

TEACHERS WITHOUT A PERMANENT CLASSROOM BASE

Ideally, all teachers should have a permanent classroom base. The benefits of having such a base are numerous, including the ability to plan and prepare in advance of each lesson.

Conversely, there are significant disadvantages to lacking a permanent classroom base, including a loss of time in moving between classrooms or different school sites, having to transport materials and lack of storage facilities. Where teachers moving between classrooms or different sites are not provided with adequate time to do so, this may impact adversely on classroom management and workloads in general. Additionally, employers should consider the impact on the health, safety and welfare of staff who are required to move between classrooms or buildings, and in particular the risk of injury and potential long-term absence.

Unfortunately, many schools are overcrowded or lack sufficient specialist teaching rooms to allow the full delivery of the curriculum without using general teaching space. Some schools also operate on multiple sites, which again raises issues around the movement of teachers.

This guidance is designed for teachers to ensure that where teachers are required to move, this movement is kept to a minimum, with sufficient consideration of the health and safety implications. It is not intended to be used for ad-hoc room changes arranged between individual teachers for specific reasons.

Throughout this guidance, it should be noted that the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAW) requires employers to do everything reasonably practicable to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees, and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations requires all hazards to be risk assessed. As moving around the site, or between sites, constitutes a hazard, this must be risk assessed.

Teachers moving within a single site

This situation is most likely to occur in secondary schools and for primary teachers delivering PPA lessons.

School leaders should ensure that all teachers have a work area with access to lockable storage facilities. This applies equally whether a teacher has a permanent base or not. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 also state that all employees should be provided with workstations that are suitable for the people using them and for the work they do. Equally, all employees should be provided with a suitable area in which to rest and take breaks.

For PPA-cover teachers in primary schools, the timetable should be designed to minimise travelling between rooms.

School leaders should ensure that wherever possible:

- all movements are kept to a minimum;
- a teacher has the use of the same room for an entire day, and where this is not possible, teachers are not expected to move between rooms between concurrent lessons;
- movements are shared equitably across colleagues within a department;
- provision is made to move equipment and resources (e.g. books). This could be via an

appropriately trained member of support staff. Teachers should not be expected to carry heavy equipment and resources between rooms, and should not be trained to do so as this represents an acceptance of the need;

- a trolley is provided to move any other materials;
- rooms are chosen to minimise distance travelled;
- movements between buildings that require teachers going outdoors are avoided;
- lesson observations do not take place immediately after a teacher has had to move between rooms;
- specialist teachers are timetabled in specialist rooms at least some of the time for all their teaching groups; and
- ECTs/NQTs/probationers are given a permanent classroom base.

When designing the timetable, part-time teachers must not automatically be timetabled without a permanent base. This would be likely to contravene the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000.

When timetabling, a room capacity of 80% usage is normally the maximum capacity that can be adequately timetabled without excessive movements.

Teachers moving between sites

The NASUWT has produced separate guidance for school leaders managing teacher movements on split site schools.

Disabled teachers

Special consideration must be given to disabled teachers, especially, but not exclusively, those with mobility issues. In these cases, it is likely that ensuring the teacher has a permanent base will be considered a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act, and it could therefore be discriminatory to require disabled teachers to move between classrooms or different sites.

Pregnancy

Special consideration must be given to the needs of pregnant employees. Legislation requires that a risk assessment is carried out in respects of pregnant employees; this must be regularly reviewed. Part of the risk assessment must focus on the physical environment. For pregnant teachers without a permanent base, or indeed those with a permanent base, consideration must be given, in consultation with the employee, as to the appropriateness of their teaching location(s), particularly in regard to access to sanitary and rest facilities.

Room closures

Where a teaching room is required to be closed for any period, a risk assessment should be carried out, especially where the closure is likely to extend more than a couple of days. In this case, it would be unfair to expect a displaced teacher to make regular movements, and it may require a more widespread temporary re-rooming to be undertaken to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of teachers is protected and the requirements above are met.

Additional advice/concerns

If you require additional advice in managing this situation, please contact the NASUWT for further assistance:



03330 145550

advice@mail.nasuwat.org.uk

www.nasuwat.org.uk