

## Children, Young People and Education Committee

### Inquiry into Supply Teaching: Consultation

Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru  
National  
Assembly for  
Wales



#### 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?

Governors Wales appreciates the contribution that supply teachers make to the education system in Wales. We are also mindful of the complexity around this area. Supply teaching is both necessary in covering teacher absence, be it planned or unplanned, along with the use of cover supervisors or teaching assistants. As indicated in the report produced by Estyn, in conjunction with the Welsh Audit Office on the impact of teacher absence (December 2013), an approximate 10% of all lessons are covered by staff who are not the usual class teachers.

From evidence we have collected, the embedded principle of rarely cover and budget consideration means that supply teachers are usually deployed for staff absence when this is foreseen and planned or equally on an unplanned basis. From comments received there does not appear to be a prevalence either way.

Some comments we have received are noted below:

“My experience is that schools seek to minimise the use of supply teachers by building into staffing arrangements cover for PPA time. In my school ad hoc absence for training, illness etc. is covered by having a small cadre of experienced teachers living locally who can be contacted direct. Use of supply agencies happens only in exceptional circumstances.”

“We try to use supply teachers on a planned basis, in cases of known and significant absence.”

“Supply teachers are mostly used on an unplanned basis where there is an unforeseen shortage of teachers in school.”

Lastly, we emphasise that schools should always have robust and rigorous policies in place regarding staff absence management.

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

Evidence suggests that a break in continuity of pupil learning arising from teacher absence and variable quality of supply teaching, can potentially impact on the quality on learning. This can often be due to the lack of rapport / understanding of pupils and learning needs. Resolving this is not always simple. Some respondents commented “This is particularly important for pupils who need good structured and personal working with the teacher to achieve progress.”

“There are problems with variable quality of supply but more significantly even high quality supply can be less than effective because of the lack of relationship with the pupils.”

“The use of supply teachers can be detrimental to the continuity of teaching and learning. There are often concerns with behavioural issues and following policy if supply isn’t consistent”

Governors Wales agrees with having a local pool of supply teachers or even developing a pool of highly qualified supply for school clusters, and effectively matching skills and qualifications as far as possible, working with Local Authorities and agencies on a needs basis. Sound Quality Assurance monitoring processes also need to be in place.

In addition, suitable high quality training programmes for supply teachers, as well familiarising with individual school information and access to designated procedures, is a necessity.

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>	<b>X</b>
<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?

“Supply teachers are an essential resource for school and should make a vital contribution to securing and maintaining high educational standards. In most cases supply teachers are committed and dedicated professionals with the skills and experience to undertake a range of reasonable duties. Issues may arise however when supply teachers are placed with a group of pupils without essential information about the functioning of the school. Only just over one in ten supply teachers (11%) report that they are always given the appropriate information and policies, including health and safety information, when entering a new school and 5% stated that they have never been given this information.”

As far as possible, supply teachers should be subject specific and of a sufficiently high enough standard so as not to impact on the pupils learning.

Whilst evidence implies that supply teachers with the appropriate specialist knowledge are deployed as far as possible, we note that this is not always feasible. If there is long term supply need for a particular subject then every endeavour should be made to take on a teacher who has the relevant subject knowledge. Expectations and relevant knowledge should always be provided.

Schools need to plan for supply teachers effectively, providing clear guidance and making supply teachers aware of any challenges in the classes that will be teaching.

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

The following are examples of comments received:

“The need to monitor the use of supply teaching and look at any impact from all sides is essential.”

“Ensure that supply teachers are provided with relevant information about the school and its pupils.”

“Supply teachers should have a contact member of staff for assistance when problems occur.”

“Cover work provided must be appropriate and challenging.”

“Supply teachers should have access to structured CPD and high quality training.”

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>	<b>X</b>
<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)?

Supply teachers can impact adversely on pupils (common features may be a lack of progress, attendance and punctuality concerns, behavioural issues), particularly where a number of different supply teachers are used as there may not be clear and consistent boundaries/expectations. The impact on outcomes can therefore be significant. Long term staff absence will present problems and employing different short term supply teachers can be problematic (due to lack of consistency). In foreseen circumstances schools should employ a long term subject specific supply, as far as possible.

Many schools will rely on internal arrangements for supply cover. Where schools use supply teachers who know the pupils and area familiar with the school, any adverse impact on outcomes is usually minimal.

Continuity and consistency are important for pupils do not always have the respect for supply / cover teachers resulting in poor classroom behaviour.

Evidence would suggest that there are more problems in secondary schools than primary, although this is anecdotal.

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

- Schools should provide a handbook for supply staff and provide up-to-date information as required.
- As far as possible, direct contact with “preferred” supply teacher but this is dependent on availability etc.
- Appropriate and challenging work should always be provided. This is usually provided where staff absence is planned but can be problematic if unplanned.
- A smaller pool of teachers who are known to pupils and are familiar with the school information and procedures.
- Effective Quality Assurance procedures in place (see answer question 1).

