

Renfrewshire Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

To: Renfrewshire Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

On: 21st March 2023

Absence Cover Agreements and Supply Staff

Report by

Joint Secretary (Teachers' Side)

Background

It has been reported to representatives of all the teaching unions that additional burdens and workload are being experienced in many schools as a result of a lack of subject specialist supply staff to cover absences of colleagues in secondary schools. The problems are acute in some schools where vacancies and/or long-term absences prevail.

The lack of availability of supply teachers, as well as adequate cover for absent classroom assistants, is being particularly felt in secondary schools in the run-up to SQA examinations where some teachers are being timetabled for additional classes to support young people. This is increasing their workload.

Senior managers as well as subject principals and faculty heads are also experiencing additional workloads in managing revisions to timetables needed to mitigate staffing problems.

Furthermore, in situations where staff leave the employ of the Local Authority, the time that it takes from recruitment to appointment of replacements, is a concern. It can lead to some young people having, at times, a disjointed experience when staff leave and a lack of continuity in their learning where they may experience a variety of teachers, some of whom are general cover while lengthy recruitment processes take place.

Every school should also have a written agreement on absence cover but it is difficult for schools to abide by their agreements if the Local Authority has not recruited enough supply staff to fill vacant posts.

It is reported by other Local Authorities that 'Teacher Booker' is the system used to place staff into vacancies and that this is largely successful. Renfrewshire Council does not use this system instead preferring a text messaging arrangement to fill vacancies. The Teachers' side would welcome further discussion on the introduction of this booking system as a means of more efficiently allocating supply staff to schools.

Action

- That the Joint Secretaries add the matter of supply staff as a standing item to their agenda at their regular meetings
- That the management side provides an update to the Teachers' side on the position in respect of supply availability and the permanent supply pool.
- The Local Authority engages in discussion around the feasibility of introducing 'Teacher Booker' as a means of allocating supply teachers more efficiently to vacancies.