

National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

ST 28

Inquiry into Supply Teaching

Evidence from : ATL Cymru

About ATL Cymru – the education union

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

Our response

ATL Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation on supply teachers. Supply teachers make up 13%¹ of teachers registered in Wales.

We would highlight that we have used both the findings from the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) "Supply teacher Survey" from June 2014², and our own membership survey.³

We would first like to highlight the main findings of the GTCW report, which show some key issues for supply teachers in Wales:

- *Supply teachers in Wales were predominantly either (a) in the early part of their careers and undertook supply work largely due to a lack of permanent or temporary long term contracts or (b) towards the end of their teaching career or retired from a substantive teaching post. These two groups accounted for approximately 66% of the supply teachers who responded to the survey.*
- *The average number of days each supply teacher respondent worked was 2.7. However, it was evident that those in the early part of their teaching career sought to work for as many days as*

¹ The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) An Analysis of registered supply teachers
Data taken from the Register of Qualified Teachers on 17th December 2014

² http://www.gtcw.org.uk/gtcw/images/stories/Statistics/Supply_Teacher_Survey_June_2014_Web.pdf

³ ATL Cymru conducted an online survey with members – 19th January 2015 – 27th January 2015.

possible (average 3.5 days per week). Conversely, those who qualified over 25 years ago, worked on average fewer days per week (average 1.8 days per week).

- Supply teachers mainly worked in the primary phase (59.4%). This is consistent with other data the Council holds, which shows that it is more difficult to secure substantive teaching posts in the primary phase due to an over-supply of teachers in Wales in this phase.*
- The most common reasons for schools to require supply teachers are to cover for sickness absence in Wales (41.1%) and for permanent teachers to undertake professional development (32.9%).*
- Supply teachers who responded to the survey worked almost exclusively through supply agencies or through a direct arrangement with a particular school or schools. Very few supply teachers worked through a Local Authority supply pool and these are now very much in decline. Furthermore, those in the early stages of their teaching career worked mainly through private supply agencies, whereas experienced supply teachers towards the end of their careers obtained their work from schools who contacted them directly.*
- The highest percentage of respondents (45.6%) worked continuously for less than one term in any one school which suggests that the majority of supply cover work is provided for short term absence.*

We did not seek to replicate the questions in the GTCW report with our own survey, but instead mirrored the questions from this inquiry. See appendix for results (page 14).

However, our results also suggest that the decline in local authority pool arrangements which can cause problems for pupil outcomes and other teachers in the school, with supply teachers often not having enough access to CPD opportunities.

Comments also support the GTCW findings around the nature of supply teachers as those early or late in their careers – suggesting that CPD would have to be tailored accordingly.

For example, one of our members said: *“A lot of them are NQTs with little support. Being put into a difficult school with no support is demoralising. Lots of supply teachers just 'give up' trying to teach and spend all their time on crowd control.”*

The key findings of our own survey include:

- On the whole supply teacher agencies do not provide a good service to supply teachers or schools
- Our members believe that the use of agencies should be replaced with local pool arrangements
- Only some agencies, LAs and schools support CPD arrangements for supply teachers
- Local authority consortia do not generally have a good oversight of the use of supply teachers in their area

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?

Our findings show that the use of supply teachers is usually planned – some finding their school uses them more than they used to.

Nearly two-thirds (60.7%) said that the use of supply teachers was planned, with 39.3% saying the use of supply teachers was unplanned.

Less than half (43.8%) of our members thought their school uses supply teachers more often than it used to. About a third (34.8%) said their school was using supply teachers more often, whilst a fifth (21.3%) said it was about the same.

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

Our members thought that using supply teachers does form a problem for pupils and students.

Nearly two-thirds (65.2%) of members felt supply teachers caused a problem for pupils, with half (51.7%) stating problems for other teachers. But nearly a third thought there were no problems caused by using supply teachers (31.5%).

Many of our members thought that the problems caused by using supply teachers could be resolved through using a local pool of supply teachers, known to the school, rather than relying on

agencies.

