

SUPPLY TEACHER SURVEY REPORT

Annual survey of experiences 2024/25



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Introduction

Supply teachers are integral to the education system. Without supply teachers, many pupils would be denied the opportunity to be taught by qualified and dedicated teachers who ensure that schools can continue to provide the education to which children and young people are entitled. Supply teachers make a vital contribution to securing high educational standards for all children and young people.

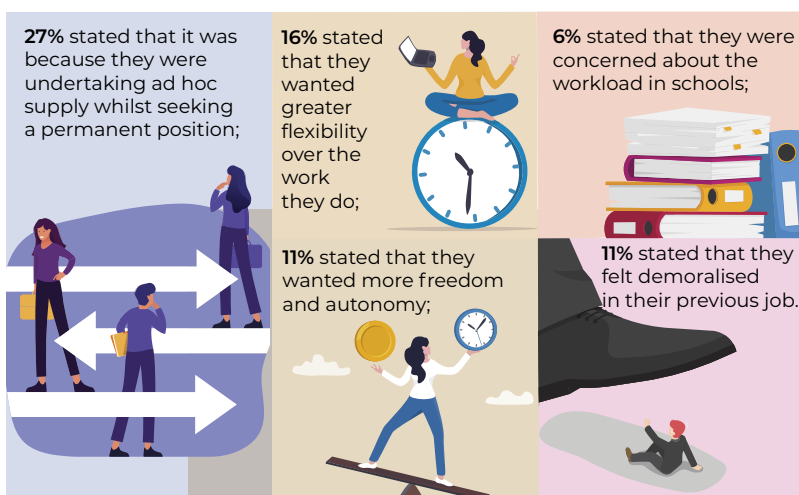
NASUWT's annual survey of supply teachers in Scotland aims to examine the changing experiences of supply teachers, including issues and trends.

The 2024/25 survey was undertaken between July and September.

This report provides the main findings from the survey of supply teachers and highlights the experiences of supply teachers during the 2024/25 academic year.

Nature of work

Supply teachers were asked why they carried out supply teaching work. The top five reasons cited by supply teachers were:



“

There are very few permanent jobs.

”

When asked what other advantages/disadvantages were associated with being a supply teacher, the top three advantages cited by supply teachers were freedom and flexibility (42%), no planning/report writing/markings (23%), and less stressful (6%). However, the top three disadvantages cited by supply teachers were lack of respect (from both pupils and staff) (35%), job/financial insecurity (35%), and lack of continuity (9%).

Supply teachers were asked about the ability to secure work teaching during the academic year 2024/25. Over a third (36%) reported that they had no problems securing work, whereas almost a third (32%) reported that they had some problems securing work. However, just over a quarter (26%) of supply teachers reported that they had significant problems getting supply work, and just over one in 20 (6%) reported that they had not been able to secure any supply work.

“ Before October, I was really struggling to get any work and had to borrow money from family to live whilst looking for non-teaching jobs. ”

Access to work

During the academic year 2024/25, over four-fifths (83%) of supply teachers reported that they were working for one local authority, 10% reported that they were working for two local authorities, and 4% reported that they were working for three local authorities. Three per cent reported that they were working for more than five local authorities.

When asked if this was more or less than the number of local authorities they had worked for during the previous academic year, just under one in ten (8%) supply teachers stated that it was more, 16% stated that it was fewer, and just over three-quarters (76%) stated that it had stayed the same.

Thirty per cent of supply teachers believed that the use of online booking platforms, such as Teacher Booker, by some Scottish Councils had a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work.

“ Never got any work through it with Glasgow City Council, no matter how quickly I responded. ”

“ Most supply work had gone by the time I applied, even if I replied immediately. ”

Two-fifths (40%) of supply teachers reported travelling between 0-10 miles for an assignment, a third (33%) reported travelling between 11-20 miles, just under a quarter (23%) reported travelling between 21-30, and just 4% reported travelling between 51-60 miles.

Fourteen per cent of supply teachers reported that they had to travel further than in previous years in order to secure work.

A total of 48% stated that the cost-of-living crisis had a detrimental impact on how far they were willing to travel to undertake an assignment.

Availability of work

Supply teachers were asked where they were able to obtain work during the academic year 2024/25.

Two-fifths (40%) of supply teachers who responded to the survey stated that they were able to secure work in primary schools, just over two-thirds (67%) stated that they were able to secure work in secondary schools, and one in ten (10%) reported that they were able to secure work in special schools/specialist units.

