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Supply teachers are integral to the education system. Around 3% of teachers working in schools at any one time are supply teachers. 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. However, the experiences of many supply teachers suggest that developments such as deregulation have had a significant impact upon how supply teachers are deployed, how they are paid, and on their working conditions in comparison with teachers who have a contract of employment with a school.

The NASUWT’s annual survey of supply teachers in England and Wales aims to examine the changing experiences of supply teachers, including issues and trends.

The 2019 survey was undertaken between June and July.

A total of 830 supply teachers responded to the survey.

This Report provides the main findings from the 2019 survey of supply teachers and highlights any key developments in comparison with previous surveys.

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1 Calculated as the total spent by academies on agency supply teachers against the total spent on teachers’ salaries as reported for August 2018.
Nature of work

Supply teachers were asked why they carried out supply teaching work:

- 12% stated that it was because they wanted to have greater flexibility over what they did;
- 14% reported that they had not been able to find permanent work;
- 15% stated that they were concerned about the workload in schools;
- 14% were motivated to work on a supply basis due to bullying by their previous employer;
- just over one in ten (11%) said they felt demoralised in their previous job;
- 3% were motivated to become a supply teacher because they felt they were not valued as a professional in the school where they previously worked;
- almost one in 20 (4%) stated that they had become a supply teacher because of the pressure of high-stakes accountability within schools;
- 1% stated that it was because they had been made redundant; and
- 1% stated that they wanted greater autonomy.
Access to work

Almost nine in ten supply teachers (88%) said that they were employed through a supply agency, whilst just under a fifth (18%) reported that they were employed directly as a supply teacher by a school, and less than one in 20 (4%) stated that they were employed via a local authority supply pool.

"Supply agencies fill a gap which many local authorities used to fill through their teaching pools.

"A lot less work now available directly with schools.

"I wish it was possible to be employed as a supply teacher directly from school and cut out agency fees.

Only 4% of supply teachers reported that they were employed via a local authority supply pool.

Two fifths (40%) of respondents stated that they had signed up to one agency in order to obtain work as a supply teacher. Almost three in ten (29%) reported that they were signed up to two agencies, 15% reported that they were signed up to three agencies and 8% reported that they had signed up to four agencies.

Almost three fifths (57%) of supply teachers indicated that they had only been provided with work from one agency in the last 12 months. Three in ten (30%) said they had been provided with work from two agencies in the last 12 months. A tenth (10%) of respondents reported that they had been provided with work from three agencies in the last 12 months.
Of those supply teachers working for supply agencies, 7% indicated that they had been asked to sign an exclusivity clause with the agency in order to get work.

Four fifths (80%) of supply teachers who work for a local authority obtain their work from one local authority, whereas 14% stated that they obtained work from two local authorities. Almost one in 20 (4%) of supply teachers reported that they obtained work from three local authorities and 2% of supply teachers stated that they obtained work from four local authorities.

**Availability of work**

Supply teachers were asked where and when they were able to obtain work and whether they faced any difficulties in doing so.

Just under half (47%) of supply teachers who responded to the survey stated that the majority of their supply work in the last 12 months took place in primary schools. Over two fifths (44%) stated that the majority of their work was in secondary schools. One in 20 (5%) of supply teachers reported that the majority of their supply work in the last 12 months took place in a special school/pupil referral unit (PRU).

**Where supply teachers undertook the majority of their work**
Just over three fifths of supply teachers (61%) stated that they experienced some problems obtaining work. Of this, 1% reported that they could not find any supply work.

Almost a third of supply teachers (31%) reported that there had been a decline in the work available to them in the last 12 months.

When asked how many days on average they worked a week in the last 12 months, 16% said they worked one day a week, just over a fifth (22%) two days a week, and just over a quarter (26%) three days a week.

Seventeen per cent of supply teachers in the survey said they regularly work four days each week and almost a fifth (19%) stated that they regularly work five days each week. However, over a third (34%) said that they wanted to work five days a week. Supply teachers were asked about whether their work is primarily on a daily or longer term basis.

Just under three fifths (57%) stated that they undertook daily supply work, 6% reported that they undertook weekly supply work, and less than one in 20 (3%) worked on a monthly basis. Just over one in ten (11%) worked on a termly basis. Just under a quarter (23%) worked on a longer term basis in excess of a term.
Pensions

Whilst the legislation prevents supply teachers working for a supply agency from paying into the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS), over four fifths (83%) stated that they are still members of the TPS. Of these, a third (33%) reported that they were active members, almost three in ten (29%) reported that they were deferred members and a fifth (20%) reported that they were drawing a pension.