Many of the views expressed are summed up in this response:
“When supply teachers were employed directly by an LEA and/or school instead of through an agency there was more consistency and supply teachers were regularly employed by a small number of schools where they got to know pupils, staff and schools much better and were therefore treated by pupils and staff more as a regular member of staff. Supply teachers are looked on as a cheap option they get paid less by agencies, cannot contribute to the teachers’ pension scheme and also have to pay for GTCW and CRB checks.”

Another commented: *“supply teachers should be hired from a county authority pool and be proven good practitioners and be paid properly. Schools are using supply agencies as they are offered “teachers” for specific rates. The Supply teachers lose out financially all ways.”*

Views differed on using higher level teaching assistants rather than using supply teachers unknown to the school – with many suggesting HLTAs could be better. Others raised concerns about the use of staff who were not properly qualified in a teaching role.

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 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?

Our members thought that supply teachers were more likely to be employed to teach the appropriate age / subject – though many of the comments show that the supply teacher is more likely to teach the right age than the right subject.

A quarter (25%) said that supply teachers were not qualified to teach the right subject / age group they were covering. Nearly

half (43.8%) thought that they were, with the rest saying they didn't know.

One PE teachers commented that supply teachers: "often turn up to teach my PE lessons in unsuitable clothing and with poor attitude to practical learning". Whilst several commented on different arrangements for short and long-term supply: "Long-term supply (maternity leave etc.) cover is always appropriately qualified; casual supply not necessarily."

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>	X
<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)?

Our members felt there were negative outcomes from using supply teachers.

Three-quarters (74.4%) of our members believe that in terms of learning and behaviour, the outcomes for children when a supply teacher is used are not as good. A quarter (23.2) thought outcomes were about the same, with only 2.4% saying that outcomes were better.

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

The messages from our members surveyed about how these outcomes could be resolved were consistent: regular supply teachers, clear work and school policy information given to supply teachers, and better CPD.

Here are some examples of comments on how to achieve better

outcomes using supply teachers:

“More consistency in the supply teachers / more information readily available to supply teachers about their classes.”

“Through building a relationship with regular team of supply teachers that understand the expectations of each institution.”

“Supply staff need to be given a copy of the behaviour policy and access to support when needed. Both of these are rare. You are usually just dumped in a classroom, often with no work, with a group of pupils who know you do not know the school behaviour policy and will admit that they play up considerably for a supply teacher. Pupils will say they are not doing any work if their normal teacher is not in. This is extremely stressful for the supply and for those pupils who do want to work.”

“Keep supply teachers updated through training. Often their work is fragmented leaving them out of touch.”

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

90% of members we surveyed said supply teachers do not have the same level of access to CPD as those contracted to a school.

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

The members felt that agencies and local authorities could have a role in ensuring CPD is available to supply teachers:

“Agency/local authorities should have more responsibility for this for regularly used supply teachers.”

Several members suggested this is something schools themselves could address: “If a supply teacher has been used by a school a few times they could be invited to take part in their training or whoever they are registered with could take responsibility to ensure they have access to up-to-date CPD.”

A couple cited online learning opportunities, assisted by some supply agencies.

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

1 – *This is a key, urgent problem.*

x

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

3 – *This is a minor problem*

4 – *Not a problem.*

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

The overwhelming majority (87.3%) of our members felt that performance management of supply teachers was difficult for schools to undertake.

Many of our members commented that this would be extremely difficult to undertake, especially with short-term supply teachers. A couple commented it would be unfair, given the nature of supply work.

