

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

19 June 2019

Dear Ms Finch-Saunders

Petition P-05-805 Fair Deal for Supply Teachers

Thank you for your letter dated 29 April, please see response below:

As part of Estyn's response to the call for evidence about teachers' pay and conditions in Wales (June 2018), we suggested that the devolution of teachers' pay and conditions to Wales was an opportunity to establish a national system for the pay and conditions of supply teachers. We believe that a lack of a national system leads to too great a variance in pay, conditions and access to professional development opportunities for supply teachers. We also believe that all long term teacher absence, planned or otherwise, should be covered by a qualified teacher.

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.

Supply teacher agencies were perceived to be useful when they were first established due to their ability to provide a reliable service to schools to find cover teacher absence, often at short notice. Prior to this, schools were supported by local authority supply teacher services but schools increasingly reported that supply availability did not always meet the demand. On occasion, supply teachers were not available at all, which put pressure on schools to cover classes internally. Any future national public sector or cluster service would need to provide a reliable and high quality service for schools in all parts of Wales, including providing supply teachers to cover roles in shortage subjects, Welsh-medium and special schools.

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Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth. | Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

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).

The introduction of a minimum daily pay rate (that would be more in line with a permanent qualified teacher's salary) is likely to support and encourage supply teachers to participate in a broader range of activities in school, for example in supporting extra-curricular activities and accessing training opportunities.

If teaching agencies are to continue to provide supply teachers, we would recommend regulations to control their fees, how much they should pay teachers, and greater transparency over their finances.

One of the unintended consequences of paying a supply teacher a daily rate in line with their current pay scale is that it might discourage schools from employing more experienced staff as their daily cost may far exceed less experienced teachers.

A new framework contract could also include requirements for monitoring the performance of supply teachers. In our report on [The impact of teacher absence \(Estyn, 2013\)](#), we found that 'Most schools and teaching agencies provide limited feedback to supply staff about their performance and little information is recorded. Feedback is more detailed when there are concerns about teaching or classroom management. Nearly all schools have on occasion raised concerns about the quality of a few supply teachers. A few agencies ask for feedback on placements, although in many instances the collection of this information is not robust. Local authorities who provide lists of supply teachers do not usually request feedback on performance.'

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

The devolution of pay and conditions for teachers presents an opportunity to consider carefully the pay and conditions and professional development requirements of supply teachers. Currently, schools use agencies to employ supply teachers, usually at a fixed rate agreed with the agency. This is in contrast to schools or local authorities employing teachers directly, when they would be paid at their MPS/UPS3 scale. The current arrangement may represent significant cost savings to schools.

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

If supply teachers are employed long term by providers, they are often involved in a range of professional learning opportunities within that provider. However, current opportunities for supply teachers on shorter term contracts or employed on a day-to-day basis are too variable. Although some of the larger teaching agencies offer a small range of training courses, usually in areas such as classroom management or safeguarding, there is currently not enough professional learning for supply teachers. We believe that it is vital that supply teachers keep their professional knowledge up to date and access suitable training regularly.

In our report on [The impact of teacher absence \(Estyn, 2013\)](#), we found that 'Most cover supervisors and HLTAs employed permanently by schools have access to appropriate training as part of their school's in-service training programme. But other supply staff do not have access to a wide range of professional development opportunities. In most cases, arranging their own training or accessing courses offered by private companies would result in losing a day's pay. Supply staff seeking a permanent post are badly affected by the lack of appropriate professional development. Their knowledge and understanding of national policies and priorities can decline over time, making it harder for them to secure a permanent post.'

For further information see [The impact of teacher absence \(Estyn, 2013\)](#)

Yours sincerely



Meilyr Rowlands
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales