

CAMPAIGNING FOR SUPPLY TEACHERS

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 NASUWT believes that supply teachers have a vital role in raising and maintaining standards. Supply teachers do not simply 'plug the gaps', but fulfil the role of teachers on establishment in many situations. However, the pay, pensions and terms and conditions of supply teachers are not standard across the UK and supply teachers are frequently subject to exploitation. Terms and conditions vary considerably by jurisdiction and are also determined by whether supply teachers are directly employed by schools and local authorities or by employment agencies.

Britain's two-tier workforce is a growing national scandal. The two tiers are:

- agency workers and other workers with no employment rights;
- workers with permanent employment status.

Supply teachers are frequently victims of the two-tier workforce and it is a key priority for the NASUWT to bring supply teachers fully within the scope of national terms and conditions arrangements for all teachers.

Policy priority

Campaigning for the interests of supply teachers is a key policy priority of the NASUWT. In 2013, the Union's Conference reaffirmed its commitment to supply teachers and to challenge vigorously the exploitation of supply teachers by employment agencies:

Conference welcomes the valuable contribution made to the education service by supply teachers.

Conference condemns the increasing exploitation of supply teachers, particularly newly qualified and overseas trained teachers, by some private agencies which:

- (i) engage in dubious employment and tax avoidance practices;***
- (ii) fail to provide access to meaningful professional development and***
- (iii) fail to ensure appropriate pay, pensions and conditions of service.***

Conference restates its demand for the robust regulation and quality kite marking of all supply teacher agencies.

Conference welcomes the initiatives taken by the National Executive to support the Union's supply teacher members and endorses its continued efforts to secure fair employment practices for all supply teachers.

From policy to action

There are significant differences between supply teachers' terms and conditions across the UK. Unfortunately, in the UK as a whole, supply teachers are suffering from a combination of privatisation, deregulation and high teacher unemployment. In all jurisdictions of the UK, supply teachers are suffering attacks on their pensions. The NASUWT strongly fights for the interests of supply teachers, as a vulnerable and exploited group of workers, alongside the interests of all teachers.

From 2002-2010, the NASUWT secured unprecedented improvements to teachers' pay and terms and conditions in England and Wales through social partnership, working with the Government, local authorities, employers and other trade unions to raise enormously teachers' pay and conditions and educational standards. Supply teachers benefited alongside other teachers from these reforms, which were led by the NASUWT. Since 2011, the NASUWT has been taking industrial action to defend the improvements to teachers' terms and conditions which it brought about and to prevent additional attacks on teachers' pay, pensions and conditions of service.

Defending supply teachers

In common with other teachers, supply teachers in England and Wales face a very serious threat to their pay from September 2013 onwards. The 2013 STPCD removes pay scales for all categories of teacher, replacing them with pay ranges. In addition, pay portability is removed from the STPCD. 'Pay portability' is the term used to describe teachers' entitlement not to be paid at a lower level than their main pay range, unqualified pay range or upper pay range point in their previous school. The removal of pay portability affects all teachers, because when teachers move school there is no guarantee that they can take their current pay levels with them. However, because supply teachers move school far more than other teachers, this affects supply teachers to a greater extent.

In Scotland supply teachers have also faced major threats to their pay. Prior to 2011, there was no distinction between supply teachers and other colleagues in terms of pay and conditions, however, the 2011 Cosla Agreement brought in a new short-term supply arrangement which created a two-tier workforce. The NASUWT opposed these changes. Supply teachers engaged on a short-term basis are now only paid on point one of the main grade salary scale for the first five days of any

contract regardless of length of service and experience, which for many teachers at the top of the pay scale has resulted in a 47% cut in salary. This is under review through the current pay offer for Scottish teachers but the proposed changes will not return supply staff to equal status with their peers. The NASUWT is the only union defending supply teachers' pay.

Since November 2011, the NASUWT has been taking continuous industrial action to defend teachers' pay, pensions and terms and conditions. In England and Wales in 2013, the NASUWT initiated industrial action to secure pay portability as an entitlement for all teachers in school pay policies. The NASUWT has enjoyed considerable success in enforcing its pay policy in the interests of all teachers. Where this has occurred, supply teachers will immediately benefit, providing that they are employed directly, rather than via employment agencies. In Scotland, the NASUWT has been the sole union championing equality for substitute teachers. Only the continued campaigning by the NASUWT has provided the lever to secure improvements in the teachers' contract, although there is further work to be done.

Campaigning for supply teachers

As teacher unemployment has increased, more and more teachers have been forced into supply work because of the scarcity of suitable permanent posts. The NASUWT is campaigning to secure:

- sufficient school funding, which will create more opportunities to recruit teachers into permanent posts in schools;
- an end to the two-tier workforce and for all workers in the UK to be brought fully under those UK employment laws and regulations which apply to permanent workers;
- that all teachers be employed under agreed national school teachers' terms and conditions and for the entitlement to join the relevant teachers' pension scheme to be extended to all teachers including supply teachers;
- the end of the Government's public sector austerity programme, which is the cause of the high unemployment of public service workers, including teachers.

A key aim of NASUWT industrial action is to defend supply teachers. The NASUWT is currently taking industrial action in all jurisdictions of the UK, with the defence of supply teachers' pay and conditions at the heart of the action in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The NASUWT is the only teachers' union to take action to enable supply teachers to evaluate and communicate information about their employers, including employment agencies. Supply teachers will no longer 'be in the dark' when registering with employment agencies.

Through its unrivalled policies, campaigning, industrial action, organising and lobbying, the NASUWT is the only union defending the interests of supply teachers across the UK.

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

Hillscourt Education Centre, Rose Hill, Rednal, Birmingham B45 8RS

Tel: 0121 453 6150 Fax: 0121 457 6208 E-mail: nasuwt@mail.nasuwt.org.uk
Website: www.nasuwt.org.uk

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