

Vetro Recruitment Response to Petition P-05-805

“We, the undersigned, request that all supply teachers be paid fairly and have full access to training opportunities and other terms and conditions. There should be a qualified teacher in every classroom and taxpayers' money should be going directly into education and not into the pockets of private agencies.

Supply teachers are being exploited and teachers are leaving the profession as they cannot afford to be supply teachers. Agencies reduce teachers' pay by forty to sixty percent and teachers lose their pensions, this is public money going into the private sector for profit. Lessons are being covered by unqualified staff.”

In relation to the above petition text, Vetro Recruitment would like to issue the following response:

Vetro recruitment was built on the foundations of providing a clear and transparent recruitment service to the schools and teaching professionals we work with. We have always maintained that an agency can provide immense value if the schools are supported well and teachers are paid fairly.

It has been well publicised that certain agencies do not share our values which has had a negative impact on the teachers, schools, children they teach and the education recruitment industry as a whole. The above statement is probably driven by the poor practices of some of the agencies that supply staff to the schools across Wales.

However, we believe that there is a fundamental role for agencies who operate well, pay teachers fairly and provide value to the schools that they support. We at Vetro Recruitment agree wholeheartedly, that all supply Teachers and School Support Staff should be paid fairly and have access to relevant training opportunities.

Prior to the new framework being implemented, Vetro Recruitment ensured that all Teachers and School Support Staff were paid fairly from day 1 and paid inline with the agency worker regulations 2010 (AWR) rate of pay after 12 week of service. We understand that, in the past, there have been instances where agencies have paid a reduced rate of pay to qualified teachers. We have supported teaching professionals that have registered with Vetro where we have identified that their previous agency had been paying them under the National living wage or AWR rate. In these situations we have supported them by helping recoup the money owed to them by flagging this practice with the department for Business, Energy and industrial strategy (BEIS.gov) and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC).

Vetro's minimum rate of pay (pre-AWR) for a qualified teacher prior to the new framework was £100 per day and where possible, Vetro would often pay above the proposed daily rate of £100.

In relation to the above comment regarding the covering of lessons with unqualified staff we would like to agree that a classroom should be covered by a fully qualified teacher at all times. The only time that Vetro would provide a non-qualified teacher to cover a class would be at the specific request of the school in question.

In relation to the proposed points below, Vetro would also like to provide the following:

"1. The role of agencies in the provision of supply teaching for schools in Wales;

The role of an agency is to supply quality, qualified and vetted education professionals into schools and education setting across wales. We provide vital cover for lessons that the schools could not otherwise cover themselves. The agency model allows schools to continue to function by filling gaps in their timetable that would otherwise go unfilled. These gaps typically consist of last minute sickness, maternity cover, long term sickness cover or gaps created when schools want to train their own staff.

Part of our role is also to allow teachers who have left the profession or retired a route back into teaching by enabling them to work on a flexible basis. This means that many years of teaching experience is not lost as many teachers do not want or cannot commit to a permanent role. The teachers that work via an agency are usually experienced within a variety of settings and have worked in many different environments giving the schools an experienced, flexible and adaptable member of staff.

In order to provide this service to schools the agency performs a multitude of time consuming and expensive tasks to attract the teachers and get them compliant ready to work.

Before a member of staff is offered to a school we will have performed the following.

- Had one of our consultants go to the school to understand the type of staff they will require, we will take a detailed bespoke job description of the ideal person to fill the vacancy within the school.
- Place adverts for requirements that schools have across all the leading job boards, social media platforms and market them to our internal database.
- Screen all the applications we receive, picking out the best and most relevant staff to

interview for the schools.

- Perform a full interview face to face with those people who we believe to be the most suitable candidates for the role.
- We will then begin vetting, reference gathering, ensuring all staff have enhanced and up-to-date DBS certificates, ensuring all staff are registered with EWC (education workforce council) and ensuring all candidates have the right to work in the UK with verified identification.
- All teachers are made compliant to the REC Gold accreditation standards - this is the highest education specific accreditation and we are regularly externally audited to make sure we are adhering to all legal and contractual processes.

You will see from the above comprehensive list and strict compliance that one of the key roles for an agency is ensuring the safeguarding of children through the provision of vetted and qualified staff.

Once a pool of workers have been made ready for work it is the role of the agency to.

- Keep the staff employed in the most suitable contracts
- Offer schools to trial staff members prior to providing full term contracts.
- Keep staff up to date with training and legislation. This includes Safeguarding and we ensure all candidates are up-to-date with safeguarding L1 and L2.
- Monitor their performance and provide regular feedback.
- Payroll staff members and take care of all WTR, NI and pension contributions.

Finally, we believe the role of an agency is to give back to the sector that they work within. Even though we are a relatively small agency we see CSR as a vital part of longevity to the recruitment sector. We work closely with Bullies out who are a local agency and support local schools with a grassroots approach to eradicating bullying in schools. So far we have raised nearly £4000 for the charity which has benefited many schools on the South Wales area.

2. The support and professional training available to supply teachers who are registered with your agency;

At Vetro, continued career development and progression of our candidates is of paramount importance, therefore we offer the following FREE training courses to all education candidates.

- Handling Violence and Aggression
- Safeguarding 1 & 2
- Quality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Preventing Radicalisation
- Autism and Aspergers Awareness
- Health and Safety including Risk Reporting
- Mental health and Learning Difficulties
- First Aid Awareness
- Manual Handling

We also offer support to our candidates through the advice and knowledge from our experienced consultants, two of whom are fully qualified teachers with almost 30 years of combined experience between them. Not only are we able to aid in answering day to day queries that arise, we can also offer expert advice to newly qualified teachers on the completion of their NQT year.

3. Any changes that you believe may arise as a result of the new framework contract for supply teaching.

- Schools will be subject to higher charge rates in line with the newly increased rate of pay for fully qualified teachers in Wales.
- Teachers will be paid better and more fairly.
- We have had discussions with schools where they have stated that education budgets are already stretched and may be unable to pay the increased rate.
- It has also been in the public domain and relayed to us by some candidates that certain agencies who are on the framework intend to not follow the M1 pay rate.
- Enhanced pay within some areas of Wales could encourage more teachers to travel across the bridge from England and work in Wales. This coupled with the toll on the M4 bridge being removed may see the jobs in Wales being very attractive to travel too.
- Where schools struggle to pay the higher daily rate, we anticipate an increase in the usage of cover supervisors, higher level teaching assistants and unqualified teachers covering classes in place of fully qualified teachers.
- With teachers being paid a substantially higher daily rate, we anticipate an increase in staff remaining within the education sector as opposed to leaving for alternative roles outside of education.
- With teachers in a position to earn a higher daily rate - working as a supply teacher will be more financially viable and appealing to candidates going forward.
- We anticipate the increased salary could lead to a growth in the number of people undertaking training to become a teacher and NQT's completing their induction year.

4. Your intentions in relation to wages paid to supply teachers under the framework contract, including whether you anticipate circumstances in which supply teachers will be paid above the stipulated minimum wage.”

Vetro’s position is that fully qualified teachers will be paid in accordance with the newly proposed framework rates of pay when working as a teacher in Wales. In certain circumstances, supply teachers may be paid above the minimum stated rate of pay, this would be evaluated on a case by case basis with a clear understanding of this from all relevant parties.