



Supply Teachers

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE FOR THOSE NEW TO SUPPLY TEACHING

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 is committed to ensuring that you have the advice and guidance you need as you embark on your role as a supply teacher.

It should be noted that this advice and guidance should be considered in line with the comprehensive advice and guidance produced by the Union, which can be found at: <https://www.nasuw.org.uk/advice/supply-teacher.html>.

Employment arrangements of supply teachers

Supply teachers can be employed in a number of different ways:

Direct contract (employer/employee relationship)

You may be able to secure work directly with a school/college or a number of different schools/colleges.



The contract

This option is good if you have strong personal relationships with individual schools/colleges and can obtain regular assignments. Either way, you should have a contract of employment with each organisation to whom you are contracted to work.

The direct employment contract with the schools/colleges are normally straightforward as the schools/colleges will be responsible for operating Pay As You Earn (PAYE) and National Insurance Contributions (NICs).

In order to obtain work directly, particularly for those schools/colleges who do not know you, it may be appropriate to market yourself. Whilst this requires time and commitment, the rewards can be significant in the security and earnings you may be able to achieve in comparison to other ways of securing supply work (see below).

Sending in a CV to schools/colleges with a covering letter towards the end of summer term or the start of the autumn term may be a useful strategy; even better still, if you do this in person.

However, try to do some background research in order to show that you appreciate and understand the specifics of the schools/colleges you are seeking to engage with. For example, look at their website to understand more about their ethos/values and their most recent Estyn report.¹

Some schools/colleges may have more vacancies than others due to the fact that they are more challenging to work in. As a consequence, these schools/colleges may find it harder to attract staff, so they may be more receptive to offering a supply teacher casual work.

In addition, you may want to give consideration to the use of other materials to advertise the fact that you are available for supply work, such as the creation of a professional one-page flyer that promotes the key qualities and attributes you have (e.g. the subjects you can offer, relevant courses you have undertaken). This could include quotes and testimonials from any previous supply work you have undertaken.

Furthermore, a specific email account can enhance and reinforce the professional message you are trying to get across.

It may also be worth knowing if the school uses a lot of supply teachers or has had difficulty filling vacancies. If so, you can present yourself as a 'solution' and an alternative to the use of supply agencies.

In addition, check who hires supply staff in the school so you are addressing it to the right person. More often than not, this is likely to be a school business manager and not the headteacher.

Over time you might look to develop a network of names, email addresses and phone numbers across a number of schools/colleges that you can use as contacts regarding supply teaching.

It is worth remembering that your online and virtual presence can be seen by a wide range of people, including the schools/colleges where you may wish to secure work as a supply teacher, so you may want to consider carefully what you do or do not post/engage with.

You will need to be persistent and proactive in your approach to securing supply work directly with schools. You may begin with an initial email to the school/college, followed up with a phone call to the named person in the school, offering a convenient day and time to discuss things further.

Remain positive and emphasise the positives of the solution you are offering to schools/colleges. Anticipate and address any questions and concerns, ensuring that you focus on the key features you can offer, including:

- you are a qualified teacher and, as such, you are competent in the Teachers' Standards and the roles and responsibilities expected of a teacher;
- the fact that you are not tied to an agency, so there are no transfer fees to pay;
- the fact that you are local and more likely to be punctual and available at short notice;
- you can be attached to a specific school or groups of schools and, as such, you are able to integrate into the ethos and values of the school/s;
- being employed directly by the school/s enables you to become familiar with the pupils, the staff and the school's policies and procedures; and
- the quality and consistency of pupils' learning experiences are improved and the emotional wellbeing of learners addressed by a more stable learning experience.²

Keep a record of who you have spoken to, and when, as this should help in any follow-up conversations.

¹ This is not an exhaustive list, but illustrates the sort of points for consideration.

² Stoll et al (2012), *Great pedagogical development leads to great pedagogy*.