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

The messages conveyed from evidence received indicates that CPD should be available. Please refer to earlier questions. Reliance on supply is unavoidable on occasions so hence the importance of opportunities for CPD being offered where possible that is planned and monitored.

In some cases, it is clear that supply teachers are not being supported appropriately by schools or their employers. It is also evident that the majority of supply teachers are unable to access appropriate training.

We are mindful of the “new deal” for the education workforce recently outlined by the Minister for Education, with a clear emphasis on career long professional development. Supply teachers have to be part of this. Equally the radical proposed changes to the curriculum and assessment arrangements will bring out new approaches, for which the teaching profession will require high quality CPD training opportunities. The need for high quality supply teachers who are up to date in their own CPD will never be greater.

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

This is certainly an area that needs considerable work at a national level, not least to raise the profile of supply teachers. This would also need to be funded and resourced appropriately.

“The need to have a well vetted, trained pool of supply teachers within each LA / consortia is essential”. This cannot be emphasised enough.

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

Governors Wales believes that there should be clear arrangements in place and consistent practice.

One respondent commented “We are mindful that The School Teacher Appraisal Regulations 35 to 45 apply here. As such appraisers must be appointed, there should be an appraisal cycle, objective setting, monitoring and reviewing.”

Comments received however indicate that supply staff report that there is little guidance available; line managers pay little regard to Performance Management. This has a significant impact in that it impedes progress and affects pay progression. “Almost two thirds of supply teachers (64%) report that they are not provided with a regular contact/mentor by the employer for which they work and a similar number (63%) say that they do not have a line manager identified for them from within the schools in which they teach (58%).”

Whilst this is important, practice appears to be variable.

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

Local authorities should potentially have a role here.

Some comments received included:

“The pool approach would provide the greater continuity required for effective performance management.”

“Training and CPD milestone requirements.”

“By continuously planning and monitoring the resource linked to the curriculum being taught with an appropriate accreditation”.

**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>	<b>X</b>
<i>3 – This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 – Not a problem.</i>	

<p><b>Question 6 – Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?</b></p>	
<p>No, there are differing arrangements in place, however, this could be improved.</p>	
<p>If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent pay for supply teachers</li> <li>• A well trained pool of supply teachers within each LA / Consortia</li> <li>• Effective Quality Assurance processes in place, providing consistent feedback to LAs / agencies and from LAs / agencies</li> </ul>	
<p>How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)</p>	
<p><i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i></p>	
<p><i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i></p>	<b>X</b>
<p><i>3 - This is a minor problem</i></p>	
<p><i>4 - Not a problem.</i></p>	



**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 have no specific information for this question. Much seems to depend on differing arrangements within each Local Authority. This is confirmed in Estyn’s 2013 report. Schools will also use a variety of ways to manage staff absence.

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

It would be helpful to have a consistent model across Wales.

One respondent suggested that there might be areas that could be linked to the final year at Teacher Training (i.e. some kind of pool for work placement such as the Teach First scheme).

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

We have limited knowledge for Question 8. From evidence collected, it would appear that -

“Quality assurance varies from agency to agency”. Sound Quality Assurance arrangements need to be developed and could be improved through better performance management. There needs to be a consistent process of maintaining the quality of supply teachers between agencies and the school.

The general feeling however, appears to be that “agencies should have to have some form of accreditation / quality control.”

There needs to be rigorous safeguarding practices in place, ensuring robust pre-employment checks (DBS etc), including an indication if the DBS document indicates any information that may be of concern to the school.

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

- The need to regulate agencies
- The requirement to ensure that supply teachers are made aware of their rights and CPD opportunities.

It would be useful for governing bodies or clusters to have presentations by agencies/ consortia.

It is felt that, as a minimum, agencies should be regulated and should also insist that only qualified teachers cover lessons and that terms and conditions are rigorously applied

It would also be useful for a SLA to be produced requiring agreed quality assurance criteria and process.

**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?

No specific information other than anecdotal that indicates that Welsh speaking supply teachers are generally scarce and as identified in Estyn’s 2013 report – extract below.

“Welsh-medium schools and those located in rural or economically deprived areas have the greatest difficulty finding suitable supply teachers, particularly when they also require teachers with expertise in shortage subjects.”

<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/annual-report/annual-report-2013-2014/>

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

A central supply register held by Local Authorities would be useful.

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?

Recommendations from respondents are noted below:

- Guidance on good practice could be issued.
- Ensure that local authorities have a central system of keeping an updated record of supply teachers and also ensuring a system which monitors and checks the quality of their performance in co-operation with schools.
- Both schools and agencies need to plan carefully e.g. school to have “welcome pack” for supply teachers and agency liaison with tutors and schools to ensure “ethos” etc. is known by all involved.
- Make it a requirement that supply teachers are given the same care, support and supervision that other staff are given.
- Supply teachers need to be subject to regular review of performance and evidence that they keep up to date with initiatives and teaching methods.

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

We are aware that schools in many cases are using Higher Level Teaching Assistants etc to cover classes to ensure behaviour and continuity of learning.