

P-05-805 Fair Deal for Supply Teachers, Correspondence – National Education Unions (NEU) Cymru to Committee, 24.06.19

We are grateful for the further opportunity to respond to Mrs Jones' petition. For ease of reference we propose dealing with the Chair's additional points in the order that they have arisen.

1. The viability of a public sector solution for employing supply teachers in Wales, for example in a similar vein to the system which operates in Northern Ireland, or the recent pilot project based on cluster arrangements

The NEU and its predecessor unions, NUT and ATL have always considered that a public sector solution similar to that operated in Northern Ireland to be a viable solution. Reference was made to this possibility at the earliest opportunity when gathering evidence for the CYPE Inquiry that reported as long ago as December 2015. Similar representations were made to the panel charged with looking at those recommendations and has since been repeated at Supply Teacher Task Group meetings. Whilst we have heard Welsh Government concerns regarding the legality of such action they have never provided, to us at least, detail of any legislative section or precedent which would preclude such action. This seemed to be more of a case of determining whether there was a will to venture along that course..

We were pleased to note the establishment of the pilot project which is an opportunity to do something different and ensure that supply teachers were paid the correct salary. Obviously this project was limited as regards scope and experience of teachers involved but it does evidence the ability to find a viable solution.

A reliable public sector or cluster solution to this issue could resolve an issue ensuring provision of high quality, trained and motivated staff to fill absences or other gaps in education provision which must be to the benefit of all.

2. The improvements which could potentially arise out of new framework contract arrangements developed by the National Procurement Service including letting the contract on the basis of individual local authority 'lots', a minimum daily pay rate and greater transparency over agency fees)

The new framework contract must necessarily be monitored closely and carefully to ensure that agencies signed up to the agreement abide fully with its requirements. The number of agencies involved may prove to be both a bonus and a potential pitfall. The former because it is clear that the agencies consider that it is a way forward if they are to continue providing supply teacher solutions to Welsh schools. The latter because the sheer number may provide opportunity for the organisations involved to develop ways around the agreement. We have seen in the past both subtle and not so subtle ways of circumnavigating legal obligations hence the need for careful monitoring of the whole process.

The NEU policy however is that supply teachers should be paid in accordance with their experience rather than at a flat rate. We do not consider that this would

discourage schools from utilising more experienced supply teachers. Rather it will provide choice and opportunity to fulfil the schools actual needs and requirements.

3. Any potential opportunities or risks for supply teaching arising from the devolution of pay and conditions for teachers

We are currently in the process of finding our feet as a country in respect of devolved pay for teachers. It is our view that teaching unions, employers and Welsh Government should grasp this opportunity to devise a way where supply teacher interests can be protected within a 'made in Wales' approach to teacher remuneration. We have to recognise that supply teachers have always had an important role to play in the provision of education in our schools. It is only right and fair that we should seek to ensure that they are correctly rewarded for their endeavours, are provided with professional development opportunities and access to a pension. Whilst the first remit letter to the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body focused upon pay only, future remits will provide the opportunity to look at the issue in some detail and we cannot afford to miss that chance to develop conditions of service that also seek to protect supply teachers securing work within the public sector.

4. Arrangements for professional learning for supply teachers, particularly in light of current education reforms.

There are significant changes occurring within education in Wales and it would be folly to ignore an important part of the workforce when providing training on such matters as the New Curriculum and ALN Transformation to name but 2. Whilst money has been set aside totalling £24m over the next 2 years, those sums should include an element for the supply workforce who must always be similarly considered in future.

NEU Cymru considers that it is vital that teachers maintain and update their professional learning. This is an opportunity to ensure that occurs in a structured and cost effective way.

Supply teachers needs have, for too long, been ignored with the result that private companies have profited from public money earmarked for education. Successive Education Ministers have failed to tackle this situation adequately or at all. This represents a golden opportunity to rectify that anomaly.

Yours sincerely

David Evans

Wales Secretary

NEU Cymru