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

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 – <i>This is a minor problem</i>	
4 – <i>Not a problem.</i>	
Question 6 - Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?	
<p>Nearly all of our members who responded to the survey did not think that regional consortia had a good idea of the use of supply teachers in their area.</p> <p>Only 5.9% of our members thought that regional consortia have a good idea about the use of supply in their area.</p> <p>The other members were split, with nearly half saying the regional consortia had no idea (48.5%), and a similar amount (45.6%) saying they had some idea.</p> <p>This shows an over whelming lack of oversight of supply teachers by regional consortia. One comment suggested this is not part of a consortia’s remit.</p>	
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)	
1 – <i>This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
2 – <i>This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	X
3 – <i>This is a minor problem</i>	
4 – <i>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?	
<p>Half (50.6%) of our members thought that use of supply staff did vary in different areas.</p>	
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)	
1 – <i>This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
2 – <i>This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
3 – <i>This is a minor problem</i>	X
4 – <i>Not a problem.</i>	
Question 8 - Do you have any views on supply agencies and their quality assurance arrangements?	
<p>Less than a fifth (17.7%) of our members felt that supply agencies have processes in place to make sure supply teachers are of a good quality.</p> <p>Many comments were negative about the use of references for supply teachers, suggesting that supply teachers are not checked in terms of their performance.</p> <p>One former supply teacher suggested agencies should be: “Actually getting to know the staff on their books. When I worked as a supply teacher (my first 2 years of teaching, 8 years ago) the agencies I worked for only asked my referees for a tick sheet reference with no room for additional information and asked me almost nothing about myself or my skills.”</p>	
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)	
1 – <i>This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
2 – <i>This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	X
3 – <i>This is a minor problem</i>	
4 – <i>Not a problem.</i>	
Question 9 - Are you aware of any specific issues relating to Welsh medium education? If so, what are they?	
<p>Specific issues relating to Welsh medium education and supply teachers was only highlighted by 11.3% of our members. With a third (32.4%) saying they thought there were no problems, and the rest unsure (56.3%).</p>	

There were very few comments left about sourcing Welsh medium teachers, with one suggesting: “We always source out own as agencies are unable to provide them.”

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)

1 – *This is a key, urgent problem.*

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

3 – *This is a minor problem*

x

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?

Overall, the comments reflected the key issues which this survey highlighted:

- On the whole supply teacher agencies do not provide a good service to supply teachers or schools
- Our members believe that the use of agencies should be replaced with local pool arrangements
- Only some agencies, LAs and schools support CPD arrangements for supply teachers
- Local authority consortia do not generally have a good oversight of the use of supply teachers in their area

Members felt that these issues need to be addressed.

Our members felt very strongly that supply teachers should be better paid and that agencies were not providing a good service to schools or supply teachers. One commented: “Get rid of the agencies! They took 50% of my wages even on a long term placement. This means you are working for very little, still having to plan lessons and mark work but on a lot less than you should be on.”

Some commented that addressing issues for permanent staff could reduce the need for using supply.

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

Other comments reiterated the need to address the use of agencies for supply teachers in schools.

Throughout the survey several commented that supply teachers should be able to contribute to their pension.

Appendix: ATL Cymru survey results:

Question: Do you think your school uses supply teachers more often than it used to?

Yes	34.8%
No	43.8%
About the same	21.3%

Is the use of supply teachers usually:

Planned?	60.7%
Unplanned?	39.3%

Does the use of supply teachers cause any problems for: (Select all that apply)

For pupils?	65.2%
For other teachers?	51.7%
No problems	31.5%

How do you think problems related to the use of supply teachers could be resolved?

Comments included

- A regular bank, known to the teachers and staff in each school
- A directory of locally available subject specialist would be a step forward - all with portable DBSs!
- The use of cover supervisors is better as they are permanent in the school BUT they are rarely qualified as teachers.
- Supply teachers should be hired from a county authority pool and be proven good practitioners and be paid properly. Schools are using supply agencies as they are offered "teachers" for specific rates. The Supply teachers lose out financially all ways.

- Schools often use cover supervisors to cover classes instead of qualified teachers, and they often have little experience and/or understanding of basic behaviour management and teaching skills.
- Pay proper supply rates. Too much money being made by agencies and not directed to staff.
- Utilising HLTAs in house who know the pupils and can feedback and are more experienced
- Offer supply teachers training and stop using agencies. The agencies take a ridiculous amount from the supply teacher's salary for doing very little.
- Increase qualified full time staffing, that allows for the management of short term sickness and cover for CPD.
- Supply related to subject
- When supply teachers were employed directly by an LEA and/or school instead of through an agency there was more consistency and supply teachers were regularly employed by a small number of schools where they got to know pupils, staff and schools much better and were therefore treated by pupils and staff more as a regular member of staff. Supply teachers are looked on as a cheap option they get paid less by agencies, cannot contribute to the teachers' pension scheme and also have to pay for GTCW and CRB checks.

