



School workforce news

...nursery nurses, secretaries, bursars, learning support practitioners, sitekeepers, school meals staff, teaching assistants, learning mentors, administrators, midday supervisors, librarians, cleaners, personal care assistants, technicians ...

GMB your union in school

Issue 25, April 2009:

This is the twenty-fifth in a series of bulletins for GMB reps and members working in schools. Our bulletins will keep you up-to-date on national policy developments and other news affecting the school workforce.

Lift-off for Support Staff Negotiating Body

At last, the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) is ready to start. The first meeting is due to take place in May. Years of GMB campaigning are now coming to fruition—but the real work is only just beginning.

GMB has been formally invited to take up membership of the new Body by Schools Minister Jim Knight.

Earlier this year, the Government set out the legal basis for the SSSNB in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill. This should hit the statute book in October. The Body will be set up on an interim footing in the meantime.

GMB has ensured that the SSSNB is not restricted to classroom-based staff but will cover all support staff employed to work in maintained schools in England. The only

exceptions to this are staff covered by the Youth and Community Workers JNC, the Craft JNC, or the Soulbury Committee.

GMB has campaigned for a fair deal and consistent pay and conditions for the school workforce. With the SSSNB we will have the opportunity to make our ambitions a reality.

If all goes according to plan, the SSSNB will negotiate a national pay and conditions framework for support staff in England. This will involve:

- a common core contract and conditions of service
- national role profiles and a national pay framework
- a process for assimilating support staff to the new framework

The SSSNB will include the recognised unions: GMB, Unison and

Unite. The employer side will have representatives of local authorities, faith schools and self-governing schools. There will also be an independent chair.

Under the terms of the legislation, agreements reached by the SSSNB will be subject to ratification by the Secretary of State. A support staff working group has been drafting a constitution for the Body.

The working group, involving all the parties who will be on the SSSNB, recently issued a joint circular about the SSSNB which is available online at <http://www.gmb.org.uk/files/98523/FileName/JointCircularfromtheSupportStaffWorkingGroup.pdf>.

The circular states that 'it is likely that the first agreements will take effect some time during 2010' and that 'it is the intention of all parties involved to make the transition from existing local pay arrangements to the new pay and conditions framework as smooth as possible'.

The SSSNB will be drawing up the new national pay framework over the coming year. GMB members will, of course, get to vote on the proposals.

These are exciting and challenging opportunities and we want all support staff to be able to have their say. If you are not a GMB member, sign up today! Simply complete the form on the back page and return it to the freepost address.

'Rarely Cover' — the impact on support staff

From September 2009, teachers will be expected only to 'rarely cover' for absent colleagues. In other words, they will not normally be expected to perform cover.

The move to 'rarely cover' is part of the National Agreement on contractual change for teachers. It does not, in itself, change the contracts or job descriptions of school support staff. But it is likely to have an impact, with schools wanting support staff to fill the breach.

Types of cover

Cover supervision is required when the teacher normally responsible for

teaching a particular class is absent. It does not mean taking a class during a teacher's timetabled PPA time, and it does not involve active teaching (i.e. specified work). Instead, it means the supervision of pupils while they undertake pre-prepared work.

Cover supervision can be used for short-term absence but it is not an appropriate way of dealing with medium- to long-term absence.

The National Joint Council (NJC) national profiles recommend that cover supervision is a level-3 activity. Specified work, however, is a level-4 (HLTA) activity. It is therefore inappropriate to deploy support staff

to provide cover that involves specified work unless they are trained to that level and their pay and grading reflect this.

GMB advice

GMB has been concerned that 'rarely cover' is going ahead without proper consideration of the knock-on impact on support staff.

We have raised the alarm with DCSF and local authority employers.

Our position is that the needs and rights of support staff must be taken into account when 'rarely cover' is implemented.

If you provide cover as part of your role, your grade should reflect this level of responsibility. GMB members can seek advice from GMB reps or officers on local grading structures.

We have contributed to joint guidance for schools about the deployment of support staff in relation to 'rarely cover'. The joint guidance specifies that headteachers:

- cannot unilaterally impose changes
- must consult the staff and their union representatives
- must consider any grading or pay implications of any agreed changes, and if necessary consult the local authority for guidance on re-evaluating jobs and the correct grading for new roles and responsibilities

It further adds that headteachers must:

- have regard to the suitability of the task to the member of staff's current role
- have regard to the impact on their workload and whether sufficient time is available, or could be freed up
- consider any additional training needs
- ensure that if additional paid working hours are required, this is agreed with the member of staff
- ensure that job descriptions are revised to reflect agreed changes and additional responsibilities

The joint guidance also refers back to previous documents issued by the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG).

In particular, it cites WAMG Guidance on Cover Supervision, and Note 22 on the Appropriate Deployment of Support Staff in Schools. These can be found online at

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=91087&int1stParentNodeID=89654&int2ndParentNodeID=89986>.

Have your say

We want to hear how 'rarely cover' affects our members.

If you have comments about it, we can take them up for you. GMB members can contact their local rep or officer, or get in touch with National Secretary Brian Strutton at brian.strutton@gmb.org.uk. If you are not already a member, now is the time to join. Simply complete the form on the back and return it to the freepost address.

JOIN US NOW

- 1** Start by filling in details about yourself.
PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS.
- 2** Then fill in details about your job
- 3** Then choose how to pay: EITHER by deductions from your pay
- 4** OR by Direct Debit from your bank or building society
- 5** Hand the form to your GMB representative, or post it – you don't need a stamp – to GMB, FREEPOST, GMB Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region, Grove Hall, 60 College Grove Road, Wakefield WF1 3RN

FOR UNION USE ONLY Section Branch No Membership No Date of joining

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Surname First name Title Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr Date of birth

Home address Home Tel Email

Postcode Mobile I agree to abide by GMB rules Signature

Date We ask for your ethnic origins as part of our equal opportunities policy of improving services to all members
 Bangladeshi / Black African / Black Caribbean / Black British / Chinese / Indian / Pakistani / White / Other

2 TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOB

Employer Your job

Address where you work Postcode How many hours a week do you work? Pay No

Work Tel Pay Date

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I authorise my employer to deduct from my pay each week/month the sum of £ or other amounts as may be fixed by the GMB from time to time.

Please start the deductions immediately and pay the amounts to the GMB. Cash

I note that this agreement may be cancelled by one month's notice in writing.

I give permission to my employer to notify the GMB of any future change of address.

Signed Date

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Reference number (Office use only)

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Instructions to your Bank or Building Society.
Please pay GMB Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with GMB and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

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