

KELSO HIGH SCHOOL

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING TEACHING STAFF ABSENCE AND COVER ARRANGEMENTS

AIM

To provide a clear and simple structure, well understood by all staff, for the management of the absence of teaching staff and class cover arrangements in Kelso High School.

RATIONALE

It is our duty to provide the best possible educational experience for our pupils. To this end, where a class requires cover, we will endeavour to provide the most appropriate cover arrangements available from within our resources.

AUDIENCE

This policy will be issued to all members of staff.

PRINCIPLES

- ?? This policy will conform to the principles and spirit of the Teachers' Agreement for the 21st Century (McCrone).
- ?? When teachers have any additional non-contact time above the contractual minimum on their timetable, they may be asked to provide class cover for absent colleagues during this time.
- ?? It is the duty of every teacher to teach any assigned classes, not only those on their timetable.
- ?? Every effort will be made to allocate class cover on a fair and equitable basis.
- ?? A record of class cover allocations will be kept and made available to members of staff on an annual basis.

PRACTICE

i) *The National Agreement*

“From August 2006, at the earliest, the contractual obligations of teachers will be expressed in relation solely to a 35 hour week within which **a maximum of 22.5 hours will be devoted to class contact.**” Class contact includes registration cover, teaching assigned classes and class cover.

“The introduction of a personal allowance of one third of actual class contact time”. This equates to 7.5 hours per week available for preparation / correction and other activities.

“the use of the remaining time (that is, time beyond the combined class contact and preparation / correction allowance) will be subject to agreement at school level and will be planned to include a range of activities”. This equates to 5 hours per week over the 39 week teacher year. Use of this time is subject to agreement by the school's Collegiate Committee.

ii) *Kelso High School Timetable*

In Kelso High School, the school day is made up of 8 x 40 minute periods and a 10 minute registration period thus giving a total working week of 27.5 hours (which is standard across Scotland).

To ensure that every member of staff remains within their contractual class contact time (i.e. 22.5 hours), the maximum number of teaching periods that can be allocated is 32 periods (i.e. $32 \times 40 = 1280$ minutes or 21hrs 20 mins + 50 minutes for registration giving a total class contact time of 22 hours 10 minutes) leaving 320 minutes, a surplus of non class contact time of 20 minutes over the contractual minimum.

If a member of staff has no register class then the maximum number of teaching periods that can be allocated is 33 periods (i.e. $33 \times 40 = 1320$ minutes or 22 hours) which leaves 330 minutes, a surplus of non class contact time of 30 minutes over the contractual minimum.

This means that no teacher should ever be working with less than their minimum non-contact time. In practice, this means that every teacher will have at least 20 minutes more non contact-time above the contractual minimum.

When a member of staff is absent then every effort will be made to provide supply to cover their classes. This should always happen from the third day of an absence, and may happen from the first day of an absence which is known in advance. However, this is not always possible, particularly at short notice and at times when a large number of people are absent.

Any additional time on a member of staff's timetable may, therefore, be used for the purpose of providing additional cover in a flexible way for the school. In any week where members of staff have additional non-contact time – i.e. because of exam leave or change of timetable, this will be seen as additional non-contact time – is not as an additional personal allowance or professional time and is, therefore, available as additional time for possible class cover.

Principal Teachers Pastoral have, by school agreement, been allocated an additional 4 periods of non-class contact time to enable them to carry out pastoral duties during the school day.

Subject Principal Teachers, where possible, are given additional non-class contact time to enable them to carry out their management duties.

However, neither of the above two options are, at present, a contractual requirement, therefore, these staff may be used for class cover should the necessity arise, although every effort will be made to avoid this, as the school is aware that this will have an effect on the way pastoral or management duties can be carried out.

