

**National Assembly for Wales  
Children, Young People and Education Committee**

ST 21

**Inquiry into Supply Teaching**

**Evidence from : Teaching Personnel**

**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?**

The essential answer to the question is; yes, there is prevalence in the use of additional teaching and teaching support staff. However, such use as an additional resource by schools has evolved to such a degree, that the question almost ceases to have relevance in this context. The tag “supply teacher” evokes in the minds of most an outdated image of a substitute teacher being utilised to cover the absence of a teacher, usually on an unplanned basis due to sickness – for a day, a few days or sometimes for longer periods of time. The other common understanding for the use of “supply teachers” would be for planned absence, the reasons for which can vary significantly but which can be categorised broadly as “non-contact time”. Whilst both remain significant elements in Teaching Personnel’s support of schools, they represent only part of the support provided. Schools make use of a whole range of staffing resources to provide a flexible response to a very wide spectrum of needs. This flexibility for schools is absolutely vital. The ability to draw on specialist skills and knowledge for a specific period of time to support learning outcomes for pupils without the burden of additional contracted staff on the school’s payroll is crucial to the success of many schools. It is in this context that the use of such staff must be seen.

Teaching Personnel provides suitably qualified, experienced and fully vetted staff for such a wide range of situations that the “supply teacher” identifier no longer really applies. By way of short example, consider the following services we also provide:

- Permanent recruitment for staff through our “temp to perm route”.
- Teaching Assistants, Learning Support Assistants and other

specialised roles.

- Attainment & achievement work through the provision of specific programmes of one-to-one or small group work for pupils in specific subjects or with specific learning needs.
- Specialist SEND support with staff qualified and experienced in Hearing & Visual Impaired, PMLD, SEBD, MLD, SpLD, ASC., to name but a few.
- Continuity provision through assessment feedback – the same teachers and teaching support staff returning to the school to improve learning outcomes and reduce disruption.
- Staff pool sharing between clusters of schools to assist attainment & achievement.

Without a full understanding of the whole context of what is contained in any one school's "supply spend", the value for money and value added benefits and so therefore the cost savings, then such an enquiry is very likely to fail to answer its own questions accurately or to any benefit.

If you believe that this results in problems (for example, for schools, pupils or teachers), how do you think they could be resolved?

Teaching Personnel's view is that much of any perceived disruption to the normal school day can be mitigated through the development of a sound working partnership with the schools that choose to work with us. We endeavour to establish contact and create relationships with key members of the school team, and not just whoever happens to deal with day to day cover needs. In order to facilitate this partnership we aim to:

- Visit the school regularly, meeting individuals or groups of staff who can provide us with information that allows us to determine the best sort of teacher or teaching support staff for the role required.
- When appropriate, spend time in classes learning for ourselves, what happens so that we can pass such information onto our candidates.
- Feedback from key members in the school of the performance of our candidates both daily, and regularly. This will include

attempting to gain specific assessment from Head of Year/ Department/Key Stage, etc., and from Head Teachers.

- Report back and in turn gain feedback from our candidates of their experience in school.

The area of most potential disruption stems from the unplanned absence. Our experience shows that the organisation within the school itself is critical to mitigating such disruption. How well the school supports the fulfilment of the absence determines how successful such cover will be:

- Is suitable planning in place so that learning is not interrupted?
- Is the candidate provided with suitable information about the lesson, the class, and any individual pupils who may require specific approaches to learning?
- Is suitable support in place for the candidate carrying out the cover should they require it?
- Are there suitable reporting procedures in place to allow the candidate to feed back on the lesson/class/day?

In any examination of the impact of “supply” in schools, serious consideration should be given to the structures in place within a school to support such need, with any specific oversight and guidelines on the use of external staff for schools being directed on ensuring that thought and attention is focused on the support of non-contracted staff in the school to allow them to deliver positive learning outcomes and that assessment of the value of any service evaluates quality of provision to be able to determine true value for money.

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.*

X

**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?

As noted as part of the response to Question 1, teaching and teaching support staff are utilised by schools in significantly varied ways.