Of those supply teachers who indicated that they were not members of the TPS, over two fifths (42%) reported that they did not have any alternative pension scheme provision and 12% reported that they were unsure.

“I am in a private pension scheme provided by the agency, but this does not offer equivalent terms/benefits as the TPS.”

“Although I am a member of the TPS, my supply work is not counting toward that pension, which is a major concern.”

“My one wish is that I could be paid at my professional rate and contribute to the TPS.”

The survey asked supply teachers about the extent to which they felt welcome within the schools where they teach and whether they have access to appropriate facilities within schools.

Just under two fifths of supply teachers (37%) reported that they are always made to feel welcome by the school and over half (53%) stated that they are often made to feel welcome on entering a school. However, one in ten respondents (10%) said that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the school.
When asked how welcome they are made to feel by the staff in the school, just under a third (31%) reported that they are always made to feel welcome and just under three fifths (58%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome, when entering a school.

Just over one in ten (11%) reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the staff.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel by the pupils in the school, almost a quarter (23%) reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and over half (53%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the pupils when entering a school.

Just over a fifth (21%) reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the pupils and 3% reported that they are never made to feel welcome by the pupils.

In respect of being made to feel welcome by the parents, just under a fifth (18%) stated that they are always made to feel welcome and over two fifths (45%) stated that they are often made to feel welcome by the parents. A quarter (19%) stated that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the parents and over one in ten (12%) stated that they are never made to feel welcome by the parents.
When asked about the their most recent assignment, just over a quarter of supply teachers (26%) stated that they do not always have access to staffrooms when they are available, just over half (52%) stated that they do not always have access to food and drink facilities and over one in ten (13%) said that they do not always have access to toilet/washroom facilities. Over two fifths (45%) reported that they do not always have access to car parking.

Forty-three per cent of supply teachers reported that they do not feel that they are treated with respect and dignity.

"I do not feel that schools respect supply teachers."

"You are not respected by school, staff or students yet the school would not function without a full teaching staff. People in the staffroom did not even say good morning to me."

When asked about the their most recent assignment, just over a quarter of supply teachers (26%) stated that they do not always have access to staffrooms when they are available, just over half (52%) stated that they do not always have access to food and drink facilities and over one in ten (13%) said that they do not always have access to toilet/washroom facilities. Over two fifths (45%) reported that they do not always have access to car parking.

Staffroom 26% stated that they do not always have access to staff rooms.

Food and drink facilities 52% stated that they do not always have access to food and drink facilities.

Toilet/washroom facilities 13% said that they do not always have access to toilet/washroom facilities.

Car parking 45% reported that they do not always have access to car parking.
When questioned about their awareness of key information and policies used within schools, over two fifths of supply teachers (43%) reported that they are not given clear information on the school’s fire evacuation policy, over two fifths (44%) of respondents stated that they are not given clear information regarding relevant health and safety policies, and almost three in ten (29%) are not given clear information of behaviour management policies, including who to contact. Well over half of respondents (55%) stated that they are not given the school’s policy on children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and 44% reported that they are not giving information on the young people in school with special educational needs (SEN) and/or behavioural problems.

For those supply teachers who did receive information in respect of key policies within schools, well over a half (55%) reported that this was provided by the school. Only 2% stated that this information was provided by the supply agency.

When asked about their most recent assignment, just over a fifth (22%) of supply teachers reported that they did not have access to a designated person or contact.
Supply teacher deployment

Just under three quarters of supply teachers (73%) stated that they were expected to mark and assess work, but over a third (34%) stated that this was not made clear to them and that they were not paid to undertake the work.

Almost three fifths (56%) of supply teachers said that they were expected to undertake break duties, yet almost two fifths (39%) of those who did this stated that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work.

Sixteen per cent of supply teachers reported that they were expected to undertake lunchtime supervision, yet three fifths (60%) of supply teachers stated that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work. Almost three fifths (58%) said that they were expected to plan and prepare lessons, but almost two fifths (38%) of those who did this stated that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work.

Three in ten (30%) of supply teachers reported that they were asked to attend meetings (during or after school), but almost half (49%) of those who did this reported that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work. Thirty per cent of respondents were expected to write reports, but just two fifths (42%) of those who did this reported that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work.
Over a quarter (27%) of supply teachers stated that they were expected to participate in educational visits. Of those who did this, almost three in ten (29%) reported that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work. Just under a quarter (23%) stated that they were expected to attend parents’ evening, but over two fifths (43%) who did this reported that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work.

Just under a quarter (24%) of supply teachers stated that they were expected to be observed teaching. However, almost three fifths (59%) of supply teachers stated that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work.

Just over a quarter (26%) stated that they were expected to take part in in-service training (INSET), but just over a third (34%) of supply teachers reported that this was not made clear to them and they were not paid to undertake the work.

**Rates of pay**

Almost two fifths of supply teachers (39%) stated that they are paid between £51 and £119 per day, two fifths (40%) are paid between £120 and £149 per day, almost a fifth (18%) are paid between £150 and £199 per day and only 2% report that they are paid over £200 per day. One per cent said they are paid less than £50 per day.
Almost seven out of ten supply teachers (68%) reported that the agency where they undertook their last assignment operated a ceiling in respect of remuneration. Four fifths (80%) of respondents indicated that this was between £75 and £149 per day, whereas only 17% stated that this was between £150 and £199 per day. One per cent reported that the ceiling was between less than £50 per day and £74 per day. Only 2% reported a ceiling of over £200.

Almost seven out of ten (68%) of supply teachers indicated that their rate of pay had remained the same over the course of the last 12 months, whereas 13% reported that their pay had decreased during the same period. Only 12% said that their rate of pay had increased.

One school I know pays £60 a day to cover staff regardless of experience and qualifications.

One school I know pays £60 a day to cover staff regardless of experience and qualifications.

My school has written to me to say that although I am paid on the main pay scale, my pay will be reduced from M6 to M1.

Over one in ten (11%) of supply teachers reported that they have had to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance since becoming a supply teacher and over one in ten (11%) reported that they have had to claim other state benefits.

Have had to borrow money off family and they will pay my mortgage over the summer holidays…very worried as I am a single parent.
Well over three fifths of supply teachers (64%) reported that they have been offered roles that do not utilise their skills and knowledge as a teacher, and, where they have been offered these roles, over four fifths (83%) reported that these were offered at a lower rate of pay.

Concerned teaching assistants are increasingly covering classes so supply work is decreasing. We have to accept half-days of work frequently. Also worried that the pay level never increases year on year and, in fact, agencies are reducing the daily rate paid to compete to drive incomes down. Finances are a source of increasing anxiety.

The stress is unbearable and at present I don't know what to do. I have applied for a job in a middle school, teaching humanities and general subjects, but if I do not get it I'm in trouble. I have no partner and my son gives me as much rent as he can, although he only works part time at present. I was made redundant from my music teaching job in 2011 due to cuts. During the holidays, I wash up in a restaurant for minimum wage to try and make ends meet.
Compliance with legislation

Over three fifths of supply teachers (52%) reported that they were not made aware that after 12 weeks of working in the same workplace they were entitled to the same pay and conditions as permanent members of staff.

A fifth (20%) of respondents stated that work had been cancelled on specific longer term assignments at or approaching the 12 weeks’ qualification period for the Agency Workers’ Regulations (AWR).

Almost half of supply teachers (49%) reported that they had been asked to sign a contract or agreement with an umbrella company when working through a supply agency. Just over two fifths of those respondents (42%) stated that their pay had included deductions in respect of both employee and employer National Employer Contributions (NICs).

Almost three quarters (73%) of supply teachers reported that the agency where they undertake the majority of their work does not fully disclose all fees and charges they make for the services they provide.

Thirteen per cent of those who responded stated that they did not know.
Despite changes in legislation regarding the provision of payslips, one in ten supply teachers (10%) reported that the agencies they worked for did not provide them with an itemised payslip. Thirteen per cent of supply teachers reported that only some of the agencies they worked for provided them with an itemised pay slip. Over one in 20 supply teachers (6%) reported that they were not sure.

Almost a fifth (17%) of supply teachers stated that they had been asked to undertake a ‘free trial’ by an agency at a school prior to undertaking paid work.

Fifteen per cent of supply teachers said that they had been denied access to permanent employment as a result of the imposition of a finder’s fee by an agency they had worked for.

Sixteen per cent of supply teachers said that they had been asked to waive their right to qualify for the same pay and conditions after the 12-week qualifying period.

Training and behaviour management support

Just over half (51%) of supply teachers stated that they had not been given access to continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities from the agencies which they worked for in the last 12 months.

For the minority of supply teachers who had access to CPD, the primary sources were obtained via the agency (51%), directly from schools (42%), or from their trade union (20%), or funded personally (13%).
TRENDS OVER THE PERIOD 2014-19

Nature of work

Supply agencies continue to dominate the market, up by 5% since last year to 88% in 2019. The use of supply agencies by supply teachers has risen by a quarter since 2014 (63%).

The number of local authorities providing work has halved since 2018 from 8% to 4%, whereas the number of schools providing direct employment has decreased a further 4% since 2018 to 18%.

