

**School Support Staff - Guidance on the Employment of Cover**

**Supervisors and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs)**

This guidance covers the role of Cover Supervisor, or that of a Teaching Assistant undertaking cover supervision and the role of a more senior teaching assistant post commonly referred to as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA). It provides information about the evaluated salary grades for these jobs and advice on how to use them**.**

For the purpose of this guidance the term HLTA is used to mean a post of responsibility requiring the post holder to deliver the more demanding aspects of specified work. Schools have referred to this type of post as “Senior Teaching Assistant” or “Higher Level Teaching Assistant”.

Schools should consider their requirement for cover supervision and specified work within the context of their staffing structure. Where new posts are created they will require a job description and an appropriate level of pay. Schools will determine the title of such posts, the job description and the qualities required of individuals that will fill these posts.

Headteachers are advised to have due regard to the standards for HLTAs www.hlta.org.uk when deploying support staff to undertake specified work and to support and encourage individuals, as appropriate, to participate in the training and assessment programme to achieve HLTA status. However, it is not essential for a person undertaking specified work to hold HLTA status.

**Evaluated Grades**

Salary grades for the following standard jobs have been considered by the job evaluation moderation panel and are confirmed below. The job descriptions on which these grades are based are those agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services and published in *School Support Staff: The Way Forward.* It is recommended that schools use these in drawing up job descriptions.

Cover Supervisor, or Teaching Assistant undertaking cover supervision – Grade 6

Cover Supervisor, or Teaching Assistant undertaking cover supervision in a special school – Grade 8

*(See NJC job description - Teaching Assistant supporting and delivering learning Level 3)*

Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) – Grade 8

Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) in a special school – Grade 9

*(See NJC job description - Teaching Assistant supporting and delivering learning Level 4)*

Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) with management responsibility – Grade 9.

*(See NJC job description - Teaching Assistant supporting and delivering learning Level 4)*

The model job profiles reflect the expectation that a person meeting the HLTA standards will have skills and knowledge at the level of, or equivalent to, NVQ4 while support staff undertaking cover supervision will have skills and knowledge at the level of, or equivalent to, NVQ3.

Where schools have particular recruitment or retention difficulties, the agreed 5-20%

supplement may be paid in addition to the correct evaluated grade.

**How to use the grades**

When a new post is created, a job description should be drawn up and the salary set at the appropriate grade.

If new duties are to be combined with an existing post at a different grade the post holder will hold two contracts and will be paid at the appropriate grade for each part of the job, providing that the number of hours at the higher grade is less than 50% of the total combined hours for the individual. If work at the higher grade amounts to

50% or more of the contracted time the whole post should be re-graded.

If the headteacher asks support staff on an occasional basis to provide cover supervision or specified work for an unexpected absence the member of staff should be paid for the hours worked at the appropriate grade. This will be treated as ‘casual work’ the hourly rate for which includes an amount for holiday pay. Schools should note that this supersedes previous advice to pay for such hours on the unqualified teacher scale.

In determining their staffing requirements schools should consider how they might wish to deploy support staff. For example, if a school requires an HLTA

to undertake specified work with a whole class on a weekly basis for two hours then it should combine the two roles as described above. Alternatively, if a school wishes to create a post which will enable the headteacher to direct the employee to undertake specified work at any time then it should establish a new post and set the salary at the higher grade.

Further guidance on the roles of Cover Supervisor and HLTA appears below.

**Job Evaluation**

Jobs which fit a standard pattern can be allocated a grade without further analysis. Such jobs are those covered by this guidance and by the advice published in the

‘Guide to Evaluated Grades for School Support Staff Jobs.’ However, if the job is a new or unusual one it should be referred to job evaluation for advice before a grade is allocated.

Schools are advised to refer a job description as soon as possible before advertising a vacancy as it can take 2-3 weeks before the moderation panel can consider a job.

A ‘Request for evaluation of a new or amended job description for schools’ form must be completed and the documents requested on the form attached. Email the form and attachments to [hradvicedesk@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hradvicedesk@oxfordshire.gov.uk%20) or phone 01865 816650 for advice.

**Cover Supervisor**

A cover supervisor will supervise whole classes during the short-term absence of teachers. The primary focus of cover supervision will be to maintain good order and to keep pupils on task. Cover Supervisors will need to respond to questions and generally assist pupils to undertake set activities.

Definition of cover supervision

Cover supervision occurs when no active teaching is taking place and involves the supervision of pre-set learning activities in the absence of a teacher.

Cover supervision does not constitute ‘specified work’.

A wide range of support staff may provide cover supervision, either as part of their role or as dedicated cover supervisors.

Cover supervision should only be used to provide cover for short-term teacher absences. Such absences may be known in advance, such as a teacher participating in professional development or they may be unexpected, for example, due to illness. Cover for longer-term absence – for example, due to long-term illness or maternity leave should be provided by a teacher.

