

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

**ST 26**

**Inquiry into Supply Teaching**

**Evidence from : Catholic Education Service**

**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 Catholic Education Service acknowledges the findings of the Welsh Audit Office, reported in the Estyn December 2013 report on the impact of teacher absence, that around 10% of lessons are covered by staff who are not the usual class teacher.

We also acknowledge the report's findings, supported by other research papers, that the use of supply teachers is having a significant impact on learning and progress.

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

All Catholic schools are voluntary aided schools. Therefore it is always the Governing Body, not the Local Authority, that is the employer of all staff. In Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools the Governing Body will need to take the lead in any of the following actions.

1. Encourage Governing Bodies to require general reports on staff absenteeism and subsequent actions.
2. Encourage Governing Bodies to consider the business case for diverting the sums spent on agency supply teaching to appointing staff as permanent cover supervisors and/or cover teachers.

3. We welcome the developments in the Education Workforce Council in terms of the registration of all staff who engage with children's learning and believe that the registration, and the subsequent focus on initial entry qualifications and on-going training and development, will professionalise LSA and HLTA staff, who, if continued to be used by schools to cover for absent teachers, will be better able to bring teaching and learning skills and expertise to the classroom when covering for absent teachers.

4. Local Authority and Consortia Officers and Challenge Advisers to encourage school leaders to monitor supply staff for absent teachers to the same standards as school staff.

5. Local Authority and Consortia Officers and Challenge Advisers to encourage and support school leaders and Governing Bodies in bringing more rigour and robustness to staff absence management.

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 share the concerns expressed in the Estyn December 2013 report on the impact of teacher absence and the lack of depth, challenge and pace in lessons taught by supply teachers. We believe that there

is no one phase of education more important than another. We recognise that research indicates that secondary schools are placing supply teachers predominantly with Key Stage 3 learners and believe that this will have a detrimental impact on progress.

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

See the points made in Q 1 above. There is no short term solution to the problem of managing teacher absence, particularly with funding cuts. However, we believe a general tightening up of processes and accountability checks will have a long-term impact.

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.*

**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)?

The already cited December 2013 Estyn report has highlighted the impact of supply teachers on outcomes and behaviour. We believe this to be an accurate picture of the impact.

We have a particular concern, in that all staff in Catholic schools are expected to adhere to the requirements of the Catholic Education Service's contract of employment, which includes support for the religious character of the school. Supply teachers, including those employed by agencies, by virtue of the fact that they are in a Catholic school classroom, may also play a part in the religious and spiritual formation of pupils.

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

As above for Q1.

In terms of agency supply staff supporting the religious character of a school, we recognise that governing bodies and senior leaders have a responsibility to ensure expectations are made clear to those recruited. We also recognise that more is possible in this area with a greater use of 'in-house' cover supervisors, employed under the Catholic Education Service's contract of employment.

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.*

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

These two developments in Q 4, alongside the professionalisation of learning support staff through the Education Workforce Council, will, we believe, improve the professionalisation of the workforce and have a positive impact on outcomes for learners.

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

As above for Q1 (4)

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>	
<b>Question 5 – What are your views on performance management arrangements for supply teachers?</b>	
<p>We acknowledge the findings of the Estyn report that there is currently little performance management for supply teachers, though believe that schools generally include long-term supply teacher placements in appraisal processes and lesson observations.</p> <p>Assuming that the current model of independent supply teacher agencies continues, some responsibility for the performance management of supply teachers must also rest with the agencies.</p>	
If you think there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?	
<p>We believe that school leadership teams are managing as well as possible a difficult situation with staff absence and short term supply teacher placements. A stronger relationship between the agencies and the school may assist with the performance management of supply staff. Long term, more school based supervisors, including well-trained learning support staff, may help to reduce the difficulty of managing short-term placements.</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>	
<b>Question 6 – Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?</b>	
<p>If the current model of independent supply teacher agencies continues, it is difficult to envisage how local authority and consortia staff can develop further oversight, except to require more substantive reports from school leaders on staff absenteeism, the impact of this on learning and plans to improve the situation if there are concerns.</p> <p>However, we are mindful of the already significant burden placed on school leadership teams and would expect such oversight to recognise the limitations to action placed on school leaders by the impact of declining school budgets and the 2003 Workload Agreement.</p>	
<b>If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?</b>	
<p>Local Authority and Consortia officers to ensure teacher staff absenteeism is integral to the leadership team's, and Governing Body's, agendas.</p>	
<b>How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)</b>	
<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 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?**

We are aware that schools use a variety of models to manage teacher staff absenteeism. A key variation appears to be between those schools which predominantly use their own 'in-house' cover supervisors and those which predominantly use external supply teachers. This variation is presumably triggered by each school's analysis of requirements and costs.

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

Based on the findings of the 2013 Estyn report, there are clear advantages to schools using their own 'in-house' staff to cover for absent teachers because of their already existing knowledge of the school's pupils, systems and expectations.

Local Authority and Consortia might encourage school leadership teams and Governing Bodies to explore the reasoning and evidence underpinning their current provision to ascertain whether it is best 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.*

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

Evidence suggests that the current arrangements between supply agencies and school leadership teams is not a strong one, not least because, as identified in the Estyn report, most schools use office administration staff to organise and co-ordinate supply teachers.

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

The relationship between supply agencies and school leadership teams on quality assurance and performance management could be strengthened.

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.*

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

Only those identified by the Estyn 2013 report.

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>	
<b>Question 10</b> – If you had to make one recommendation to the Welsh Government from all the points you have made, what would that recommendation be?	
<p>Encourage local authority and consortia officers to explore school data on, and school leadership responses to, staff absenteeism, sharing this information with schools and ensuring it is a regular item for analysis and planning for improvement. In particular, encourage policy makers at all levels to consider a greater use of professionalised ‘in-house’ support staff to cover for absent teachers.</p>	
<b>Question 11</b> – Do you have any other comments or issues you wish to raise that have not been covered by the specific questions?	
<p>Our experience is that generally school leaders are very aware of the problem of using supply staff to cover for absent teachers. We also believe that many school leaders are doing everything possible in the current financial and workload environment to manage a difficult situation.</p> <p>Tightening accountability throughout the service may help to share good practice between schools on how best to manage absent teachers.</p>	