You can expect a low response rate from the schools/colleges you have contacted, so remember the importance of being persistent, as referenced above, and try again at specific intervals throughout the academic year. In particular, you should pay attention to [resignation dates](#) and the school holidays, as unexpected vacancies can arise which you may be able to fill.

If schools/colleges expect you to complete an application form, you should ensure that this correctly identifies you as a 'teacher' so that you will be automatically enrolled into the [Teachers' Pension Scheme \(TPS\)](#).

Once you have secured supply work directly with a school, it is important to build up a reputation to enhance your opportunities for further supply work in the future.

For example, you could ensure you engage with senior staff so they know who you are and are aware of your experience teaching the classes allocated to you.

In addition, make sure that you mark any work and provide some feedback on the classes you have covered at the school/college, including a brief summary of the relevant learning objectives and/or the behaviour of the pupils.

Furthermore, before you leave the class, make sure the room is tidy and try to speak to someone (e.g. head of department) so they are aware of how the day went, particularly the person responsible for booking you, including telling them that you would be available to undertake further supply work in the future. This will leave an impression and further enhance your reputation.

Local authority supply pool

Despite the decline in the number of local authorities offering supply pools or banks of supply teachers, you may work in an area where such arrangements still exist.³

The contract

This involves a situation where you provide your services via a local authority supply pool where the local authority will normally be your employer. The school or college would normally seek staff from the pool, but there would be no direct contractual arrangement between the local authority and the organisation for which you are providing your services.

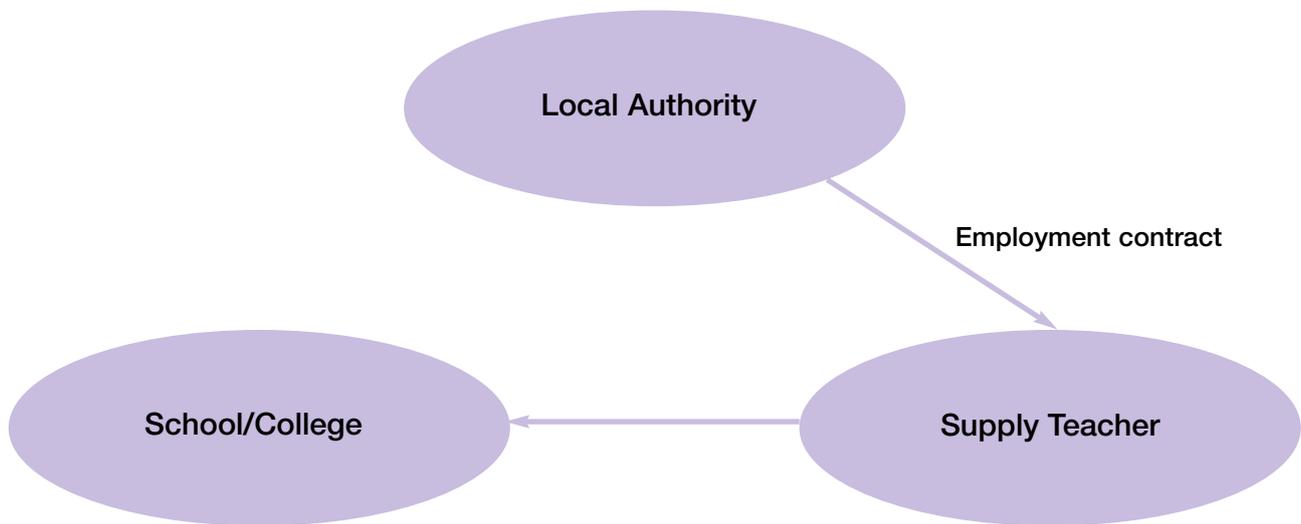
On starting a new role, you will be required to present your most recent P45, if available, to your new employer (or each of your new employers where you have more than one). Please be aware that you can only present a P45 from your last employment to one new employer.

If you have no P45 when you start, your employer should ask you to complete a New Starter Form. This is the equivalent of the old P46 form which it has replaced since the introduction of Real Time Information (RTI). This will inform HMRC whether:

- this is your first job of the tax year;
- you have worked before but this is now your only job; or
- you have another job.

³ Supply Teachers Annual Survey 2020 (England) ([nasuwt.org.uk](https://www.nasuwt.org.uk)).

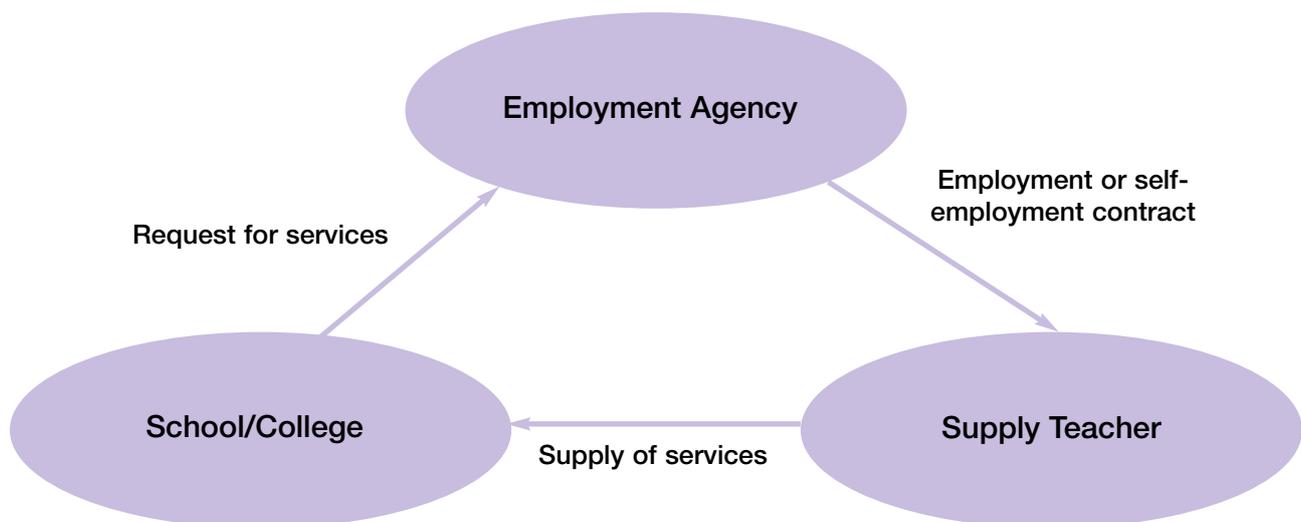




Many of the benefits of working through a local authority supply pool are similar to those outlined above in respect to direct employment. For example, supply teachers engaged in this way are more likely to be paid in line with their experience and qualifications, as well as access to the TPS.

Additionally, supply teachers can realise better economy of effort, as they are more likely to be visible to a greater number of schools on a local authority supply pool who can engage you for an assignment.

◆ Employment agency



For the vast majority of supply teachers, the only way to obtain supply work is by registering with one or more employment agencies.⁴ Many supply teachers choose to register with several agencies in order to gain access to a wider range of work assignments.

When you register with an employment agency, there are generally three parties involved:

1. the supply teacher;
2. the employment agency (that is, the organisation who identifies the needs of the school and organises the provision of the supply teacher); and
3. the client (that is, the person who requires the services – the school).

⁴ Supply Teachers Annual Survey 2019 (England, Wales) (nasuwt.org.uk).



The contract and the paperwork

A typical arrangement between these parties takes the following form:

1. the supply teacher will have an overarching contract with the employment agency;
2. the client will complete a time sheet for the employment agency to confirm the hours/days that have been worked;
3. the employment agency raises an invoice to the client for the work undertaken by the supply teacher, plus any expenses agreed to be reimbursed; and
4. the employment agency then processes the payment and any expenses and deducts the necessary tax and NICs.

Under these arrangements, you must be working under an overarching employment contract between you and the employment agency, which links the different assignments and specific assignment details. In this case, the employment agency will be responsible for deducting PAYE and NICs from your pay.

Each separate assignment is a separate contract, so you should ensure you are aware of and agree to the daily rate you can expect to be paid. Agencies are able to confirm this in a number of ways, so keep a record confirming what you have agreed to do and the rate of pay you can expect to receive.

This is particularly important, given that some agencies often seek to offer supply teachers cover supervisor work at a reduced rate of pay.

[The Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations](#) were introduced in April 2004 and were amended in 2010 and again in 2016. The Regulations provide a set of legal minimum standards that govern the conduct of employment businesses and protect supply teachers as agency workers.

As a supply teacher, your rights and entitlements should be set out in the overarching contract of employment that you have with your agency and/or umbrella company.

The agency and/or umbrella company must provide details of your entitlements in your **written statement of employment particulars**. From 6 April 2020, this must be provided to all workers and employees from day one.

In addition, for supply teachers as agency workers, you must be given a **Key Information Document (KID)** containing the key terms and conditions that govern assignments, on or before the engagement start date, including the provisions in relation to sickness absence and sick pay. This is in addition to the right to a written statement of employment particulars.

This must be provided to agency workers in one succinct written document (maximum two sides of A4 paper) that is easy to read. If appropriate, reference can be made to other documents where further relevant information can be found. The KID must be provided to you before an agreement is reached on terms and conditions and a contract is issued with the recruitment agency.

This includes a 'representative example statement', including gross pay and net pay, any deductions required by law (e.g. the apprenticeship levy and NICs), and any other deductions, including how they have been calculated. This is designed to give you an illustration of the pay you can expect to receive.

The KID should provide clarity where a recruitment agency uses an umbrella company as a payroll service, as the name of the umbrella company must be included in the KID, in addition to any administration fees charged by umbrella companies which are deducted from an agency worker's pay. For any non-statutory deductions or fees, the KID must either state the amounts to be deducted or explain how the deductions are calculated.

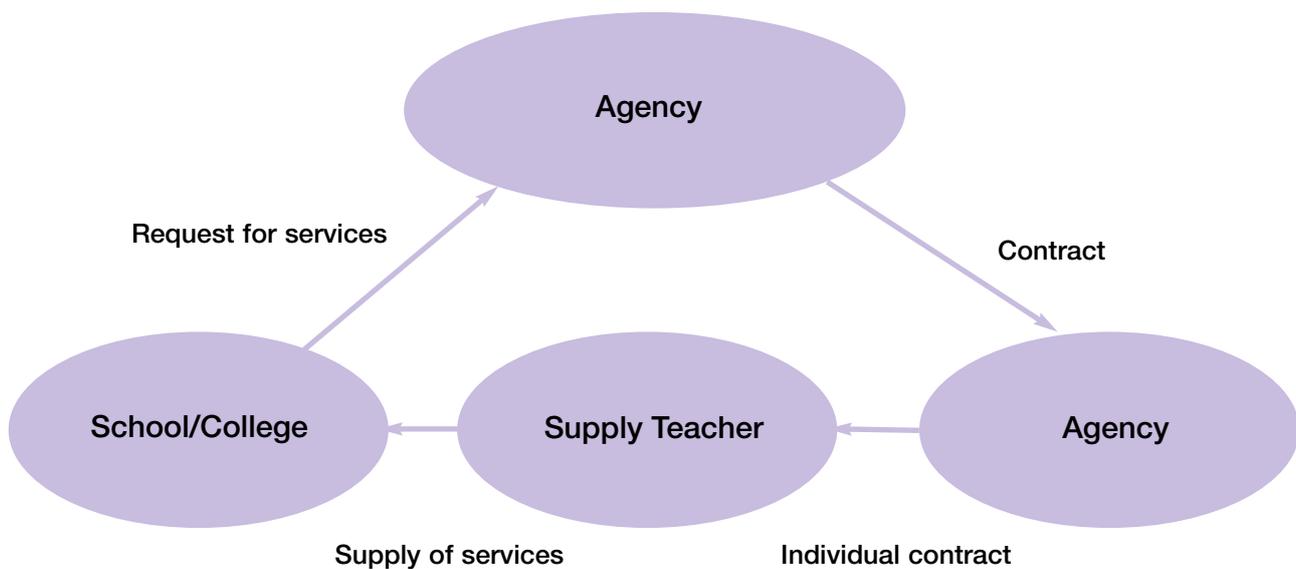
Further advice and guidance is available at: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/supply-teacher/conduct-of-employment-agencies-and-businesses-regs.html>.

