needed to plan lessons that are at least 'good' is significant. We also recognise that to achieve their potential, students need to be taught by their class teacher for the vast majority of lessons during the year to ensure continuity, challenge and the development of mutually respectful relationships that allow students to thrive.

The rarely cover policy is based upon the following set of principles:

- Our teaching and support staff is comprised of dedicated professionals who are reflective practitioners, committed to improving practice
- High quality learning and teaching is the school's key focus
- High quality learning experiences are the key to students achieving their potential and beyond in all areas of school life
- Teachers require time to review and plan lessons and materials/ resources
- Teachers' time is most appropriately spent in school reviewing and planning the delivery of their lessons or delivering these lessons
- Staff absence should be as low as possible and should be strategically and carefully managed
- Conducting cover lessons for absent staff is not a good use of teachers' time and should happen only 'rarely'
- Teachers should be able to attend professional development events and other training if deemed to be in the interest of student learning and achievement or directly linked to Performance Management outcomes

2. Aims

We acknowledge that there is a direct relation between staff being in school, able to prepare, deliver and manage high quality lessons and other learning experiences and levels of student achievement.

This policy aims to:

- Clarify 'Rarely Cover' as part of the National Agreement
- Ensure that we comply with guidance on 'rarely cover' within the school setting
- Clarify the school's approach to staff absence in all its forms

- Provide staff with guidance on managing their absence
- Make explicit the school's expectations of staff in the event of absence

3. Definitions

The following definitions should be understood:

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

Cover occurs when another member of teaching staff or a supply teacher delivers the lesson in the teacher's absence.

Rarely Cover 'Teachers should be required to cover only rarely, and only in circumstances that are not foreseeable. Foreseeable circumstances for the school include events that are foreseeable on the basis of historical experience, events that are foreseeable in the normal, local experience and events that may be expected as part of the evolving pattern of provision.' Rarely cover should mean 'no cover at all' under normal circumstances but it does not mean 'never cover'.

4. 'Rarely cover' in the school

There will be full time cover / student supervisors working in the school from September 2009. These staff will carry out the vast majority of cover required and certainly any cover that is 'foreseeable'.

However, an associated implication of the introduction of 'rarely cover' is the need to reduce as far as possible the amount of time that staff spend out of school. In order to ensure that the school can manage the level of cover needed, the following strategies will be implemented:

- Attendance at training courses that take place during the school day will be limited but will include essential exam board training and network meetings. All C.P.D. will be linked to whole school priorities and/or individual Performance Management targets.
- Leave of Absence will be granted in line with school policy. This will mean less leave granted in general and a reduction also seen in the amount of leave that is granted with pay.
- Enrichment activities will largely be restricted to the school's 'Specialist Days' and Enrichment Week.
- The introduction of a School Diary – requiring staff to complete activity forms for any on-site activity. Weekly meetings held by Leadership Group and Office Manager to ensure cover is strategically monitored.

5. Reporting Absence

'Rarely Cover' will mean that staff have to report any first day of sickness / emergency absence **before 8.00am** by leaving a message on the dedicated phone line for staff (01325 375465) in addition to informing their Line Manager. Any message after 8.00am can create difficulties if supply staff from an agency have to be called upon as there is insufficient time to guarantee their arrival at the school before 8.45am. Therefore, any absence reported after 8.00am will be defined by the school as 'unforeseen circumstances' and will therefore mean that teaching staff will have to cover the lessons if needed. In the event of staff being taken ill during the day or having to leave the site due to unforeseen circumstances, teaching staff will be used to cover lessons. Where it is necessary to use staff for rarely cover, this will be done on a rota to ensure it is kept to a minimum. Staff may be diverted to use gained time to cover for a colleague, but this should happen rarely. It will also be of utmost importance that staff who are absent from school because they are ill contact Lorraine Cox **before 3.15pm** to inform her of their intention (or not) to return to school the following day. Where staff make no contact by 8am it will be assumed that they will be returning to work.

6. Appointments

There is an expectation that all staff arrange all appointments (doctor / dentist) outside of normal working hours wherever possible.

7 Support Staff

Leave of absence for support staff will also be granted in line with school guidelines. Holiday leave will not be granted during term time unless this is part of the member of staff's terms and conditions of employment.

8 Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Leadership Group. Revisions of and amendments to the policy will be recommended to the appropriate Governing Body.