



Department
for Education

Use of supply teachers in schools

Research Report

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This research report was written before the new UK Government took office on 5 July 2024. As a result, the content may not reflect current Government policy.

1 Summary

This report draws on insight from a nationally representative survey of schools in England, a convenience sample of nearly 1,500 supply teachers and qualitative research with 60 supply teachers, 22 leaders, and seven supply teacher providers conducted in 2023. It explores individuals' motivations for entering the supply market, along with the reasons schools use supply teachers and the ways in which they are deployed. Current models for the procurement, management and professional development of supply teachers are also examined.

The supply market in England is large and diverse. It has evolved over recent years in the context of a decline in the number of Local Authority-run supply teacher pools and it is now dominated by commercial agencies operating at a national, regional and local level. Schools typically obtain supply teachers through these agencies, although direct engagement between schools and supply teachers is also common practice. Little use is currently made of the Crown Commercial Service's Supply Teacher and Temporary Staff (CCS STaTS) framework. The findings suggest lack of awareness is the primary barrier to engagement and measures to increase its visibility could deliver benefits in terms of the quality and cohesion of provision and access to localised pools of supply teachers.

The use of supply teachers, particularly in the secondary phase, has increased since the Covid-19 pandemic. The drivers of this growth are increases in the number and duration of teacher absences and recruitment difficulties and schools use supply workers for cover of a few hours to several weeks or even months. Most supply workers are deployed as classroom teachers but there is evidence of them fulfilling other roles, including teaching assistant (TA) and senior and specialist roles, as well as some non-teaching functions. As such, effective supply teachers need generic (e.g. flexibility and adaptability) and technical (e.g. classroom management) skills in addition to subject knowledge. Ideally, supply teachers should also possess a teaching qualification, although of the supply teachers surveyed, around a fifth did not have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

The cost of supply is variable and largely driven by market forces. Schools can often expect to pay a premium for subject and other specialists, such as specialists in special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), that are in short supply within the supply market as well as in the wider teacher workforce. The growing reliance on supply is, therefore, having a significant impact on school budgets – some leaders report cutting back on other areas, including training and development, to offset the overspend on

supply. As such, supply is most often used as a last resort when no suitable cover is available internally.

Skills and knowledge shortages along with limited market coverage in certain parts of the country, particularly rural areas, also have implications for the quality of provision. Most leaders report occasions when they have had to accept non-specialists or supply workers without QTS to cover absences, particularly at short notice. To minimise the potential impact on pupils, schools typically deploy these supply teachers in other parts of the school to release specialists to cover lessons with priority year groups (e.g. GCSE). Beyond statutory requirements for safeguarding, there is currently no obligation on providers or schools to support the continuing professional development (CPD) of supply teachers; this also has implications for quality. While schools often formally review the performance of supply teachers on long-term placements and provide access to CPD, those undertaking short term placements or who work in different rather than the same schools regularly often do not have access to these benefits. Consequently, it was common for many of the supply teachers surveyed to fund their own CPD and approximately two-fifths had not undertaken any CPD at all.

The characteristics of the supply workforce largely mirror the teacher workforce in terms of gender but is typically older. Most have held permanent teaching positions and enter supply for a variety of personal and professional reasons, including to reduce workload, alleviate stress and achieve a better work/life balance. Few aspire to a long-term career in supply teaching; rather supply teachers use it as a stepping stone into a permanent teaching position, particularly early career teachers and those returning after a career break. The high cost of supply to schools is not reflected in the rate of pay for supply teachers as a substantial proportion - almost double in some cases - is retained by providers in fees. There are also variations in rates of pay by sector and geographical region. Dissatisfaction with pay, terms and conditions are among the top five reasons the supply teachers surveyed wanted to leave the market. Many schools and supply teachers would welcome measures to ensure more equity in supply teacher's pay and conditions and the fees charged to schools. This could help to retain skilled teachers in the supply or permanent workforce, and coupled with an entitlement to CPD, could also help to enhance quality and deliver better value for money. The supply providers consulted recognise the benefits of ensuring a fair and consistent rate for supply with a transparent system of pricing, although they point out that greater regulation could drive costs up.

2 Executive summary of main findings

This report brings together insights from YouGov surveys commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) and qualitative research undertaken by CFE Research to examine the supply and demand for supply teachers in primary, secondary and special state schools across England. It considers how supply teachers are deployed, along with the strengths and limitations of current models for the procurement, management and professional development of supply teachers.

Research aims and approach

DfE commissioned YouGov to conduct surveys with supply teachers and school leaders. The aim was to better understand how the supply teacher market operates, and to identify how it could be improved so that schools are able to make the most effective use of their funding and invest in activity that best supports pupil outcomes. A total of 1,444 supply teachers responded to the survey using an open link shared with supply agencies, local authority (LA) pools and representative bodies. Schools were randomly sampled from the School Workforce Census (SWC) and 1,296 school leaders within these schools responded to the survey. Both surveys were administered in May and June 2023. The school survey was weighted to be nationally representative while the supply survey was unweighted.¹

DfE subsequently commissioned CFE Research to undertake large scale qualitative research with a sample of survey respondents and supply teacher providers. The aim was to add depth to the survey findings by exploring the motivations and experiences of supply teachers, in addition to capturing insights into the reasons schools use supply teachers, the roles they fulfil within different contexts, the barriers and enablers to the effective use of supply teachers, and the perceived impact on pupil outcomes. Between July and December 2023, 60 supply teachers, 22 school leaders, and seven representatives from supply teacher providers were interviewed.

Key findings

Supply and demand for supply teachers

The characteristics of the supply workforce largely mirror the teaching workforce in terms of gender but is typically older. Almost all of those surveyed were qualified to at least degree level (98%) and the majority were qualified teachers (80%). Most had held permanent positions in educational settings prior to entering the supply market. As such,

¹ This was due to data limitations in estimating the true size of the supply teaching workforce.

many bring significant teaching, as well as leadership and management, experience to their role as a supply teacher.

Teachers leave permanent positions and enter supply for a variety of reasons, both personal and professional. Many become a supply teacher because they perceive the workload will be lighter and less stressful than a permanent teaching role. However, a desire for greater flexibility is the primary motivation for around half of supply teachers and many work part-time. Supply teachers do not aspire to work in supply permanently; but rather regard it as a route to achieving their longer-term goals. Encouragingly, around half of survey respondents wishing to leave supply want to enter (or re-enter) the permanent workforce. This group are typically younger and work in supply to gain classroom experience and strengthen their CV. Others could be persuaded to take-up a permanent role by a change in their personal circumstances (e.g. a reduction in their caring responsibilities) and/or improvements in teachers' pay, terms and conditions, including more flexible and part-time contracts. A minority are highly unlikely to ever return to the profession; this group are typically older and making the transition to retirement.

The decision to use supply teachers is informed by the availability of suitable internal cover, the nature of the role to be covered and the likely length of the staff absence. Cost is a key consideration along with the quality of available supply. Demand for supply teachers has increased across all settings, particularly since the pandemic. Key drivers of the change are increases in the number of teacher absences and the volume of long-term absences, and recruitment difficulties. Level of demand for supply workers varies by phase. Secondary schools make more frequent use of supply teachers than those in other settings and use them for longer periods of time, although demand for longer-term placements has increased across all phases. Special schools and smaller primaries are much less likely to use supply, instead preferring to source internal cover. Schools in these phases are more likely to use their teaching assistant (TA) workforce to cover teaching staff absences. Despite this increase in demand for supply teachers, some do still find it challenging to obtain sufficient work and are not able to exercise choice over which placements they accept.

Deployment of supply teachers

Schools obtain supply teachers to cover staff absences ranging from a few hours (e.g., to release a member of staff to undertake training and development) to a few days (e.g., to cover a short-term illness) to several weeks or even months (e.g., to cover a long-term illness or maternity leave, or to cover a vacancy that is difficult to fill). The length of the placement as well as the job role requiring cover determine the knowledge and skills schools seek from a supply teacher and the tasks they expect a supply teacher to fulfil. These factors also determine the extent to which a school is prepared to invest in the

training and development of a supply teacher and the impact that a teacher has on pupil outcomes.

Those working in the supply market are primarily deployed to cover the role of a classroom teacher. However, there is evidence from the survey that supply workers can fulfil other roles such as TA, senior and specialist roles as well as non-teaching functions. When deployed in a teaching role, supply teachers commonly fulfil classroom-related tasks, including delivering a lesson plan, supervising pupils and marking and assessing work. It is less common for supply teachers to engage in activities outside the classroom and with parents/carers, but some do, particularly those on long-term placements.

Supply teachers report that they need a range of generic skills and qualities to undertake their role effectively, including flexibility, adaptability, and the ability to think and assimilate information quickly. They also report they need good interpersonal skills so that they can build rapport with pupils and manage behaviour. The level of technical skills and knowledge school leaders require from supply teachers can vary according to phase and the length and nature of the placement. However, most ideally want those fulfilling a teaching role to hold an appropriate teaching qualification. Some supply teachers obtained their qualifications overseas and many school leaders regard the quality of the work delivered by these teachers to be a high standard. Secondary schools often seek specialist subject knowledge, particularly if the supply teacher is to be deployed in Key Stage 4.

Recruitment of supply teachers

Schools most commonly obtain supply teachers, and supply teachers most commonly obtain work, through private agencies and/or direct engagement. Little use is now made of LA pools and few schools currently use the Crown Commercial Service's Supply Teacher and Temporary Staff (CCS STaTS) framework. The number of LA pools has diminished in recent years in the context of academisation and financial pressures, resulting in lack of provision in some areas. There is a lack of awareness among school leaders and supply teachers of the CSS STaTS.

The supply market is large and diverse. It includes commercial, private enterprises and not-for-profit organisations operating at a national, regional and local level. Schools typically engage with multiple providers to ensure their needs, particularly at short notice, are met. Supply teachers also register with multiple providers to maximise their opportunities to secure work. However, most schools prefer to develop partnerships with one or two preferred suppliers that understand the local area and can provide access to a pool of 'tried and tested' supply teachers that are a 'good fit' for their school context.

Management and development of supply teachers

In most instances, it is the provider not the school that employs the supply teacher. However, schools also play a key role in the management and supervision of the workers placed with them. The providers consulted ensure supply teachers are briefed on the role they will fulfil within the school, along with their working hours and the length of the placement. Although some providers also support the induction process, most devolve this to the host school. Supply teachers are inducted and supervised by a range of staff, including a member of the senior leadership team (SLT), another member of teaching staff or a business manager. While most supply teachers are satisfied with induction processes, some would welcome further information when they arrive at a school, including on how to access resources and how to respond to any presenting issues.

The providers consulted routinely collect feedback from schools – both positive and negative – on supply teachers. Although providers expect to address any performance management issues, they rely on feedback from schools to inform this process. Some also use the feedback to inform their training and development plans for supply teachers. Beyond statutory requirements for safeguarding, providers and schools are under no obligation to provide or fund training and development for supply teachers, but the evidence indicates that some do. In the best examples, providers consult with schools and supply teachers to identify training and development needs. Both providers and schools deliver training as well as signpost supply teachers to external activities and resources. Schools are most likely to provide feedback on a supply teacher's performance (including via the school's appraisal system) and invest in their development if they are placed with them long term. Most supply teachers do not perceive that they have equal opportunities to access continuing professional development (CPD); a substantial minority also disagree that they have access to the CPD they need to carry out their role effectively. Many supply teachers invest in their own development and much of the CPD accessed is delivered free of charge.

The rate of pay for supply workers can vary according to role, length of placement, phase and geographical region, as well as the individual's qualifications, skills and experience. Supply teachers working in secondary schools and in London receive a higher rate of pay on average than those working in other phases and locations. Market forces can drive the overall cost for schools and rates of pay for individuals up as well as down. Agencies often charge a premium where demand for subject and other specialists exceeds supply.

Most supply teachers are employed through a provider that charges schools a day rate for their time. The supply teacher receives a proportion of the day rate, and the provider retains a proportion to cover its own costs. The 'mark-up' charged by providers varies considerably. Supply teachers are largely dissatisfied with their pay, terms and conditions and these are major contributing factors for those who are considering leaving the market. Most leaders disagree that the system represents good value for money based

on their experience of the quality and cost of supply teachers. Schools and supply teachers would welcome regulation of the supply market in order to ensure greater parity in pay, terms and conditions for those working in the sector and to deliver better value for money for schools. The seven providers consulted include private agencies that would be subject to greater regulation if it was to be introduced and others, such as LA pools, that would not. None of them are against greater regulation in principle. However, the private agencies emphasise the impact it could have on their costs and the subsequent implications for schools and the supply workforce.

Strengths and limitations of the current system

The research has identified a number of strengths of the current system. It provides:

- access to a large, flexible pool of labour with a diverse range of skills that can be deployed to cover a range of roles in response to schools' needs
- the ability for schools to exercise choice over which and how many providers they work with, and to develop partnerships with preferred suppliers offering preferential rates and bespoke services tailored to their needs
- access to a cost-effective alternative to permanent recruitment in some circumstances
- the option for schools to appoint supply teachers to permanent vacancies after 12 weeks at no extra cost through the CCS STaTS framework
- a route into and out of the permanent teaching workforce for those seeking to broaden their experience, upskill or reskill after a career break, work flexibly and reduce stress and workload; and
- a mechanism for retaining staff who would otherwise leave the teaching profession, exacerbating existing skills gaps and shortages.

A number of limitations of the current system were also identified:

- Some parts of the education sector are less well served by the current system, particularly special schools that often have difficulty finding suitably qualified and experienced special educational needs teachers from the supply market to ensure the consistency and quality of care needed in these schools.
- Competition between providers can drive down the cost of supply to schools, but this often results in a lower rate of pay for supply teachers.
- Market forces can also drive costs up for schools, particularly in areas that are less well served by the supply market and/or where demand (especially for specialist roles) outstrips supply.

- Supply teachers can experience a similar level of workload and stress as those in the permanent workforce and those on long-term placements can be expected to undertake all aspects of the role they are covering.
- Supply teachers are typically paid below the rate of a permanent teacher with equivalent qualifications, skills and experience and they are often unable to contribute to the teachers' pension scheme.
- A mismatch between schools' and supply teachers' expectations of the role, particularly the range of tasks they are expected to fulfil, can be a source of tension and frustration and result in dissatisfaction with the supply market for both parties.
- Despite the size of the sector, many schools are unable to obtain the supply resources they need, when they need them. There is limited coverage of the supply market in some geographical areas.
- Skills shortages in the wider teacher workforce, such as in subject specialists in science and maths and staff with the skills needed to support pupils with SEND, are also evident in the supply market. As a result, not every supply teacher placed within a school has the requisite qualifications, skills and experience.
- Supply teachers have more limited access to training and development and career progression opportunities. Lack of investment in CPD, along with a shortage of subject and other specialists, are perceived to impact on the overall quality of the teaching and learning delivered by the supply market. Poor quality teaching has an impact on the classroom environment and pupil outcomes.

Detailed research findings

3 Introduction

This section outlines the purpose of the research and the methods used.

Research aims and objectives

DfE commissioned CFE Research in summer 2023 to undertake qualitative research to build on the findings of online surveys conducted by YouGov with supply teachers and school leaders earlier in the year. The qualitative research sought to explore the following themes and any differences by school phase:

- The procurement of supply teachers, including schools' use of the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) Supply Teachers and Temporary Staff (STaTS) framework and the variability of cost and pay.
- The demographics, characteristics and motivations of teachers working in the supply market.
- The factors underpinning the quality of supply teaching.
- The barriers and enablers to the effective use of supply teachers, including training and development.
- The experiences of schools using supply teachers.

This study was conducted alongside a sister project examining the use of teaching assistants (TAs). The report on TAs is informed by YouGov surveys of TAs and school leaders along with qualitative research conducted by CFE. Where appropriate, reference is made to these findings in this report.

Methodology

Online survey of school leaders and supply teachers

DfE commissioned YouGov to conduct surveys with supply teachers and school leaders between April and May 2023. In total, 1,444 supply teachers² and 1,296 leaders responded to the surveys.

² Although all respondents had worked as a classroom supply teacher, the survey demonstrated that some had also fulfilled other roles on a temporary basis, including senior management, support and/or non-education roles.

A random sample of schools was drawn from the School Workforce Census (SWC)³ to recruit school leaders and data from respondents was then weighted to be representative using the ‘Schools, pupils and their characteristics’ and ‘Get Information About Schools’ databases.

A sample of convenience was used to recruit supply teachers to take part in the survey using an open link distributed by recruitment agencies, Local Authority (LA) pools and representative bodies. The results of the supply teacher survey therefore cannot be seen as representative of supply teachers but rather indicative.

Qualitative research

The surveys included a recall question which was used as a sample frame for the interviews with leaders and supply teachers. Between August and December 2023, purposive sampling was used to achieve a total of 60 interviews with supply teachers and 22 with school leaders. Table 1 and

Table 2 illustrate the sample distribution by role and school phase. Of the 60 supply teachers consulted, 38 had worked in one phase only, 16 had worked in two phases and six had worked across all three.

Table 1: Number of interviews with supply teachers by experience of school phase

School phase	Number with experience of this phase only	Total number with experience of phase
Primary	25	42
Secondary	12	24
Special	1	20
Total	38	

Table 2: Number of interviews conducted with school leaders by phase

School phase	Number of interviews
Primary	10
Secondary	7
Special	5
Total	22

³ The total response rate from school leaders was 11%.

A sample of providers of supply teachers (referred to as providers throughout the report) was identified through a desk-top review and a sign-up survey sent out to providers on the CCS framework. A total of seven agreed to be interviewed. The supply market is diverse and providers range in size, geographical and sector coverage and operating model. Although of limited size, the sample reflects the diversity of providers in the current market⁴ and includes both providers that are and are not registered on the CCS framework.

The interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. To ensure a broad range of perspectives was captured, target quotas were applied:

- 20 supply teachers in primary and secondary schools (40 in total) and a flexible quota for those in special schools
- 10 school leaders in primary and secondary schools (20 in total) and seven for those in special schools.

