

National Union of Teachers

**Protecting
supply teachers
and
teachers
employed
to cover**



www.teachers.org.uk

SUPPLY AND COVER TEACHERS

1. Supply teachers and teachers employed by schools to provide cover (cover teachers) do one of the most difficult jobs in education. They have to be flexible and adaptable, often teaching unfamiliar classes at very short notice. Supply and cover teachers with their qualified status and their professional experience have the ability to teach the pupils in their care, rather than merely supervise them.

WHO TEACHES?

2. The Government's regulations under Section 133 of the Education Act 2002 now enable any person without qualified teacher status, whom a headteacher believes can carry out specified teaching work, to teach whole classes without the presence of a qualified teacher. Headteachers can now employ persons to take on teaching duties irrespective of qualification. This threatens to undermine the status, and reduce the employment prospects, of supply, cover and all teachers.
3. The new regulations describe an additional group of persons who can teach. This group is covered by none of the precise protective conditions that apply to the other groups.
4. There may be attempts by some governing bodies or headteachers to employ support staff including persons described as 'higher level teaching assistants' (HLTAs) to teach whole classes on their own, whether for the purposes of cover or taking timetabled classes. Such an approach is very different from the use of such staff in

emergencies. The application of the National Agreement on Workload and any new regulations should not result in the removal of teaching posts, the filling of teaching posts by unqualified persons or the termination of teachers' employment. The NUT will oppose such developments.

QUALIFIED TEACHER STATUS

Quality Teaching

5. The Government's changes to the teachers' regulations were opposed by the NUT. The provisions to allow unqualified persons to teach whole classes were central to the NUT's principled opposition to the School Workforce Reform Agreement and its decision not to sign. The acceptance of teaching as an all-graduate profession was achieved only after campaigns over many years.
6. The decision to change the regulations and to allow persons, irrespective of qualification, to take on core teaching duties is a retrograde step. It will continue to be opposed by the NUT.

Cover for Absence

7. Throughout this document, the NUT includes within the definition of 'cover', time during which teachers take additional pupils into their classes.
8. The NUT believes that in respect of cover for absent teachers, 'cover supervisors' or 'higher level teaching assistants' should not be a substitute for the employment of qualified supply or cover teachers.

9. The NUT believes that cover should be provided by qualified cover teachers or supply teachers. Where unqualified persons are appointed to provide cover in preference to seeking cover or supply teachers, the NUT regional office or NUT Cymru, if in Wales, should be informed. NUT school representatives will have an important role in monitoring developments and seeking support as necessary.

Teaching on the Cheap?

10. Although the Government has denied consistently that the use of unqualified persons for cover duties represents 'teaching on the cheap', its letter of 4 August 2003 to chief education officers in England reveals its true intentions. The letter said:

"The national remodelling team, with the Workload Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) should provide advice on 'ways in which schools can make the most of their resources – for example, ... early action on ways of working which will serve to reduce the cost of supply cover'".

This proves the support of the School Workforce Agreement signatories for driving down the cost of teaching through reducing the employment of supply and cover teachers.

11. A growing number of supply and cover teachers face reduced levels of employment or the termination of engagements as cover teachers in particular schools. The NUT has emphasised consistently at national, local and school level that this is unacceptable and will oppose

reductions in the use of qualified supply teachers.

12. NUT members who are supply teachers and discover that their periods of employment have been reduced because of the use of persons unqualified to teach should contact their NUT regional office or, in Wales, NUT Cymru. The NUT is the only teachers' organisation free to protect supply teachers and other teachers employed to cover for absent teachers. The NUT is determined to protect members employed to cover for absent staff, including those on supply contracts.
13. The NUT will give the highest priority to ensuring the continuing employment of supply and cover teachers. It believes that there is an opportunity for LEAs individually and in clusters to provide reassurance to supply and cover teachers and a greater regularity and consistency in supply cover.