When signing your overarching contract, you should you try to ensure that you are paid through PAYE as opposed to through an umbrella company.

Many supply agencies look to push supply teachers through an arrangement with an umbrella company on the basis that this saves them time and money.

It has been suggested that using an umbrella company is the best way to maximise revenue and minimise risk. Agencies have a preferred supplier list and will decide on which umbrella company to use, based not on what is best for the employment agency.

Supply teachers will have an overarching employment contract with the umbrella company whereby the umbrella company is treated for tax purposes as the employer and, as such, the employer sends the teacher on temporary assignments to the organisations where they are teaching.



A typical arrangement between these parties takes the following form:

1. the umbrella company will have a business-to-business contract with the employment agency;
2. the supply teacher will have a contract with the employment agency and umbrella company;
3. the client will complete a time sheet for the employment agency to confirm the hours/days that have been worked;
4. the supply teacher will supply the signed time sheet to the employment agency (and may be required to complete a similar time sheet for the umbrella company);
5. the umbrella company raises an invoice to the employment agency for the work undertaken by the supply teacher, plus any expenses agreed to be reimbursed;
6. the employment agency then pays the umbrella company;
7. the umbrella company processes the payment and any expenses, and then deducts the necessary tax and NICs;
8. the umbrella company then makes a payment through PAYE to the supply teacher;
9. the supply teacher receives their money, less tax, NICs and the umbrella services fee.



However, you should look to be paid via PAYE, and be prepared to look elsewhere if the agency is not willing to do so.

If the agency seeks to push you through an umbrella company, then you should ensure you scrutinise the contract and the KID very carefully, as some umbrella companies seek to pay at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW), with the rest comprising either a 'discretionary bonus' or a 'loan'.

Pay

When looking to secure supply work through a supply agency, it is important to do some background research, not only to see what the agency/agencies are like, but also to understand your worth in terms of what you can expect to be paid.

This could include looking at the agency/agencies website to establish what they pay and what they offer (e.g. continuing professional development – CPD), as well as talking to other supply teachers or going online (e.g. social media).

Some agencies may be more reliable in terms of the work they are able to offer you, whereas others may work with more schools/colleges across a bigger geographical area.

Check if the agency/agencies hold accreditation with one of the two main trade bodies the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) and the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCO). Whilst this does not necessarily translate into better rates of pay, it should ensure better standards in the way you are treated.

In addition, you might want to see if the agency/agencies operate through the [National Procurement Service \(NPS\)](#), as these have benefits associated with agencies operating through them, such as minimum daily rates of pay.

The Union publishes extensive advice and guidance to assist you in understanding the process and what to expect. This can be found at: <https://www.nasuwat.org.uk/advice/supply-teacher.html>.

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Union is monitoring the situation with agencies and the use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) to furlough supply teachers. This can be found at: <https://www.nasuwat.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/covid-19-campaign-for-supply-teachers/supply-agencies-umbrella-cos-operating-furlough.html>.

The list of agencies that placed supply teachers on furlough may act as a useful barometer when judging if an agency is good or not.

In addition, the Union annually publishes [daily pay rates](#) for supply teachers, which you should use to understand and establish your worth.

When registering with an agency/agencies, you should not hesitate in asking them about the rates of pay they offer and comparing this to other agencies operating in the same area. Remember that you do not simply have to accept what an agency offers you. You can decide what your minimum daily rate will be, and what you will or will not be prepared to accept.

There may be a risk that some work is offered to others, but if you are able to build a reputation for the work you do (see above tips), then agencies will often pay the rate you request in order to obtain your services.