Where supply teachers secured work during the academic year 2024/25

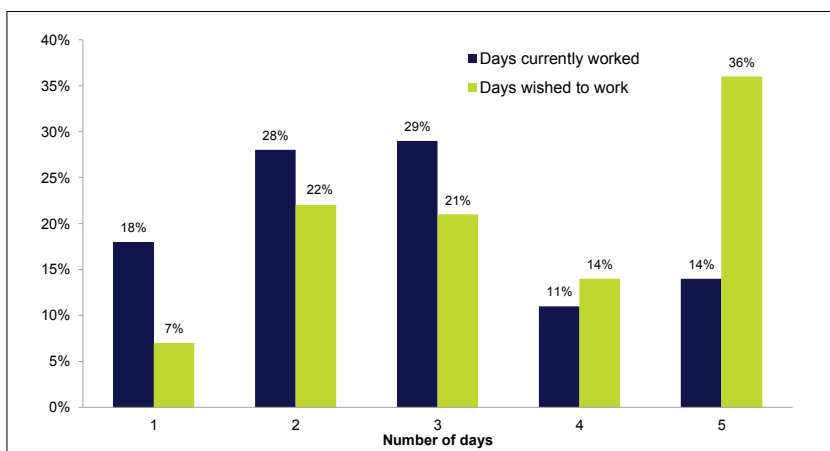


For those supply teachers who reported that they were able to secure work during the academic year 2024/25, just under three-fifths (59%) reported that the majority of their supply teaching was short-term supply (e.g. ad hoc for two days or fewer), and just over two-fifths (41%) stated that the majority of their supply teaching was on longer term assignments (e.g. placements in excess of two days).

Of those supply teachers on a long-term assignment, well over half (54%) said that this was weekly supply work, and just under one in ten (8%) stated that this was monthly supply work. Another 8% reported that the majority of their work was termly supply work, and almost a third (30%) stated that the majority of their supply teaching was on longer term assignments in excess of a term.

When supply teachers were asked how many days on average they were able to obtain work during the academic year 2024/25, just under a fifth (18%) said they secured work one day a week, 28% two days a week, and 29% three days a week. Just over one in ten (11%) supply teachers said they were able to secure work for four days a week, and 14% stated that they were able to secure work five days a week. However, half of supply teachers said that they would like to work either four or five days a week.

Just over two-fifths (42%) of supply teachers stated that the amount of supply work had decreased during 2024/25 compared to the previous academic year, whereas just over one in ten (12%) stated that the amount of supply work had increased. Well in excess of two-fifths (46%) of respondents stated that the amount of supply work they were able to secure had stayed the same.



Whilst the work I am getting is sustained periods of time, the gaps between the work requiring alternative income streams have increased.

Working for a school during the academic year 2024/25

Supply teachers were asked about their experiences working for a school during the academic year 2024/25.

Experiences with schools, staff, parents and pupils when undertaking assignments during the academic year 2024/25

Half of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome by the school, and two-fifths (40%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the school. However, one in ten (10%) supply teachers reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome.

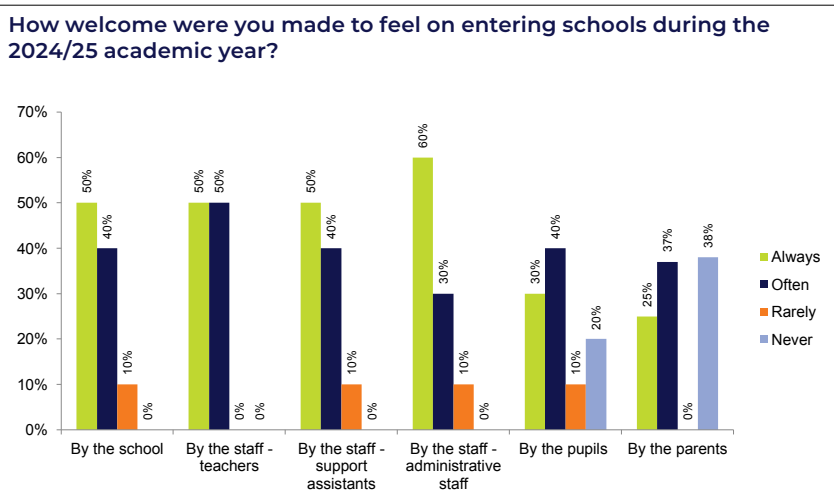
When asked how welcome they are made to feel by the teaching staff in schools, half of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome, whereas half reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the teaching staff in schools.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel by the support assistants in schools, half of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and two-fifths (40%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the support assistants in schools. However, just one in ten (10%) reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the support assistants in schools.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel by the administrative staff in schools, three-fifths (60%) of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and 30% reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the administrative staff in schools. However, just one in ten (10%) reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the administrative staff in schools.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel by the pupils in schools, 30% of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and two-fifths (40%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by pupils in schools. However, one in ten (10%) supply teachers reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the pupils, and a fifth (20%) stated that they are never made to feel welcome by the pupils.

