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25th June 2019
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Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales.
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
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Dear Janet

Petition P-05-805 Fair Deal for Supply Teachers.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to some of the specific issues raised by the Petitions Committee in considering the issue of a Fair Deal for Supply Teachers. The WLGA response to the issues is below under each of the queries you have raised.

Specific issues

The viability of a Public Sector solution for employing supply teachers in Wales, for example in a similar vein to the system which operates in Northern Ireland, or the recent pilot project based on cluster arrangements.

Under the local management of schools' governance framework (as set out in the Staffing of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2006) school governing bodies of maintained schools, are responsible for making decisions about how they organise, recruit, deploy and manage an effective school workforce. This recruitment and deployment can be permanent, fixed term, full-time and part-time and includes the employment and engagement of 'supply' teachers.

The purpose of supply teachers is to cover absences which may occur for a number of reasons. Some of those absences will be planned and others not. The duration of the absence will also vary depending on the reason for the absence.

Currently, schools engage supply teachers from a range of sources which include numerous agencies and also individuals who may be self-employed. Schools cannot be compelled or directed to use any particular source and are free to determine who they engage and from where these staff come. They will base their decisions on key issues such as the length of absence and the nature of the cover required e.g. subject matter.

Dr Chris Llewelyn
Prif Weithredwr
Chief Executive

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**Croesawn ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg a byddwn yn ymateb i ohebiaeth yn yr un iaith.
Ni fydd defnyddio'r naill iaith na'r llall yn arwain at oedi.**

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Use of either language will not lead to a delay.

Supply teachers work irregularly, determined by the absence, and therefore it would be ineffective and costly for schools to engage 'supernumerary' teachers on a permanent basis to cover these absences. This is particularly relevant at a time when resources for schools are challenging and teacher numbers more generally are being reduced because of budget restraint.

For similar reasons local authorities do not employ a 'pool' of supply teachers who would not be fully engaged and would also find themselves in competition with existing sources to be engaged as determined by the individual school. This would not be a good use of scarce resources. Local authorities would need to ensure that they had enough capacity and range, to properly support all schools in its area.

The current pilot project is looking at arrangements where resourcing a permanent supernumerary teacher for a small cluster of schools could be cost-effective. The funding for the project is being provided on a sliding scale by Welsh Government and it will not be clear until the end of the 3- year project whether it is both cost-effective to schools and works in an operational sense.

The improvements which could potentially arise out of new framework contract arrangements developed by the National Procurement Service (including letting the contract on the basis of individual local authority 'lots', a minimum daily pay rate and greater transparency over agency fees).

It is the WLGA's understanding that the new framework will provide schools with a greater degree of choice and flexibility in terms of which local supply agencies they choose to engage. It will also provide clarity and transparency in terms of the fees payable by the hiring schools enabling them to maximise the use of their delegated budgets, and will provide clarity in terms of how public funding is spent.

We also understand that this approach will improve supply teachers' rights and schools will be able to be confident that the minimum quality standards and statutory safeguarding obligations will be met by all commercial agencies admitted to the new framework.

The wider range of agencies that now fall under the framework will enable local authorities to encourage schools to meet their supply teacher needs via agencies appointed to the NPS framework, who will have met the specified quality requirements and be formally monitored as part of the framework arrangements. This includes registering with a representative professional recruitment body and signing up to the Welsh Government's Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains and our Fair Work principles.

Any potential opportunities or risks for supply teaching arising from the devolution of pay and conditions for teachers.

Currently the statutory School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) only applies to those contractually employed by schools. The devolution of teacher's pay and conditions does provide the opportunity for Wales to develop its own response to the teaching workforce. This could include the opportunities to recognise the role of teachers who undertake a supply function.

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Arrangements for professional learning for supply teachers, particularly in light of current education reforms.

Professional learning is recognised as a key aspect of improving outcomes for learners. The introduction of the current curriculum reforms highlights the need for professionals to be up-to-date and inhibiting the highest level of practice.

Professional learning can take a number of forms. Continuing Professional Development in many professions is provided and managed by the relevant professional body. In Wales this is the Education Workforce Council which supports some development for supply teacher and provides access to the Professional Learning Passport (PLP).

The training and development of staff normally falls to the employer, who will invest in their workforce to meet its business needs. Supply teachers are not contractually employed by schools or local authorities but will have a relationship with an agency and/or be self-employed. There is a challenge for supply teachers who might not be in position to access some development needs which are provided by schools and local authorities on INSET days or through the Regional School Improvement Services. Equally there is a challenge for schools to invest resources in an individual for whom they are not the employer and may not see a return on the investment, if they are not engaged in the school in the future.

The Welsh Government will need to consider how best it can reach this element of the teaching workforce to ensure that they receive the appropriate professional learning required to maintain high levels of pedagogy and practice in light of these forthcoming changes.

Yours faithfully



Dr Chris Llewelyn
Chief Executive

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