The quotas were particularly challenging to achieve for:

- Supply teachers in special schools who accounted for the smallest proportion of the survey recontact sample (10%)
- School leaders in secondary and special schools as the sample was dominated by those in primary schools (50%).

In addition, flexible quotas for the interviews with supply teachers and school leaders were applied to ensure representation at the aggregate level by English region, schools located in advantaged and disadvantaged areas (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), and Ofsted rating.

Interview guides were used to ensure the discussions covered specific topics. Interviews were recorded with respondents' consent and transcribed for thematic coding and analysis. Most of the interviews were conducted in the 2023/24 academic year.

The following should be considered in relation to the qualitative research findings:

- The qualitative research was undertaken in the 2023/24 academic year so the interviewees could be working in a different school to when they completed the survey. Attribution of any quotations from supply teachers relates to their current school setting, unless otherwise specified.

⁴ The sample include includes two LA pools, one run by a private provider and one run by the LA, two self-service platforms, one small provider of specialist support staff, one large private agency serving a region and one national agency.

- Some of those who consented to recontact had since left the school and did not provide personal contact details. This group could not, therefore, be invited to participate.
- Supply teachers received a £30 shopping voucher as an incentive to participate in the qualitative research.
- The sample of supply providers is limited in number.

This report uses the findings from the interviews to contextualise and add depth to the survey data collected and analysed by YouGov. We report evidence from surveys in the past tense as it refers to views from the 2022/23 academic year, and evidence from the interviews in the present tense.

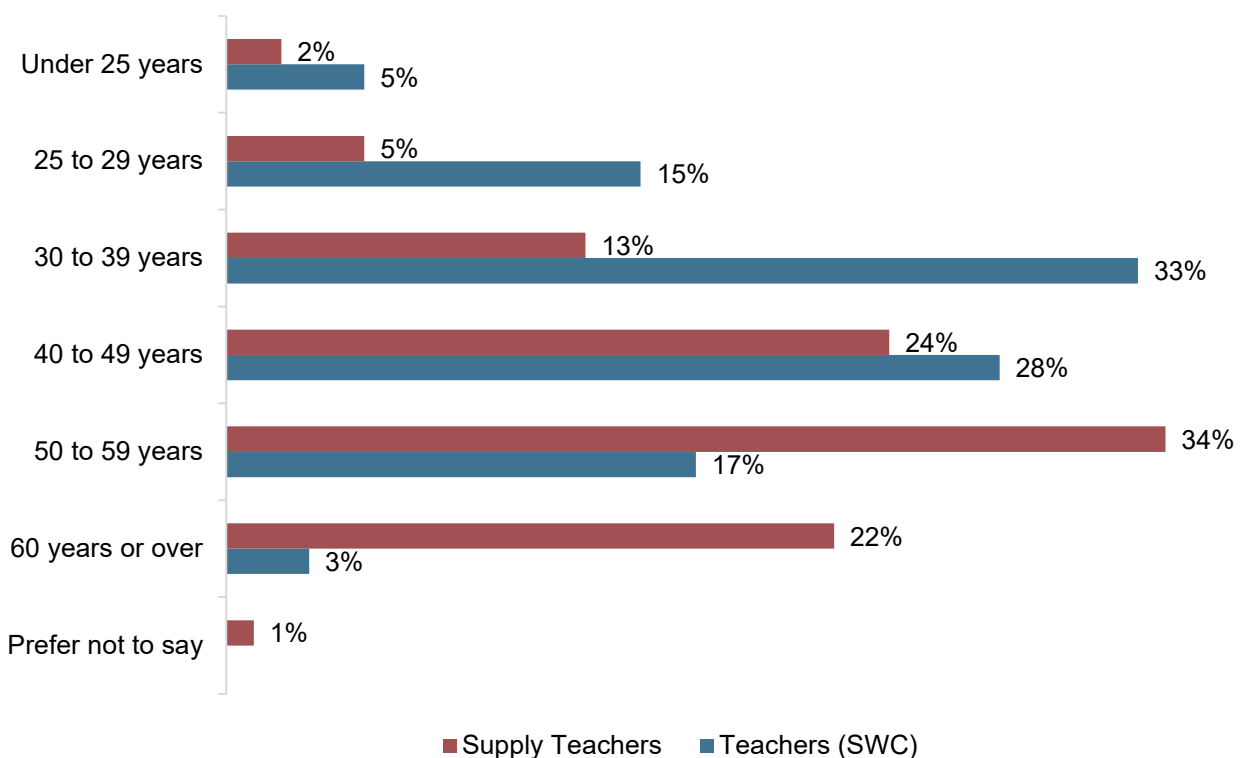
4 Supply and demand for supply teachers

This section explores the characteristics of the supply teacher workforce, motivations for entering supply teaching and the likelihood of supply teachers taking up permanent positions within the school workforce. It also explores the characteristics of schools that are most and least likely to use supply teachers, and the ways in which schools deploy them.

Characteristics of the teacher supply workforce

Like the teaching workforce, the majority of supply teachers surveyed were female (79%). However, they were typically older than those permanently employed in schools and colleges. While most teachers were under the age of 40 (53%), the majority of supply teachers surveyed were aged 50 and over (56%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Age of teachers within the School Workforce Census⁵ compared with the supply teachers within the survey



Source: School Workforce Census (2022) and supply teacher survey (Base: 1,444)

⁵ Department for Education (2022). School Workforce Census, reporting year 2022. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

Workforce qualifications and experience

Supply teachers surveyed held a range of qualifications. Most were educated to at least degree level (98%). The majority of respondents had studied Education (51%); the remainder had achieved degrees in a wide range of subject disciplines.⁶ Four-fifths of those surveyed (80%) had completed Initial Teacher Training (ITT).⁷ Approximately a quarter had been working in the supply market for up to one year (24%), a similar proportion had been working in supply for more than 10 years (20%). Just 8% had been in ITT immediately prior to first working as a supply teacher, most had been in a permanent post in a school or college (59%). However, a higher proportion had held a permanent position *at some point* during their career (64%), most commonly in a state-funded secondary setting (65%); previous permanent roles ranged from classroom teacher (82%) to head of department or senior leader (30%). The survey findings, therefore, suggest that while not all those working in supply have qualified teacher status (QTS), most have held permanent positions in an educational setting. Many bring a wealth of teaching, as well as leadership and management experience to their role as a supply teacher.

Motivations for becoming a supply teacher

Almost all the supply teachers surveyed left their permanent position out of choice, just 7% left as a result of redundancy or workforce efficiencies. However, the qualitative research findings indicate that supply teachers do not aspire to work in this market. Most do not intend to remain in the market long term, just while it works for them and their circumstances. Most use supply as a route to achieving their career or personal goals. Supply teaching is, therefore, regarded as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

A wide range of factors contributed to the decision to become a supply teacher. Over half of survey respondents who had previously held a permanent teaching or leadership position left because of 'high workload' (57%) and/or 'stress and/or poor wellbeing' (53%). 'Lack of support from their superiors' (42%), along with 'other pressures'⁸ (29%) and 'poor mental and physical health' (28%) were also reported to have contributed to the decision to leave the teacher workforce. Insight from the qualitative research suggests that these factors also act as drivers for those who subsequently enter the supply workforce:

In a small school, the workload now is much higher, because you have no support and you're wearing so many different hats. I was

⁶ Other graduates in the supply teacher workforce studied a wide range of disciplines that typically align with subjects on the national curriculum, most commonly English (16%), Historical and philosophical studies (9%), Languages (8%), Biological and Sport Sciences (7%) and mathematics (6%).

⁷ E.g. a Postgraduate Certification in Education (PGCE) or BEd.

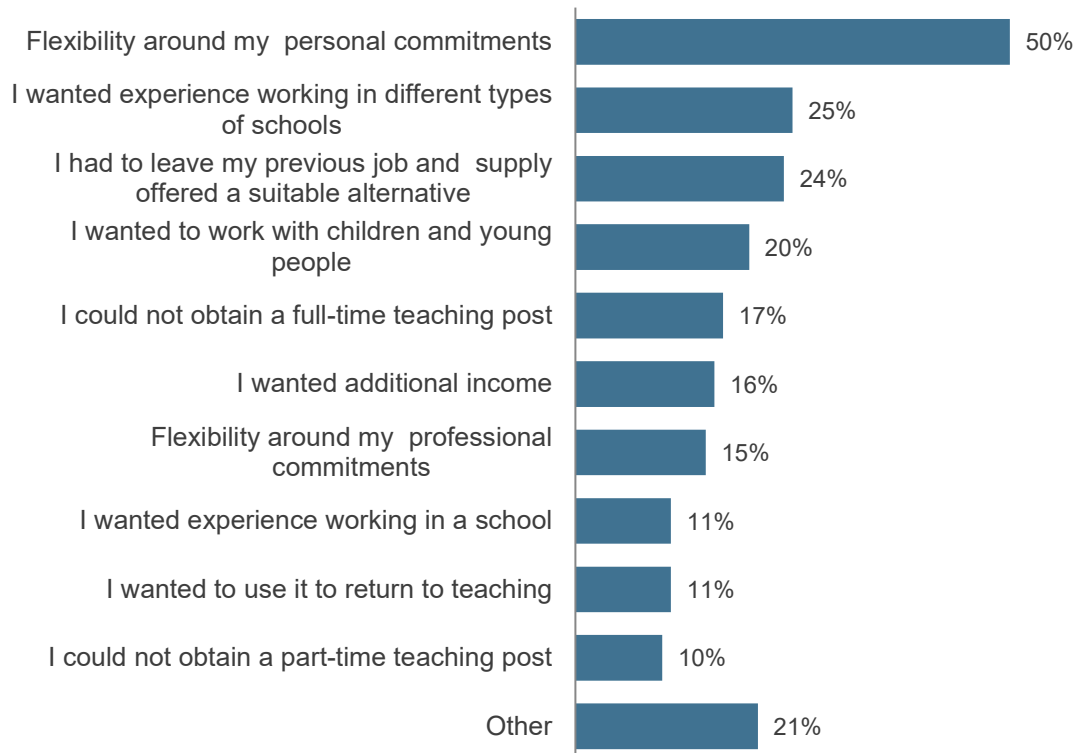
⁸ Such as pupil outcomes and inspection

arriving around half past 7...and I didn't get home until about 6. Then, my 2 days off, I'd either be assessing other children or planning for the following week. So, after 5 or 6 years, I was just thinking, 'What's going on here?' – *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Workload is a factor. I mean, what you are expected to do.it's just the expectation that you just keep giving, and that you won't care about giving up everything else in your life to facilitate the role. - *Supply teacher, Special school & Primary school*

Supply teachers, irrespective of their previous work experience, chose to enter the supply market for a variety of other reasons. Half of survey respondents were attracted to supply by the flexibility to fit work around their personal commitments (50%); a further 15% wanted to balance teaching with other professional commitments. (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Motivations for entering the supply teacher workforce.



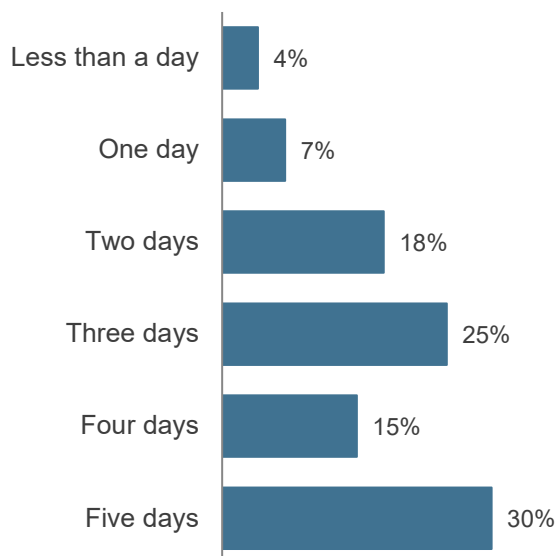
Source: Supply teacher survey. Base: 1,444

The qualitative research suggests that an individual's reasons for becoming a supply teacher can be multi-faceted and relate to their personal circumstances and career stage. Interviewees often fell into one of three groups: (i) those looking for more flexibility at work; (ii) those looking to secure their first permanent teaching position; and (iii) those looking for a route back into the school workforce after a break.

Greater flexibility

One in ten survey respondents entered the supply market because they were unable to get a part-time position. The majority (70%) subsequently worked part-time (up to 4 days per week) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Number of days worked as a supply teacher in an average week in the 2022/23 academic year.



Source: Supply teacher survey. Base: 1,444

Insight from the interviewees suggests that demand for part-time, flexible working is particularly high among teachers with young children or other caring responsibilities, but there is limited supply of suitable permanent positions. Supply teaching provides the flexibility this group needs to balance work and family life in the short-term and a springboard back into full-time teaching in the longer term. Demand for more flexible, part-time roles is also high among those in the latter stages of their career. The sister qualitative research focused on TAs identifies examples of former teachers and leaders taking TA roles as they transition to retirement. They are attracted to this role by the opportunities it presents to assume a lower level of responsibility and to achieve a better work / life balance, while remaining connected to the classroom and continuing to support young people. Others at a similar stage in their working life choose to enter the supply market because of the additional flexibility it offers, including to work only on certain days or for a certain number of hours each week and/or to not work at certain times, including during term-time.

I quite enjoyed teaching, but I'd had enough of doing it every day. [I went into supply because] I didn't want to be completely retired and have nothing to do all day, every day. As much as anything, it was to stay in touch with the profession, rather than for the money...I was

perfectly happy to pop back on that sort of basis. If I was available, I'd do it. If I wasn't available or didn't fancy it, I wouldn't do it. - *Supply teacher, Secondary school*

This preference for part-time working applies to teachers with long-term supply arrangements with one school, as well as for some on short-term supply contracts.

Secure a permanent position

A minority of supply teachers surveyed entered the market because they were unable to obtain a full-time teaching position (17%), they wanted experience of working in a school (11%) and/or they wanted experience of working in different types of school (25%). Insight from the interviews suggests some early career teachers can find it difficult to secure permanent roles because of a lack of opportunities to gain QTS near to their homes and/or because they lack the experience schools are looking for. Those that completed their ITT during the Covid-19 pandemic perceive that they are at a particular disadvantage because the restrictions in place at that time impacted on the opportunities available to them to gain practical classroom experience. This group are in the supply market out of necessity and use it as a mechanism to obtain the experience they need to strengthen their CV as a supply teacher or so they can successfully compete for a permanent position.

I didn't really have much of a choice...I wanted to work in teaching because I'd just qualified to do that. I was desperately looking for a [newly qualified teacher] NQT contract, and while I was waiting for that, I needed to earn money, so I started doing supply just to get experience. – *Supply teacher, currently working on a placement in a primary school*

I was so under-prepared after university for what you were expected to do in the classroom, even though I'd done loads of placements. It's so different when you are on your own and there's no-one there to tell you if you're doing it right or wrong. So, I don't think I would have stuck in the profession if I hadn't had the supply experience I've had. - *Supply teacher, currently working on a placement in a primary school*

To be very honest, my real reason is to gain a wealth of knowledge within teaching that will allow me to be an even more effective teacher when I decide to take on my own class...You learn different things from different schools as different schools have different

policies, different procedures. – *Supply teacher, currently working on a placement in a special school*

A route back into teaching

There is a further group, representing 11% of survey respondents, that entered the supply market as a route back into the teacher workforce. The qualitative research suggests that a high proportion of these are seeking to return after a career break caring for dependents or taking care of their own health and wellbeing. Like those at the start of their career, supply teaching provides this group with the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills in a range of classroom and/or school settings as well as to position themselves for permanent roles in the schools where they are placed.

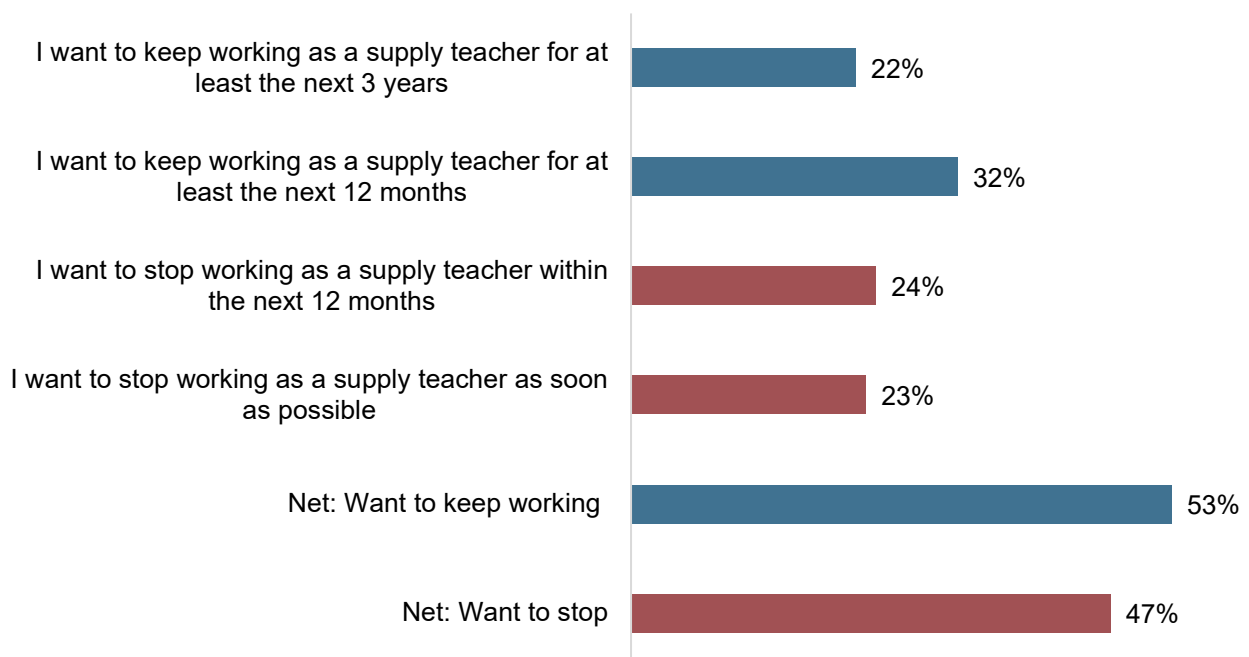
I left during the pandemic for various reasons and then decided that I'd like to step back into the classroom. I missed teaching. So, I took the supply route to see if I was ready to go back, because I'd taken 2.5 years out. – *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Progression into permanent teaching roles

Just under half of all supply teachers surveyed (47%) wanted to stop working as a supply teacher within 12 months (

Figure 4).