In respect of being made to feel welcome by the parents, a quarter (25%) of supply teachers stated that they are always made to feel welcome, and under two-fifths (37%) stated that they are often made to feel welcome by parents. However, just under two-fifths (38%) stated that they are never made to feel welcome by the parents.



Sixteen per cent of supply teachers reported that they had experienced physical abuse or violence from pupils when undertaking an assignment, and 71% stated that they had experienced verbal abuse or violence from pupils when undertaking an assignment during the 2024/25 academic year.

Over four-fifths (83%) of supply teachers indicated that they had reported the incident/s to someone in the school; however, of those who did report the incident, just under two-fifths (39%) stated that no action was taken against the pupil, and over a quarter (28%) stated that they didn't know or were not informed whether or not any action was taken.

I reported the verbal abuse to a colleague, but nothing was done about it.

Even having submitted V & A forms, the verbal harassment by pupils continues. However, if I don't accept supply work, I don't earn money and worry about getting references.

Provision of key information when undertaking assignments

Of those supply teachers able to secure work during the 2024/25 academic year, over four-fifths (83%) stated that they were not given the school's overall risk assessment, and 8% stated that they were not sure.

Just over half (52%) of supply teachers stated that they were not given the arrangements in place for supply teachers to report safely to the workplace, and just over a quarter (26%) reported that they were not given the details of who and where to report to each day, including details of the signing-in process.

Over two-fifths (43%) stated that they were not provided with the details of any designated contact(s) for any questions, problems or emergencies.

Seventy per cent of supply teachers stated that they were not provided with the details regarding access to, and availability of, hand sanitiser, and almost two-thirds (65%) reported that they were not provided with the details in place to ensure classrooms and work areas were well ventilated.

Just over three-fifths (61%) of supply teachers reported that they were not provided with the details of how to raise any concerns about health and safety, and under three-fifths (57%) reported that they were not provided with the details of how to call for assistance, including first aid. Furthermore, just under four-fifths (78%) reported that they were not provided with the details of the nearest first aid room or appropriate area.

In regards to the school's fire evacuation plans, including routes and procedures, almost two-thirds (65%) of supply teachers reported that this was not provided to them when undertaking assignments in schools during the 2024/25 academic year.

Just over half (52%) of respondents stated that they had not been given a tour of the school site, including identifying where they would be teaching when undertaking assignments in schools.

In respect to the timetable, including breaks and lunch periods, as well as expectations on staff during such times, just over a quarter (26%) of supply teachers reported that this information had not been provided to them when undertaking assignments in schools.

“ Whilst staff are generally fine, the behaviour of many pupils is awful. As a supply teacher, they are aware I do not have access to school systems, including behaviour [management]. ”

Under three-fifths (57%) of respondents reported that they had not been provided with the details of the registration process and expectations for the appropriate movement of pupils around the school site between lessons, at breaks, and at lunchtimes, and at the end of the school day when undertaking assignments during the 2024/25 academic year.

In regards to teaching, just over three-fifths (61%) of supply teachers reported that they were not provided with details of how to access relevant information on schemes of work for the subjects they were expected to teach, and just under three-fifths (58%) reported that they had not been provided with access to relevant teaching materials.

“ I was extremely well supported within the school as a whole, but I was given little information formally regarding the whole-school procedures and policies. ”

In addition, just under half (48%) of supply teachers stated that they were not provided with the details regarding access to computers, with log-in details and what to do at the end of the school day, and just under two-thirds (65%) reported that they were not provided with the details of any resources they might reasonably be expected to provide to students, such as pens.

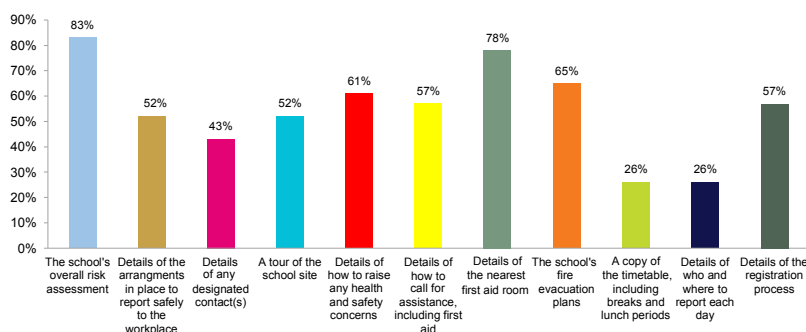
Just over half (52%) of respondents stated that they were not provided with a list of the pupils in the class(es) they would be teaching, including details of any additional information, such as those with medical conditions or additional support needs (ASN), and 69% of supply teachers stated that they

had not been provided with the details of any pupils known to be potentially violent, and how this should be managed.

