

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee
ST 11
Inquiry into Supply Teaching
Evidence from : Teacher – Higher School & Parent

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?

The picture varies across schools and local authorities. On an “unplanned” and “ad-hoc” basis to cover emergency absences, the use of external cover teachers is unavoidable, and most learners, most of the time are resilient enough to cope with infrequent distribution to their learning. However schools have an obligation to provide adequate provision for the discharge of their educational responsibilities. Many schools have adopted the use of HTLA, Cover Supervisors or General Teachers, permanently employed by the school to cover extended (more than one day) absences. Learners generally respond favourably to internally employed “cover supervisors” compared to externally employed supply teachers. Where the situation becomes complex is for schools dealing with multiple incidents of short term absence – for example when a teacher is absent for 3 months, but made up from multiple sick notes of 2 weeks duration. Providing subject specific cover can be difficult under these circumstances.

The main issue with external supply teachers is “How do you ensure they are the high quality teachers that young people deserve?” If a supply teacher is “not up to it” – a school just asks for a different teacher from the agency and that teacher deemed to be failing is recycled to another school – who may just accept poor provision as a part of life.

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

Where schools employ additional staff internally to manage colleague absence, the situation is less critical. Schools that still utilise daily supply to cover extended absence need an alternative:

- 1) Schools to be required to employ additional staff to cover absence
- 2) Employ additional teachers across a group of schools – with staff operating across and between institutions.
- 3) Have a centrally facilitated, mandatory training program and management system for supply teachers – some form of central regulatory body.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	X
<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 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?

High quality practitioners can (in the main) teach most subjects – and outcomes for learners are higher with a great teacher, with a range of pedagogies than a subject specialist, with great specific knowledge, not poor teaching skills.

If supply teachers are used for very short term (1 day) cover, then KS2, KS3 and KS4 all would benefit from better teachers over subject specialists.

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

See previous point on managing, training, CPD for supply teachers.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

X

2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

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)?

In a secondary setting, learners can be very tribal – and external supply teachers are seen by the pupils as someone who they “don’t have to take seriously”. As supply teachers probably don’t know school procedures, they often ignore poor behaviour. As a result, outcomes are generally less than with the class teacher.

Plus, during periods of emergency cover, the quality of the work provided for the learners is very often “make work” designed to keep the learners busy as opposed to moving them on educationally. Learners know this, so they behave accordingly.

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

Some schools operate an “emergency” cover booklet system – with non-subject specific activities for learners. Some schools have a similar system with each subject designing a series of non related lessons to be used for emergency provision.

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?	
<p>The issue of line management, cpd and NPLM is a serious one. Who looks after supply teachers? Who ensures that they can “do” what the claim? How do you take a supply teacher through competency? Who do you complain to? Who pays for their CPD?</p>	
<p>If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?</p>	
<p>Supply Agencies need to do more than “match make” and send the next teacher on the list to a school. They need to act as the employer and line manage that member of staff, provide CPD, INSET etc etc.</p> <p>How about a national standard that supply agencies must (by law) adhere to?</p>	
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 5 – What are your views on performance management arrangements for supply teachers?

None existent at present – if this was to be instigated, raises the questions of “who line manages them” and “who is responsible”

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

See Q4

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

Good question.

Previous models for supply cover used local agreements where the LA's and Consortia could recommend a teacher to cover an absence – now this has been replaced with agencies and cover supervisors, these external bodies do not have any real oversight.

LA subject advisers used to maintain a list of cover teachers for their subject. These roles no longer exist in Consortia so this intelligence has been lost and schools are dependent on commercial agencies for advice.

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

Consider allowing / promoting more local agreements – what about a peripatetic pool of teachers employed by the LA to act as cover across the authority?

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 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?

Yes

Most schools have adopted a cover supervisor, HTLA model. Some schools still require teaching staff to cover for absent colleagues and use agency teachers as needed.

One assumes that this is either a financially driven initiative or lack of awareness of current practices.

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

Stronger / clearer guidance to schools and Head teachers on the expectations over cover provision.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

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

Many supply teachers are not up to the standards expected in the classroom today – many are great. For schools, getting a new supply teacher in a lottery.

The QA process for supply agencies does not include taking references and observing teachers teach – so it is impossible for them to know how good a teacher anyone is.

Many agencies don't care – if a supply teacher fails in School X, they are simply placed in School Y without any remedial / supportive action.

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

As previous comments on national standards for supply teachers.

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 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?

Learners have an entitlement to high quality teachers – and this is where the focus is needed. How do you ensure that the cover teacher in front of a class is up to the job? Who manages / supports the teacher? Who is responsible for their CPD?

My recommendation would be to create a national agency responsible for the registration, professional management, cpd and line management of supply teachers. Supply teachers must join this national agency.

Supply teachers to have an “official CV” that this agency provides, which details the teachers skills and which schools they have provided cover in – with some “rating” from their time in those schools.

In the bigger picture – some form of Quality Mark to show that the supply teacher can deliver in the classroom.

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

Of course, this issue of quality teachers is not limited to supply teachers and the same questions could be asked about our entire teaching body.