This includes understanding the expectations and responsibilities attached to each assignment and if there are any additional expectations or requirements (e.g. planning and reporting) for which you may be able to attract an enhanced rate of pay.

In addition, ensure that the agency/agencies are fully aware of the experience and expertise that you are able to offer to schools/colleges.



It should be noted that the agency business model works on schools being regular and repeat 'customers', so if you are doing a good job and the school/college is satisfied, then this helps promote the agency, whilst enhancing your argument for a better daily rate of pay.

In certain situations, the subject/s you are able to offer can also increase the daily rate that you are able to attract.

You should look to revisit your pay on a regular basis, as you may be able to attract an increase in your daily rate if you have had positive feedback from an assignment which then leads to the agency securing a repeat and/or regular booking with a school/college.

The same could be said if you have worked in a challenging school/college, as your willingness to undertake such assignments potentially puts you at a competitive advantage in regards to pay.

It is therefore worth seeking positive feedback from schools, as this gives you more leverage when discussing your daily rate with the agency/agencies going forwards. Ask schools/colleges to commend you to the agency.

Remember that all agencies charge a commission to the schools/colleges who secure supply teachers, and this usually provides some flexibility in the charge rate to enable them to uplift your daily rate of pay.

Over time, you may be in position to discuss cutting out the agency/agencies altogether and working directly for the school, particularly if you can make a compelling argument as to the savings that schools/colleges can make.

The Union has produced [advice and guidance](#) which assists and supports members in making such a case.

If you have undertaken other supply work, retain copies of your payslips as evidence to show the rate that other agencies and schools/colleges were willing to pay.

Agency Workers Regulations (AWR)

The Agency Workers Regulations (AWR) were introduced in October 2011 to ensure that agency workers are treated in the same way as directly employed workers carrying out the same work after a 12-week qualifying period, particularly in respect of pay.

The Union has provided detailed advice and guidance for supply teachers as agency workers in respect of the AWR. This can be found at: <https://www.nasuwat.org.uk/advice/supply-teacher/agency-workers-regulations.html>.

You should ensure you retain copies of your payslips, along with a detailed record of the weeks you worked on a long-term assignment, for the purposes of calculating any entitlement to equal pay under the AWR.

The agency should do this automatically.

Preparing for an assignment as a supply teacher

Irrespective of how you are engaged as a supply teacher, prior to reporting for work at a school, you should ask for the following (or details of where this can be accessed when on the assignment):

- the school's staff handbook;
- a tour or a map of the school to help you find classrooms, the first-aid/medical room, the nearest fire exit, the staffroom and toilets;
- the emergency evacuation signal, route and procedure;
- a timetable with timing of sessions, breaks and lunch periods;



- schemes of work for the subjects you will be expected to teach;
- details of how to access any resources (e.g. materials, ICT) you will need to deliver your lessons;
- a list of the names of pupils in the class(es) you will be teaching, or where this can be accessed on the day;
- information about whether any pupils you will teach have any medical conditions, behavioural problems or special educational needs (SEN);
- details of any relevant ongoing risk assessments regarding pupils, parents or facilities;
- information about the school's procedures for managing pupil behaviour, including any rules on the use of rewards and sanctions, and details of how support is provided to classroom teachers when managing behaviour;
- expectations regarding marking and assessment of pupils' work;
- the name of who you should contact if you have any questions or in the event of a problem or emergency, and their contact details;
- details of pupil registration procedures and expectations for dismissing pupils at the end of the school day;
- confirmation of who you should report to each day;
- details of any events, meetings or other activities taking place that may involve some or all of the pupils you will teach;
- a copy of the school calendar (including meetings and training days) if you will be at the school for a period of time; and
- the school's policy on the appropriate use of technology and social media, including mobile phones.

Additional information may be required as part of the school's/college's mitigations during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Union has produced detailed advice and guidance for supply teachers, which can be found at: <https://www.nasuwat.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/full-reopening-of-schools/full-reopening-of-schools-wales.html>.





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