**Joint Guidance for Schools in relation to PPA and Cover Supervision including the deployment of support staff**

  

 





**Introduction**

This guidance has been produced to provide updated advice to schools on the deployment of teaching assistants particularly in relation to the delivery of PPA time for teachers and cover supervision.

In addition to this, many schools are reviewing their staffing structures and considering alternative models of teaching assistant support therefore this guidance includes clarification of the duties of staff at each of the levels within the framework.

The guidance has been collated from previously agreed documentation with the trade unions and in line with national guidance produced by the TDA during implementation of the workforce reforms. It has also been updated to reflect the changing status of schools and the responsibilities of Governors and Headteachers.

**Background**

The national agreement for school workforce reform was signed in January 2003 with the intention of raising standards and tackling workloads. The agreement included a phased programme of statutory changes including the identification of admin and clerical tasks which teachers should not routinely undertake, entitlements to work life balance, introduction of limits on cover by teachers for absent colleagues, invigilation arrangements for examinations, dedicated headship time and guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers.

A national programme of change implementation commenced after the agreement and resulted in the introduction of new roles and responsibilities for support staff, change in the roles for teachers and amended staffing structures for schools.

Sheffield City Council, in common with many authorities, supported schools through the changes by the development of new job descriptions and model policies/procedures to support the implementation of the statutory changes.

In addition to this joint guidance was developed between the City Council, Schools and the trade unions through the ‘local social partnership’ and this guidance is still in existence for schools today.

It is now 10 years since the workforce agreement was signed and concerns have been raised that, given the passage of time, not all Governors and Headteachers are familiar with the statutory requirements and the agreed guidance which was developed to support schools with implementation. It has therefore been agreed to review the previous guidance and update the advice to provide assistance to schools in managing PPA, Cover supervision and deployment of teaching assistants.

**Planning, Preparation and Assessment Time**

All teachers have a legal entitlement to guaranteed time to support their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). This entitlement was introduced in September 2005 and all teachers since that date should have had 10% of their timetabled teaching time allocated to them for the purpose of planning, preparation and assessment.

During this time, teachers are not required to teach and schools are required to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure delivery of the curriculum is maintained. Since 2005, schools have had the following options for ensuring teachers can be released for their PPA entitlement:

* Employ a teacher solely for the purpose of providing this cover
* Employ a Higher Level Teaching Assistant for the purpose of providing this cover
* Employ a specialist or unqualified teacher who may offer alternative skills such as sport, languages, music or drama
* Employ an external organization who can deliver learning to meet the requirements of the curriculum

In all cases the Headteacher needs to be satisfied that the person(s) appointed to deliver this support have the appropriate skills and experience in accordance with the Section 133 regulations of the Education Act 2002.

The Section 133 regulations came into force on 1st August 2003 and set out the definition of ‘specified work’ and who could undertake it.

Specified work is:

1. Planning and preparing lessons for pupils
2. Delivering lessons to pupils. This includes delivery via distance learning or computer aided techniques.
3. Assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils
4. Reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils

This includes work with individual pupils as well as groups and whole classes.

Specified work may be carried out by qualified teachers, teachers without qualified teacher status (eg trainee teachers) or by support staff where these duties are clearly set out within their job description and appropriate grade. Support staff may carry out specified work subject to the following conditions:

* They must carry out the specified work in order to assist or support the work of a qualified teacher in the school
* They must be subject to the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher in accordance with the arrangements made by the Headteacher of the school
* The Headteacher must be satisfied that the support staff member has the skills, expertise and experience required to carry out the specified work
* The work must be in accordance with their job description and grade

It is strongly recommended that Headteachers should have regard to the standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants in determining whether or not such staff have the necessary level of skills and expertise to undertake the specified work.

During implementation of the workforce reforms, Sheffield City Council developed model job descriptions and a framework for support staff in schools. The framework was based on the national guidance developed and agreed by the national joint council for local government services in their document ‘School Support Staff:The way forward’.

Within the framework there are roles which schools can consider when determining their staffing structures and for delivery of specified work. In particular the HLTA role and the Curriculum Specialist roles were created to deliver this support.

In Sheffield, the use of HLTA’s has been the most popular role for supporting schools in managing the requirements of PPA time.

There are some key points for Headteachers to consider when deploying HLTA’s to deliver specified work for teachers who are undertaking their PPA time:

* Support in the classroom
	+ Although HLTA’s can take whole classes in the absence of the teacher, consideration should be given to whether there is sufficient teaching assistant support in the classroom to enable the HLTA to perform their role.
* Age range, subject and other specialisms
	+ Schools often have an HLTA employed across a key stage or subject area to support PPA time for more than one teacher. In some circumstances, HLTA’s have been expected to deliver specified work across the whole primary age range. Headteachers need to ensure that the HLTA has sufficient skills, expertise and experience in relation to the range of classes they are being asked to support and whether the expectations are reasonable. For example is it reasonable to ask an HLTA in primary to deliver in Key Stage 1 and 2 as well as foundation stages and provide the level of support required to maintain high educational standards?
* Management and supervision
	+ HLTA’s should be working within the structure for management and supervision within the school. Sufficient time should be allocated for teachers and HLTA’s to discuss planning and pupil progress within the contracted hours of those involved.
	+ HLTA’s can be responsible for managing other staff. They will need appropriate time to be able to do this within their contracted hours.
* Pay and hours
	+ HLTA’s should be paid in accordance with the grade for the post when undertaking their role.
	+ HLTA’s are expected to plan, prepare and assess the work they undertake therefore they need time within their working week to be able to do this.
	+ Workforce reform guidance recommended that HLTA’s should be employed on 52 week contracts. This is in recognition of the fact that they can deliver breakfast and after school clubs as well as holiday schemes and schools would require more than term time employment in these circumstances.
	+ Some schools have used split contracts for HLTAs who are only paid at this rate when they are delivering specified work, the remainder of their working time normally paid at Senior Teaching Assistant level. However this can mean that the skills and expertise of the HLTA are not being fully utilized and can stifle development of the role and the individual. National guidance and our strong recommendation is that schools should consider the broader range of duties that an HLTA can bring to the classroom and have roles which deliver more than just the period of time when covering for teachers on PPA.

