

Teaching Assistants - Guidance for Schools on Cover Supervision and PPA Cover

1. Introduction

This guidance is designed to provide assistance to schools on the pay and grading of Teaching Assistants providing cover for teachers when they are absent. It also seeks to provide clarity on Teaching Assistants roles and the difference between cover supervision and PPA time.

2. Definitions

2.1 Cover Supervision

2.1.1 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**.

2.1.2 Cover supervision should only be used for short-term absences. These might be known in advance e.g. absence due to a medical appointment, or unexpected, e.g. absence due to illness, or if the teacher is unexpectedly called away.

2.1.3 Cover Supervision occurs when there is no active teaching taking place. Students continue their learning by carrying out a pre-prepared exercise under supervision*.

2.1.4 Cover supervision *does not* involve carrying out 'specified work' as outlined in the Education (Specified Work and Registration (England)) Regulations 2003.

* What is understood by 'pre-prepared exercise' will depend upon the age and stage of development of the pupils. In particular, in the Foundation Stage, adult support in pupil-led play, or for example, leading stories and songs, would be deemed an appropriate element of cover supervision.

2.2 PPA Time

2.2.1 All teachers have a legal entitlement to guaranteed time to support their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA).

2.2.2 PPA time is time during which a teacher is **not timetabled to teach**. Schools are required to put additional staff into their timetable in order to ensure that delivery of the curriculum is maintained.

2.2.3 During a teacher's PPA time, staff timetabled to cover will be actively delivering a lesson/undertaking elements of 'specified work' for the purposes of the regulations in 2.1.4.

2.2.4 PPA time is a regular occurrence and therefore the cover of these lessons needs to be timetabled. It is not short term and not short notice.

3.0 Who can undertake Cover Supervision?

3.1 Teaching Assistant Level 3 (MK 5) and above

National Guidance on cover supervision states that this role is expected to be undertaken by appropriately skilled and knowledgeable staff at Teaching Assistant Level 3 (MK5) and above. Cover Supervision is stated in the job purpose of the generic Teaching Assistant level 3 job description.

3.2 Teaching Assistant Level 2 (MK 4)

Within Milton Keynes an amendment to the national guidance has been negotiated with the unions whereby a Temporary Responsibility Payment could be made to Level 2 Teaching Assistants (MK 4) who would ordinarily undertake Level 2 duties but who would be prepared to cover during an unexpected absence by the teacher.

A level 2 Teaching Assistant could routinely be deployed to assist a Level 3 Teaching Assistant in providing cover supervision to a class. There would not be any extra pay for this.

3.2.1 This agreement is not intended to replace those genuine situations where a Teaching Assistant is undertaking more complex work or is carrying out a high proportion of cover as the bulk of their role. This arrangement aims to give schools flexibility where they may not need a Level 3 Teaching Assistant for normal classroom duties but wish to reward a Level 2 Teaching Assistant as and when they agree to cover on a very occasional basis.

3.2.2 Cover duties are not a requirement in the job description for a Level 2 Teaching Assistant. However those staff willing and capable of undertaking additional responsibilities on an ad hoc basis can do so providing:

- The individual agrees
- Support and clear direction are provided

3.2.3 Payment

In these circumstances the Level 2 TA will receive payment at the rate of one and a half times their normal salary.

Payment is for a minimum of 1 hour. Any part of an hour would be calculated upwards to the next complete hour.

Cover Supervision carried out by Level 2 Teaching Assistants is ad hoc and must therefore not exceed 10 hours in any one month.

If a Level 2 Teaching Assistant is consistently being required to carry out more than 10 hours cover supervision every month it is strongly advised that the school revisit their Teaching Assistant structure to investigate whether a post of cover supervisor is required.

4.0 Who can undertake PPA time?

4.1 There are a number of strategies a head teacher can use for PPA time including using supply teachers and unqualified teachers as well as Higher Level Teaching Assistants.

4.2 Teaching Assistant (Level 4) - Higher Level Teaching Assistant (MK6)

National guidance states that if a Teaching Assistant takes a class during this time they should be paid at Level 4 (MK6). They will have HLTA status or be working towards it, or have obtained another level 4 qualification or above.

4.3 Level 4 Teaching Assistants – HLTA (MK6) can take on higher level tasks and responsibilities which include working with individual pupils, small groups and whole classes. One of the roles of the Level 4 HLTA can therefore be to take responsibility for a whole class during the planned absence of a teacher, i.e. during PPA time

4.4 If the individual does not have HLTA status the school needs to be confident the person has the necessary skills, expertise and experience to fulfil this role.

5.0 Teaching Assistant Career Progression

5.1 It is recommended that schools periodically review their support structure to ensure they have the correct number of Teaching Assistants across the four levels (MK grades 3-6) to meet the school's requirements.

5.2 Progression of employees through the various Teaching Assistant levels/grades is not automatic and is dependent upon individual review and assessment. It is also subject to the following criteria:

- Individuals are required to provide evidence demonstrating how they have developed their skills and competence to meet the requirements of the next level.
- The employee must have shown proper motivation, conduct and standards of performance in respect of past and current duties and responsibilities and made realistic efforts to achieve all targets set.
- Progression is subject to approval by the Headteacher.
- Work of that level must be available in the school, i.e. a vacancy exists for a TA of a higher level.

5.3 It is expected that individuals will take ownership of their own career progression and should accumulate a portfolio of achievements to demonstrate their increased competence. Headteachers are expected to support employee development through formal training, workplace projects, coaching and feedback.

5.4 The 'Competencies and Career Progression for Teaching Assistants – Guidelines for Headteachers' booklet, produced by the Learning and Development Directorate provides further details of the career grade structure,

generic job profiles and person specifications for each Teaching Assistant Level and a Teaching Assistant Learning Framework.

5.0 References

This guidance has been compiled using the following documents:

www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/nationalagreement/wamg.aspx

- WAMG Note 17, June 2006 'Effective Deployment of Higher Level Teaching Assistants to Help Raise Standards'.
- WAMG Note 22 July 2008 'The Appropriate Deployment of Support Staff in Schools'.
- WAMG 'Guidance for Schools on Higher Level Teaching Assistant Roles for School Support Staff'.
- WAMG 'Guidance for Schools on Cover Supervision'