

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee
ST 42
Inquiry into Supply Teaching
Evidence from : School Governor

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?

When I was in school as a deputy head, supply teachers were used in both capacities. They were essential to the smooth running of the school, but, because of the extra cost involved we used them circumspectly. I wouldn't say that there was a prevalence in their use. We used our judgement as to when to ask for their help. This seemed to work well and not cause problems with regard to over use. Other problems did arise.

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

We had a few supply teachers who had specific training to teach in our special needs school. There were not enough for us to be that particular in our choice and this led to examples of child minding rather than teaching. If planned, the actual teacher left lesson notes to be followed, and it was expected that our supply teacher was prepared before coming to school. Unplanned absences needed to be covered. I was very much against using N.N.E.B.s to do this and felt that this policy, when implemented, was very wrong. The good supply teachers could take over a class effectively, others drifted through the day. It is up to the school management to encourage all supply teachers to be proactive. There were no discipline problems with any of our supply cover.

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>	yes
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
<p>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?</p>	
<p>In our case, our supply teachers were qualified to work in special education –small steps, carefully explained and at the appropriate level. As explained above, our problem was one of expecting the supply teacher to efficiently work with the class. Having regular supply staff meant that this was easier to do.</p> <p>As a general point, I would expect all supply staff to be sufficiently qualified to take over the cover they have been asked to teach. If this is not the case, then the supplying body (public or private agency) is at fault and needs to be investigated. A supply teacher should be as good as any other member of staff. The ability to have regular supply staff who know the school is a great help in making this service run smoothly. A supply teacher should be prepared to go anywhere within the school, unless they specifically state that there are areas where they are not able to teach. This information is then available to the school before the visit.</p>	
<p>If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?</p>	
<p>An efficient supplying body should be able to provide good teachers to work in any given situation. The school should be able to organise its staff to work around both planned and unplanned absence. Thus any problem is one of management, supply and demand. It is at this level that remedial action might be needed, not in the classroom</p>	

where the decision to employ supply staff has already been taken. Failure at that level will be due to individual incompetence which should have been recognised before the appointment was made.

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.

Yes

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)?

A good teacher can enthuse a class and produce good work from it. Naturally the supply teacher is not familiar, but his/her charisma should compensate for this. Pre knowledge (easier when the absence is planned) should make it easy for the supply teacher to get straight on with the syllabus. For sickness, it should be expected that the supply teacher is briefed on arrival in school. As a supply teacher, one of his/her skills should be to adapt quickly to any class and any curriculum to be taught.

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

Again, the supplying agency should expect their staff to be sufficiently trained. They might require staff to undergo specific training before and during their appointments as supply teachers being used by the agency. This training would enhance the ability to adapt to any given situation and to be flexible in response to school demands.

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>	yes
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
Question 4 – What are your views on the Continuous Professional Development of supply teachers and the potential impact of the National Professional Learning Model?	
<p>Essential. Any supply teacher needs to be up to date and ready for the employment anywhere. Subject updates are probably more important than management skills, since the supply teacher is a visitor to the school (unless a long term supply for maternity leave) and unlikely to have a key input in department meetings. Their expertise from previous employment might be valuable, and schools should be grateful for constructive suggestions given tactfully to them. My experience is that supply teachers are poorly treated when it comes to in service training. The agency is concerned with their employment and the revenue generated from it, money spent on training is an extra expense for them. They may not identify this as part of their role.</p>	
<p>If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?</p>	
<p>Perhaps some form of requirement that makes agencies have to say what recent training has been offered and an audit made annually of what has been achieved. Supply teachers should be helped to find suitable in service training and funding should be available to finance this. It is in all interests that the supply teacher arrives in school ready to go.</p>	
<p>How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)</p>	
<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	yes
<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 5 – What are your views on performance management arrangements for supply teachers?	
<p>A difficult question. If supply teachers are at least partly under the influence of the local authority (who is, of course paying them directly or indirectly through the school budget) then the local authority could carry out performance management on them. This would be different to other teaching staff in as much as there would be no promotion to consider within a school hierarchy. The agencies could be required to carry out performance management on all supply staff as a prerequisite to their continuing employment. The criterion of professional competence would be assessed and suitable in service training could be linked to this performance management.</p>	
<p>If you think there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?</p>	
<p>I don't have the necessary information to make a useful comment here, nor do I know what the current situation is. I do know that performance management should be mandatory for all teachers and that it should be a constructive process. It should also be mandatory for those employing supply teachers to carry this out and checks should be available to ensure this happens.</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 6 – Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?

We were left to our own devices when we used supply staff. We decided when they should be sought and how often used. Budget constraints were a major consideration and it was these that sometimes led to N.N.E.B. led classes. Something I disapproved of. I expect that questions might be raised if the authority thought we were using too many supply staff, since this would imply poor regular staff attendance. The local authority would need to be happy that all staff used were bona fide teachers from a reputable source and all of our supply staff had to be registered with the local authority before being allowed to teach there.

The school should be capable of making judgements about supply staff without too much oversight from outside.

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

If basic procedures are in place: (properly registered supply staff) then there shouldn't be a need for much oversight.

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>	Yes.

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?

I don't have this information.

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

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

I have made clear that these must conform to good standards and that they should be properly inspected to see that this is the case. I have also said that some supply teachers were better than others. All of ours were registered with the local authority and we contacted them directly, none came through an agency. My instinct is that agencies are expensive places to find supply staff and should be avoided if local staff can be sourced directly. I don't have knowledge of their procedures and so can not comment on quality assurance. No doubt they need to observe good practice in order to stay in business!

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

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

Most of our supply staff were Welsh speaking. Our school was largely English in nature, though we celebrated Welsh culture and used a bi lingual approach when appropriate. Quite a lot of our work was through signing, which is international.

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

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?

Ensure that all supply staff receive regular in service training and feel competent to take on any task that the school requires of them. They might also monitor supply and demand to ensure a good coverage throughout Wales.

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

My comments have been based on local knowledge and are limited to my experiences. Supply staff are there to give the school cover and enable it to function. Lack of staff leads to stress and management problems and ultimately to safety issues. It should not be a bonus, more an expectation that the school curriculum continues to be

delivered, no matter who is in front of the class. Supply cover is vital to give regular staff time to train and carry out major school reforms. Supply staff are an essential part of the educational establishment and should be treated with the respect given to all teachers. This includes proper remuneration for the skills they have to offer.