

Children, Young People and Education Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing: the education, health and wellbeing of the children and young people of Wales, including their social care.

On 22 January 2014, the Assembly agreed to alter the remit of the Committee to include Higher Education. This subject will continue to be included in the remit of the Enterprise and Business Committee, with both committees looking at Higher Education from their particular perspectives. The Committee was previously known as the Children and Young People Committee.

Current Committee membership:



Ann Jones (Chair)
Welsh Labour
Vale of Clwyd



Angela Burns
Welsh Conservatives
Carmarthen West and South
Pembrokeshire



Keith Davies
Welsh Labour
Llanelli



Suzy Davies
Welsh Conservatives
South Wales West



John Griffiths
Welsh Labour
Newport East



Lynne Neagle
Welsh Labour
Torfaen



David Rees
Welsh Labour
Aberavon



Aled Roberts
Welsh Liberal Democrats
North Wales



Rhodri Glyn Thomas
Plaid Cymru
Carmarthen East and Dinefwr



Simon Thomas
Plaid Cymru
Mid and West Wales

The following Member was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry:



Bethan Jenkins
Plaid Cymru
South Wales West

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1. Chair's Foreword

1. Supply teaching is an essential part of the education system. While teacher absence is inevitable, it must be a common goal to help ensure that where cover teaching is required it can be delivered effectively, and is of the highest standard, in order to provide pupils with continued quality learning.
2. The many challenges and difficulties in meeting the high expectations for supply teaching have been explored in three recent reports produced by the Wales Audit Office, Estyn and the Assembly's Public Accounts Committee. While the Committee very much welcomed the Reports, and the work undertaken, concerns were still being raised by stakeholders, parents and pupils. The Committee therefore wanted to explore this further, building on work already undertaken, and engaging with those most directly affected by the issues being raised, including pupils, teachers and supply teachers themselves.
3. The Committee was particularly keen to learn about whether the use of supply teachers affected pupils, and if it did, what impact it has. The Committee undertook surveys for young people and for parents and carers, which attracted almost 1,500 responses. We are extremely grateful to those who took the time to respond, as this provided a clear picture of how supply teaching is viewed by those on the receiving end.
4. The views expressed in the survey responses, and from teachers and supply teachers, enhanced the inquiry and provided the Committee with a balance against which to consider the wider evidence from stakeholders. It was clear that many of the views received expressed personal experience. While this helped the Committee gain an understanding of how individuals are affected, the Committee was keen to ensure that the inquiry remained focussed on the systems and practices in place for the delivery of supply teaching. The Committee did not attempt to gauge the quality of teaching and the report reflects that.
5. During the course of this inquiry, many issues were raised, some linked, others isolated. The clear view presented in evidence was that many of these issues could be ameliorated if there were closer arrangements between the employers of supply teachers and those with responsibility for providing school education. A view that was shared widely across those giving evidence.

6. Our overarching recommendation calls on the Welsh Government to look at a range of options for the employment of supply teachers, including cluster arrangements operated by local authorities or through a national body. The Committee believes this is vital step forward, but recognises that this is likely to be a longer term goal, with the current contract for supply teachers due to run until August 2018.

7. The Welsh Government's new guidance on Effective Management of School Workforce Attendance, which was published in July, may help towards resolving some of the issues identified in this inquiry. It is important to note that evidence quoted in this report was received prior to the guidance being published. The Committee was, however, keen to ensure that the new Guidance was considered fully as part of the inquiry and took additional evidence on it. This report therefore includes reference to the Guidance, together with the views of stakeholders, and how the Guidance impacts on the Committee's earlier findings.

2. The Committee's Key Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Welsh Government should start work to design a new model for the employment of supply teachers. In making this recommendation the Committee acknowledges that the current contract runs until August 2018, but calls on the Welsh Government to start work now to ensure that the new system is in place in readiness. *Page 17*

Conclusion 1: The Committee agrees with the Welsh Government's proposal to request a further thematic review by Estyn, at which time the effectiveness of the Guidance can be assessed. *Page 20*

Recommendation 2: In advance of any further thematic review by Estyn, the Welsh Government should continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that the Guidance is as robust and effective as it can be. *Page 20*

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should commit to reporting back to any future responsible Committee on the outcome and impact of the guidance following Estyn's review in 2016/17. *Page 20*

Conclusion 2: The Committee notes that the intention of the new guidance is to provide for more consistent and comparable data. This should help gain an understanding of the reasons for teacher absence, which can then help in reducing sickness absence and the need for supply cover. *Page 26*

Recommendation 4: While the Committee acknowledges the introduction of the new Guidance, the Welsh Government must take additional steps to help simplify the system for supply cover. *Page 26*

Recommendation 5: The Welsh Government should undertake research immediately to establish (a) whether there is an increased use of supply teachers in disadvantaged areas, and (b) the cause of any increase. *Page 26*

Recommendation 6: The Welsh Government should work with schools to ensure that they develop targets for monitoring absence, as set out in the new Guidance, that are based on both the data they have collected and on data from comparable schools. *Page 26*

