

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee
ST 01

Inquiry into Supply Teaching
Evidence from : School Secretary – Primary

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?

Yes. The need to employ supply teachers has increased considerably over the past 10 years particularly on an unplanned basis.

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

The biggest problem is cost. Firstly the cost of an insurance premium to cover the sickness absence of staff, then the cost of replacement staff (particularly when using supply agencies).

Also it can be difficult to get the right staff with suitable experience. i.e. we have a Hearing Impaired SNRB – its almost impossible to locate supply staff to cover absence.

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>	X
<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?

I have had some excellent teachers/teaching assistants from agencies and I have also had some very poor staff. I always try to feedback to the agency if a certain member of staff has not met acceptable standards.

It is also difficult for supply staff to be aware of particular pupils needs educationally and emotionally and therefore they can struggle to deliver lessons adequately.

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

It is very difficult as supply teachers could work in 4 or 5 different schools in any one week and therefore they do not get to know the pupils they teach.

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 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)?

I have found that pupils with challenging behaviour and emotional needs cannot cope with changes in teachers and this has a detrimental effect on them.

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

This is a difficult question with no easy answer. When I first started working as a school secretary 21 years ago, supply agencies did not exist. Staff would need to register with the local authority and then get in contact with schools themselves. This was better in one way as I had a list of approximately 6 staff which I used continuously. The staff would get to know the pupils. However, the availability of these 6 staff could be very limited. Also the Headteacher had to cover teacher absence frequently where as now the Headteacher does not cover at all.

Maybe local authorities could adopt this system but share details of available staff as a whole authority.

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>	X
<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?

I assume that supply teachers do not have access to training.

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

My son is currently in his final year of training to be a primary school teacher. I would like to think that he could do supply cover on a short term basis. It would enable him to gain access into schools where there may be permanent vacancies. However, I believe that all teachers need support from a good management structure to be able to progress and develop

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.

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

Question 6 – Do you consider that local authorities and regional consortia have sufficient oversight of the use of supply teachers?

No they do not

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

Local authorities need to contact local schools and gather information on costs and needs etc to decide a better way forward.

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>	X
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - 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?	
Most schools in my local area now use agency staff. On a busy Monday morning it far easier and quicker to telephone an agency who have access to a large number of staff ready to work.	
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>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
Question 8 – Do you have any views on supply agencies and their quality assurance arrangements?	
I use 3 local agencies who I have built up a good relationship with. I find that I get a lot of 'sales' phone calls from other agencies. More agencies seem to be springing up day by day.	

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

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?

There are a lot of unemployed teachers at the moment, most of whom do not want to work as supply teachers but want full time jobs. Supply agencies do take a big ‘cut’ of the amount the school pays per day (approx a third) so this results in qualified teachers not receiving the proper rates of pay. This is not fair as these are qualified people who have trained for at least three years, have accumulated huge students debts and have paid course fees of £8000 + per year.

The retirement age of teachers should be reduced to 57/58 years old on full pension. Huge sums are being paid out to supply teachers to cover the absence of many 'older' staff who are absent through stress due to the ever increasing demands of the job. This would introduce permanent vacancies for the young enthusiastic teachers just coming out of university today.

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