Figure 4: Whether supply teachers wanted to remain working as a supply teacher



Positively, just under half wanted to leave in order to take up a permanent teaching position (47%). This suggests that some of those in the supply market could be recruited into the school workforce to help address skills gaps and shortages.

If the right school came up, yes, I would consider it, definitely, yes.
But, you know, it's quite lucky that when you do the rounds on supply you do get to go and visit other schools and see what things are like.
- *Supply teacher, Secondary school*

As noted above, some members of the school workforce go into supply because they want to work part-time, either as they transition to retirement or to fit work around their personal or other professional commitments⁹. It is likely that nothing would persuade the 12% of survey respondents who wanted to leave supply in order to retire to remain in the teaching workforce (permanent or supply); others could, however, be motivated to return to a permanent role by a change in their circumstances, such as improvements in their health condition or being released from caring responsibilities.

Although not among the top five reasons, some supply teachers surveyed considered leaving the market because of stress and/or poor wellbeing (17%), high workload (10%), and poor mental and/or physical health (10%). This is significant because for many these factors also contributed to the decision to leave the school workforce and enter supply in the first place. This group are unlikely to be retained in the supply market, or persuaded to return to the school workforce, unless these factors and others reported to contribute to their dissatisfaction with the profession (particularly pay) are addressed.

I have taken the decision that from September I am no longer going to be a supply teacher, which breaks my heart because I know teaching is something that I want to do. But, unfortunately, the way the profession is at the moment, I can't face going back. If things did change where it was a better rate of pay and you could fund your six weeks, then [supply teaching] would be a role I would do permanently. But...I just need...security...,to know that I'm getting full-time pay, month in, month out. - *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Choice of placement

Schools deploy supply teachers in a variety of ways ranging from ad hoc cover for very short-term staff absences (1 or 2 days) to placements of a few months to cover a longer

⁹ 9% of respondents to the supply teacher survey reported that they held a permanent position in addition to their work as a supply teacher.

leave of absence (e.g. maternity leave) or as part of a recruitment strategy (temporary to permanent roles) (see Section 0 for further details).

The qualitative research findings suggest that there is an association between the types of placement supply teachers want and their reasons for entering the supply market. Those wishing to work highly flexibly and/or part-time are often content to undertake short-term, ad hoc placements, particularly in settings where they work regularly and/or where they were previously employed. Those seeking to broaden their experience typically seek placements which are long enough to enable them to build a rapport with pupils and develop their practical skills, while also gaining exposure to different settings and/or year groups. Supply teachers looking to re-enter the profession on a more substantive basis are attracted to longer-term placements, including those with the potential to become permanent roles.

The diversity in supply broadly mirrors the range of demands from schools. However, the extent to which supply teachers are practically able to exercise choice and secure 'ideal' placements is variable and often depends on their motivations and circumstances, including their geographical location and willingness and ability to travel. There are some supply teachers living in households that are less reliant on the income generated from their work. This group often live with a partner who is the main breadwinner or have savings generated over the course of their career. They are consequently in a position to turn down opportunities that do not align with their preferred working pattern.

I like the idea that I can pick and choose. If I was a teacher, I would have to turn up every day. I'd probably get paid more but I'm in a position where I'm not really desperate for money, you know, fairly financially secure. – *Supply teacher, Special school*

In contrast, there are those that need to generate a minimum level of income through supply teaching. As such, this group are less able to exercise choice over the placements they take. Some supply teachers surveyed were unable to secure sufficient work and wanted to stop working as a supply teacher as a result (11%). Insight from the interviews with supply teachers confirms that some would like to work more hours if they could. Nearly a third of interviewees report that the hours available across the academic year are highly variable and not guaranteed. Some seek to increase the amount of supply they do at busier points in the academic year to offset the shortfall in their income at quieter times. According to the survey data, supply teachers that were working in special settings were especially likely to experience challenges finding sufficient work. Demand for supply teachers from special schools was lower than from mainstream schools and so this was likely to have been a contributing factor. The interviews with supply teachers with experience of working with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) highlight that some seek to use their skills in mainstream settings to increase

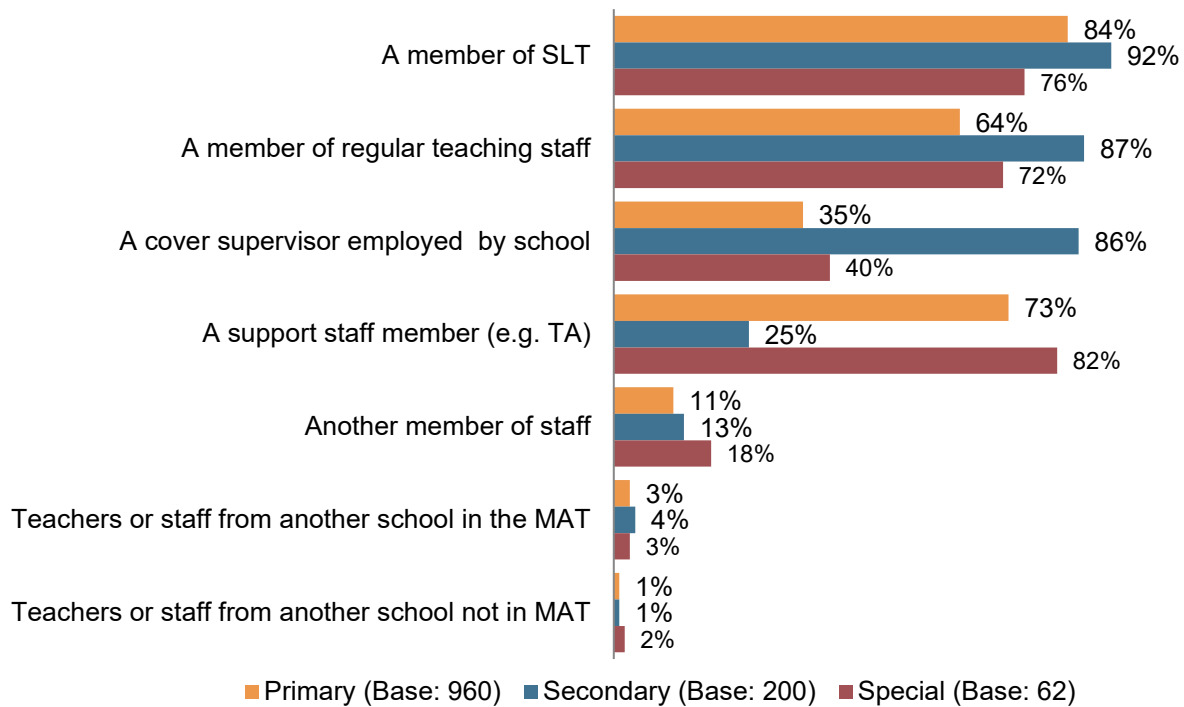
their opportunities to work because special schools are less likely to request supply teachers and would prefer to cover absence internally to maintain consistency for pupils. However, some mainstream schools can also be reluctant to use supply teachers on an ad hoc basis in classes with a high a number of pupils with SEND and so teachers with this specialist experience are unable to use their SEND skills to their full potential. For these groups of supply teachers, the uncertainty and unpredictability of supply is a key drawback. A scarcity of opportunities in some geographical areas, or for teachers with a particular skillset or subject knowledge, further limits the extent to which some supply teachers are able to exercise choice.

I've sometimes travelled further than some other supply teachers would want to for a day's work. Or I go into age ranges that I don't necessarily enjoy teaching. - *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Demand for supply teachers

In the event of staff absence, most schools draw on a range of internal staff to provide cover in the first instance. The leaders survey demonstrated that it was most common for members of the senior leadership team (SLT) to step in, particularly in secondary school settings (92%, compared with 85% of schools overall). Cover was often also provided by other members of schools' regular teaching (68%) and support (65%) staff. However, the use of support staff, including TAs, was more prevalent in primary (73%) than in secondary (25%) schools; conversely, secondary schools were more likely to draw on other members of teaching staff (87% compared with 64% of primary schools) and employ a cover supervisor (86% compared with 35% of primary schools) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Staff used to provide internal cover for teacher absences by phase



Source: Leader survey

Schools primarily use supply teachers to cover staff absence when no suitable resources or capacity are available internally or within their multi-academy trust (MAT). The decision to make use of supply teachers is also informed by the nature of the role to be covered and the likely length of the staff absence. Cost is also a key consideration in the context of schools' budgetary constraints. School leaders often assess the relative costs of using a supply teacher, paying an existing staff member for additional hours or an enhanced rate, and going out to recruitment to identify the most cost-effective option, particularly for long-term cover. The perceived quality of the supply teachers available is a further consideration, as illustrated by the following leader:

The trust spent a phenomenal amount of money on supply teaching last year... And a lot of the supply that we're seeing is not the best quality, and therefore, [we] would prefer to use in-house supply. So, [a Higher-Level Teaching Assistant] HLTA or additional hours for the teachers that we've already got or SLT, in my case. – *School leader, Primary school*

Costs of supply teachers have rocketed recently because there has been a shortage. That's had implications for how we cover. I will now cover a class where it's just a single day or a half day. – *School leader, Primary school*

School leaders report an upward trend in the use of supply teachers over recent years, and a significant increase since the Covid-19 pandemic. The leader survey demonstrates that demand for supply teachers increased in around three-fifths of schools (58%) during this period. Leaders report that the key drivers of this change are an increase in the number of staff absences due to sickness (physical illness and mental ill health), an increase in the volume of long-term staff absences, and difficulties recruiting and retaining permanent teaching staff. A minority of providers report that there has been a steep rise in the demand for supply teachers who have qualifications and/or experience of working with pupils with SEND, possibly due to higher turnover of staff within these particular roles, but also because the number of pupils with SEND is increasing.

Demand's gone through the roof! The reasons behind that, I think, are that schools have found it harder to recruit...my understanding is take-up of university places, PGCEs etc., is lower and we've seen less [early career teachers] ECTs come through... Some people got lost during COVID, people retired earlier because they didn't want to be in the classroom putting themselves at risk...and Brexit. We didn't have a lot of European teachers but there must be some implication across the country of Brexit as well. – *Supply provider representative*

Characteristics of schools that use supply teachers

Although demand for supply teachers increased across all settings after the Covid-19 pandemic, the level of this increase varied across phases. The survey analysis demonstrated that the use of supply teachers increased most in secondary schools - 78% of leaders in this setting reported an increase, compared with 54% in primary and 66% in special schools. Secondary schools also made more frequent use of supply teachers. While schools overall most commonly used supply teachers 'every or most weeks' (32%), secondary schools typically used them 'almost daily' (43%, compared with 7% of primary and 25% special schools).

Insight from the qualitative research highlights that secondary schools are finding it increasingly difficult to fill teacher vacancies across different departments. Leaders are using supply teachers to cover these vacancies in addition to covering others who are absent. In some instances, where specialist teachers cannot be recruited or obtained through the supply market, schools will deploy existing staff to work with priority year groups (e.g. GCSEs, A Levels). Supply teachers are then deployed to fill the resultant gaps.

There is also evidence that some schools use supply as a mechanism for addressing recruitment challenges. These schools initially appoint a supply teacher on a temporary basis to cover a vacant post. If they perform well in that role, the school encourages them

to apply for the permanent position. Supply teachers can also be offered posts that arise while they are placed with a school.

I did a year in a mainstream school and then I did supply after that, but after a month, or say after a term, the school I ended up in, I ended up working in for 11 years and became a permanent member of staff. – *Supply teacher, Special school*

We get a lot of people who have lost confidence in themselves, in their teaching, or they've decided to take a step back and re-evaluate their life. So, they go onto supply and then they come here, and they go, 'Actually, I really love it and I'd love a permanent job.' The main way that we lose our supply staff is by employing them as permanent members of staff! - *School leader, Special school*

Characteristics of schools that are unlikely to use supply teachers

The leader survey demonstrated that nearly two-fifths of schools had not used supply teachers in 2022/23. These were more likely to be schools in special settings and those rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.¹⁰ Their reasons for not using supply teachers varied. A minority (18%) had no requirement because staff absence within their setting during that academic year was extremely low. Most others reported that they were able to manage staff absences through internal cover (87%) and/or the use of cover supervisors employed by the school (36%). Some schools proactively mitigated against staff absence by overrecruiting teachers (16%).

The interviews with school leaders highlight that some schools, particularly special schools and smaller primaries, never or very rarely use supply teachers. These schools prefer to use existing staff, including TAs and members of SLT, to cover short-term absences. Indeed, the wider research with TAs highlights that they are increasingly being used to provide cover in these settings. Leaders in special schools perceive that supply teachers who have never worked in their school lack the necessary knowledge and insight into their pupils' needs, many of whom are extremely vulnerable and have experienced trauma. These pupils often do not cope well when taught by staff they do not know, and this can have a negative effect on their learning. In the event that these schools have no choice but to bring in a supply teacher to cover an unexpected absence, they will typically seek a TA to backfill for a member of their own support staff deployed to provide cover for the regular teacher.

Last year we had a more tricky pupil in one of the classes...I would cover rather than put an unknown member of staff in that class, or we would move a teaching assistant or someone who knew that pupil into that classroom, and then we would cover the teaching assistant vacancy. It would be a bit like a game of draughts. - *School leader, Primary school*

Schools that rarely ever use supply teachers prefer to recruit to cover planned long-term absences such as maternity leave. Schools often offer staff appointed to cover a long-term absence a permanent role, because fixed-term positions are less attractive to candidates, and consequently more difficult to fill. This approach also ensures the school has capacity and continuity for pupils in the event the absent staff member does not return or returns in a different capacity (e.g. part-time). If a school experiences severe difficulties recruiting a member of staff to cover a role longer term, they may use a supply

¹⁰ 20% of schools rated 'Outstanding' or 'Good' said they had not used agency workers in the 2022/23 academic year compared to just 4% of schools rated 'Requires improvement' or lower.

teacher on a temporary basis to bridge the gap, or in a very small number of cases recruit on a 'temporary to permanent' basis.

Budget is a final consideration for those schools that rarely use supply teachers, either on an ad hoc basis or for 'temporary to permanent' recruitment. Schools will consider whether other, more cost-effective solutions are available before turning to supply.

We would always look at budgets. Could a TA who's already in the class step-up and backfill with a supply TA, rather than putting a teacher supply in? Because, obviously, teacher supply is going to be more expensive. – *School leader, Special school*

'Temporary to permanent' recruitment is typically a 'last resort', particularly for smaller schools with limited budgets, because they are put off by the finder's fees charged by the providers.

5 Deployment of supply teachers

Schools deploy supply teachers to cover different roles in a range of circumstances, including staff illness, maternity leave, staff training and development, and performance management. Supply teachers can also be deployed when schools experience challenges filling vacancies for permanent posts.

Duration of placements

According to the leader survey, the length of time supply teachers were deployed in 2022/23 ranged from less than a day (45%) to a full term or longer (36%). Although schools most commonly deployed supply teachers for 'more than a day but less than a week' (49%), the survey demonstrated that the long-term use of supply teachers had increased in just under half of schools (44%), particularly secondary and special schools. This shift was reflected in the supply teacher survey: two-fifths of supply teachers surveyed (40%) reported that their most recent placement had lasted more than one term, compared with just 10% that reported it lasted 'more than a day but less than a week'.

According to some school leaders, the main reason for the increased use of supply teachers on a long-term basis is the challenge of recruiting staff to fill current vacancies. Supply can sometimes be more cost-effective for schools than employing a permanent member of staff, particularly in a part-time role.

We had put a job up for a day a week to do PPA management release, but we couldn't find anybody. With the on-costs, for us it was actually almost cheaper having a long-term supply – *School leader, Primary school*

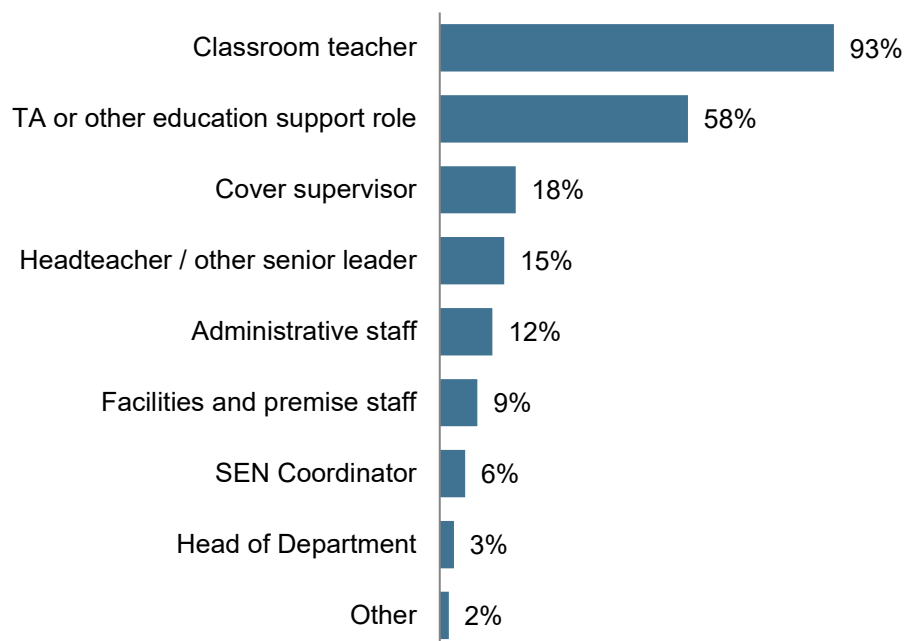
Although in other contexts long-term supply can prove more expensive, it is perceived by most school leaders to be more effective and efficient than multiple, short-term placements with different supply teachers who do not know the children or the school.