In our experience, schools make use of our staff in 4 key ways:

- Additional teaching/learning in support of attainment & achievement (e.g. Tuition, mentoring, nurturing etc.) This is additional learning rather than replacement learning.
- Longer term role/cover. Many schools now choose to use an extended period of use through our services to ensure the teacher or teaching assistant is the right fit before committing to a contract (in effect a “try before you buy” service), rather than rely on more traditional forms of recruitment that can be time-consuming, costly and variable in outcome. Other longer term roles are typically a fixed period of half a term or longer to cover absences or need where a contracted teaching role is not a suitable or desired option. This can be for additional “bursts” of teaching and learning as above, whilst assessments are made to establish a pupils learning needs or for maternity/paternity leave, unexpected resignations, ill-health, and when other recruitment options fail to find a suitable candidate.
- Shorter term roles not covered above: Release time for CPD or other training and mentoring, management release time, sabbaticals, jury Service, shorter periods of absence for minor operations and illness.
- Day to day needs. Non-contact time for various reasons, rarely cover needs, field trips or excursions, sickness cover.

Given such variety, there is no ‘one-size fits all’ answer to how they are utilised. Teaching Staff supplied by us carry out the full range of teaching and learning that can be encompassed within a school or

education centre.

The qualification and experience of any staff member carrying out a “cover” role will vary tremendously depending the circumstances of need, notice period and subject or specialism availability.

Within the Secondary school, a single day of cover may encompass a large number of curriculum subjects and so specialist knowledge across all would be impossible. At Primary School level, cover is likely to be for a single colleague for the day or part day and so providing a Key Stage or Year Group specialist is usually the single–most important requirement.

Different schools have different expectations on what is “acceptable” cover for day to day needs, or even shorter term needs, both when using staff internally, as well as use of external staff. The use of Cover Supervisors at Secondary level especially is widespread and growing with no particular educational requirement as set criteria. Primary Schools also make use of HLTA’s and TA’s to cover classes internally but in our experience seek qualified teachers when externally sourcing cover.

When cover requires the use of teaching agencies, then competing concerns are often a flashpoint for potential issues of quality and suitability. In Wales in particular, budgetary concerns and pressures, combined with the migration of the responsibility of overseeing school cover needs from members of SLT to administration staff (due to work/time requirements), has seen cost issues outweigh quality issues. For some managers in schools, the only question for consideration is the charge rate. This has led to “charge” competition and other unprofessional practices that impact candidate pay (teachers in Wales employed through agencies typically earn far less than colleagues in England), reduces concerns about quality, true value for money and in many cases, all three. Teachers in particular being paid at lower rates will feel undervalued and perhaps less inclined to do their best in all cases.

Competition of itself is a positive thing, but if there is no measure of value for money – i.e the quality of service, the safety and stringency

of recruitment and vetting procedures, the skills and experience of the teacher or teaching support staff used, the learning outcomes for pupils, then the whole drive to raise attainment and achievement is undermined.

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

Any review of the impact of “supply” in schools should focus not simply on cost, but must have in place some mechanism for measuring value for money. This has to reflect the quality and experience of teachers and teaching support staff used, the quality of the whole service provided by a teaching agency, including how stringent its vetting, checking and quality assurance systems are and the impact (positive or otherwise) on the learning outcomes of pupils.

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

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	x
<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 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)?

For many pupils, school can be one of the few stable factors in their lives, and the importance of their teachers will go well beyond just subject learning. There will be few occasions when pupils will react in a wholly positive manner to the idea of their own teacher being replaced by a “stranger” for the day. How disruptive this actually is will depend on a number of factors, but broadly will encompass:

- The experience, ability or subject knowledge of the teacher being utilised.
- The expectation of the school for the subject or class being

covered (including the work left or planned).

- The support provided to the teacher by the school to assist them in providing positive learning outcomes.

Well matched teaching staff (in the case of Teaching Personnel: knowledge gained through regular visits to the school, meetings with SLT to understand the school's requirements, feedback on the performance of staff we have provided to ensure correct matching, and ongoing investment in systems, programmes and professional development to support schools and candidates and the development of continuity – the same staff going into the school through our matching and assessment) can at the very least maintain learning and keep to an absolute minimum any disruption for pupils.

Poor learning outcomes, disruption and issues of behaviour will usually be the result of the failure of one or more of the three factors above.

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

- Ensure schools and agencies focus on the importance of continuity and candidate matching, and assessment of performance rather than just “book a body for the day” mentality.
- Ensure schools and agencies work together to improve the communication and expectations of the learning experience. If staff going into school understand the discipline policies and procedures, are briefed fully, the work set or planned for is a continuation of what they have been learning (as opposed to “basket work”) and they have a full understanding of what is required of them, learning days “lost” will be curtailed and behaviour will be far less problematic.
- Strike the balance in favour of value for money when assessing the use of any one agency.