**Cover Supervision**

The term cover supervision refers to any occasion where the teacher normally responsible for teaching a particular class is absent from the classroom during the time they are timetabled to teach. For example due to sickness, courses or leave of absence. Longer term absence due to maternity leave or long-term illness should be covered by a teacher.

Cover supervision should only be used for short-term absences. Short-term is defined as:

1. Up to 3 days in primary schools
2. Up to 5 days in secondary schools

These definitions are in line with the model cover policy previously circulated and in recognition that, particularly in primary settings, cover supervision can quickly develop into specified work.

Cover supervision does not involve carrying out ‘specified work’ as outlined in the Section 133 regulations. This means no active teaching is taking place and students continue their learning by carrying out exercises which have been pre-prepared by a teacher under supervision.

Cover supervision is not an appropriate means of maintaining curriculum provision during the time a teacher is timetabled for PPA. As a teacher’s PPA time constitutes a regular timetabled activity, a member of staff, as outlined in the section above, should be deployed to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning throughout the timetable. Senior Teaching Assistant’s and Cover Supervisors should only be deployed for PPA time where they are providing cover supervision in the absence of the regular member of staff and not specified work. Cover supervision is likely to include some core elements:

* Supervising work that has been set in accordance with the school policy (e.g. developing banks of suitable materials)
* Managing the behaviour of pupils whilst they are undertaking this work to ensure a constructive environment
* Responding to any questions from pupils about process and procedures
* Dealing with any immediate problems or emergencies according to the schools policies and procedures
* Collecting any completed work after the lesson and returning it to the appropriate teacher
* Reporting back as appropriate using the schools agreed referral procedures on the behaviour of pupils during the class and any issues arising.

There are a number of strategies that schools can consider in managing absence and cover supervision:

1. Deployment of ‘Cover Supervisor(s)’ or Senior Teaching Assistants at Level 3 to cover the class and supervise pre-planned activities.
2. Deployment of ‘Higher Level Teaching Assistants’ or ‘Curriculum Specialists’ for short-term delivery of specified work
3. Deployment of a teacher who the school employs wholly or mainly for the purposes of cover and can be directed to teach the lesson
4. Employment of supply teachers or HLTAs through an agency or direct supply
5. In circumstances where all options have been exhausted and no alternative is available then a teacher in the school may be asked to cover the class in accordance with the school policy for ‘rarely cover’

Schools should ensure that staff undertaking cover supervision are:

* Familiar with the full range of school policies particularly those regarding health and safety, safeguarding, special educational needs and pupil welfare
* Skilled and experienced to be able to manage safely classroom activities, the physical learning environment and resources for which they are responsible
* Familiar with and understand the range of strategies for managing classroom behaviour as a whole and individual behavioural needs.

The teaching assistant framework includes cover supervision duties within the Senior Teaching Assistant Level 3 job description. This role would be used where there is occasional absence and the Senior Teaching Assistant is asked to cover on a short-term basis in accordance with the definitions within the policy. However where cover supervision is a daily expectation of the role there is a specific Cover Supervisor Level 3 job description.

In primary and special schools, cover supervision can quickly escalate into specified work which would be within the HLTA or curriculum specialist role therefore Headteachers may need to consider whether the use of cover supervisors is appropriate in these settings depending on the circumstances.

**Deployment of Teaching Assistants**

In January 2010, the Local Social Partnership agreed guidance for teachers to clarify the roles of teaching assistants in the classroom. This guidance is contained within the LSP leaflet which can be accessed via SchoolPoint.

It is important for Governors and Headteachers to recognise and understand the differences in the teaching assistant roles to ensure that staff are effectively deployed within the classroom.

There are some specific points to ensure that everyone in the school is familiar with:

* There are specific job descriptions for each level of teaching assistant within the framework. It is important that the class teacher understands the role that those employed within their classroom can perform to ensure staff are not being expected to work over and above those duties.
* Teaching assistants need to understand the purpose of the lesson activities and should be involved in planning where appropriate depending on their role.
* Teaching assistants should have appropriate time identified within their working time for planning and liaising with the teacher.
* Teaching assistants at Level 1 and 2 are not expected to cover a whole class learning activity however they can be deployed to support a Senior Teaching Assistant Level 3 or HLTA who may be taking the whole class in the absence of the teacher.
* All meetings, events and training which teaching assistants are expected to attend are part of their contracted hours or should be paid as additional hours.
* There are different job descriptions for teaching assistants in special schools which incorporate duties in relation to feeding and care of the pupils.
* There are additional allowances which can be paid for teaching assistants or other staff who volunteer to administer medication to pupils. Details of these allowances are available from your HR provider.

**Useful information and documents**

There are model policies and procedures available via the information centre in relation to cover supervision, rarely cover, administration of medicines, deployment of staff and pay and conditions. In addition to this you can access guidance via the following websites:

[www.dfe.gov.uk](http://www.dfe.gov.uk)

[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

[www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk)

[www.gmb.org.uk](http://www.gmb.org.uk)

[www.nasuwt.org.uk](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk)

[www.nut.org.uk](http://www.nut.org.uk)

[www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)

[www.unitetheunion.com](http://www.unitetheunion.com)