

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee
ST 05

Inquiry into Supply Teaching

Evidence from : Headteacher – High School

Consultation questions

Question 1 – What are your views on whether there is a prevalence in the use of supply teachers on a planned and unplanned basis?	
<p>The use of supply teachers is very common, and I would imagine that all schools use them almost on a daily basis. If teachers are on a course then that use is, of course, planned in advance, but, with illness, supply teachers are commonly called in the morning.</p>	
If you believe that this results in problems (for example, for schools, pupils or teachers), how do you think they could be resolved?	
<p>If a school deploys supply teachers wisely it is not a problem. We do not usually use supply agencies; rather, we use the same supply teachers all of the time. We have a personal list that we use on a daily basis. These teachers have either been students at our school, have retired after teaching at the school or have been recommended by another school. In addition, we also have two lesson supervisors who take lessons on a daily basis.</p>	
How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)	
<i>1 – This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 – This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 – This is a minor problem</i>	/
<i>4 – Not a problem.</i>	

Question 2 – What are your views on the circumstances in which supply teachers are used for example, the types of classes they cover; the types of learning activities which take place under the supervision of supply teachers; whether they are qualified to teach relevant subjects?

We are not concerned about this at our school. Our lesson supervisors are, in the first instance, used to look after the subjects in which they specialise. We try to use teachers in an effective manner; for example, if a linguist is unwell, we employ a supply teacher who previously taught French and English. A former physical education teacher is used when there is illness in the PE department and a former design and technology teacher when there are problems with subjects such as woodwork, design and technology and construction. We adapt to the demand. If a teacher is away on a course, it is the responsibility of that teacher to assign work for the class – this work is given to the deputy or the relevant head of department. If illness is the reason for the absence, work is expected to be assigned for the second day of absence. With careful planning, there is no problem. We also periodically observe our supply teachers to ensure that they are appropriate for the position.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

These problems can be resolved by adopting the strategies outlined above.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 – This is a key, urgent problem.

2 – This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

3 – This is a minor problem

4 – Not a problem.

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Question 3 – What are your views on the impact of the use of supply teachers on the outcomes for pupils (including any impact on pupil behaviour)?

I am not of the opinion that the use of supply teachers, when appropriate, affects outcomes for pupils. The school must ensure that this does not affect pupil behaviour, too. Staff must be supervised closely to ensure that the use of supply teachers is not a problem.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

Again, by keeping a close eye on the issue, there is no problem. Plans must be made beforehand to ensure that appropriate work is left for the pupils. If a supply teacher is deployed at a school for a longer period of illness, it must be ensured that appropriate standards are maintained. This is ensured via observation and offering relevant support.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

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Question 4 – What are your views on the Continuous Professional Development of supply teachers and the potential impact of the National Professional Learning Model?

It is very important that supply teachers have an opportunity to participate in continuous professional development. We ensure that they have an opportunity to attend any courses held at the school and we also observe them on occasion.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

Supply teachers need to be treated as members of staff at the school.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
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<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
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<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
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<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	/
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Question 5 – What are your views on performance management arrangements for supply teachers?

I do not see any problem with performance management arrangements for supply teachers. This is an opportunity for them to develop professionally.

If you think there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

This may be a problem if the teacher works in several schools. Guidance must come from the teachers themselves.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
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<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
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<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	/
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<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
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Question 6 – Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?

Certainly not. Many agency supply teachers are not fit for purpose. This is a particular problem with Welsh-medium schools. We had to turn to an agency recently for someone to teach science, for example. However, even though the agency said that the scientist was able to speak Welsh, his Welsh was not of an appropriate standard for the school. Regional consortia and local authorities have no current plans to monitor this.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

There are certainly problems in this area. Local authorities and regional consortia need to ensure that they keep a close eye on the agencies and staff working within them. The amount of money made by agencies from supply teachers is also appalling.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 – This is a key, urgent problem.

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2 – This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

3 – This is a minor problem

4 – Not a problem.

Question 7 – Are you aware of any local and regional variation in the use of supply teachers and if so, are there any reasons for this?

No, I am not.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
Question 8 – Do you have any views on supply agencies and their quality assurance arrangements?	
<p>Certainly, I do not believe that supply agencies ensure the quality of staff in their care. Even though we do not use agencies regularly, from the experiences that I have had, I have never seen anyone from an agency coming to visit a member of staff at the school. I also feel that, as noted previously, the way that agencies exploit their staff is appalling. The contracts are often unfair and many teachers do not realise what it is the small print in terms of being released from their 'contracts'.</p>	
<p>If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?</p>	
<p>Again, agencies need to be fairer to their staff. They need to ensure that they demonstrate quality by monitoring and managing the staff performance.</p>	
<p>How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)</p>	
<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	/
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
Question 9 – Are you aware of any specific issues relating to Welsh medium education? If so, what are they?	
<p>Again, as I noted previously, getting hold of people to teach in the medium of Welsh is a problem. From our experience of using</p>	

agencies, they have very few Welsh speakers appropriate for our use. Even though they are identified as 'Welsh speakers', their oral Welsh and, certainly, their written Welsh, are not sufficient for them to work in a Welsh-medium school. Many of them have also not taught their chosen subject through the medium of Welsh.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

It is a very difficult problem to resolve as there is a shortage of teachers in several relevant fields.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

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2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

Question 10 – If you had to make one recommendation to the Welsh Government from all the points you have made, what would that recommendation be?

It must be ensured that agencies are accountable to local authorities and that quality assurance takes place.

Question 11 – Do you have any other comments or issues you wish to raise that have not been covered by the specific questions?

No.