

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee
ST 16
Inquiry into Supply Teaching
Evidence from : Headteacher – Primary

Thank you for the opportunity to give our views regarding the use of supply teachers. Our context is that we are an English medium primary school of 200 full time pupils and 26 part time. The age range of the school is 3 to 11 years.

We use supply teachers to cover staff who are absent due to illness and to cover for staff who are attending professional development courses. We occasionally use supply teachers for releasing senior staff to carry out management duties or for performance management purposes.

Primary supply teachers are qualified to teach all subjects across the curriculum as this is a requirement of the teacher qualification. The supply teachers therefore tend to take whole classes, usually for a single days or for an extended period of time

There is clearly some impact upon the children's learning, as the class teacher is far more aware of each child's individual development stage and of targets that they are working to achieve. The class teacher is also more aware of potential behavioural issues that might arise and is more able to recognize triggers and know what strategies to use to help to diffuse them.

As supply teachers are often employed on a day to day basis and don't have any formal attachment to a school or a contract of employment, professional development opportunities are minimal and performance management would not normally take place.

The LEA hold a list of supply teachers using an online system called "E teach" but many primary schools now use agencies to provide their supply teachers or have a few who are well known, and therefore engage them on an more frequent basis. The agencies quality- assure the supply teachers and ensure that they have DRB clearance.

Many secondary schools and an increasing number of primary schools now use Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) to cover for absent colleagues. I have felt for a long time that this has a highly detrimental impact upon the education of our children. An HLTA has trained as a teaching assistant (TA) and the qualifications are far below that of a teacher. To gain HLTA status they simply need to produce a portfolio of evidence to show that they meet the expected requirements. This means that a person with low grades at GCSE themselves, could potentially be covering for classes when their own expertise is highly limited. This is particularly true in the secondary settings. In addition, an HLTA hasn't taken a teacher's training qualification and therefore has limited experience when managing pupil behavior so there are certainly associated health and safety implications.

I hope that these comments are helpful, and I would be more than willing to clarify further any of the issues mentioned.