Roles and responsibilities of supply teachers

According to the leader survey, supply teachers were most commonly deployed to cover the role of a classroom teacher, particularly in primary and secondary settings, along with a TA or other education support role. However, there was also evidence that schools deployed supply workers in senior and specialist roles, as well as non-educational functions (

Figure 6).

Figure 6: Roles covered by supply workers in schools in 2022/23.



Source: Leader survey. Base: 1,050

Over two-thirds of supply teachers surveyed (68%) had fulfilled one or more non-classroom-based role in the 2022/23 academic year. The responsibilities that supply teachers assume during their placement vary according to the role they fulfil and the length of the placement.

Cover for classroom teachers

The top five tasks the majority of respondents to the supply teacher survey were required to fulfil at least some of the time, were all classroom-related:

- Following a lesson plan that has been provided (94%)
- Marking and assessing pupil work (88%)
- Supervising pupils doing set work (82%)
- Planning and teaching a lesson (80%)
- Devising a lesson following a weekly plan or a scheme of work that has been provided (74%)

Of these, the task supply teachers were most commonly required to do 'always' was marking and assessing work (39%). The tasks supply teachers were least likely to be required to do were engaging with parents and engaging with other school activities outside of the classroom: 56% and 57% of respondents respectively were never asked to take on these responsibilities. These findings were reflected in the qualitative research.

Around a third of interviewees routinely carry out marking and assessment as part of their supply placement. Only a very small minority report being involved in parents' evenings or other pastoral duties that are normally associated with a permanent teaching role.

Interviewees suggest that length of placement is associated with the responsibilities supply teachers fulfil. When deployed to cover a classroom teacher on a short-term basis, their primary responsibilities are to deliver pre-planned lessons and supervise pupils to ensure they complete the set work. In the absence of a lesson plan, supply teachers are responsible for devising and delivering a suitable lesson. Some supply teachers develop pre-planned activities in the event they are 'parachuted' into a class with no or minimal lesson plan available.

You need to have things that are relevant to each possible age group that you could be working with. Lots of little games, primary school children love games...For upper Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, you need to have a number of topics that you can just pick out and say, 'Right, we're going to talk about X, or we're going to talk about Y. -
Supply teacher, All phases

When supply teachers are deployed to cover a teaching role over a longer period, they are expected to fulfil all aspects of the role of a permanent member of staff by assuming responsibility for lesson planning, teaching, assessment and marking. They may also be required to liaise with TAs and support staff and/or parents and carers.

If I do a long-term cover, then obviously I'll take on parents' evenings and any kind of school trips, sort out all the assessments and reading and bits like that, with the help of a teaching assistant who knows the children better. - *Supply teacher, Primary school*

The phase of education where a supply teacher is deployed can also influence their role and responsibilities. In secondary schools in particular, leaders are more likely to deploy supply teachers in lower year groups (Key Stage 3) to free-up permanent staff members with the appropriate specialist knowledge to cover GCSE year groups (Key Stage 4). However, this is not always possible, and is dependent on the availability of suitable internal staff resources and supply on the day. In the absence of suitable cover (internally or through supply), supply teachers can be deployed to cover different classes in order to reduce the number of times each class is covered by a non-specialist. This type of placement can be less attractive for supply teachers, and in some cases, secondary school supply teachers request placements that require their specialism, rather than ad hoc cover.

Cover for TA and other education support roles

Schools typically deploy supply workers in TA and other education support roles in order to enable TAs employed by the school to step up and cover a classroom teacher who is absent. As noted in Section 4, this practice is more prevalent in primary and special schools because it is perceived to minimise disruption to learning for pupils with SEND. Secondary schools are less likely to deploy TAs to backfill for a classroom teacher because they typically do not possess the specific subject knowledge required to effectively deliver the content and undertake any associated assessment or marking. As such, secondary schools are less likely to recruit TAs via the supply market to backfill their own TAs in this way.

Skills and qualities required of supply teachers

Supply teachers require a range of generic transferable skills, in addition to technical skills to support teaching, learning and assessment and subject knowledge.

Generic skills

Although it was common for supply teachers to undertake one or more placements in a single or small number of schools over the course of the 2022/23 academic year, approximately half (49%) reported that they had worked in at least some schools that they had not worked in before. When asked to reflect on the skills and attributes an effective supply teacher needs, supply teacher interviewees that it is important for them to be able to work flexibly and adapt to different school contexts and cultures, given the range of roles and diversity of settings they can be deployed within. They also believe that the confidence and ability to think on their feet is important, along with the ability to quickly assimilate information about local systems and processes, the needs of the pupils and the intended lesson plans. Although most leaders are focused on technical skill requirements, many agree that the ability to 'hit the ground running' is a key skill for supply teachers. The success of a placement is contingent, at least in part, on the ability of the supply teacher to establish a good rapport with the pupils, as well as with other staff members such as TAs and learning support staff, who work in the classroom.

The best way through is having an entertaining lesson, because if they're interested in what you're teaching, the behaviour problems melt away. - *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Technical skills and knowledge

The level of technical skills and knowledge schools require of supply teachers can vary according to phase and the nature of the placement. However, insight from the qualitative

research with leaders suggests that most ideally want those fulfilling a teaching role to hold an appropriate teaching qualification. Some supply teachers obtained their qualifications overseas, and the high quality of these teachers is acknowledged by schools, in most cases. However, some leaders do have reservations about employing these teachers because they are internationally trained and do not all hold a QTS.

The lady I've got today, she seems like she's doing a really good job, but she's only internationally trained. - *School leader, Middle school*

Secondary schools seek specialist subject knowledge particularly if the supply teacher is to be deployed in Key Stage 4. Knowledge of the subject and the specific curriculum content for the year group(s) a supply teacher is assigned to is perceived to be particularly important in a secondary school context. Secondary school leaders consider it particularly important to have a qualified subject specialist for GCSE classes, especially if they are covering a longer-term absence, because a lack of subject expertise is likely to have a detrimental impact on pupil outcomes. For short-term cover, school leaders are less focused on the need for a subject specialist or indeed QTS.

We've got Key Stage 4 classes, GCSE classes, where we need someone who knows the subject content in order to deliver it well. We've tried where we've got Key Stage 3 or where we can provide work for them to just deliver, to focus on better teachers who might not be specialists. But, like I say, it comes down to who's available on the fly, which is few and far between. - *School leader, Secondary school*

In primary settings, knowledge and experience of particular programmes (e.g., phonics) are often required, along with the ability to work in a cross-curricula way. Knowledge of all phases of the curriculum is regarded as particularly important by some school leaders who sometimes find it difficult to cover gaps in early years with supply teachers who have the appropriate skills.

Not many supply teachers tend to favour Key Stage 2. They're not so bad with Key Stage 1, but they really don't like early years. One of the biggest challenges is cover for early years. We really struggle to get early years practitioners. – *School leader, Primary school*

As noted in Section 4, special schools make less use of supply teachers. However, those that do unsurprisingly seek supply teachers with experience of working in a SEND context. Knowledge and skills in SEND are also sought by some mainstream schools, if the supply worker is to be deployed in this capacity or to teach a group with a high proportion of pupils with SEND.

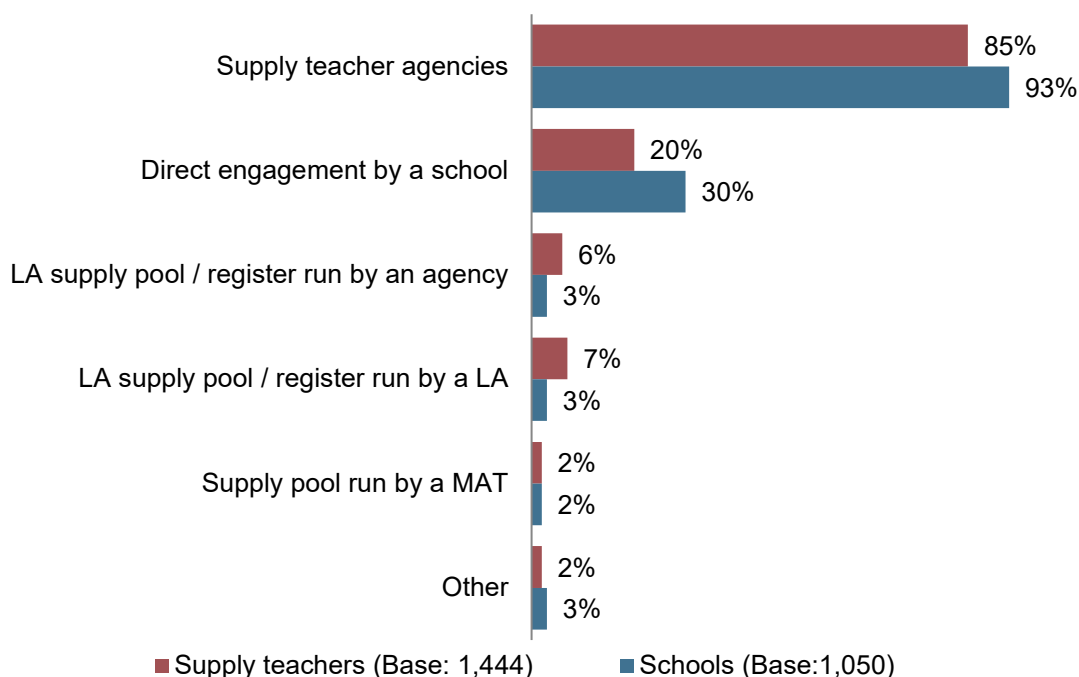
In addition to subject knowledge, the supply teachers interviewed report that they must be able to effectively manage pupil behaviour to ensure the classroom environment is conducive to learning and show resilience. Pupils will sometimes test boundaries when being supervised or taught by a supply teacher who is unfamiliar with the class and the school. Indeed, 31% of respondents to the supply teacher survey disagreed that they felt respected by the pupils they worked with in their supply role. This proportion was significantly higher among those working in secondary (46%) and special (39%) schools than in primary schools (25%). An effective supply teacher needs to have strategies to manage this.

If they've got a newcomer coming in who isn't an expert in that subject, they can try and take advantage if you're not on top of it. So, yes, you need flexibility and to be able to think on your feet. - *Supply teacher, Secondary school*

6 Recruitment of supply teachers

Schools obtain supply teachers and supply teachers obtain work through a variety of routes. In 2022/23, the most common mechanisms used by both schools and supply teachers were supply teacher agencies and/or direct engagement (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Routes used by supply teachers and schools



Source: Supply teacher survey and Leader survey

Use of supply teacher providers

The supply system in England is open and unregulated. The market is diverse and comprises providers ranging in size, geographical coverage and operating model. The seven providers interviewed reflect this diversity (Box 1 overleaf).

Insight from the interviews with school leaders suggests that schools typically engage with a number of providers to ensure they are able to obtain the resource they require. Schools' relationships with different types of providers can be characterised along a continuum, ranging from 'transactional' to 'collaborative'. Schools typically have a 'transactional', relationship with multiple providers that they can call upon to obtain cover at short notice (i.e., the same day) for an unexpected, short-term staff absences. This strategy expands the pool of staff schools have access to, thus enhancing the chances of securing cover with appropriate subject knowledge (particularly in secondary schools) and skills (particularly in special schools).

We have built up relationships with the agencies because they do come into school quite often and that's changed in the last few years. So, they come in and touch base to see how things are going, see what our future needs might be and if there's anything we can feed back to them about, which is often about the quality of teachers. I'd probably pull from about three agencies. - *School leader, Primary school*

Box 1: Typology of supply teacher providers consulted

National private agencies operating regional centres that contract with multi-academy trusts on an annual basis to service all of their supply needs. Operates a register of supply agencies to ensure schools have a pool of staff to draw upon to fulfil different roles.

Large private agencies supplying temporary and fixed-term cover along with permanent recruitment for all roles within a school in a geographical region. Some agencies focus on the education sector only; others supply staff to the wider public sector, including social work and healthcare. Large agencies are sometimes a part of a national parent agency.

Small specialist private agencies supplying temporary cover for specific roles, such as teaching assistants and SEND, in a town or city.

Self-service platforms which enable local authorities and multi-academy trusts to build up their own bank of supply staff which schools can use to obtain staff directly for short and longer-term cover.

Local authority pool run by the local authority or private agency supplying teachers to a local area under similar terms and conditions to permanent teachers.

Umbrella companies: Although no umbrella companies were consulted for this research, these organisations are fulfilling an increasingly significant role in the supply landscape. A typical umbrella arrangement involves four parties - a supply teacher, a school, an agency and an umbrella company. The agency agrees the assignment and pay rate with the school and identifies a suitable candidate. However, the supply

Evidence from the qualitative research suggests that around half of supply teachers also register with multiple providers to ensure they are able to secure sufficient work. Typically supply teachers register with two or three providers; those that register with more initially will often reduce the number they work with to limit the administrative burden.

At one stage I was registered with four or five, but I only use two or three now. I've dropped a couple basically because if you don't work for them for three months and then you've got to re-register – *Supply teacher, All phases*

However, most leaders prefer to develop a partnership with one or two providers, typically based in their local area or region, which they can work with more closely to address their supply needs.

We use two agencies local to the school, one which we've had a very long-term relationship with, and the other one is a more recent relationship. But they tend to supply us the same people because we are a bit choosy about who we work with. We have built up relationships with those organisations so that we have the flexibility to say to them, 'We want X but not Y.' – *School leader, Secondary school*

We have an agreement with one particular agency that they will be our first port of call, and then we actually use six or seven different agencies, purely because most of the time we can't find anybody, so you're going out to six or seven before you manage to get a person anyway. – *School leader, Secondary school*

A key advantage of this more collaborative approach is that the provider is familiar with the area where the school is located and can develop a clear understanding of the school, including the size and characteristics of its pupil population, and its culture and working practices. This insight enables the provider to respond more effectively to the needs of the school, including by assigning supply workers from a pool that has been successfully placed within the school before.

I don't think it's the be all..., but I think living close by and understanding the demographics of the area, even things like transport links, [is really helpful] when you've got such small margins in the morning to get somebody somewhere – *Supply provider representative*

Schools may also be able to negotiate preferential rates with providers they work with regularly on a partnership basis.

Where [the area] I am now, they have done a deal with a preferred agency to get better rates...Because we're always watching our budgets as well, we don't have enough money - *School leader, Special school*

Schools are more likely to work in partnership with a provider that they have an established relationship with to obtain cover for longer-term absences or to fill vacant permanent posts. In these instances, a school gives the provider with a detailed job specification. The provider then screens candidates and puts forward those that it perceives meet the criteria and offer a 'good fit' for the school. In one school, shortlisted candidates were required to participate in the same recruitment process to direct applicants for permanent teaching roles, involving an application form, formal interview and references. This process enables the school to better assess the suitability of a candidate and provides additional assurance about their experience and performance in previous roles.

We can't always trust the information that the agency sends us, which is why we ask them to complete our application form. We know that the application form for an agency is quite scant, whereas on ours, you have to list everywhere you've worked. You have to put two referees, one being that last employer. Whereas on an agency one, you can put anybody down. You could put somebody down that you worked for 10 years ago – *School leader, Primary school*

Direct engagement with schools

Insight from the survey and interviews with supply teachers demonstrates that a proportion leave permanent teaching positions to enter the market because they want to reduce their hours and/or work more flexibly (**Error! Reference source not found.**). As such, many supply teachers have established relationships with schools they have previously worked in as a permanent member of staff, as well as in some cases as a regular supply teacher. A fifth of supply teachers surveyed (20%) and just under a third of leaders (30%) connect through direct engagement (Figure 7). This method is perceived to be advantageous by both parties. Schools benefit from access to trusted staff members that know the school's systems and processes, existing staff members and pupils. As such, schools can deploy these supply teachers more flexibly and in a broader range of ways, depending on the presenting need. The supply teachers benefit from regular work in a familiar environment within a suitable commuting distance. Contracting with supply teachers directly can also be more cost effective for schools because they do not have to pay providers' fees; teachers often also benefit from an enhanced rate of pay because they receive the full amount, rather than a day rate minus the provider's fee.

I know one school I worked in, the head from another school said, 'Oh, I need a supply teacher' so they recommended me and, actually, an ex-colleague of mine has become a head teacher, so she asks me to work at her school as well sometimes. So, it's been either me going out or word of mouth – *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Use of Local Authority Pools

According to the leader survey, only a minority of schools obtained supply workers through a LA pool run by a LA or private agency. Insight from the qualitative research suggests that the number of LA pools has diminished over recent years and schools in some areas no longer have access to this service. As a result, schools have become increasingly reliant on private agencies. The primary reason for the reduction in the number of LA-run pools appears to be financial; running a pool is no longer financially viable for some local authorities.

The company was actually part of a local authority pool before I joined them...but I think, like many councils, they found it was just so expensive, so they hived it off as a separate company. - *Supply provider representative*

However, one supply teacher also believes that academisation and proliferation of free schools outside of LA control has also contributed to a reduction in the number of LA pools.

There's no reason why it [local authority pool] wouldn't work. It used to work in the old days. The difference now is that it couldn't all be local authority because of the rise of academies and free schools, but they could still do it as, working cooperatively with others or as a multiple academy trust. There's an organisation now that's started up [...] which is doing a not-for-profit supply model. hopefully, things like that can take off, develop, and become the norm. – *Supply teacher, Secondary school.*

Those that are still LA-run have adapted their operating model to enable them to compete with the burgeoning number of private agencies. One of the LA pools consulted has diversified its offer and now provides a broader menu of services that can be tailored to a particular MAT's needs.

Historically, we only really had two or three subscription options..., whereas now we offer ad hoc and bespoke packages set up for the customer. - *Supply provider representative*

This LA pool perceives that its model offers a number of advantages over some types of private agency. For example, its online system enables schools to log on and book the resources they need, as well as to advertise opportunities (including permanent vacancies) on its regional jobs board. The ability to book supply workers directly is perceived to be quicker and more efficient than telephoning a private agency which then identifies a supply worker on a school's behalf.