Protecting Supply and Cover Teachers

14. The NUT did not sign the School Workforce Reform Agreement because it believed that it undermined qualified teacher status. The signatories have signed up to an agreement aimed at reducing the use of qualified teachers generally and in particular for cover. The NUT is the only teachers' organisation in England and Wales which is able to oppose freely this approach. The NUT is the only teachers' organisation which is:

- pressing LEAs to review the cover arrangements of schools, including their own strategies for ensuring that all schools have access to supply and cover teachers;

- calling on LEAs to restore their responsibilities for the co-ordination of supply and cover teachers;
- pressing Government and LEAs to examine the possibility of a range of improved contractual and organisational options for schools with respect to the employment of supply and cover teachers; and
- urging LEAs to prepare, prior to 1 September 2004, a strategy paper which focuses on securing proper and embedded cover arrangements involving the use of supply and cover teachers.

A CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT

15. To improve the status and quality of supply and cover teachers, the NUT is calling on the Government to:
- invest in high quality professional development and training opportunities for supply and cover teachers;
 - ensure that supply and cover teachers have equal entitlement to any initiative designed to improve the quality, professionalism and retention of the teaching profession;
 - introduce legislation to ensure that supply agencies are subject to stringent regulation and that agency, supply and cover teachers are subject to the same terms and conditions of employment as other teachers working in maintained schools; and
 - protect the employment of supply and cover teachers by permitting only qualified teachers to teach whole classes.

CURRENT REQUIREMENTS

16. The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document provides that no teacher, other than a teacher employed specifically to provide cover, on the staff of a school, shall be required to provide cover:
- a) after the teacher who is absent or otherwise not available has been so for three or more consecutive working days;
 - b) where the fact that the teacher would be absent or otherwise not available for a period exceeding three consecutive working days was known to the maintaining authority or, in the case of a school which has a delegated budget, to the governing body, for two or more working days before the absence commenced.
- From 1 September 2004 these clauses are deleted and the protection provided is lost. Instead, no teacher can be required to provide cover for more than 38 hours, as an annual total limit.
17. Set out below are the arrangements that the NUT would wish to put into place. Their purpose is to protect the work of supply teachers; to ensure that every effort is made to secure teaching by qualified teachers; and to limit, as far as can be achieved, the use of 'cover supervisors'.
- Teachers on the staff of the school other than cover teachers should be required to cover for no more than one day in the event of an unforeseen absence and should not be required to cover at all in the event of absences known in advance.

- On the introduction of the 38 hour limit in September 2004, the 38 hours should be evenly distributed over the school terms. In the event of cover being required, teachers employed specifically to provide such cover should be used.
- In the event of a teacher absence, the headteacher should exhaust all reasonable means in trying to secure a cover or supply teacher. This approach should continue to apply when the 38 hour annual cover limit for teachers comes into force in September 2004.
- The LEA will re-establish a pool of available supply teachers to be called upon by schools.

ONLY THE NUT

18. The NUT is the only teachers' organisation acting to protect supply and cover teachers.
19. NUT members who are supply or cover teachers and discover that their periods of employment have been reduced because of the use of persons unqualified to teach should contact their NUT regional office or, in Wales, NUT Cymru.

**Not a member?
Join the NUT today.
Call the joining hotline
0845 300 1669 or visit
www.teachers.org.uk**

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Northern

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Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, S Tyneside, Stockton-on-
Tees, Sunderland, City of York.

Region 2

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North West

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Bolton, Bury, Cheshire, Halton,
Isle of Man, Knowsley, Lancashire, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham,
Rochdale, St Helen's, Salford, Sefton, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford,
Warrington, Wigan, Wirral.

Region 3

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Yorkshire/Midland

Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Derbyshire, City of Derby, Doncaster,
East Riding, Kingston-upon-Hull, Kirklees, Leeds, Lincolnshire,
North East Lincs, North Lincs, City of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire,
Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield.

Region 4

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Midlands

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Region 5

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Region 7

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Region 8

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Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport,
Pembrokeshire, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Torfaen,
Vale of Glamorgan, Wrexham, Ynys Môn.



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