



# Supply Teachers

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## SUPPLY TEACHERS AND THE RISE OF ONLINE BOOKING PLATFORMS

**Supply teachers have a vital role in raising and maintaining high educational standards in schools. Campaigning to secure professional entitlements for supply teachers is a key priority of the NASUWT, together with securing decent pay and working conditions for all supply teachers.**

The increased use of technology in society has led to the rise of online booking platforms specifically developed for supply teachers. These services claim that they pay supply teachers more and give them access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS).

The NASUWT is aware that such claims sound very appealing and could have a positive benefit to supply teacher members. However, the Union does have legitimate concerns about the validity of these statements.

### **1. Receive 100% of your daily rate/get paid more for the work you do**

Online booking platforms make claims that supply teachers using their platform will get paid more. The estimates vary, but some platforms assert that you will get paid up to 50% more, or even that you will receive 100% of your daily rate.<sup>1</sup>

Such claims imply that the savings made by the school would result in better pay for the supply teacher. However, it is for the school to determine the rate they will offer. This may not guarantee that a teacher will receive 100% of their daily rate.

### **2. How will I be employed?**

This will depend on which online platform you use. Some platforms claim that you will be directly employed by the school that has hired you, whereas others expect you to become self-employed.

It is essential that you understand the nature of the contractual relationship you are entering into, as this has implications in respect of your rights and entitlements (i.e. holiday pay). This is particularly important if you are asked to sign up with an umbrella company.

### **3. Can I access the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS)?**

The claim is made that some online platforms enable supply teachers to access the TPS. However, access to the TPS is wholly dependent on if a teacher is directly employed by a school, local authority or academy trust for their supply work.

If this is the case, then you are entitled to membership of the TPS. Under these circumstances, you would be auto-enrolled into the TPS.

Self-employment or employment through an umbrella company does not confer an entitlement to join the TPS. Instead, a teacher may find themselves auto-enrolled in a non-TPS pension scheme, such as the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST). If an alternative pension scheme to the TPS is provided, you are entitled to a written statement of the pension scheme's provisions.

<sup>1</sup> Claim made by one online platform using the NASUWT daily rates for 2016/17.

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#### 4. How do I register?

Online platforms normally require you to register with them online. Many use a standard format asking for your personal details, professional qualifications and experience, including subjects taught and age ranges. They will also need to see proof of identity, including a relevant and up-to-date DBS check. In addition to all of this, they often require you to set a minimum and maximum wage which you would be happy to work for.

Teachers should be aware that this could result in a 'race to the bottom' if supply teachers are willing to reduce the amount they are happy to be paid.

Some teachers are also concerned about potential equalities issues regarding online platforms which require a photo to be uploaded as part of the profile of the candidate, since this could result in discriminatory decisions by schools when selecting a supply teacher.

#### 5. It is an app not an agency

Many of the online platforms claim that they are not agencies; instead, they refer to themselves as 'enablers'. They claim this means they do not take hefty commission fees which drive down your wages.

However, the NASUWT believes that this may not always be the case, particularly for those online platforms which essentially hold open your availability for schools to see. If this is indeed the case, then they could be viewed as 'agencies' and the online platform would become responsible for all your employment rights.

Some online platforms are not even registered as a company within the UK, further impacting on supply teachers' rights at work.

#### 6. More opportunities

Online platforms appear attractive because they argue that you will get more work because you are more visible to schools in your local area and beyond.

Whilst this may appear to be the case, there is no guarantee, especially given that schools can see your online profile and may make decisions based on how much you are willing to work for. It could therefore be the case that the cheapest supply teachers are the most popular and get more work as a consequence.

#### 7. Rating systems

A number of online platforms employ a rating system for the teacher which schools can access and use. The NASUWT is concerned about this, particularly the criteria that might be used and who has access to it. References to subjective judgements that could negatively impact upon a supply teacher's ability to get work are unacceptable, especially if a supply teacher is unable to challenge these if they do not agree with them.

There is nothing inherently wrong with the use of online platforms, but the NASUWT believes that the points and claims identified above are important considerations which supply teachers should take into account.

If you have had experience, whether positive or negative, when using an online platform or 'app' to find work, tell us about it by contacting [supply@mail.nasuwt.org.uk](mailto:supply@mail.nasuwt.org.uk).

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