LA-run pools are non-profit making. Their fees (subscriptions or one-off charges) are only designed to cover their costs and, according to one of the providers consulted, are therefore typically lower than private agencies. Pools can also offer schools discretion to set the rate of pay for supply teachers in line with their own policy. Furthermore, unlike private agencies, LA pools enable supply teachers to pay into the teachers' pension scheme. Although few supply teachers surveyed obtained work through LA pools (7%), one of the interviewees that did perceives that, as a result, pools can deliver a fairer deal for supply workers. The survey demonstrated that pay, terms and conditions were important issues for supply teachers and deciding factor for some who had considered leaving the supply marke

t.

I work for [a] local authority, so we have a supply pool. So, we do get paid to scale which is nice, so I don't feel like I'm losing out that much. I feel like if I work every day in a year, over the long run I'm getting nearly as much as a full-time teacher. – *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Agencies are paying £20, £30, £40 less and there would be local authority teachers' pension rights with the local authority pool. So, I did change agencies and just work for the local authority because I get paid at M6 and can make contributions to the teachers' pension scheme. – *Supply teacher, Secondary school*

However, supply teachers also report that a drawback of LA pools is they cannot always provide the same volume of work that a private agency can offer because of their limited reach and penetration in some locations.

Current leaders have limited experience of LA pools. A small minority are aware that they were used in previous schools they had worked in and acknowledge the benefits in terms of quality assurance, costs and charges and rates of pay for supply teachers.

Awareness of the STaTS framework

The Crown Commercial Service (CCS) operates the Supply Teachers and Temporary Staffing (STaTS) framework which is designed to support UK schools, colleges and educational establishments¹¹ to recruit temporary and fixed-term teachers, education support staff and non-teaching staff. The framework comprises three lots: Lot 1 is a register of 104 approved recruitment agencies; Lot 2¹² is comprised of eight providers that can service all of a school's temporary staffing needs; and Lot 4 comprises four providers offering different technology apps that can be used to hire temporary workers.

Less than 0.5% of school leaders who responded to the survey reported that they obtained supply teachers for their school via STaTS. Insight from the interviews with school leaders suggests that lack of awareness is the main barrier to use. DfE has invested some resource in awareness raising activities for STaTS, but insight from the interviews suggests that time poor leaders' default to the providers they communicate with regularly for ease. Awareness of STaTS was also limited among the supply teachers surveyed – 90% had not heard about it before they received the survey and just 1% knew 'a lot' about it.

However, insight from one of the minority of school leaders who is aware of the framework and a provider suggests that perceptions (or misconceptions) about the value-added of the framework and the processes involved in using it could also be acting as barriers.

It's something that I've looked at but not something that I've used... Unless there was something really significant to persuade us that we'd be any better off using that and not following the arrangements that we've got in place already, then it's not something we'd think about. And actually, at the moment, there's nothing to persuade us that it's a better option. – *School leader, Special school*

We've also seen some multi-academy trusts that had chosen to go down the CCS route, thought it was convoluted, complicated, didn't really get the service and decided to go with the CPC¹³. - *Supply provider representative*

In contrast, all of the providers consulted were aware of the STaTS and most were on at least Lot 1. The providers were motivated to join the framework by the opportunity it

¹¹ Excluding independent (for profit) schools

¹² This Lot is split into 2.1: Contracts under £2.5m and 2.2: Contracts of any value

¹³ CPC are a purchasing consortium, owned and run by the FE sector. It is free to join and provides members with specialist advice on best spending practices and how to obtain best value for money. See: www.thecpc.ac.uk/

presented to access the supply market and potentially expand their market share. Although the volume of business generated through the framework to date is limited, and some found the procurement process burdensome, the potential benefits for providers and education providers are recognised. Membership of the register is perceived to be a 'badge of quality' which sets providers apart from others in the market. This 'badge' reassures education providers that the provider complies with required standards for safeguarding and cost structures.

What I have found useful is the focus on quality supply. It has really driven us to make sure that we are fully engaged with the APSCo Compliance+ framework¹⁴ of quality assurance. - *Supply provider representative*

It makes things much more transparent. So, we say to schools, 'If you go onto the DfE's website, you can see at a glance what our costs are. So, you know that we're charging you X amount of money, and you can see where that money goes. You can see how much [of the fee] is candidate pay, how much is pension, how much is [national insurance] NI, and you can see the profit that we're making on it. - *Supply provider representative*

One provider says the adoption rate varies according to region, with schools located in metropolitan areas more likely to be aware and make use of the framework than those in rural areas (served by this provider). However, all of the providers report that the value of the framework would be enhanced if more individual providers and MATs were aware of it. As such, they believe greater resource for marketing and communications is needed. In the context of budget constraints, members of the register could help to raise awareness through their routine engagement with education providers in their area. One provider indicates that they are already doing this:

I attend school business manager meetings monthly. So, each academic year, I'll go into that meeting and present to them about us, about why we think they should use us because we're owned by the council, and also about the CCS. - *Supply provider representative*

One provider on Lot 2 values the opportunity to engage with other suppliers at monthly meetings. This provider believes it would be beneficial if there were more opportunities for suppliers on Lot 1 to engage in this way and also to network with schools to develop a fuller understanding of the staffing issues they are experiencing, so the provider can

¹⁴ See <https://www.apscouk.org/member-services-hub/legal-services/compliance-plus.html>

identify how it could help. One provider perceives that there is scope to further clarify the nature of the services available through Lot 4.

I think the description of Lot 4 missed the point... At the time it was published it looked like it was just a supply app, like you can hire a supply teacher through this portal, but all the agencies now have a portal. The 'software as a service' technology-driven approach that we're proposing, the 'have your own staff bank' kind of idea, I think that probably hasn't been communicated that clearly to the customer base. - *Supply provider representative*

7 Management and development of supply workers

This section explores the roles and responsibilities of providers and schools in relation to the management, supervision and development of supply teachers. It also considers the role supply teachers themselves play in their own professional and career development.

Management and supervision

Around a third of supply teacher interviewees report that they are inducted and supervised by a member of the school's SLT, the rest are supervised by a department head, another member of the teaching staff or the cover supervisor. A minority of supply teachers have inductions with non-teaching staff, for example a Business Manager. Although most are largely satisfied with the induction process, a small number of supply teachers would welcome more information when they arrive at a school, so they are clear about their role, how to access resources and how to respond to any presenting issues. Those who are greeted by a member of the SLT and teachers feel most supported and subsequently view their supply experience more positively than those who have limited contact with the school leadership and wider teaching staff.

Although most supply teachers surveyed agreed that they felt respected by the teachers they worked with in their supply role (63%), a minority disagreed (20%).¹⁵ According to interviewees, the attitude shown towards supply teachers by wider permanent staff and SLT is variable. Approximately half of interviewees report that they have had minimal contact with other members of staff, including SLT for supervision, at some schools they have worked in.

Staff who are just not helpful, not friendly, think they're superior, that's the big thing. They seem to think they're better than you, that if you're a supply teacher, you can't get a job elsewhere, therefore you're second rate. - *Supply teacher, short-term placement in a primary school*

Supply teachers on long-term placements tend to report more positive experiences than those on short-term placements because they have the opportunity to form relationships with staff and pupils over time. Long-term supply teachers are treated more like a member of the team and are more likely to have access to opportunities that are available to permanent staff, such as CPD.

After Easter, I started working mainly in one school close to where I live. It's really easy commute for me and I love the school. SLT is

¹⁵ 17% of supply teachers surveyed said they neither agreed nor disagree.

very supportive, and it's a great environment. *Supply teacher, long-term placement in a secondary school.*

I was made to feel like part of the team from day one. I think, generally, in their minds, you were there as the teacher in the room, therefore they were going to treat you exactly the same. – *Supply teacher, long-term placement in a primary school*

The role of providers in relation to the management of supply workers varies according to their operating model. The providers consulted that work with MATs to develop their own bank of supply teachers and support staff play an active role in the preparation and induction process. This is perceived to result in better outcomes for the MAT and the supply teacher:

We actually treat them as if they're going to be a permanent member of their staff. We create an induction pack with the MAT which tells them 'when you arrive at this MAT, this is the brand, this is what their values and their mission statement are. This where your photocopier's going to be, this is who you report a health and safety issue to, this is who you need to speak to as your supervisor, this is the person who's going to approve your timesheet for you'. - *Supply provider representative*

As the supply teacher's employer, some providers expect to address any questions they may have about their rate of pay, working hours and the length of the placement. Providers also expect supply workers to raise any questions they may have about their role and the expectations of the school with them in the first instance.

We are their employer, so they should come to us first and foremost. If we felt it was appropriate for them to ask someone in the school, we would tell them, or we would get the answer for them. ...We're the middleman, so we deal with the candidates and then we deal with the clients. - *Supply provider representative*

Performance management

The providers consulted expect schools to monitor the performance of the supply workers placed with them and provide feedback – positive or negative – to the provider on a regular basis. Feedback on individuals is provided verbally and in writing. For very short-term placements, providers will 'check in' with the school at the start and end of the day. One provider collects feedback on individuals that are placed with a school on 10 or more occasions via a survey. Schools may also be asked to undertake a more formal

performance review with supply workers on long-term placements (e.g. six weeks or more). A provider that specialises in placing TAs in special schools also meets with its key contacts face-to-face at least termly to review their service and identify ways in which it could be improved. Another provider conducts an annual survey of the schools it works with to identify strengths as well as areas for further development. The providers keep a record of the feedback as part of their quality assurance and compliance processes and to inform their training and development plan for their supply workers. Recording feedback also plays a crucial role in client relationship management by enabling providers to assign supply workers to schools which provided positive feedback on their performance during a previous assignment.

How schools monitor and assess the performance of supply workers is primarily determined by length of the placement. Supply teachers on a short-term placement can typically expect a member of the school workforce to check in with them at the start and end of the day. The person responsible can vary according to the role and setting. Classroom teachers are typically responsible for providing feedback on a supply TA's performance. According to one provider, responsibility for feeding back on a supply teachers' performance can sometimes be devolved to the TA that works with them in the classroom, particularly in primary settings. In all school settings, but particularly primary, it is common for the head teacher or another member of the SLT to observe the supply teacher in order to assess their performance.

I would always do a drop in or my head of school or someone within the school would do a drop in during that supply time. If it was someone coming in for the day, obviously, you go through things in the morning and then you make sure that they're comfortable in the classes. - *School leader, Primary school*

In contrast, those on longer-term placements can expect to receive more formal feedback and in some cases, to participate in the host school's appraisal system.

"[if] they're going to go into a class for more than 12 weeks, then we would put them onto a contract and monitor their performance through the appraisal process. - *School leader, Special school*

We discuss each supply teacher that's here on a long term [placement] and what else they need... It comes up on our senior management team meetings and then they'll go, 'Oh, well, we'll get the maths lead in to talk to them' or, I'll go and have a word with them, or I'll check in on them. - *School leader, Primary school*

Supply teachers on long term placements value the opportunity to meet with senior members of school staff for feedback.

It was the second in charge of the department. I met with her every morning before the first lesson, and she basically was my liaison, so we spoke to each other at least two or three times a day. And she was effectively my line manager for the weeks I was there. I mean, I think that's a pretty good model, actually. – *Supply teacher, Secondary school*

A range of circumstances can result in a school providing negative feedback on a supply teacher. In some instances, the supply teacher is simply not a 'good fit' for the school, despite performing well on other placements. In these instances, the provider will discuss the issues with school and the supply teacher and offer a replacement if appropriate.

Sometimes people just don't fit into schools unfortunately, they're just not good matches. We can have wonderful supply teachers and a school will call and say, 'Oh that person didn't get on very well,' even though they'd worked at 50 schools and got on fine. - *Supply provider representative*

According to the providers, last minute changes or requests from a supply teacher for time off, along with 'no shows', are the main sources of frustrations expressed by schools, particularly in special settings:

We get the most negative feedback from schools whenever there [are] last minute changes. Where somebody has just not turned up or said, 'Oh, my daughter's got an appointment that I really need to go to.' If they tell us a week in advance, it's not a problem. We can arrange cover, or the school can arrange cover. But schools don't want to just drop somebody into the class that hasn't got the relationship with the kids because that can be really disruptive for those with special needs. - *Supply provider representative*

School leaders' main frustration with supply teachers is a perceived lack of quality. They view some supply teachers as not having the requisite skills and experience for the roles they have been assigned, for example a music specialist sent to fill a PE role. This can create a mismatch between schools' and supply teachers' expectations of the role and the tasks the supply teacher is expected to fulfil. This can be a further source of frustration and result in dissatisfaction with the supply market for both parties. For other leaders, it is the inability of the supply teacher to deliver the appropriate curriculum or to

effectively manage behaviour in a classroom that result in poor perceptions of the supply market.

Providers have systems in place to respond in the event that a school is dissatisfied with a supply teacher's performance or conduct. Schools typically raise relatively minor issues by telephone or email. Formal reporting procedures are implemented when a school raises a serious issue or complaint, including in relation to safeguarding, to ensure the details are recorded and escalated to the appropriate authority, if required.

So, on occasions where there's been an allegation, it is complete shutdown. That candidate is not able to continue to work until we have investigated, and we've got the green light that the person is okay to continue. - *Supply provider representative*

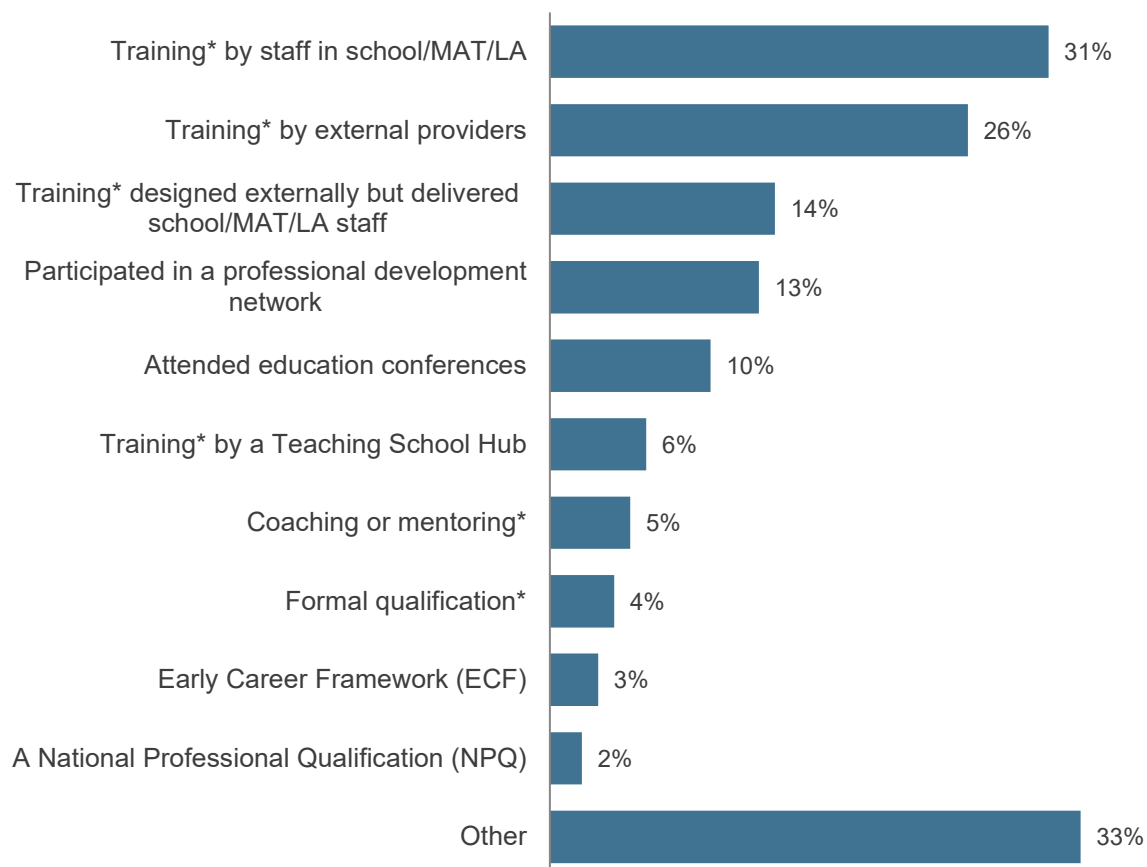
The providers consulted are in regular contact with their supply teachers, as well as schools, to monitor how the placements are going. Providers maintain contact with their agency workers via WhatsApp, text, email and telephone. Communication between providers and supply teachers is frequent initially, two or three times per day in some instances. However, the level of communication diminishes over time for those on long-term placements once the supply teacher is fully embedded within the host school. Providers will discuss any feedback from schools during one of these regular communications. The aim is to rectify any presenting issues swiftly and with minimal impact on the placement. Any training needs identified as a result of feedback from schools are also discussed. The provider may implement training or encourage the supply teacher to access suitable CPD.

Training and development

Just under three-fifths of the supply teachers (57%) surveyed undertook formal continuing professional development (CPD) activities in the preceding 12 months. There were no significant differences in the proportion of supply teachers who had undertaken CPD by level of existing qualification. Although those *without* a teacher training certificate were equally as likely to have engaged in CPD as those *with* a teacher training certificate, the survey findings highlight that 42% of those without a teacher training certificate who worked as a supply teacher in 2022/23 received no CPD that year.

Respondents who had undertaken CPD had most commonly engaged in training designed and delivered by school, MAT or LA staff (31%) or external providers (26%). Small minorities had undertaken training in the Early Career Framework (ECF) and/or National Professional Qualification (NPQ) (3% and 2% respectively) (Figure 8 overleaf).

Figure 8: CPD activities completed by supply teachers in the previous 12 months



*Excluding NPQs and ECF

Source: Supply teacher survey. Base: 882

Some of this training was free of charge – 26% of respondents had *only* done free training. However, where a cost was involved, this was met through a range of sources. Agencies and schools are under no obligation to provide or fund training for supply teachers, but the evidence indicates that some do. Approximately a quarter of supply teachers reported that the schools or trusts they had worked for had funded their training (26%) and a similar proportion reported that their training had been funded by a provider (22%).

