

Cover supervisor

Everything you need to know



What is a cover supervisor?

A cover supervisor works across a school, supervising classes in the absence of full-time staff. They deliver work set by a teacher and manage the classroom, ensuring that all pupils remain on task and behave well.

Cover supervisors may have duties at break and lunchtime, during form time, or may be asked to invigilate exams.

Schools expect you to be...

- Flexible
- Organised
- Prepared
- Professional

Schools won't expect you to...

- Do any lesson planning
- Mark the lessons
- Be a subject expert
- Set homework



Establishing behavioural expectations when covering a new class can be tricky. Try these methods to help keep control, and remember to always read the school's behaviour policy on arrival!

Set the foundation

At the start of the lesson:

- Greet the children before they enter the classroom.
- Introduce yourself and write your name on the board.
- Take the register.
- Ask the children to get their equipment and planners out on their desks.
- Read the instructions for the lesson and explain the objectives using clear language.
- Hand out the necessary resources.

Starting a class

Remain calm and composed, and avoid raising your voice. Clearly state what you expect to see and focus on positive direction rather than criticism. Learn and use pupils' names where possible, and have a clear starter activity ready as they enter. Reinforce readiness to learn and establish simple, consistent routines.

- Use clear instructions: "I need everyone looking this way and ready to listen."
- Praise readiness: "Thank you for having your books open and pens ready."
- Provide a clear starter such as a question, image, or short task on the board.
- Use consistent signals such as counting down from five to one or raising your hand.
- Give responsibility, for example, handing out books or resources.
- Acknowledge that you may do things differently from their usual teacher.



Maintaining positive behaviour

Set expectations concisely at the start of the lesson and refer consistently to the school's behaviour policy to keep interactions professional and fair. Move around the classroom to support pupils and maintain focus. Recognise and reinforce positive behaviour throughout the lesson.

- State expectations clearly: "Work in silence. If you need help, put your hand up. Thank you."
- Define acceptable noise levels for discussion tasks.
- Use descriptive and directional cues: "You are fiddling with the blinds. Look this way and listen."
- Refer to the school behaviour policy when addressing concerns.
- Praise individuals and the class, and pass positive feedback to their usual teacher.

Our supply top tips

- Know your key contacts: who you report to, who to call for support, and the names of heads of year or heads of department.
- Introduce yourself to teaching assistants or support staff before the lesson and agree on how you will work together.
- Set the standard from the start. Meet pupils at the door, introduce yourself, and write your name on the board.
- Teach the work that has been set unless directed otherwise.
- Stay present and proactive. Move around the classroom, support pupils with their learning, and maintain a calm, positive atmosphere.



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