

JNCT 1.10

Teachers Absence in Exceptional Circumstances



Reference:

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Version Control

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1	April 2015		C Douglas	
2	October 2020		D Strang	Next Review Oct 2023
3	April 2022		S Mulholland	Next Review April 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This JNCT agreement sets out the measures that schools should take during the challenging periods when there may be a shortage of teaching staff.

2. Background

- 2.1 There are occasions in schools (such as during a pandemic, an outbreak of flu or during severe shortage of supply teachers) when the absence rate of teachers as a result of self-isolation or 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.
- 2.2 This paper has been issued with the agreement of the local JNCT.

3. Staffing – General Guidance

- 3.1 Head teachers should refer to this JNCT agreement for steps schools should take where the level of teacher absence is high and where necessary speak to the QIM/QIO or Co-ordinators.
- 3.2 Normal absence management processes will remain in place at all times and schools should ensure that these are followed.
- 3.3 Head teachers should consider an emergency plan for their school which may be actioned during critical staff shortages.

4. Exceptional Circumstances

- 4.1 Where a head teacher judges that teacher absence has become, or is likely to become critical in their school, he/she should contact the QIM/QIO or Co-ordinator to discuss the situation if an emergency situation applies and that the advice contained in this agreement should be followed.
- 4.2 If an emergency situation is likely to extend beyond 5 days, further additional advice will be given following discussion with the central education team
- 4.3 Where staffing levels have become critical, the schools should discontinue involvement in all planned out-of-school activities by all staff (e.g. CPD courses, network meetings, HT meetings, working groups).

5. Guidance

- 5.1 Schools should make arrangements to provide cover within the school using suitably qualified staff or temporary staff.
- 5.2 The supply teacher booking system (BoB) will continue to be the focus for requests for supply staff in cases of teacher absence.
- 5.3 For both short and longer-term teacher absences, the central peripatetic pool of supply teachers will be used if staff are available.

- 5.4 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, in sequence, the following groups of staff.
- Staff currently based within the school in addition to entitlement e.g. PEF teachers
 - Principal Teachers
 - School Senior Managers
 - Early Intervention /Home-Link Staff
 - School-based Learning Support Staff
 - Teaching staff available in other schools (cluster-based approach)
 - Cluster-based Learning Support Staff
 - Peripatetic Learning Support Staff
 - Authority Central Staff
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 The maximum contact time of 22.5 hours for teachers should be respected.
- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 If the exceptional circumstances persist, the JNCT Joint Secretaries will, following discussion of the individual circumstances, provide further guidance to schools.
- 5.10 Under no circumstances should local government school support staff be used to cover the classes of absent teachers. Support staff can be used to supervise a class but for short periods only.
- 5.11 Where staffing remains critical then please contact the QIO for cover from the central team from where any centrally based GTCS registered staff will be deployed.
6. **Monitoring**
- 6.1 Where extreme levels of absence are causing disruption to the delivery of education the Quality Improvement Managers and the Director will monitor the weekly data reporting on staff absence to Scottish Government where required.