CPD offered by providers

All except one of the providers (the self-service platform) offered some form of CPD for their supply workers (teachers and/or TAs). As a minimum, the providers ensure their workers participate in mandatory safeguarding and Prevent training annually. Most also offer training and/or access to resources on behaviour management and positive handling.

One of the providers specialises in the provision of TAs to support children with SEND. This provider recruits TAs from a variety of backgrounds, some of whom have limited or

no school-based experience. Candidates receive core mandatory training, including an introduction to working with children with SEND. Other providers offer training to support workers with more limited experience of working with children with SEND in mainstream settings (e.g. autism awareness) and in specific settings (e.g. a day in the life of an EYFS teacher). Those deploying staff in primary settings also provide opportunities to up skill in phonics and 'mastering mathematics'.

The providers promote opportunities for supply workers to access ad hoc training offered in response to situations that emerge, such as how to recognise the symptoms of Strep A, which was launched in response to an outbreak. One pro-active provider surveys its workers to capture their reflections on their performance and development areas. The provider then develops and funds a programme of CPD in response to the feedback which is open to all roles:

We do a survey twice a year...and then depending on what our candidates tell us, we do stuff on that...So this year, loads of people want support in behaviour management, supporting SEN learners effectively...and a new phonics scheme...As well as enhancing their skills and bringing them up to speed on educational developments, it's an opportunity for them to get together with other supply candidates and have a bit of a sounding board. -*Supply provider representative*

The training provided by providers is typically delivered online, accessed via a portal. There is evidence of providers forming strategic partnerships with learning providers, such as the Open University and National College, in order to facilitate access to wider learning as well as training opportunities to support their professional development and career progression. Those on the LA pool have access to the council's adult learning provision. The cost of this wider provision is more likely to be met by the individual:

All of our supply teachers get access to the council's adult learning but then it's for adult learning to speak with the supply teacher about how that might be funded, because it does come with a charge. Often the person doesn't actually have to pay the full amount because of earnings. - *Supply provider representative*

However, insight from providers (and supply teachers – see below) suggests that not all providers demonstrate the same strong commitment to CPD, beyond the provision of mandatory safeguarding.

We've got a commitment that everyone should access at least one method of CPD per academic year...Believe me, when we first started out in the sector, I know there were supply teachers that had

been working two or three years that hadn't had a single day of training. I just found that absurd. - *Supply provider representative*

CPD offered by schools

Most schools provide access to some CPD activities for supply teachers. In particular, schools ensure that supply teachers have the mandatory safeguarding training. Some supply teachers do this training via the provider, together with other required training, such as Prevent. Although the offer is sometimes extended to those on short term ad hoc placements of a few days, schools are more likely to invest in the development of supply teachers they regularly work with or those who are placed with the school on a long-term basis. CPD for those on long-term placement can include curriculum updates, phonics, or ADHD training. Some of the supply teachers on long-term placement report being invited to inset days. As such, the type of training supply teachers are invited to attend is commonly related to the role they are covering, rather than in support of their wider career development. The training is often delivered by school staff, rather than an external provider at a higher cost. In most instances, the supply teachers are paid for the extra time. If they cannot claim payment, they are often given the opportunity to attend on a voluntary, unpaid basis. The research identifies a small number of schools that do not have the budget to provide any paid CPD to supply teachers. As such, the evidence suggests that supply teachers do not have equal access to CPD.

The role of the individual

There is similarly no obligation on supply teachers to undertake CPD. However, insight from the survey and qualitative research provides evidence that some are motivated to engage in activities to ensure their knowledge and skills remain up to date, even if that means funding it themselves. Almost a fifth of supply teachers (19%) surveyed reported that they most commonly funded their own CPD. This proportion was similar, irrespective of the length of time they had been working as a supply teacher. However, those who worked mainly in schools where they had not worked before were significantly more likely to fund their own CPD (41%) than those who worked exclusively for one school (11%) or in the same schools (20%) over a 12-month period. This provides further evidence that schools are likely to invest in the development of supply workers they work with regularly and regard as an extension of their core staff.

I applied for a CPD course on The Holocaust. It was organised by a local educational trust in Vienna. I had been told that I wouldn't have priority because I'm not a teacher with a contract. I applied anyway... I attend CPD courses organised by the City Library and British Museum, the Historical Association courses. – *Supply teacher, Secondary school*

I do all my own with CPD. The only thing that I don't do on my own is the safeguarding. That is done through the agency or if the school has put it on, it's for the school. But most of my CPD is personal because I need it as well, and I do it because I actually enjoy it. Not because I have to – *Supply teacher, Secondary school*

Some supply teachers would like more CPD to be provided to them.

Professional development - I think that's something that's 100% missing from supply teaching which would make teachers' lives easier, children's lives easier, supply teachers' lives easier. Because, you know, knowledge is the key to this job. – *Supply teacher, Special school*

Remuneration

Although a minority of supply teachers are employed directly by schools, most are employed through by third party that charges schools a day rate for their time. These third parties include private agencies, LAs and umbrella companies (see Box 1 in Section 6). The supply teacher receives a proportion of the day rate, and the provider retains a proportion to cover its own costs. When umbrella companies are used, the umbrella as well as the agency takes a proportion of the day rate charged in fees.

The rates of pay received by supply workers can vary according to role, length of placement, phase/setting and geographical region, as well as an individual's qualifications, skills and experience. The 'mark-up' charged by providers and umbrella companies can vary according to their business model as well as market forces. As a result, the costs of supply for schools can also vary and schools can expect to pay a premium for supply teachers in specific subjects or with specialist skills that are in short supply nationally or within their locality.

Rates of pay

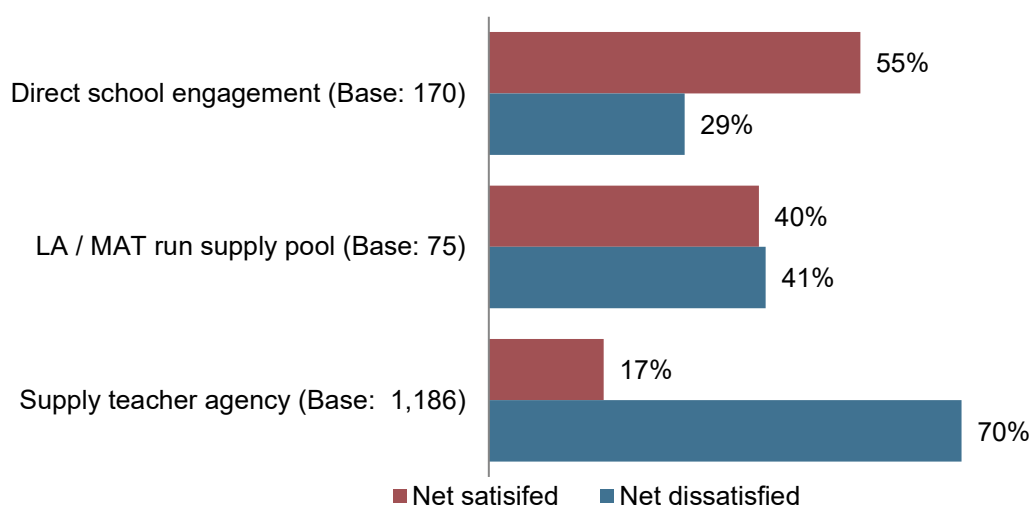
In 2022/23, the supply teachers surveyed received on average £142 gross pay for one day's work. Analysis by phase revealed that supply teachers working in secondary schools received a higher-than-average rate of pay (£150 per day) and those working in primary schools received a lower-than-average rate (£136). Supply teachers in Inner London received higher pay than those working in other regions, particularly the South West (£158 per day on average, compared to £130). Although only a small number of respondents found work through a LA pool or directly via a school, the analysis demonstrated that these supply teachers received higher average pay than those who found work through a provider (£152 and £170 respectively). LA pools are non-profit

making and so typically charge lower fees than private agencies **Error! Reference source not found.** Supply teachers, therefore, retain a higher proportion of the day rate charged to schools. Those employed directly by a school receive the full day rate.

Perceptions of rates of pay and costs to schools

More than three-fifths of supply teachers surveyed (63%) were dissatisfied with their rate of pay in 2022/23; this proportion rose to two-thirds of those that worked in a special school (66%). Although those who worked in London received the highest rate on average, this group were more likely to be dissatisfied with their pay than respondents overall (68% and 70% of those working in Inner and Outer London respectively). As noted above, supply teachers who were employed directly by a school received a higher rate of pay on average than those who found work in other ways. This group were also more likely to be satisfied with their remuneration (Figure 9 **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 9: Supply teachers’ satisfaction with their rate of pay by main way of finding work



Source: Supply teacher survey

According to the leader survey data, the average cost per day for a supply teacher is £232. However, the cost varies according to phase. As illustrated in Table 3 overleaf, secondary schools pay the highest and primary schools the lowest day rate, on average. It is notable that although the average rate of pay received by supply teachers working in secondary schools is also higher than in other phases, the difference is marginal. The additional cost incurred by secondary schools is accounted for by the higher mark-up charged by providers. The drivers of these differences are explored later in this section.

Table 3: Estimated average daily cost of a supply teacher to a school and estimated average daily take-home of supply teachers by phase

	Primary	Secondary	Special
Reported average daily cost to the school of a supply teacher	£218	£291	£270
Reported average daily take-home salary for supply teachers	£136	£150	£144

Source: Leader survey and supply teacher survey

Insight from the qualitative research suggests that leaders perceive supply as costly and, as a result, it is used only as a last resort by many. However, for the many schools that are becoming increasingly reliant on supply, the financial implications are significant.

It's normally the biggest area that I'm overdrawn on. It's quite a large pot and some is budgeted for, but there's often illnesses that you don't see and that pot creeps up. - *School leader, Primary school*

Around half of leaders interviewed report that the use of supply negatively impacts on their school budget and many have been forced to make savings in other areas, such as recruitment and investment in CPD, to meet the rising cost. Some schools develop alternative models to the use of supply in order to save money, for example, recruitment of cover supervisors who can backfill in the event that a teacher is absent.

We've worked on a model of one or two cover supervisors in our school for the last 10 years. I don't think we would be able to foot the bill for supply for all of the times that we use a cover supervisor because, obviously, their salary is a lot less than the daily rate for supply. – *School leader, Secondary school*

The high cost, coupled with a perception that some supply teachers are of poor quality, means leaders can perceive supply as offering poor value for money. Indeed, almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) to the leaders survey disagreed that supply teachers represent good value for money for their school. This sentiment was strongest for secondary leaders where 89% disagreed that they represented good value for money.

Drivers of pay rates and costs

The private agencies operating in the supply market are commercial, profit-making enterprises. Consultants target an average day rate but can be afforded a degree of flexibility to discount rates to secure certain contracts and to charge a premium for

others, for example, roles that are harder to recruit such as specialists in SEND. The extent to which rates of pay for supply teachers mirror national pay scales is variable. Some of those that pay below national levels argue that this is because supply workers are not always required to assume the same level of responsibility as permanent members of staff in the same role.

We agreed that the pay should not drop lower than 85% of the full-time equivalent salary up to main scale 6. The 15% is because they probably aren't doing the planning, the preparation and the marking. They probably aren't doing the after-school clubs, the nurture groups. However, if they are doing all of those things, our job is to then go and speak to the school and negotiate a higher percentage. – *Supply provider representative*

Others argue that it is competition between providers that is driving pay down:

National pay scales and our pay scales are nothing like each other. I think on the main scale, the daily rate is £155, and our equivalent rate is £105. If we were to charge main scale, we wouldn't have any bookings. It's a fiercely competitive industry, and there are a lot of agencies trying to encroach on this area. - *Supply provider representative*

However, in accordance with the Agency Workers Regulations (AWR)¹⁶ supply workers placed in a single setting for 12 weeks or more can expect to receive the same rate of pay as a permanent member of staff undertaking the same role.

All the providers report that the pay bill for their supply workers has increased over recent years in response to changes in the national minimum wage. Their overheads have also increased, impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the current economic climate. Some providers have taken measures to reduce overheads so that they can remain profitable without passing on the full additional cost to their clients.

Our overheads have all gone up but our ability to pass that onto the schools isn't really there, so our prices have gone up well below the rate of inflation in the past 12 months. - *Supply provider representative*

¹⁶ See <https://www.gov.uk/agency-workers-your-rights/pay>

Regulation of supply teachers' pay

The introduction of the CCS STaTS framework was designed to ensure greater parity and transparency in rates of pay for supply workers and the costs and charges incurred by education providers. However, to date, this has had limited impact on the market rate for supply teachers, primarily due to the low take-up.

Both supply teachers and leaders are increasingly aware of the differential fees as well as rates of pay offered by different providers and the impact this can have on supply teachers' wellbeing, living standards and propensity to remain in the market. Supply teachers in particular would welcome greater parity and consistency in their rate of pay.

It would be useful to know that you're going to get a similar amount from each agency that you work for. – *Supply teacher, Primary school*

I didn't realise how badly I was being paid until I compared notes! During lockdown we had this Facebook group of miserable supply teachers. We were all comparing notes of what we earned, where we lived, how we were treated, and it was just ridiculous the disparity in the rates. – *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Some leaders and supply teachers consulted are in support of greater regulation of supply providers to address inequalities in the pay, terms and conditions of employment for supply teachers, as well as the quality of provision.

Local authorities or somebody needs to step in and have them regulated so that they all offer equal standards across the board.....Because they all have a different way of doing things, like, some will expect you to have an umbrella company, some will pay as you earn, others will offer more...They all offer different rates of daily pay. Maybe there needs to be a minimum for a daily rate for supply teachers. – *Supply teacher, Primary school*

I would like to see the government or the DfE impose a fixed rate for supply teachers. So, you can say, 'This is the minimum amount an agency can pay a supply teacher' and then for me, if I thought, 'No, the minimum amount is not what I want to work for,' I could negotiate that with the agency...If supply teachers had access to the teachers' pension fund, then I think that would make the job a lot more attractive too. - *Supply teacher, Special school*

None of the providers consulted are completely against greater regulation in principle. Although one provider questioned whether it was strictly necessary, most perceive it could reduce practices by some in the market that are perceived to be less ethical:

I don't know about regulation. I think the market does tend to drive fairly consistent rates over time, but I would hate it to end up like the nursing agency world where because supply is so tight, people just charge whatever they can and get away with it, while the rest try to keep it as sensible as possible. - *Supply provider representative*

Some agencies are charging £90, £100 margin per day. If a teacher is going out to work for a whole academic year...times that by 109 and they've made £20,000 from that teacher. Now, I know agencies will turn round and say, 'Well, it's the cost of compliance and this, that and the other'. Well, compliance is only ever done once...The unscrupulous agencies will continue to find as many points of entry to try and increase their profit. - *Supply provider representative*

However, providers also express several notes of caution and identify the potential adverse effects of greater regulation for supply workers and education providers, including increased costs. The providers perceive it would be important to communicate the implications of greater regulation for schools as well as supply workers. As on cap on the level of margin, as well as parameters on pay, may be required.

I don't think it would be a bad thing for it to be regulated, and clients would probably be all for that, but they'd have to understand, and this can be a difficult thing to put over, that when the charge rate goes up, it's not because we're making more money, it's going to the teacher. - *Supply provider representative*

If the Government was going to regulate candidate pay, I would just want them to know that it would increase the chances of the cost of supply increasing because agencies will still want to make their margin. In an ideal world, if you're going to regulate pay, maybe you should regulate what the gross profit is as well. - *Supply provider representative*

DfE needs to put a cap on how much supply agencies get. They know that all schools are going into a deficit. They know that all schools don't have the money. - *Supply teacher, Primary school*

Those on the CCS STaTS framework are required to stipulate the rate of pay the worker receives and provider's fee. Requiring providers operating in the market to be transparent about how the day rate breaks down is beneficial for supply workers and schools. In particular, it enables them to make a more informed choice about which providers they work with, based on their margin, the proportion received by the worker in gross pay.

They don't say 'you'll earn', they say 'your rate'. It's language. If...you say 'your gross pay is £150 a day', then all that's going to come out of that is NI and income tax... If you say, 'your rate is £150 a day' that's what the umbrella gets from the agency. The umbrella then has to pay the employer's NI, the employee's NI, income tax and all the rest of it. - *Supply provider representative*

Different systems currently operate in different parts of the UK. One provider working nationally suggests that imposing a minimum day rate, rather than a requirement to pay the main scale equivalent, may be the most effective approach. This would provide a degree of flexibility for both the provider and the education setting, while also ensuring greater parity for supply workers.

What we've seen work the best is when you put in a floor, like a minimum for a full day of supply, and you can't post a job for less than that. - *Supply provider representative*

8 Strengths and limitations of current system

This final section of the report summarises the strengths and limitations of the current supply system, drawing on the insight from leaders, supply teachers and providers. Recommendations on how the systems could be improved are also provided.

Strengths

Schools, particularly those in the secondary phase, have become increasingly reliant on supply to cover a growing number of staff absences and, in some instances, vacant posts. The current supply market is large and diverse and offers access to a flexible pool of labour with a diverse range of skills that can be deployed to cover ad hoc as well as long-term absences of a term or more, depending on the needs of schools.

The number of LA-run pools has diminished over time and the market is now dominated by private agencies. A range of business models are in operation, delivering services at a national, regional and local level, as well as in specialist roles such as SEND. This enables schools to exercise a degree of choice over which, as well as how many providers they work with; they are also able to determine the ways in which they engage with different types of providers to ensure their needs are met. In practice, this often means schools engage with a number of providers to ensure they have access to suitable resource at very short notice (same day) while also developing partnerships with one or two providers that provide a more holistic, tailored service. This sometimes includes access to a regular pool of 'tried and tested' supply teachers that are familiar with the school context. These 'preferred supplier' arrangements sometimes enable schools to negotiate preferential rates which ensures better value for money for the school and a fairer wage for the supply teachers. Competition between providers in some areas is perceived by some providers to drive costs down, which can also result in savings for schools.

