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To Chairs of Governing Boards in Academy Trusts

A Better Deal for Supply Teachers

Dear Chair

The NASUWT knows that you will recognise that supply teachers are a valuable resource to schools, assisting them in maintaining high standards of education for all children and young people.

Like all staff, supply teachers are able to work to the best of their ability when they are valued and not subjected to exploitative employment arrangements.

It is clear that the market in agency workers in education is big business. The amount spent by academy schools for the period 2018-19 was in excess of £199 million.¹ Over two fifths (43%) of this was spent sourcing supply teachers from employment agencies. This represents in excess of £86.3 million.

Schools are charged up to a 40% commission fee, which goes direct to the agency. This equates to over £170 million for local authority maintained schools and over £34.5 million for academies.

Your priority will be to ensure high-quality teaching while being concerned that expenditure on supply staff represents best value for money.

Unfortunately, many schools fall foul of aggressive supply agency tactics which exploit the vulnerabilities of schools and exacerbate the recruitment challenges in schools to maximise their profits. The Trust is not immune to this.

Schools in the Trust can be charged up to a 40% commission fee, which goes direct to the agency when they engage a supply teacher. Some schools report transfer fees in excess of £10,000.

As teachers are on the front line of caring for vulnerable children and children of other key workers, it is time that a broken labour market, that is letting teachers down and failing our children, is fixed.

Whatever emerges from the coronavirus crisis, it must be a new normal that is based on bringing such practices to an end and a genuine commitment to ensure that all teachers, including supply teachers, are properly valued and recognised for the vitally important work they do on behalf of children, young people and the public.

Supply agencies often do not deliver best value for schools or for supply teachers. The NASUWT would request that the Trust includes matters relating to the procurement of supply teachers on the agenda for a future meeting of the governing body and looks to establish a mechanism to directly employ supply teachers, in order to effectively manage the demand for supply teachers and deliver better value when procuring supply teachers, whilst securing improvements to supply teachers' pay and other entitlements at work.

The NASUWT would request that the Trustees consider how they could establish the direct employment of supply teachers in order to effectively manage the demand for supply teachers, in order to deliver better value when procuring supply teachers and secure improvements to supply teachers' pay and other entitlements at work.

The NASUWT very much looks forward to hearing from you with regards to this and the outcome of any discussions in respect of this that took place at a meeting of the governing body.

Yours sincerely



Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary

¹ <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/Help/DataSources>.