Are supply teachers usually qualified to teach the subject/age group which they are covering?

Yes	43.8%
No	25.0%
Don't know	31.3%

Do you believe that in terms of learning and behaviour, the outcomes for children when a supply teacher is used are:

Better?	2.4%
About the same?	23.2%
Not as good?	74.4%

If you think that there were less good outcomes in terms of learning and behaviour, how do you think these could be improved?

Comments included:

- Cover supervisors or using the same supply teachers regularly
- A bank of teachers known to the children and staff, qualified to

- teach the age group they are covering
- More consistency in the supply teachers / more information readily available to supply teachers about their classes.
 - By using the same supply teacher, to try and ensure continuity, and who is familiar with both school and children.
 - Using supply teachers with the subject knowledge or maybe informing them of the school behaviour policy when they arrive so that they know the steps to take.
 - If someone were to be absent say for more than a week then should try to get subject specialists
 - Keep supply teachers updated through training. Often their work is fragmented leaving them out of touch.
 - In house HLTAs with internal knowledge and experience
 - Having specialist teachers for covering their subjects long term.
 - By employing part time teachers/ supply teachers through the county rather than lower paid teachers through agencies. Have regular supplies like we used to have before agencies

If you are a supply teacher, do you have access to the same continuous professional development (CPD) you would expect if you were contracted to a school?

Yes	10.0%
No	90.0%

How do you think a lack of access to CPD can be addressed?

Comments included:

- Agencies could provide courses to back up CPD requirements of their staff. e.g. e-learning.
- Courses within each LEA should also be available to supply teachers so they are trained up in the same techniques and strategies
- I have found CPD to be non existent or very inconsistent. The supply agency has fantastic training but there naturally is less choice. I think CPD should be offered through schools to their more consistent supply teachers as well.
- If a supply teacher has been used by a school a few times they could be invited to take part in their training or whoever they are registered with could take responsibility to ensure they have access to up-to-date CPD.
- Going back to LAs keeping supply lists, rather than all supply staff working through agencies, & LAs providing training for supply

teachers

- By external agencies.
- Local authority offering courses for supply teachers, as they do for schools.
- Funded continuous professional development!
- By providing funding which supply teachers can apply for which will pay for them to attend courses. This should also be done for permanent staff as at present they often get sent on courses they don't particularly want to do where as if people apply they want to do it and will therefore benefit from it.
- Better access to funded workshops and training courses

Is performance management for supply teachers:

Difficult for schools to undertake?	87.3%
Easy for schools to undertake?	12.7%

Do you think that local authorities' regional consortia have:

No idea about the use of supply teachers in their area?	48.5%
Some idea about the use of supply teachers in their area?	45.6%
A good idea about the use of supply teachers in their area?	5.9%

Do you think the use of supply teachers varies in different areas?

Yes	50.6%
No	9.1%
Don't know	40.3%

Do you think that supply agencies have processes in place to make sure supply teachers are of a good quality?

Yes	17.7%
No	41.8%
Don't know	40.5%

How do you think supply agencies could improve their processes to make sure supply teachers are of good quality?

Comments included:

- I feel some agencies are absolutely fantastic and really listen to their teachers. Others are clearly financially orientated

and try to post supply teachers into other positions, just to satisfy bookings.

- A lot of them are NQTs with little support. Being put into a difficult school with no support is demoralising. Lots of supply teachers just 'give up' trying to teach and spend all their time on crowd control.
- Day to day supply is often not your subject, just whoever is available. Supply staff should have specialised training to deal with the unique issues that arise.
- Supply agencies should be more rigorous in the standards when employing potential covering staff.
- Actually getting to know the staff on their books. When I worked as a supply teacher (my first 2 years of teaching, 8 years ago) the agencies I worked for only asked my referees for a tick sheet reference with no room for additional information and asked me almost nothing about myself or my skills.
- Training, and tracking of supply teachers through observations and feedback
- Pay them more. A friend has to provide, at her own expense, a CRB check for each agency. I realise they are vital, but surely generating 5or6 within a month was unnecessary. Not only is it prohibitively expensive but it clogs up the system.
- Agencies should not exist. They profit from the arrangements, so once again, we have a misuse of public funds. It needs to go to schools' own contingency strategies.
- To pay them a fair wage for work undertaken.
- Send teachers suited to the lessons taught, not just send random teachers.