Supply can still, however, represent a significant cost for schools, particularly those in the secondary sector that rely most heavily on it. In view of budgetary constraints in most state-funded schools, many seek to exhaust other options, such as deploying internal cover, before reaching out to the market. However, there are instances where supply is perceived to be a cost-effective option, for example, to fulfil a very specific role (e.g. PPA management) on a fractional contract (e.g. one day per week). A post of this nature can be very hard and resource-intensive to fill. Working through a supply provider reduces administrative burden, along with recruitment costs (direct expenditure and staff time) and overheads incurred when schools add permanently to its headcount.

More limited use is made of 'temporary to permanent' recruitment, primarily because of the providers' fees involved. Schools that obtain temporary staff through the CCS's

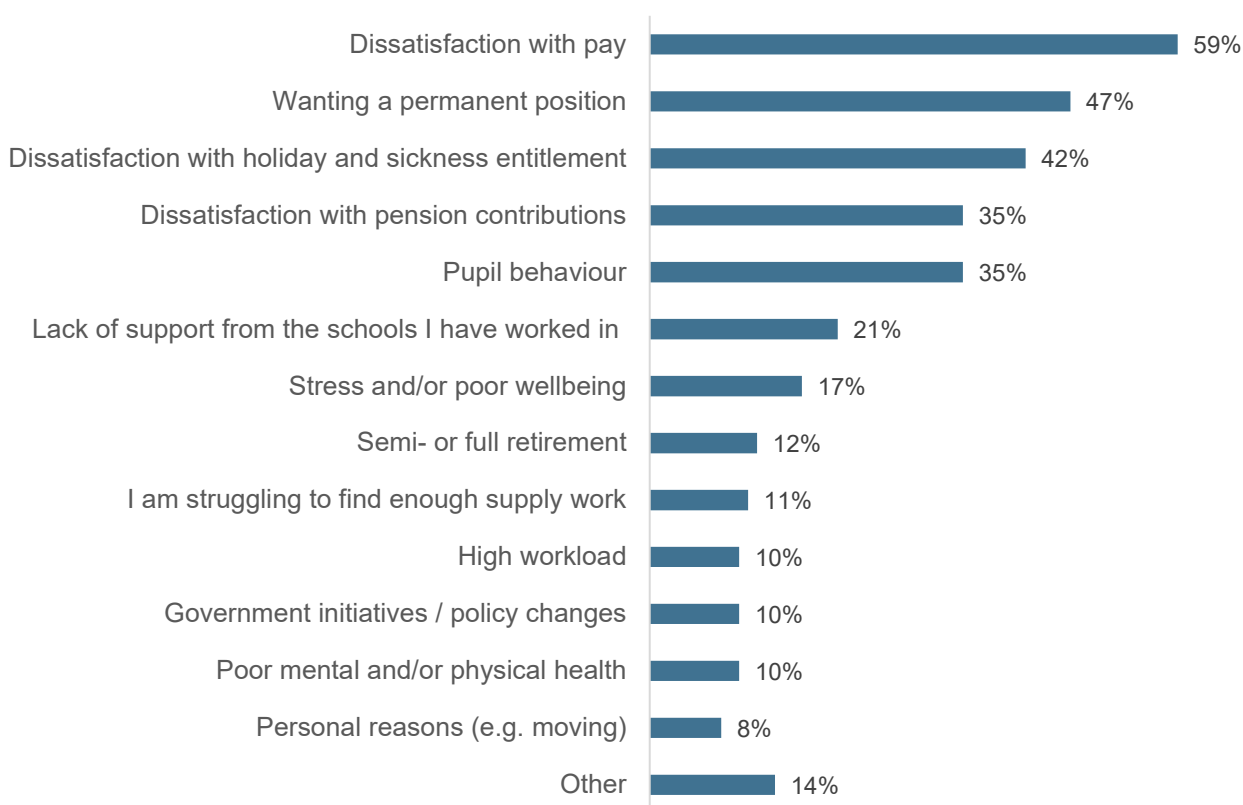
STaTS framework have the option to move a worker on to a permanent contract after 12 weeks in post at no extra cost. In view of the current recruitment crisis identified by schools and providers, this, along with screening, safeguarding and transparency about cost, is a key strength of the framework. However, many schools are still not aware of it and its potential benefits.

The market delivers a range of potential benefits for supply teachers, including the opportunity to broaden their experience, upskill or reskill after a career break, work flexibly around family and other commitments and reduce stress and workload. Just over half are satisfied with their work (55% of survey respondents compared with 24% who were dissatisfied) and wish to remain in supply (or return to a permanent teaching role). The supply market, therefore, helps to retain staff who would otherwise leave the teaching profession, exacerbating skills gaps and shortages. It also provides an initial route into the workforce for early career and less experienced teachers as well as a route back into teaching for those who have taken a career break. Supply enables this group to develop the skills and experience they need to strengthen their CV, as well as opportunities to develop their networks and position themselves for permanent positions that arise.

Limitations

Competition between providers can help to 'regulate the market' and have a positive impact on costs. However, in areas that are less-well served by supply providers (or alternative provision such as LA pools), or where demand outstrips supply, particularly for specific subject specialists or roles, prices can go up. Furthermore, lack of regulation on pricing means schools pay different rates with different providers for similar types of supply. Fluctuations in the market, coupled with the profit drivers within commercial providers, can also impact on the rate of pay supply teachers receive. Pay can be driven down (as well as up) and supply teachers receive different rates depending on which providers they work with and how they are employed (via a provider, through an umbrella or directly by the school). With the exception of LA pools, typical rates are on average, below the main scale for permanent teaching staff and supply teachers are unable to contribute to the teachers' pension. This, along with dissatisfaction with their wider terms and conditions, is causing some to consider leaving the market (Figure 10 overleaf **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 10: Reasons given for wanting to leave supply teaching



Source: Supply teacher survey. Base: 672

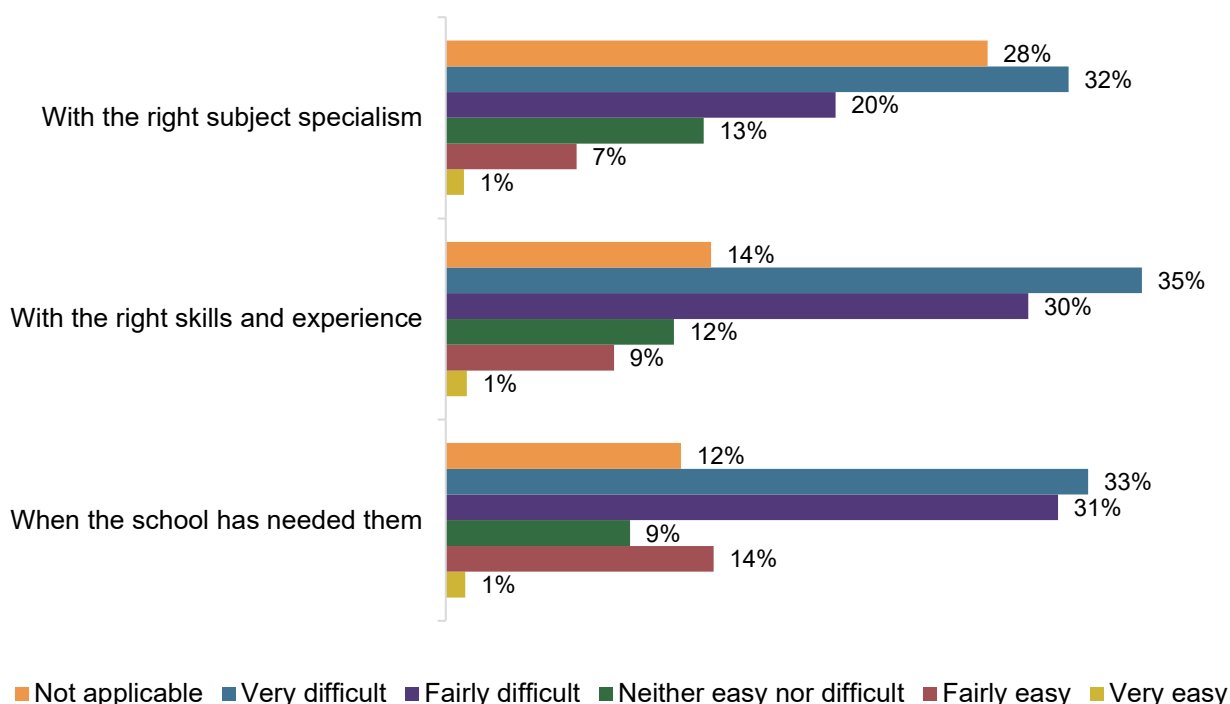
In addition to flexibility and experience, some are attracted to the market by a perception that work as a supply teacher is less pressurised and stressful than a permanent teaching role. However, this does not always transpire to be the case. Coupled with the insecurity caused by fluctuations in demand for supply and pay, these factors contribute to low job satisfaction; just under half of supply teachers surveyed are now considering leaving the market as a result. Addressing workload pressures and supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of teachers is therefore a priority, alongside pay, to ensure the profession has access to the skills it needs to achieve positive outcomes for pupils.

Although many supply teachers have held permanent teaching positions and bring a wealth of expertise to their role, according to the survey data, approximately a fifth those working in supply are not qualified or experienced teachers. Furthermore, there is no imperative for providers or schools to offer training (beyond statutory safeguarding) or for supply teachers to engage in CPD to maintain their knowledge and skills. Some schools and providers do provide access to CPD for supply teachers, but the majority of respondents to the supply teacher survey disagreed that they had equal access to CPD and training as permanent teachers (70%). Furthermore, over two-fifths of supply teachers disagreed that they had access to the CPD and training they needed to carry

out their role effectively (44%). As a result, many invested time and resources in their own development. The lack of regulation and commercialisation of the supply market is perceived by many schools to contribute to lack of investment in the workforce and low standards of supply.

Although the *overall* size and flexibility of the supply market are key strengths, there is evidence that some schools cannot always get the resources they need, when they need them, particularly at short notice (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Leaders’ perceptions of how easy or difficult it is to obtain different groups of supply teachers



Source: Leader survey. Base: 1,296

Some geographical areas are less well-served by the supply market, and schools in these areas can experience challenges obtaining cover. Furthermore, skills shortages in the permanent workforce appear to be reflected in the supply market, which results in providers sometimes being unable to deploy a suitable supply teacher. For instance, secondary schools often report difficulties obtaining subject specialists (e.g. maths and science). In the absence of a suitable specialist, non-specialists are deployed to either supervise the absent teacher’s class or backfill for an internal specialist until a more suitable solution becomes available. Furthermore, special schools are less likely to use supply teachers because leaders perceive that the current market cannot cater for their specific needs. Introducing unfamiliar staff, particularly on an ad hoc, short-term basis, can be disruptive for pupils with SEND and detrimental to their learning. Special schools

may require an alternative approach, for example, access to a limited pool of supply teachers with the appropriate skills, who can develop a relationship with the school but particularly their pupils, so they become familiar to the pupils and develop an understanding of their needs.

Lack of qualifications, investment in CPD and subject specialists are all perceived to impact on the quality of the teaching and learning delivered by supply teachers in schools. Poor quality teaching has an impact on the classroom environment and the outcomes achieved. Indeed, the majority of respondents to the leaders survey reported that the use of supply teachers had a negative effect on pupil behaviour (64%) and achievement (61%).

Appendix 1: Interview guides

Leader interview guide

Introduction

1. Please start by telling me about yourself and your current leadership role?
 - a. What are your general responsibilities in the school?
 - b. What specific responsibilities do you have regarding supply teachers?
2. Can you tell me a little about your school and the surrounding area?
 - a. The structure of the school – is it part of a multi-academy trust (MAT), etc.,
 - b. Ofsted rating
 - c. Wider socio-economic conditions in the catchment area
 - d. Eligibility and take up of free school meals

Using supply teachers in the school

3. How many supply teachers are currently contracted in your school/Trust and where are these supply teachers deployed?
 - a. What is that as a proportion of all teaching staff?
 - b. Are the current numbers and roles of supply teachers typical? If not, what is currently influencing the number of supply teachers you are contracting?
4. Has the number of supply teachers you contract increased, decreased or stayed the same over the past couple of years? What are the causes of any changes in the number of supply teachers used?

PROMPT IF NECESSARY:

 - a. Changes prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic
 - b. School-level factors such as:
 - i. Where the school / Trust is located
 - ii. Other school characteristics (e.g., Ofsted)
 - iii. General pedagogical or classroom management skills
 - iv. The needs of pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND)
 - v. The needs of pupils with education health and care plans (EHCPs)
 - vi. Changes to the number of pupils / class sizes / pupil behaviour at the school / Trust
 - vii. The school / Trusts financial circumstances or changes to budgets

- c. Wider challenges in recruiting or retaining permanent teachers such as:
 - i. Subject area teacher shortages
 - ii. Teaching staff retirement
 - iii. Teaching staff illness / sickness leave
 - d. Strike action
5. What are the factors that lead you to use supply teachers in your school/Trust?
PROMPT IF NECESSARY USING LIST IN Q4:
6. Can you describe the decision-making processes you use to identify a need for a supply teacher?
- a. Ask about different situations (i.e., short notice supply versus a longer-term requirement)
 - b. When would you cover using permanent staff compared to using supply teachers? What are the decisions you need to make when deciding whether to use a supply teacher over a permanent teacher or other staff member?
 - i. Can you provide an example where you chose a supply teacher over a permanent staff member, and then vice versa?
 - c. How do you balance different considerations e.g., finances versus pupil needs versus staff workload?
7. And how do you assign supply teachers to a specific class or role?
- a. What choices are made when deciding which lessons, classes or specialist support will be covered by supply?
 - b. What factors influence whether to use supply over another option? What are the other options available for different circumstances?
 - c. Whose responsibility is it for assigning supply teachers to timetables?
 - d. How do the needs of pupils factor into these choices?

Pupil considerations in supply teaching

8. Which pupils, if any, are more likely to be taught by supply teachers?
- a. How are pupils' characteristics used when you make decisions about timetabling supply teachers?
 - b. How do you monitor the use of supply teachers and their pupil / class contact time?
9. What are the impacts on pupils who are taught by supply teachers?
- a. Does the quality of learning differ between supply teachers and permanent staff? How?
 - b. How, if at all, has the impact on pupils changed over time? Why has this impact changed?

10. How are pupil outcomes impacted when they are taught for a significant amount of time by supply teachers?
- INTERVIEWERS – Ask the participant to define what they interpret “significant” to mean?
 - What are the specific impacts on the quality of pupil outcomes? Why do these impacts arise?
 - How, if at all, has the impact on outcomes changed over time? Why has this impact changed?
11. How could the Department for Education act to address any challenges to pupils or pupil outcomes arising from supply teaching?

Managing supply teachers

12. Can you describe the management processes your school/trust uses to line manage supply teachers?
- Who directly manages supply teachers?
 - Why do you adopt this management approach?
 - Do permanent teachers coach or mentor supply teachers? How is this achieved?
13. How do you monitor and evaluate supply teachers’ performance? Can you provide examples?
14. What training or guidance is in place for teachers to help them manage and/or deploy supply teachers?
- Who devised this guidance?
 - How do you monitor whether teachers follow this guidance correctly?
15. What feedback do you collect on supply teachers’ performance?
- What evidence is used to support feedback?
 - How is feedback used to improve the performance of supply teachers?

Using supply agencies and pools

16. How do you approach recruiting supply teachers when needed?
- Do you use any agencies or specialist organisations to recruit supply teachers?
 - What are the pros and cons of using recruitment specialists?
 - How, if at all, do these challenges differ to those you face filling professional teaching positions?
 - Have you heard of the Crown Commercial Framework for recruiting supply teachers? IF YES, why do or don’t you use this framework?

17. ASK IF THEY USE LA OR A MAT POOL. What are the key differences between using a LA or MAT supply pool and privately-run teacher supply agencies?

- a. What are the differences in the quality of the teachers supplied?
- b. Can you describe the working relationship with the managers of any supply pools you use? How does this relationship differ from other agents providing supply teachers?
- c. In what circumstances would you use a supply pool over another supply agency?

Recruitment and retention

18. What challenges, if any, do you face in recruiting supply teachers?

- a. What do you think are the reasons why these challenges exist?
- b. How would you describe the supply and demand for supply teachers in your setting?

19. How do you fit supply teaching around other flexible working arrangements for permanent teachers such as part-time working and job shares?

- a. How, if at all, do these challenges differ to those you face filling professional teaching positions?
- b. What are the relative financial implications or considerations using supply teaching for flexible working arrangements?

20. FOR SCHOOLS THAT USE NO OR FEW SUPPLY TEACHERS. How does your school typically respond to situations where others may turn to supply teaching?

21. What challenges do you face in retaining supply teachers over the term of their contract?

- a. How dependable are supply teachers? Why do you think that?
- b. If their dependability varies, what are the causes of this variance?
- c. What reasons do supply teachers give for terminating their contracts early?

22. How often do supply teachers become permanent teachers in your school/Trust?

- a. Can you provide an example of recruiting to a permanent role through contracting a supply teacher?
- b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of filling permanent roles through supply teacher contracts?
- c. Are the agency fees involved with recruiting permanent staff from supply positions a barrier? Why is that?

Developing supply teachers

23. What skills, qualifications and experience are you looking for in the supply teachers you contract?

- a. How often do supply teachers have these attributes?
- b. Do you use supply teachers without any teaching qualifications / Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)? If so, what other experience or skills do you look for?
- c. What are the differences in how non-QTS supply teachers are deployed in schools compared to qualified teachers?
- d. What happens when a supply teacher does not have the range of skills or knowledge you require?

24. What training and professional development is available to supply teachers working in your school/Trust?

- a. PROMPT ON: Who provides this professional development? Why do you use this provision?
- b. Is it a requirement for supply teachers in your school/Trust to undertake professional development, or is it voluntary?
- c. Do supply teachers take part in inset days? Please explain why you do or do not include supply teachers on inset days.
- d. If some supply teachers receive professional development, how do you make choices about which supply teachers are trained?
- e. How is any professional development for supply teachers funded?
- f. How do you assess the quality of professional development offered to supply teachers?