Furthermore, under three-fifths (57%) of supply teachers reported that they had not been provided with the behaviour management policy when undertaking assignments in schools, including who to contact.

Almost two-thirds (65%) of supply teachers reported that they had not been provided with the details of any events, meetings or specific activities taking place, and 70% stated that they had not been provided with the arrangements for school transport, as appropriate, when undertaking assignments during the 2024/25 academic year.

Examples of the key information supply teachers were denied access to during the academic year 2024/25



Access to facilities and amenities in schools when undertaking assignments

When asked about their most recent assignment, just over a fifth (22%) of supply teachers stated that they do not always have access to staff rooms where they were available, a quarter (25%) stated that they do not always have access to staff food and drink facilities, and just under one in ten (8%) said that they do not always have access to toilet/washroom facilities. Twelve per cent reported that they do not always have access to car parking.

25% stated that they do not always have access to staff food and drink facilities when undertaking assignments.

Health and safety issues for supply teachers during the academic year 2024/25

Well in excess of two-fifths (46%) of supply teachers who secured work during the academic year 2024/25 stated that they were concerned about their health and safety when undertaking supply work in schools, and just under one in ten (8%) thought that they may have been penalised or had work cancelled for disclosing personal information about their health and safety (e.g. pregnant).



The violence in schools is becoming worse and there are no consequences for the children. This makes me nervous of what could happen.

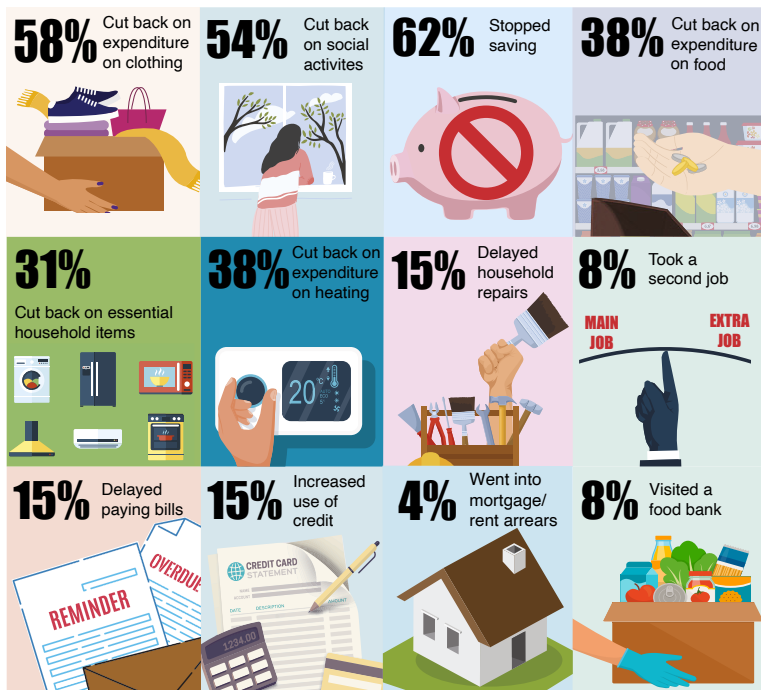


Financial situation during the academic year 2024/25

Supply teachers were asked about their financial situation during the academic year 2024/25.

Well in excess of a third (36%) of supply teachers reported that they had sourced work elsewhere other than teaching during the academic year. Of those, well in excess of four-fifths (84%) stated that the work sourced elsewhere other than teaching failed to provide the same level of financial income that they would have obtained had they been able to obtain work teaching.

Over one in ten (14%) supply teachers reported having to claim some form of state benefit during the academic year 2024/25 (e.g. Universal Credit), and 46% of respondents stated that they had experienced financial hardship as a supply teacher over the same period.



Take out more credit cards to pay bills.

46% of respondents stated that they had experienced financial hardship as a supply teacher.

56% of supply teachers who responded stated that undertaking supply work, and the inability to secure a permanent post, had affected their ability to make significant life decisions.

Can't repair house, can't start a family, don't socialise anymore, can't afford simple luxuries like going to a restaurant for a nice meal or buy presents for people.

Training and behaviour management support

Over half (54%) of supply teachers stated that they had not been given access to career-long professional learning (CLPL) in the last 12 months.