Short-term absence is not defined as a specific length of time; the *Guidance for*

*Schools on Cover Supervision* published by WAMG (2004) says:

9 Headteachers will exercise their professional judgement in determining what should be regarded as a “short-term” absence for these purposes. There will be a number of considerations which the headteacher will need to take into account when deciding whether the use of cover supervision is appropriate or not. The key factors are:

a. The extent to which continuity of learning can be maintained;

b. The length of time a particular group of pupils would be working without a teacher;

c. The proportion of the total curriculum time affected in a specific subject over the course of the term.

10 For example, in a setting where a class is predominantly led by one teacher for the majority of the day, it is likely that cover supervision will very quickly become “specified work” and active teaching would be required. This would therefore fall under the Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations. In any case, it would clearly be inappropriate in such settings for

a class to be ‘supervised’ for more than three consecutive days.

11 On the other hand, where pupils are only timetabled for occasional lessons which are affected by teacher absence, the use of cover supervision over a longer period of time may be appropriate.

Schools may wish to create dedicated cover supervisor posts or they may want to include cover supervision as one element of a wider role. Cover supervision duties should be recognised in the job description and should be rewarded at the appropriate level of pay as described above.

In circumstances where a headteacher asks support staff on an occasional basis to provide cover supervision or specified work for an unexpected absence the support staff member should be paid for the hours spent doing cover supervision or specified work at the appropriate grade. Schools should note that this supersedes previous advice to pay for such hours on the unqualified teacher scale.

**Higher Level Teaching Assistant Roles**

The role of a higher level teaching assistant will complement the professional work of teachers and can include a wide range of different work, including providing

specified work under an agreed system of supervision. It might also involve managing and working with others – for example, guiding the work of other adults supporting teaching and learning in the classroom, working collaboratively with colleagues and liaising sensitively and effectively with parents and carers. Further guidance and examples of HLTA roles can be found on the HLTA website [www.hlta.org.uk](http://www.hlta.org.uk)

**Specified Work and PPA time**

As part of their PPA strategy schools may wish to deploy support staff to work with whole classes. Where the more demanding aspects of specified work are carried out by support staff, and particularly where they are working with whole classes, it is strongly recommended that the headteacher should have regard for the standards for HLTAs in determining whether those staff have the necessary level of skills and expertise.

In some schools, new posts will be created and individuals recruited to fulfil these duties. Job descriptions should reflect the work to be done. Pay for such posts will be at the HLTA grade.

In other schools the work may be shared among a number of support staff. Job descriptions will need to be revised to reflect the work to be done. Any revision of job descriptions should normally be agreed between the headteacher and the member of staff. In these circumstances support staff will hold two contracts and will be paid for the hours spent doing specified work at the higher level. If this amounts to 50% or more of their contracted time, the whole post should be re-graded as above.

Definition of Specified Work

The Regulations[[1]](#footnote-1) specify the following activities:

a. planning and preparing lessons and courses for pupils;

b. delivering lessons to pupils. This includes delivery via distance learning or computer aided techniques;

c. assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils; and d. reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils.

Support staff may undertake ‘specified work’ subject to conditions set out in the

Regulations:

i. the support staff member must carry out the ‘specified work’ in order to assist or support the work of a qualified teacher in the school;

ii. the support staff member must be subject to the direction and supervision of a qualified teacher in accordance with arrangements made by the headteacher of the school; and

iii. the headteacher must be satisfied that the support staff member has the skills, expertise and experience required to carry out the ‘specified

work’.

**Job Descriptions**

Job profiles for a range of standard school support staff roles agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services are published in *School Support Staff: The Way Forward,* this booklet has been widely distributed to schools The contents can also be downloaded [here.](http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/public/LandC/SandPM/SIMS/Management/School%20Support%20Staff%20-%20The%20Way%20Forward.pdf)

[Further](http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/publications/) information about these job descriptions and those for other standard jobs can be found in the advice published in the ‘[Guide to Evaluated Grades for School Support Staff Jobs](http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/HR/jobevaluation/GuidetoEvaluatedGradesforSchoolSupportStaffJobs.pdf).’ It is recommended that schools use these in drawing up job descriptions.

**Useful References:**

Oxfordshire County Council Guide to Evaluated Grades for School Support Staff Jobs – [See schools intranet](http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/HR/jobevaluation/GuidetoEvaluatedGradesforSchoolSupportStaffJobs.pdf)

Job Evaluation Advice - [hradvicedesk@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hradvicedesk@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or phone 01865 816650

National Joint Council for Local Government Services [School Support Staff: The Way](http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/public/LandC/SandPM/SIMS/Management/School%20Support%20Staff%20-%20The%20Way%20Forward.pdf)

[Forward](http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/public/LandC/SandPM/SIMS/Management/School%20Support%20Staff%20-%20The%20Way%20Forward.pdf) *(*Employers’ Organisation for local government (2003)

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1. Section 133 Regulations issued under the Education Act 2002 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)