Availability of work

The number of supply teachers who have reported some problems securing work has increased by 3% since 2018 to 61%.

The number of supply teachers able to work either four or five days a week has increased again since the last survey was conducted in 2018, from 32% to 36% respectively.

This is a 10% increase in the last two years.
Welcome to work and access to facilities

Disappointingly, there has been a significant drop in the number of supply teachers reporting that they are made to feel welcome when they entered a school. For example, 31% of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome by the staff, a decrease of over a quarter (26%) since the 2018 survey.

Coupled with this, there has been a decrease by almost a quarter (24%) in supply teachers reporting that they are always made to feel welcome by the school, down from 61% in 2018 to 37% in 2019.

In addition, the number of supply teachers reporting that they are always made to feel welcome by the students has halved since the 2018 survey from 46% to 23%. Furthermore, the amount of supply teachers reporting that they are always made to feel welcome by the parents has decreased from 31% in 2018 to 18% in 2019.

The number of supply teachers reporting that they did not always have access to food and drink facilities has increased from 39% in 2018 to 52%.

In addition, the number saying they did not always have access to car parking has increased by 10% since 2018 to 45% in 2019.

Furthermore, the number of supply teachers reporting that they do not have access to toilet/washroom facilities has increased from 11% in 2018 to 13% in 2019. The number of supply teachers reporting that they do not always have access to staffrooms has increased since 2018 from 19% to 26%.

The number of supply teachers reporting that they are not given clear information on key policies used within schools has increased since the 2018 survey. For example, 43% of supply teachers reported that they are not given clear information on the school’s fire evacuation policy. This is an increase of 12% since 2018.

“Despite doing well over the 12 weeks and everyone agreeing that I have achieved AWR, I was still asked to leave with only a week’s notice and no further pay.”
Rates of pay

In regards to rates of pay for supply teachers, it remains the case that the majority of supply teachers report that they are paid between £100 and £149 per day (68%), an increase of 1% since the 2018 survey.

The percentage of supply teachers who are paid between £51 and £99 per day stayed the same at 40%, whilst the percentage of supply teachers reporting that they are paid between £150 and £199 decreased again from 20% in 2018 to 18% in 2019.

The percentage of supply teachers reporting that they are paid in excess of £200 has doubled since 2018 from 1% to 2% in 2019.

Despite pay increases for other teachers, the majority of supply teachers have not seen their remuneration increase substantially since 2014.

Many qualified supply teachers are still being paid at rates equivalent to unqualified teachers.

Coupled with this, there has been an increase in those supply teachers reporting that they have had to take a second job (up 2% since 2018) or rely on increased use of credit (up 3% since 2018).

There has also been a 5% increase since 2018 on the number of supply teachers reporting that they have had to cut down on expenditure on food.
Conclusion

The 2019 Supply Teacher Survey reveals that the increase in agency working has led to a reduction in the pay, conditions of service and pensions of supply teachers.

Rates of pay have remained stagnant for the overwhelming majority of supply teachers and have therefore failed to keep pace with the rate of inflation and the pay awards recommended by the teachers’ pay review bodies for England and Wales.

Low-paid, insecure and precarious work offered irregularly makes it impossible for supply teachers to plan and manage their finances effectively.

As a consequence, more supply teachers report that they find themselves in a precarious financial situation where they have to make tough decisions about their expenditure or rely on the increased use of credit or the generosity of family and friends to make ends meet.

The increased use of agency and casual employment is a key source of stress and anxiety for hard-working and dedicated supply teachers who simply want to do the best by the children and young people they are assigned to teach.

It is also of deep concern to supply teachers that their employment by or through agencies may not constitute reckonable service within the TPS, leaving many supply teachers no alternative other than to make less favourable pension plans, including reliance on inferior auto-enrolment pension arrangements.

The lack of access to occupational pension provision risks future financial insecurity for supply teachers and the increased risk of reliance on the welfare system in later life.

Given the tendency for supply teachers to disproportionately include women, black and minority ethnic (BME) and disabled teachers, the lack of eligibility of access to the TPS may be regarded as having a discriminatory impact.

Whilst issues of non-compliance, coupled with a lack of transparency, are highlighted in the survey, many supply teachers are also unaware of their employment rights and unsure how to report unfair practices.

Feedback also suggests that where supply teachers do complain about poor practices by agencies, the work ‘dries up’.
Other supply teachers may be reluctant to question unfair practices because of the potentially negative impact this may have for them.

The results from the 2019 survey indicate that action is needed to address the concerns of hard-working and dedicated supply teachers who make an important and significant contribution to the public education system.

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