For those supply teachers who accessed CLPL, over a third (35%) stated that this had been provided by local authorities, two-fifths (40%) stated that this had been provided by schools, a fifth stated that this had been provided by their trade union, one in 20 (5%) stated that this had been provided by a subject specialist organisation, and three-quarters (75%) reported that it had been self-directed CLPL.

“
Confusion over who signs it off and what areas to fill in.
”

Just under three-quarters (74%) of supply teachers stated that they had not been provided with an annual Professional Review and Development (PRD) meeting.

Of those supply teachers eligible to complete their professional update in the academic year 2024/25, 37% were successful, whereas just under two-fifths (38%) of those who were eligible reported that they were successful, although there were difficulties in getting their professional update signed off. A quarter (25%) of eligible supply teachers reported that they were unsuccessful and there were difficulties in the process.

In regards to participating in in-service training (INSET) days provided by schools during the 2024/25 academic year, just over a fifth (22%) of supply teachers reported that they were asked to participate in the INSET days in all the schools where they undertook assignments, whereas less than one in ten (9%) reported that they were asked to participate in the INSET days in a few of the schools where they undertake assignments, and 69% reported that they were not asked to participate in any INSET days provided by the schools where they undertook assignments in.

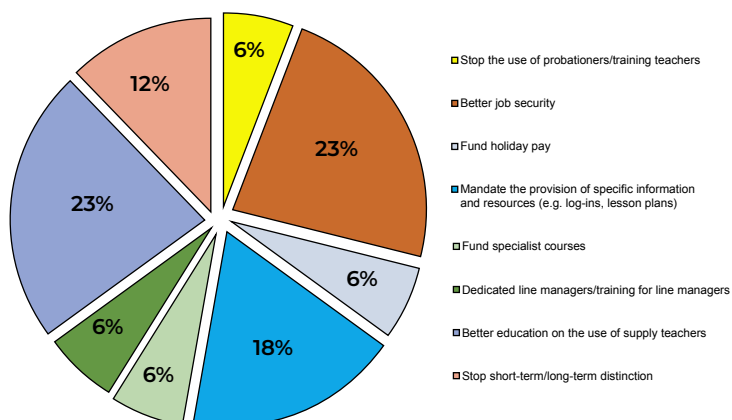
Well in excess of two-fifths (46%) of supply teachers reported that they do not feel they are treated with respect and dignity.

Pupils treat you as inferior if doing supply. I've had comments like 'I don't care, you're just cover'.

You're on your own really. Do not raise issues or problems or you won't be invited back.

In excess of two-fifths (44%) of supply teachers who responded stated that, based on their experiences during the 2024/25 academic year, they were currently looking for work outside of teaching.

Ways in which the Scottish Government could best support supply teachers moving forwards



Conclusion

The survey of supply teachers emphasises the continuing critical role that supply teachers have played in maintaining educational provision in schools in Scotland during the 2024/25 academic year.

However, the survey suggests that the experiences of supply teachers throughout the 2024/25 academic year have been varied, with more supply teachers reporting significant problems securing work compared to those who have reported increased opportunities for work.

The availability and nature of the work supply teachers in Scotland have been able to access have also altered, with a significant increase in those working in short-term ad-hoc assignments through fewer local authorities, and, even for those fortunate enough to find longer term assignments (e.g. placements in excess of two days), it appears that the opportunities for anything other than weekly assignments have significantly decreased.

Given this, it is disappointing, but not surprising, to note that there has been an increase in those supply teachers sourcing work elsewhere other than teaching, despite the fact that this does not provide them with the same level of financial income.

As a consequence, a number of supply teachers are still in the position of having to make tough decisions about their expenditure, including a minority who have had to rely on food banks or the generosity of family and friends to make ends meet.

It is pleasing to note that the 2024/25 survey indicates that many school communities are far more welcoming to supply teachers, with a marked increase in those reporting that they are often made to feel welcome by the school, the staff, and particularly by both pupils and parents.

Despite this, there are concerns about the increase in the number of supply teachers reporting that schools are routinely failing to provide key information when undertaking assignments, specifically in regards to critical health and safety information, such as fire evacuation plans, details of how to call for assistance, including first aid, and details of how to raise concerns about health and safety; all of which are vital for supply teachers to be able to safely discharge their duties.

It therefore comes as no surprise that there has been a decline in the number of supply teachers working in Scotland stating that they are treated with respect and dignity.

There are concerns that these disparities in treatment are impacting disproportionately on women, Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and disabled teachers, who are more likely to be employed as supply teachers.

In this context, the results from the 2024/25 survey substantiate the pressing need for a Better Deal for Supply Teachers which recognises and values the important and significant contribution that they make to the Scottish education system.