Does your school have any specific problems with supply teachers relating to Welsh medium education?

Yes	11.3%
No	32.4%
Don't know	56.3%

If Welsh Government could make one change about supply teachers, what would you want it to be?

Comments included:

- I think that there should be encouragement by the Welsh Assembly Government to increase the payment made to supply teachers. Agency rates are in the main very low.
- Don't encourage agencies. Use bank of supplies known to schools.
- To make the training & pay they receive consistent.
- A central resource that is well managed and invests in CPD.
- introduce a standard daily rate of pay and link
- More rigour. I only do supply at the school I retired from. I know the protocols and the systems of the school.
- Get rid of the agencies! They took 50% of my wages even on a long term placement. This means you are working for very little, still having to plan lessons and mark work but on a lot less than you should be on.
Insist on training for supply teachers on how to deal with these situations on supply.
- Ensure that classes are taught by a qualified teacher and not by cover supervisors, which is often to no benefit to students as they are not qualified to actually teach but just monitor and manage behaviour.
- Give supply staff access to training & cpd.
- Pay supply teachers proper percentage salary reflecting their position on teacher pay scales.
- Stop using agencies
- Ensure that private supply agencies are not making increasing profits by exploiting the supply workforce in a competitive market.
- They could pay towards pensions.
- Offer training
- If a supply teacher gets a long-term placement then their pay should increase to take into account longer working hours e.g.
- Remove agencies. They are unnecessary and drain resources from schools and mean supply teachers earn less.
- Do away with agencies and let schools employ teachers from an LEA approved register.

- More opportunities for nqt's or student teachers to have more opportunities to teach on supply.
- Provide greater opportunities for CPD especially with new structures, practices being implemented
- Legislate to ensure supply teachers are paid the full daily rate by agencies.
- To pay them to attend CPD courses
- Get rid of agencies that effectively cause good teachers to work for substantially lower salaries.

Any other comments:

- I have been a supply teacher for a year a half with various agencies (undertaking 2 maternity posts & my current post with one agency in particular). My current agency is fantastic but it has taken a long time to ensure a good representative was found. I have also encountered a variety of issues being an NQT on supply. I would be happy to discuss this further with an ATL rep if this is deemed useful.
- As a special school, my school only uses supply teachers for long-term cover as we cannot get experienced supply teachers to cover day to day absences.
- Supply teaching is not easy! Many would love some support, particularly behaviour management and keeping up to date with new methodologies and techniques. As a full time teacher I know my school, I know my pupils I plan for my pupils. A supply teacher may regularly teach in strange schools, unfamiliar pupils and translate/ dissect another teachers planning. That is hard.
- Schools are getting a good deal by using the Supply agency but the supply staff are being paid a great deal less than the sum paid by the school to the agency. The deal agreed between WG and New Directions is very much in favour of private gain from public funds.
- I'm a supply teacher and my pay is half what it was when I worked for local council as supply. I receive no training and I can't pay towards my pension.
- I feel the reduction in direct links between schools and 'their' supply teachers is detrimental to the children, for many reasons.
- Agencies have done nothing to improve supply teaching, they have lowered the moral of supply teachers who are now underpaid.
- Money drives everything. Cover is the cheapest most often which is an educational nonsense. Also matching qualification to job description is just as important for supply teachers when the driving force is the quality of education our pupils receive.

- Something must be done about teachers' pensions for supply teachers.
- As a supply teacher I have the flexibility to work in different schools. I am fortunate enough to provide supply for two local schools and able to access some training provided by the schools. However it must be very difficult for supply teachers who travel to lots of schools to build relationships with staff and pupils and access training.