

Advice for supply teachers on staying safe during full opening of schools from September 2020

Supply teachers have a vital role to play 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 recognises that supply teachers have faced an extremely difficult time during the COVID-19 lockdown. Whilst some supply teachers have been furloughed by their agencies or continued to be paid by the local authority or school they were working for, a number of supply teachers have been left without any income.

The NASUWT is committed to ensuring that each individual member, including supply teachers, have the information they need to help them stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to the September opening of schools and the potential opportunities this may provide for supply teachers.

The purpose of this checklist is to assist supply teachers to stay safe during the full opening of schools from September 2020 and to ensure you are aware of your responsibilities in terms of keeping yourself and others safe.

It should be noted that this checklist should be considered in line with the comprehensive advice, health and safety checklists and other associated guidance produced by the Union on the opening of schools from September 2020, including that specifically addressing issues of health and safety for supply teachers, which can be found at <https://www.nasuw.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/full-reopening-of-schools/full-reopening-of-schools-england.html>.

Before taking up supply work with an agency/school, in order to stay safe, you should ask for:

The procedures and protective measures for staff to follow to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus.

The arrangements in place for supply teachers to report safely to the workplace.

Any reasonable adjustments you may require if you have a disability or are a pregnant or breastfeeding mother.

Details of arrangements to maintain social distancing and to minimise contact.

Details of any designated contact should you have any questions, COVID-specific or otherwise, or, in the event of a problem or emergency, where and to whom you should report each day.

As a supply teacher, on first reporting for work at a school (or beforehand if possible), in order to stay safe, you should ask for:

Details of any designated contact should you have any questions, COVID-specific or otherwise, or, in the event of a problem or emergency.

Details of who and where you should report to each day, including details of the signing-in process.

Details of the measures in place that you will be expected to follow to ensure appropriate physical distancing.

Any guidance for staff of COVID-safe working practices.

Details of how to raise any concerns about health and safety, including those specific to COVID-19.

Details of how to call for assistance, including first aid, in light of COVID-19.

A tour of the school site identifying where you will be teaching, as well as details of any one-way systems or other such systems in place to minimise physical contact and maintain social distancing.

Details of the nearest first-aid room or appropriate area, including where to send those with suspected symptoms of COVID-19.

Details of the nearest fire exit and any revised COVID-19 evacuation plans, including routes and procedures.

Details of what to do in the event of a suspected case of COVID-19.

Details of the staffroom and toilets and the measures in place to minimise contact and maintain social distancing.

A copy of the timetable, including breaks and lunch periods, as well as expectations on staff during such times.

Details of how to access relevant information on schemes of work for the subjects you will be expected to teach.

Details of access to computers (including laptops or fixed computers), with log-in details and what to do at the end of the school day.

Details of any resources you may reasonably be expected to provide (such as pens) to minimise contact, and where these can be safely and securely stored.

Details regarding access to, and availability of, hand sanitiser to enable you to wash your hands frequently throughout the school day for at least 20 seconds.

Details regarding access to, and use of, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and where to locate and access hot water and soap, as well as the arrangements for the regular cleaning of touch surfaces throughout the day.

A list of the pupils in the class(es) you will be teaching, including details of any medical conditions, behavioural issues or special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and the details or how these should be managed during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. reasonable adjustments, individual risk assessments).

Details of any pupils known to be potentially violent and any associated COVID-19 revised risk assessments in place, including any specific training which is required, along with how this can be appropriately accessed.

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.

Specific details of the school behaviour management procedure, including the support that is available to assist in managing behaviour effectively, whilst minimising physical contact and maintaining social distancing.

Details of any events, meetings or specific activities taking place during an assignment.

Your duties as a supply teacher

In order to stay safe during the opening of schools from September, you have a duty to take reasonable care for your own health and safety, and that of other people who may be affected by your actions at work, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. You must co-operate with your agency and the end user where you are working, including by providing them with any information which may necessitate the provision of a risk assessment before you undertake an assignment with a school.

For example, if there is a concern over your situation which makes it difficult for you to undertake an assignment in a school, or which should be disclosed to a school prior to an assignment, then you should disclose this as soon as possible (e.g. you are pregnant or you are from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background).

Once disclosed to the agency, it has a statutory obligation to consider any measures necessary to enable you to undertake each assignment safely.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAW) places a responsibility on all employers to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all employees and non-employees in their workplace. This includes identifying and assessing risks to health and safety, and steps to reduce or eliminate these risks, so that all those working in a school are safe from September 2020, including supply teachers.

Under HASAW, there is a joint responsibility between the provider (i.e. the supply agency) and the end user with regards to the health and safety of agency workers, such as supply teachers.

This also applies if you are supplied via an umbrella company, as they are legally your employer.

In preparation for the opening of schools and staying safe from September 2020, agencies and umbrella companies should take reasonable steps to identify and satisfy themselves concerning on health and safety issues in respect of the schools in which you may be expected to undertake assignments, including the appropriate steps to mitigate the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

This should be provided to you by the agency in enough time to fully familiarise yourself with the situation with that employer.

The agency should also ensure you are provided with the details of how to raise any health and safety concerns in the workplace.

The Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003

Regulation 18 of the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003 also places an expectation on agencies to obtain and provide information about a school, including any risks or health and safety issues which have been picked up following a thorough risk assessment, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, if an assignment being undertaken specifies no notice period, then the Conduct Regulations contain provisions which permit you to leave the school at any time, should you feel unsafe, and still be paid for the work you have undertaken.

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