The Kelso High School Collegiate Agreement states that “staff will normally be in school during class time” and “staff may be out of school engaged in tasks relating to their job, if not required for any tasks in school, but should notify the Business Support Manager of their intention and sign out at the Office. This allows the Business Support Manager to provide emergency cover at short notice, if it should become necessary.

iii) Arrangements For Managing Absence

Planned Absences

When a member of staff knows they are going to be absent on a planned basis, i.e. on a field trip, theatre trip, gallery visit, etc. a check should be made initially with the Business Support Manager to ensure that the level of staff absence that day is manageable. Once this has been agreed, a yellow absence request form should be completed by the member of staff and authorised by the Principal Teacher. This should be done as soon as the date of absence is known.

On receipt of the yellow absence request form, the PT should arrange to cover as much as possible internally within the Department either by using available non-class contact time or by doubling up classes. This should be marked clearly on the form under the relevant period.

(Please note that if classes are doubled up, the member of staff taking the class will be recorded as having taken a “please take” on the Phoenix system). Periods requiring external cover should be ticked and the form should be sent to the school office.

On days when it becomes clear that there is likely to be severe pressure on cover arrangements because of the number of staff requiring cover, it may be necessary to restrict the numbers of absent staff. This may be done by cancelling non-urgent meetings in school, cancelling attendance at SBC meetings, cancelling attendance at courses and requesting that staff postpone non-urgent personal appointments. As much advance notice of this likelihood will be given to staff concerned so that alternative arrangements can be made. This will not happen on the morning when the absence is planned for.

Attendance at meetings during the school day

If a member of staff is attending a meeting in the school (e.g. PRD meeting, Departmental Review, meeting with House Co-ordinator re pupil issues), a yellow absence request form must be completed as soon as possible whether or not cover is required and this should be passed to the PT for authorisation. (The completion of the yellow absence request form will ensure that a member of staff is not allocated a “please take” at this time).

The PT should authorise the form and allocate internal cover (if required) as above.

Unplanned Absences / Illness

Where a member of staff is unavoidably absent – for illness or other reasons, they should make arrangements to telephone the school as soon as practicable. Telephones will be answered from 8.00 a.m. onwards. Please give a reason for the absence (simply “ill” is not sufficient since Notification of Sickness Absence forms have to be completed by the Business Support Manager and sent to SBC on the first day of absence. These require a specific reason to be given for the absence, e.g. flu, sickness bug, etc.).

If the absence will last for more than 1 day, this should be made clear during the call. Alternatively, the school should be contacted again before 4.30 p.m. on the day of the continuing absence, if possible, so that cover arrangements can be put in place for the following day.

Details of work necessary for classes should be given or a call to the PT or another member of the department should be made at a mutually convenient time, if the teacher is able to do this. Teachers should ensure that their PT knows where their Planner can be found, as well as the seating plans for their classes. Arrangements will be made immediately to cover the classes. However, if the PT or departmental colleagues feel it is more appropriate to cover classes within the Department, they should contact the Business Support Manager as soon as possible so the “please takes” can be reassigned to ensure that the staff member covering has been recorded on Phoenix as having taken the class and that other staff do not unnecessarily turn up to cover the class.

On return to work, staff should notify the school office and complete a self-certificate form (for sickness absence only) and pass to the Business Support Manager **immediately**. A delay in completing this form may result in staff not being paid for their absence. Teachers may have, or request to have, a Return to Work interview as stated in the Attendance Plus Policy.

Absence due to Personal Reasons

If a member of staff requires to be absent for a personal reason, they should discuss this with the Rector in the first instance. Leave may then be granted, in accordance with SBC Policy, either with or without pay or by using the arrangement of making up time during school holidays.

iv) Arranging Cover

It is the job of the Business Support Manager to arrange class cover.

When arranging cover for an absent member of staff, there are 4 options available:-

1. Internal Cover within the Department;
2. Cover using Supply Staff;
3. Internal Cover within the School;
4. Group supervision by SMT in the Assembly Hall.