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>	X
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
<b>Question 4 – What are your views on the Continuous Professional Development of supply teachers and the potential impact of the National Professional Learning Model?</b>	
<p>Continuous Professional Development of teachers and teaching support staff working on a temporary basis is of vital consideration. With the majority of such staff being provided through various agencies, the availability and effectiveness of any CPD can be very variable. It is also necessary to consider the personal responsibility of the teacher or teaching support staff member themselves, since they also need to take a pro-active role within their own development needs. The NPLM is an excellent step forward in attempting to develop a framework for professional development but does not, or so far as I am aware has not yet addressed engagement of professionals who work on “temporary” contracts including “supply”. At Teaching Personnel, we have developed our own “CPD Academy” which seeks to provide our staff with meaningful and useful additional skills and learning to directly improve their skills and abilities and so impact positively, learning outcomes for pupils. Access to such formal training as ReadWriteInc., TeamTeach, training for work with children with Autism, Manual Handling etc., provides our candidates with real opportunities for professional development. However, it must be borne in mind that most teachers and teaching support staff who come to us do so for the expressed purpose of seeking a full time post at a school at some point. The number of “professional supply” staff – those who choose such a career as a permanent option are relatively small. The transitory nature of this work force needs to be borne in mind. Access to such development is voluntary.</p>	



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

- Coordination of required/available CPD via Consortia/LA made available to all teachers and teaching support staff irrespective of their contractual status.
- The development of core CPD for all that focus' on "becoming an outstanding educator" that can be accessed by all.
- The ability for staff working on supply to access school/LA/Consortia based CPD at reasonable cost.

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>	X
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	

**Question 5 – What are your views on performance management arrangements for supply teachers?**

Currently, if an allegation of a serious professional misconduct and/or child safety issue is made against a member of staff on supply then there are three areas of concern:

1. There is no mechanism in place to prevent a candidate working on supply who is under investigation from continuing to work with children and/or vulnerable adults if they are registered with multiple organisations. If Teaching Personnel receives notice of such an allegation from a school or LA, we immediately suspend the candidate to prevent them working for us until an investigation is concluded and an outcome arrived at. The result will either be an obvious legal or punitive outcome or an outcome that allows us to determine our own course of action regarding the offer of any other work for that candidate, and the support that might be required to address

any issue of performance. However, if they are determined to continue to work (or, in some cases, are unaware of any investigation due to the request of relevant investigative bodies) and are registered with other agencies or even LA supply lists or used direct by schools, then they can do so.

2. The investigative mechanism itself by LA is predicated on the suspension of staff on full salaries pending outcome. The vast bulk of staff working on supply have temporary hire contracts which means if they do not work then they do not get paid. The speed of the investigative process at times is incredibly slow. If a candidate is found to have no case to answer and yet has spent six weeks or longer without work then this can have a serious impact on their lives.
3. Because of the lack of focus on quality and true value for money assessment by some schools when it comes to “supply” and so therefore no specific expectation for feedback and assessment of such staff then performance management will be variable and essentially down to the quality ethos of any agency employing such staff. Our own experience has shown that where we have ceased working with a teacher or teaching assistant over issues of professionalism or ability that do not have a direct bearing on child protection, they will often continue to work regularly with other agencies.

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

1. Maintain an updated register of agencies in Wales to be able to alert each of serious concerns/ongoing investigations regarding supply staff (for instance via a safeguarding team at GTCW).
2. Sharing of same from LA and Consortia to *each* other.
3. Education of staff involved in child safety concerns of the differences in circumstances between contracted staff and supply staff on suspension, so that wherever possible and appropriate, investigations are concluded as rapidly as possible.
4. Education of school based staff to aid the development of

meaningful feedback and assessment of supply staff being used.

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.*

x

*3 - This is a minor problem*

*4 - Not a problem.*

**Question 6 – Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?**

The NAO report on the use of supply teachers made clear that different LA and so by extension Regional Consortia have not collected or collated data on the use of temporary staff by schools in the same way, or in some cases, not at all.

The focus of LA/Consortia with regards the use of temporary staff should be aimed at ensuring schools are properly assessing the quality of the service used, the ability of the staff so placed and the level of support they receive when working in their school.

Also, other than a largely ineffective ‘All Wales Agreement’ selection process, LA’s and Consortia have not sought to scrutinise or regulate the use or practices of agencies at all and have instead passed all responsibility onto the Head Teachers of the schools themselves.

