



SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

**JOINT NEGOTIATING
COMMITTEE FOR TEACHERS**

**Teachers Absence in Exceptional
Circumstances (JNCT1.10)**

1. Background

- 1.1 There are occasions in schools (such as during an outbreak of flu or during severe shortage of supply teachers) when the absence rate of teachers through illness reaches levels that make the teaching of classes and proper running of schools extremely difficult. Clearly, in exercising its duty to provide education, the authority would wish only to send pupils home and/or close a school as a last resort. The purpose of this paper is therefore to provide guidance to school managers and other staff on the protocols to be adopted when staff absence is at exceptionally high levels. As an example, a 10% staff absence over a working week may be considered an exceptional circumstance.
- 1.2 This paper has been issued with the agreement of the local JNCT.

2. Exceptional Circumstances

- 2.1 Where a head teacher judges that teacher absence has become, or is likely to become critical in their school, he/she should consult with the Senior Education Manager (Staffing) who will, following consultation with the JNCT Joint Secretary (Teachers' Side) decide if an emergency situation applies and that the advice contained in this agreement should be followed.
- 2.2 If an emergency situation is likely to extend beyond 5 days, further additional advice will be given following consultation with the Senior Education Manager (Staffing)
- 2.3 Where staffing levels have become critical, the schools should discontinue involvement in all planned out-of-school activities by all staff (eg CPD courses, network meetings, HT meetings, working groups).

3. Guidance

- 3.1 The supply teacher helpline will continue to be the focus for requests for supply staff in cases of teacher absence.
- 3.2 For both short and longer-term teacher absences, the central peripatetic pool of supply teachers will be used.
- 3.3 In circumstances where the situation is judged to be an emergency, head teachers should use all available teaching staff to cover the classes of absent teachers by deploying the following groups of staff in sequence:
- School Senior Managers
 - Principal Teachers who have additional management time
 - Early Intervention /Home-Link Staff
 - School-based Learning Support Staff
 - Cluster-based Learning Support Staff
 - Peripatetic Learning Support Staff
 - Staff Tutors
 - Authority Central Staff
- 3.4 Where it is agreed that an emergency situation applies, head teachers should consult with staff and agree the appropriate arrangements that best apply to their establishment.

- 3.5 In deploying learning support staff to cover classes, a risk assessment of the removal of support from particular pupil(s) should be undertaken either by the head teacher of the school or the Pupil Support Co-ordinator. If the risk is high, a move to the next group of staff in the sequence may be the appropriate outcome.
- 3.6 The maximum contact time of 22.5 hours for teachers should be respected.
- 3.7 The authority accepts that the use of school senior managers and principal teachers to cover the classes of absent teachers may impact significantly on the capacity of the school to deliver the school improvements contained in the school development plan. Development plan targets and timescales should be adjusted accordingly in schools that become adversely affected in this way.
- 3.8 If the exceptional circumstances persist, the JNCT Joint Secretaries will, following discussion of the individual circumstances, provide further guidance to schools.
- 3.9 Under no circumstances should non-teaching staff be used to cover the classes of absent teachers.