

COVER DAY & SUPPLY · ALL GRADES

First Day as Supply

A survival guide

Before you walk in

If you've been booked the night before, do these: • **ASK THE AGENCY:** year group, school, anything they know about the class • **LOOK UP** the school's website — Ofsted/inspection report, behavior policy, ethos • **SET YOUR ALARM EARLY** — aim to arrive 30 minutes before bell • **PREPARE A TINY EMERGENCY KIT:** pens, whiteboard markers, sticky notes, your own phone-charged lanyard if you have one If you've been booked that morning — accept what is. The rest of this guide is your friend.

Your first 15 minutes in the building

Sign in at the office Get a visitor lanyard. Confirm what year group, what classroom. Ask: where do parents drop off? Where is fire assembly? Where are toilets for staff and pupils?	Find the class teacher's pack Most schools leave one. Ask the office or whoever shows you to the room. If there isn't one, ask the year partner.
Walk the classroom Find the register, the photocopier, the toilet pass system, the class behavior chart, the class timetable. Spend 2 minutes orienting.	Read the class list Note medical flags, SEND children, EAL children. You won't remember names, but flags help you SCAN the room.
Set up the day Write the day's outline on the board. Put your name on it. Put resources where you'll need them.	Greet the year partner Find them. Introduce yourself. They are your lifeline. 'I'm new here today — anything I should particularly know?' Most are kind.

The morning bell — the first 5 minutes with the children



This is the most important 5 minutes of your day. Children will test. They're entitled to. You're a stranger. 1. **STAND AT THE DOOR.** Greet each child as they come in. 'Good morning. What's your name?' This puts you in adult-mode and reduces anonymity. 2. **WHEN THEY'RE SETTLED — INTRODUCE YOURSELF.** Briefly. 'I'm Mrs/Mr [Name]. Mrs Walker is away today and I'll be teaching you.' Don't apologise. Don't over-explain. 3. **STATE EXPECTATIONS BRIEFLY.** 'I want a really good day with you. We're going to do [maths first / your reading / story]. Then break. Then [next thing]. Show me what a brilliant Year [X] looks like.' 4. **TAKE THE REGISTER.** Slowly. Use names. This is partly behavior management — children seeing you know them is grounding. 5. **START THE FIRST ACTIVITY.** Move quickly. Don't dwell on transitions. Don't let dead time develop.

Behavior management for an unfamiliar class

Use names within 5 minutes 'Sam, well done.' 'Sofia, sit down please.' Names anchor you in the room and them as individuals.	Don't compete with their teacher 'Mrs Walker doesn't let us...' 'Today we do it this way.' Don't get into 'but our teacher said...'
Reward what's right early Catch good behavior in the first 10 minutes. 'I'm noticing this row are listening brilliantly.' Sets the tone.	If something is hard — stay calm Children testing a supply often escalate when the supply does. Quiet voice. Slow movements. Privately redirect rather than publicly battling.
Use the year partner If something is too much — a child you can't settle, behavior beyond what's reasonable — get help. Send a child to the year partner with a note. No shame in this.	Don't promise consequences you can't deliver 'You'll lose Friday treat.' 'I'll tell Mrs Walker.' Maybe. Maybe not. Don't bluff. Use what you can actually do today.

If there's no cover plan

Sometimes there genuinely isn't one. Don't panic. 1. **ASK THE CHILDREN.** 'What were you doing yesterday in maths?' Year 5 children can usually tell you accurately. They want learning to continue. 2. **CHECK THE TEACHER'S DESK.** Often the planning file is there. Sometimes a sticky-note plan. 3. **ASK YEAR PARTNER.** They often know what the parallel class is doing. 4. **DEFAULT TO YOUR OWN BAG.** Keep generic activities ready: a comprehension set, an arithmetic worksheet, an art lesson, a writing prompt. (See the cover lessons in this subject — designed for exactly this.) 5. **BE HONEST WITH CHILDREN:** 'I haven't got Mrs Walker's plan, so we're going to do [X]. It will count.' Don't pretend you have a plan you don't.

Through the day — sustainability



1. EAT. Most schools have a staff-room. Eat your lunch with adults. Don't martyr yourself in the classroom. 2. BREATHE. Use breaks. Walk to the office or staff-room. Don't just stay in the room. 3. WATCH ENERGY. Children's attention drops mid-afternoon. Plan for it — story time, movement, art rather than dense academic work. 4. STAY KIND. Don't let the day's frustrations land on the children. They'll have someone better tomorrow; today they have you. 5. WRITE DOWN WHAT WORKED. For yourself. Notes for your next supply day. Builds your repertoire fast.

End of the day — handover

Before you leave, fill in a handover note for the regular teacher (use the cover-day handover template — separate resource):

- What got done in each lesson
- Any work to be marked / collected
- Any children who need follow-up
- Anything that needs to be passed on (medical, family, behavior)
- Anything you need them to do (e.g. 'Sofia's coat is in lost property')
- A brief 'general' line about how the day went

Keep it positive in tone where possible. Specific where you can be. The teacher will read it on the morning of their return — it shapes how they pick up. Thank the office on your way out. Sign out. Rebook through the agency if you'd like to come back. Schools that find good supply teachers KEEP THEM — make yourself a known name.