As noted in answers to prior questions, the range and use of staff by schools is hugely varied. Our other main concern is not so much sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers so much as LA and Consortia understanding the breadth and nature of the services available to schools. As noted in question 1 above, the term and use of “supply teacher” has for some, emotive or outdated connotations that require updating. Individual needs in schools will be as different as each school.

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

Such consultations as this will help open dialogue and communication that should be developed further. Temporary staff in schools are of vital importance to pupils in schools, and so any plans to deliver higher quality learning must include their deployment in schools.

LA/Consortia focus on quality of provision and true value for money when seeking to address the use of temporary staff in schools and not seeking a “one size fits all” procurement route that simply looks at cost. A simple ‘benchmarking’ procedure, which involves scrutiny of the practices and policies of all agencies seeking to operate under an ‘approved status’ in each consortia and subsequent communication of a list of approved companies to the schools within that consortia would be a huge step in the right direction – still placing purchasing decisions and responsibility for those decisions in the hands of Head Teachers, but at least reducing the potential for the assumptive use of those agencies that have absolutely no hope of achieving the ‘quality benchmark’ for recruitment practice.

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.*

x

**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?

As in most parts of the UK, there are variations in the availability and distribution of teachers and teaching support staff in Wales. In general terms, more staff are living and working within urban centres and so more rural locations will find it less easy to find suitably qualified or experienced staff.

Teaching Personnel's service provides for schools in South Wales. Schools in Pembrokeshire tell us they find it more difficult to find suitable staff than in say Cardiff or Newport. Demands for subject or year group specific staff will also reflect wider shortages of such staff – so English, Math's and Science-based staff at Secondary are harder to find in all areas.

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

Government should focus on the long term need for teachers using known data in schools as to population trends to ensure there is an adequate cohort of students in training to match such demand.

In general, agencies are well placed to find the candidates they need in innovative ways provided that sufficient numbers are joining the education profession.

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>	x
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	

**Question 8** – Do you have any views on supply agencies and their quality assurance arrangements?

Teaching Personnel's whole philosophy on its staffing services to schools is based on a quality focused approach. As noted in questions above we are aware of the variability of this across the whole supply agency industry and it is particularly stark where charge rate is the main or sole focus.

Teaching Personnel attempts to gain feedback on every candidate we send into every school every day. Such feedback is then used to

“rate” that candidates effectiveness in that school ranging from “1” – excellent and school would like to prioritise this candidate for continuity to “4” – Do not send back for reasons of ability/professionalism etc. In addition to this first step in feedback we endeavour to gain specific and detailed feedback from relevant school leaders (HOD, Head of Key Stage etc.) on candidates working regularly in the school, carrying out a longer term role etc. In addition, regular meetings with schools using specific data in reports for each school help to assess quality of provision and the candidates we are providing. Such discussion helps us assess how well we are doing in supporting a school, any recruitment issues we need to address and additional CPD we might need to provide or seek in conjunction with the school.

All such feedback is discussed with each candidate and helps form our decision making on the suitability of each candidate to work in specific schools, and in the case of negative feedback, whether the candidate needs to seek CPD support in order to improve areas of practice (which we can often provide) or can even lead us to consider whether the candidate is suitable for temporary work at all.

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

As previously noted, Government, Consortia and LA involvement in the provision of temporary staff in schools should focus on ensuring that schools assess the impact of temporary staff in their schools on true value for money criteria, and not just “how low is the charge rate”

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.*

x

**Question 9** – Are you aware of any specific issues relating to Welsh medium education? If so, what are they?

The main issue in relation to Welsh medium education in the past has always been the dearth of suitably trained teachers in the medium of Welsh. In the last year this situation has improved but remains problematic, and we are aware of the continuing struggle of some schools, particularly in the eastern areas of South Wales to find enough teaching staff.

There is a tendency by some Welsh Medium schools to reject potential teaching staff who did not themselves attend Welsh medium Primary and Secondary schools, in addition to gaining QTS in the medium of Welsh.

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

Continued investment in the attraction of well-educated people into the teaching profession.

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.*

x

**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?

To fully understand and appreciate the full scope and range of temporary teaching staff used in schools; their roles, impact and benefits to the learning of pupils. Such a flexible workforce can have a significant beneficial impact on pupils and schools. Without this full understanding of how schools spend some of their budget on “supply”, and a move away from the outdated notion of exactly what a “supply teacher” is, then entirely the wrong conclusions can be drawn which will do nothing to assist the Welsh Government’s drive for improving learning outcomes for pupils.

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