

# Guidance on Cover Supervision for Classroom-Based Staff



Cover supervision is needed for a teacher's short-term absence from the classroom, where the absence was not known about in advance.

**If you are asked to provide cover supervision, you should only do so if you are suitably trained/qualified and confident and happy to do so. You should also be appropriately paid for doing additional duties.**

Any proposal for a change of responsibility or duties should be discussed and agreed.

Although there is no definitive guidance on the time limits of cover, and it is at the discretion of Headteachers, GMB would advise that cover should not really be for more than 5 consecutive days and most definitely should not be on an indefinite basis. Longer-term absence, e.g. due to long-term sick or maternity leave, should be covered by a teacher.

Cover supervision involves ensuring pupils carry out a pre-prepared exercise under supervision and no active teaching takes place. The duties of cover supervision can be summarised as:

- Supervising the work that has been set on the lesson plan provided, using the necessary resources that have also been provided.
- Managing the behaviour of pupils in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- Responding to any questions that pupils might have about the process.
- Dealing with any immediate problems or emergencies in line with school policy and procedures
- Collecting any completed work at the end of the lesson and returning it to the teacher
- Reporting back as appropriate on any issues that arose during the lesson.

**Importantly, any cover of absence should only be short-term.**

## NJC School Support Staff Job Profiles – Who is the Right Person to Cover?

### Teaching Assistants – Level 3 and Level 4

“provide short term cover supervision of classes”.

### Higher Level Teaching Assistants

“Plan, prepare and deliver assigned programmes of teaching and learning activities to individuals, small groups and/or classes modifying and adapting activities as necessary under the overall direction and supervision of a teacher.”

“Use teaching and learning objectives to plan, evaluate and adjust lessons/work plans as appropriate within agreed systems of supervision”.



### Cover Supervisors

“To supervise whole classes undertaking pre-prepared activities provided by a teacher during the short-term absence of a classroom teacher. The primary focus is to maintain order and to keep pupils on task.”

**These definitions are useful in understanding the remit of the roles and there are limitations on the ways in which teaching assistants can be used in providing cover.**

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## Workload

If any cover you are being asked to provide is making your workload excessive, then this is a health and safety issue. Unreasonable or unmanageable workloads can have a negative effect on both physical and mental wellbeing and your employer has a duty of care to protect your wellbeing and welfare.

If you are experiencing stress, or any other effect caused by your workload, speak to your manager and contact your local GMB rep, or get in touch with your local GMB office at [gmb.org.uk/gmb-regions](http://gmb.org.uk/gmb-regions)

## Staffing Levels

When teaching assistants cover teachers absences, you often become the only adult in a classroom. GMB advise that the normal staffing levels that exist day to day in your classroom are maintained in the absence of a school teacher. There should be no worsening of staff to pupil ratios.

There are occasions where you will be working with a child on a one-to-one basis or in small groups and this can bring additional risks, you can become vulnerable to malicious allegations; making you more at risk from verbal or physical abuse from students and causing you to feel stressed and isolated.

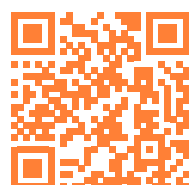
Risk assessments should be carried out to suitably and sufficiently address risk and your employer should be ensuring your health, safety and welfare.

## Stronger Together

GMB has more than 100,000 members working as school support staff, and by taking on issues collectively, we can get a quicker and more effective solution than you would doing it on your own.

If you need advice on any aspect of providing cover, or for support on how to collectively organise, contact your local GMB rep, or get in touch with your local office at [gmb.org.uk/gmb-regions](http://gmb.org.uk/gmb-regions)

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