25. What professional training and staff development for supply teachers works particularly well in your context? Why are these approaches effective?

Financial aspects of contracting supply teachers

26. What is the financial impact on the school/Trust contracting the number of supply teachers you use?

- a. What impact has your school/Trust directly felt on supply teacher recruitment and retention due to the cost of living crisis?
- b. Where does using supply teachers save money for the school/Trust, and what are the extra costs when compared to employing permanent teachers?
- c. What has your school/Trust done to counteract any financial impacts arising from using supply teachers?

27. How factors influence the amount you pay supply teachers?

- a. How does pay vary between supply teachers?
 - i. PROMPTS: By subject

- ii. By level of qualifications / experience
 - iii. By specialist knowledge
- b. How, if at all, do these challenges differ to those you face filling professional teaching positions?

Closing thoughts

28. Has our conversation generated any new thoughts or ideas on the use of supply teachers in your school/Trust?
29. What is the main thing that the Department for Education can do to improve supply teaching?
30. Thank you. At the start of the interview, I said we would ask your permission to pass on a transcript of this interview to the Department of Education for their internal analysis. You are under no obligation to give this permission. Can we pass a transcript on to DfE?

Supply teacher discussion guide

Introduction

1. Please start by telling me about yourself and your most recent supply role?
 - a. What is/was the school like?
 - b. What are/were you teaching in this role?
 - c. What was the length of the placement? Is that typical for your type of supply role?
2. What sort of schools do you like teaching in?
 - a. What are the characteristics of the schools you prefer? Why are these characteristics important to you?

PROMPT AS APPROPRIATE:

 - i. Pupil characteristics
 - ii. Features of the school's location
 - iii. Management styles or professional relationships
 - iv. Ofsted ratings
 - b. What are the features of more challenging supply teacher placements?

Prior experiences of teaching – TEACHERS WHO COMPLETED ITT OR WITH QTS

3. I understand you undertook initial teaching training (ITT). Did you achieve qualified teacher status (QTS)? If so, when?
4. How would you sum up your experiences of any prior permanent teaching roles?
 - a. How did you find being a permanent teacher?
 - b. How long did you work as a permanent teacher?
 - c. IF NOT HAD A PERMANENT ROLE: Can you tell me what you did after finishing your initial teacher training?
5. What are the benefits of supply teaching compared to a role as a permanent teacher?
 - a. How does supply teaching fit with your current circumstances?
 - b. And what are the drawbacks of supply teaching compared to a permanent role?
 - c. What, if anything, would make you consider a role as a permanent teacher?
6. What prompted you to become a supply teacher?
 - a. How did you first find out about supply teaching and explore your options?
 - b. What do you think are the main characteristics of supply teaching that make it attractive?

7. What are the key skills a supply teacher needs to effectively teach pupils?
- Can you provide an example or two of when these skills have led to positive pupil outcomes?
 - How, if at all, are these skills different to those needed by permanent teachers?
 - What are the main skills you have developed from supply teaching roles?

Prior experiences relevant to teaching – TEACHERS WITHOUT PROFESSIONAL TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS

8. I understand you do not have a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) or qualified teacher status (QTS)? What prompted you to become a supply teacher?
9. What prior work or life experiences do you think make you suitable for supply teaching?
- Which of your skills or prior work experience are relevant to teaching? Why do you say that?
 - What are the main skills you have developed from supply teaching roles?
 - What do you know about teaching now that you didn't before becoming a supply teacher?
10. What prompted you to become a supply teacher?
- How did you first find out about supply teaching and explore your options?
 - What do you think are the main characteristics of supply teaching that make it attractive?
11. What are the key skills a supply teacher needs to effectively teach pupils?
- Can you provide an example or two of when these skills have led to positive pupil outcomes?

Working in schools

12. Thinking about the school in which you most recently, what are/were your roles and responsibilities?
- What were your teaching/pedagogical responsibilities?
 - What classes did you teach? Were the classes related to your subject specialism? What were the range of pupil abilities in the classes you taught?
 - What non-teaching responsibilities did you have? INTERVIEWER – These could be pastoral, administrative, management, specialist roles (especially SEND).
13. Can you describe what the school in which you most recently worked was like?
- INTERVIEWER: PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED FOR:
 - Where the school was located

- ii. The social and economic conditions of the school's catchment / pupil cohort?
- iii. School management
- iv. Pupil behaviour

14. IF INTERVIEWEE HAS EXPERIENCE AS A PERMANENT TEACHER: How do your responsibilities as a supply teacher compare to those in your past permanent teaching roles?

- a. What are the main points of difference between permanent and supply teaching?
- b. What do you think are the causes of any differences between supply and permanent teaching roles?

15. How does what you did at your last school compare to the roles of the permanent teachers working there?

- a. Was your status equal to that of permanent teachers? How would you describe any differences in status?
- b. IF INTERVIEWEE HAS EXPERIENCE AS A PERMANENT TEACHER: How (if at all) does your status as a supply teacher differ to that of a permanent teacher?

16. How would you describe your working relationship with the other teachers and teaching assistants at the school in which you most recently worked?

- a. What characteristics of the school or the teaching staff supported positive working relationships? Why were those characteristics important?

17. Are the experiences you just described similar, or different, to other schools in which you have worked? This includes any prior role as a permanent teacher.

- a. What are the main points of any difference?
- b. How do the following influence the different types of experience between schools:
 - i. The roles / responsibilities you are given.
 - ii. Working relationships with other teachers and teaching assistants
 - iii. The characteristics of the school.

Supply teachers' management

18. How were you managed at the school in which you most recently worked?

- a. Who was your direct manager or managers? Who assigned you work and/or classes?
- b. What support, advice or guidance were you given when you started this position?

- c. IF EMPLOYED BY SUPPLY AGENCY / LOCAL AUTHORITY POOL: What role, if any, does a supply agency / LA pool play in your management when you're working in a school?

19. How have management process varied across schools in which you have taught supply?

- a. IF INTERVIEWEE HAS EXPERIENCE AS A PERMANENT TEACHER: How differently, if at all, are you managed as a supply teacher compared to any permanent roles you've held?

20. From your perspective, what management and support approaches work best for you?

- a. Why are these management processes effective for you?
- b. What support, advice or guidance is particularly helpful for you? Why is that?
- c. Do you generally receive enough support from the schools in which you are placed? What support, if any, is lacking?

21. What feedback on your performance has been provided by the school in which you most recently worked?

- a. How was feedback provided? INTERVIEWER – ASK WHETHER SCHOOL STAFF OR INDIVIDUALS AT A SUPPLY AGENCY (IF RELEVANT) PROVIDED FEEDBACK?
- b. How have you used any feedback given? To what extent (if at all) has this feedback helped you? Why do you say that?
- c. Are these experiences at your last school common across other schools in which you've worked as a supply teacher (or permanent teacher)? If they differ, how?

Developing supply teachers

22. What training and professional development have you undertaken recently?

- a. PROMPT ON: Who provided this professional development? INTERVIEWER: The school, a supply agency, themselves?
- b. Do you take part in inset days? Can you outline what activities you did during your most recent inset?
- c. Do you have choices about any professional development you undertake? What are those choices / why do you not have a choice?
- d. Do you have to pay anything for professional development? Do you know if anyone else pays anything? What is the rationale given for you to pay?

23. IF INTERVIEWEE ALSO RECEIVES FEEDBACK: How, if at all, does your professional development relate to the feedback on performance you get from the school?

- a. How does the school and/or the supply agency assess any changes in practice resulting from professional development?

24. IF NO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFERED. Has anyone at the school in which you most recently worked, or the supply teacher agency, ever offered professional development activity?

a. If so, what activity was offered and why were you unable to take it up?

25. What professional training and staff development has worked particularly well for you? Why are these approaches effective?

Supply teacher contracting

26. Are you directly registered as a supply teacher with a school, or through an agency, local authority, or other organisation?

a. IF REGISTERED WITH MORE THAN ONE ORGANISATION: What are the types of organisation with which you are registered?

b. How did you hear about the organisation(s) with which you are registered?

c. What are the benefits of using the route(s) into supply that you use?

d. And what the drawbacks of using these routes?

27. Can you talk me through the process of registering to become a supply teacher?

a. What certification, qualifications or experiences did the organisation ask about when you registered?

b. IF REGISTERED WITH MORE THAN ONE ORGANISATION: How does the registration process differ between organisations?

28. What choices are you able to make about the schools into which you are placed?

a. What options (if any) are presented to you before you take up a supply role?

b. Is it difficult to find supply positions? Can you describe any challenges you face?

29. What happens when you leave a placement?

a. How are different decisions about terminating a placement made?

How does the decision process differ by the duration of a placement?

Contractual aspects of contracting supply teachers

30. What are the financial considerations you make by working as a supply teacher?

a. How does the pay through supply work compare to the pay you could get in other employment?

31. IF INTERVIEWEE HAS TEACHING EXPERIENCE: What are the financial trade-offs between working as a supply teacher compared to working in a permanent teaching role?

a. What are the biggest financial attractions of each employment position?

32. What are the non-financial benefits of working supply contracts compared to other types of employment contract (e.g., part- or full-time, permanent teaching)?

- a. What aspects of supply contracts particularly suit your circumstances?
- b. What non-financial elements of permanent teaching are attractive and unattractive?

Closing thoughts

33. Thinking about all we've discussed, can you summarise the key attractions of supply teaching for you?
34. What, can be changed about supply teaching to improve outcomes for you, schools and pupils?
35. Thank you. At the start of the interview, I said we would ask your permission to pass on a transcript of this interview to the Department of Education for their internal analysis. You are under no obligation to give this permission. Can we pass a transcript on to DfE?

Provider interview guide

Introduction

1. Please start by telling me about yourself and your role at [NAME OF PROVIDER/AGENCY]?
 - a. What are your responsibilities for the organisation?
 - b. What specific responsibilities do you have regarding supply teachers?
2. In a couple of sentences, how would you briefly summarise what your organisation does to someone who knows nothing about teacher supply?

Supplying teachers to schools

3. How do you work with schools to meet their supply teacher and recruitment needs?
 - a. Ask about different situations (i.e., short notice supply versus a longer-term requirement).
 - b. Can you describe where you have a good working relationship with a school or trust? What are the features of this good working relationship?
 - c. What are the reasons why a working relationship with a school or trust is less good? What has your organisation done in the past to resolve any challenges you've met supplying or recruiting teachers for schools or trusts?
4. Can you talk me through the processes you follow to...
 - a. Fill a short-term teaching position for a school or trust?
 - b. Fill a long-term, temporary position for a school or trust?
 - c. Recruit a permanent teaching position for a school or trust?
 - d. How do processes differ depending on the role or specialists of the position you are filling?
5. How is your organisation structured?
 - a. How would you describe your business model?
 - b. Does your organisation specialise in a specific aspect of teaching supply?
 - i. By phase (primary, secondary, special schools)
 - ii. By academic subject area
 - iii. By non-academic specialism (SEND, Leadership, etc.,)
 - iv. Recruiting to address short-term, longer-term or permanent teaching positions
 - c. What range of supply services do you offer? Which type of supply services feature more in your service offer?

6. What is the geographical focus of your organisation?
- IF ORGANISATION HAS NATIONAL, MULTI-REGIONAL REACH. What level of operational autonomy do regional or local branches have? Why do you manage the organisation in that way?
 - How important is local knowledge in delivering your services? How (if at all) does this differ between the different supply services you offer?
7. What factors have influenced the demand for supply teachers from schools over the past couple of years? Why are these factors important?

PROMPT IF NECESSARY:

- The Covid-19 pandemic.
 - School-level factors such as where a school is located, the school or trusts financial position, a school's Ofsted rating, etc.
 - Changes in the composition of pupils in schools such as pupil numbers, SEND requirements, etc.
 - Wider challenges for schools in recruiting or retaining permanent teachers such as subject area teacher shortages, retirement, long-term illness.
 - Strike action.
- What areas of demand are harder for you to meet? Why is this?
8. Similarly, what factors have influenced the supply for supply teachers from schools over the past couple of years? Why are these factors important?

PROMPT IF NECESSARY:

- The Covid-19 pandemic.
- Changes in teacher deployment or permanent teacher staffing levels
- Changes to teachers' pay, and working or contractual conditions (such as part-time work or job shares)
- Subject area teacher shortages
- Teaching staff retirement
- Changes in the number of overseas teachers working in England.

Your organisation [is/is not] a member of the Crown Commercial Service Framework RM6238 (also known as the Supply Teachers and Temporary Staffing ([STaTS](#)) framework.

9. Can you outline why you are/are not on the CCS framework?
- When you decided whether to apply, what were the main factors influencing your decision? Why were these factors important?
 - IF ON FRAMEWORK: How has membership of the register benefited your organisation? Why do you think that?

- c. IF NOT ON FRAMEWORK. Is your organisation thinking of joining the register? What are the reasons behind this decision?
- d. What would you do to improve the CCS framework? What changes would you make to the framework?

Local Authority Supply Pool questions

10. How do you think schools benefit from using a local authority supply pool over a supply agency?
- a. How do schools benefit most from using a local authority supply pool?
What features of supply agencies offer benefits to school over local authority supply pools?
11. What types of schools do you work with?
- a. Do they only work with local authority-maintained schools, or all schools in the area?
12. What challenges do local authority pools and supply agencies face?
- a. How do these challenges pose different issues for local authority pools compared to other supply agencies?
 - b. What actions have you taken to address these challenges? Which actions have been effective, and why?
13. What plans do you have for the future of your supply pool?
- What are the key challenges you anticipate for the future and how do you plan to address these challenges?

Characteristics of supply teachers

14. How many active supply teachers are currently registered with you?
- a. How is this pool of staff distributed across the different operational areas or specialism in your business?
 - b. How has the number of supply teachers registered with your organisation changed over the past few years?
 - c. INTERVIEWER – relate challenges back to the questions of demand and supply earlier (Q7 and Q8)
 - d. What factors have caused these changes?
15. What are the range of qualifications, experience and teacher specialisms within your active teacher supply pool?
- a. Is it important to have a range of differently qualified and experience supply teachers? Why do you say that.
 - b. What methods do you use to identify demand by subject specialism? How do you recruit to meet that demand?

- c. What are the characteristics of a good supply teacher? How (if at all) do these characteristics differ for permanent professional teachers?

16. Do any staff in your supply pool not hold qualified teacher status (QTS)?

- a. What positions do unqualified staff fill?
- b. Has the number of unqualified teachers on your register increased? Why is that?
- c. Do you actively recruit non-qualified teachers? If so, why?
- d. What benefits do unqualified supply teachers offer compared to qualified teachers?
- e. Apart from a qualification, how else does your cohort of unqualified supply teachers differ to those who are qualified?

17. What are the different methods you use to recruit teachers onto your pool of staff?

- a. What assessment activities or safeguarding/ vetting procedures does your organisation operate?
- b. What happens if an applicant fails an assessment or vetting procedure?
- c. Do recruitment methods differ depending on who you are looking to recruit (i.e., by experience, phase, subject, etc.)? How do methods differ?
- d. Are using overseas recruitment? What shortages (by subject, specialist skills, etc.) are overseas teachers filling?

Managing supply teachers

18. Can you describe how you manage supply teachers?

- a. What aspects of a supply teacher's role do you manage, and what is managed by the school or trust in which they are placed?
- b. What are the management processes you use with supply staff?
- c. Do any management processes differ by staff characteristics? If so, how do those processes differ by staff characteristics?

19. How do you monitor and evaluate supply teachers' performance? Can you provide examples?

- a. What quality assurances processes do you have in place to manage teachers' performance?
- b. What happens when a teacher in your supply pool performs below your quality thresholds?

20. What feedback do you collect on supply teachers' performance?

- a. What evidence is used to support feedback?

- b. How is feedback used in your management of supply teachers? Can you provide an example of what you've done in response to good feedback on performance, and what you've done in response to bad feedback?
- c. Do you visit or monitor supply teachers' performance in the school? If so, how do you do this? How is any evidence collected used?

21. What, if any, training or professional development does your organisation offer to teachers on your supply pool?

- a. Are there any specific circumstances in which training or professional development is offered? If so, what are these circumstances?
- b. Who provides any professional development? Why do you use this provision?
- c. Do you signpost or guide teachers on your supply pool to any professional development or training? What guidance do you provide?
- d. How is any professional development for supply teachers funded?
- e. How do you assess the quality of professional development offered to supply teachers?

Financial aspects of contracting supply teachers

INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION: The last few questions are about the financial aspects of offering supply teacher services. We do not want to collect commercially sensitive data. We are interested in your wider views on the factors that influence costs and pricing for supply teacher services.

22. Do you use differential pricing for different roles, experience or qualifications in your teacher supply services?

- a. Which of your services or staff come at a higher price? What are the factors that influence your prices?
- b. What factors or operational costs do you consider when you set your prices?
- c. How (if at all) are national teacher pay scales / regional pay differentials reflected within your pricing?
- d. What non-financial benefits can you offer supply teachers and/or the schools that use your services?

23. How have your costs and financial overheads changed over the past few years?

- a. What factors have led to any changes in your pricing model?
- b. What are the most significant cost constraints you face? What costs do you have to pass on to schools to remain a viable business?
- c. What elements of demand from schools exert the strongest influence on your pricing?

24. Are there any regulatory or voluntary frameworks that influence how you price your teacher supply and recruitment services?

- a. What are these frameworks and why are they important?
- b. Should pay for supply teachers be regulated? Why do you think that?

Closing thoughts

- 25. Has our conversation generated any new thoughts or ideas on an aspect of supply teaching?
- 26. What is the main thing that the Department for Education can do to improve the market for supply teaching?
- 27. Thank you. At the start of the interview, I said we would ask your permission to pass on a transcript of this interview to the Department of Education for their internal analysis. You are under no obligation to give this permission. Can we pass a transcript on to DfE?



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