Option 1: Internal Cover within the Department

This is, by far, the best form for class cover as classes are taught by a subject specialist conversant with the subject and course. This should be the first option considered when a member of staff is going to be out of school. Where Departments arrange to cover their own classes, provided the Business Support Manager is informed, this will be recorded on Phoenix as a “please take”.

Option 2: Cover using Supply Staff

In session 2006 / 07, the school has an allocation of 196.13 supply days (i.e. 1 supply teacher per day). However, certain other activities (e.g. SQA duties) gain additional supply days for the school. Every effort is made to use the supply budget for cover purposes but, due to a shortage of supply teachers, it is often not possible to get subject specialists for planned or unplanned absences and, on some occasions, no supply teachers are available at all. On any day when planned absences indicate that there is a full timetable to cover, every effort will be made to bring in a supply teacher. When a supply teacher is brought in, they will be given the maximum number of cover periods possible in a day (i.e. 7 periods).

Option 3: Internal Cover within the School

Any remaining classes to be covered and all classes arising from unplanned absences will go to internal cover within the school.

These are allocated as fairly as possible using the following priority rating:-

1. Teachers with more than 8 non-class contact time periods (or 7 non-class contact periods for staff with no register class) will be used in the first instance;
2. Principal Teachers (Curriculum);
3. Principal Teachers (Pastoral) (as more of their remit has to be done within the school day);
4. SMT.

However, during certain periods within the week when the timetable is very tight and only a few members of staff have non-class contact time, it may be that this prioritising cannot take place.

Option 4: Group Supervision by SMT

When all of the above options are exhausted, e.g. during a ‘flu epidemic, arrangements will be made to supervise classes in the Assembly Hall.

v) Yellow “Please Take” Slips

Cover arrangements for planned absences are completed by 4.00 p.m. the day before and “please take” slips are printed. Any member of staff who wishes to check if they have a “please take” the following day can contact Mrs Bryson or check in the Janitors Office. Due to the possible impact of unplanned absences, “please takes” are not issued to staff pigeonholes until the following morning. Staff covering registration or period 1 and 2 classes will be contacted by the Janitors.

vi) Allocation Of Class Cover

Every effort is made, within the pressure and constraints of the school timetable, to ensure that “please takes” are allocated on a fair and equitable basis. Details of the school timetable, staff absences and allocation of “please takes” are held in Phoenix. Records of staff absences and “please takes” completed are issued to all staff at the start of each session.

Any member of staff who has queries about the allocation of “please takes” or who wishes to discuss issues about staff cover should contact the Rector.

vii) Covering Classes

When a covering a class, the following should be available:-

- ?? The room the class are to be supervised in (if this has changed from what is in Phoenix, the Department should ensure that Mrs Bryson is informed).
- ?? A class list / seating plan.
- ?? A clear outline of the work to be completed – the more comprehensive the better since this makes it easier for the supervising teacher to keep the pupils on task.
- ?? Any specific information regarding pupils in the class.

Staff covering classes are expected to supervise and help the pupils complete the assigned work. If no work is available, the relevant PT (or any member of staff in the department if the PT is absent) should be contacted. If, for any reason this is not possible, the Office should be contacted to request the duty member of SMT. Any issues concerning the class should be dealt with through normal departmental channels (i.e. the department responsible for the class). It is very beneficial for the absent teacher if the staff member covering writes a short note giving information on how the lesson went.

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will operate in draft form from January 2007.

MONITORING

Operation of this policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis by SMT and the school Collegiate Committee.

REVIEW

The Policy will operate in draft form as a green paper and will be further reviewed in March 2008. Thereafter it will be reviewed as part of HGIOS Key Area 6 – Resources. This will take place as part of the school’s self-evaluation cycle in Session 2011 / 12.

RESPONSIBILITY

The Business Support Manager will have overall responsibility for this policy.

DATE

The first draft of this policy was completed in January 2007.