

Welsh Parliament

Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Supply and Demand: Covering Teachers' Absence

December 2024



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Supply and Demand: Covering Teachers' Absence

December 2024



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddPAPA

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Chair's foreword

It is said that 'a good teacher can change everything'. But when that teacher is unavoidably absent the quality of the teaching cover really matters. We must provide the best possible provision covering teaching absences in the classroom so that children's education does not suffer unduly.

It is essential therefore that we have an adequate supply of adequately paid, qualified and motivated supply teachers, across all ages and subjects, in both Welsh and English.

Ten years ago, our predecessor Committee published its report on Covering Teacher's Absence following work by both Estyn and the Auditor General.

Since then, further work has been taken forward by the Auditor General and the Senedd's Petitions Committee.

For its part, the Welsh Government committed in its Programme for Government to developing a sustainable employment model for supply teachers with fair work at its heart.

In 2020, the Auditor General reported that:

'The Welsh Government has taken action to support supply staff, tackle the root causes of teacher absence from the classroom, improve the management of absence and address some key concerns about agency contracts. However, gaps in data mean that it is still difficult to say whether some of these actions are having the intended effects.'

Four years on, whilst the government has taken action in some areas, those 'gaps in data' remain.

Despite important steps being taken, the Committee is concerned that progress is too slow and that where action is being taken, the lack of monitoring means the government cannot be sure if its approach is having the desired impact.

Importantly, the committee would like to see the long discussed 'national supply pool' made a reality nationwide and that all supply teachers have access to the enhanced pay, pension and training provision of their colleagues.

The cohort of children who were embarking on their school journey back in 2014 will now be taking their GCSEs. They and the children who follow them cannot afford the current rate of progress.

Mark Isherwood MS,

Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

1. Background

Auditor General reports

1. The Auditor General for Wales published a report on covering teachers' absence in 2020¹, which followed up on the work of his predecessor in 2013². A previous Public Accounts Committee had also reported on this topic in 2014³. He recommended, in relation to ensuring the quality and sufficiency of supply teachers for schools, that the Welsh Government:

- reinforces in its policy development and implementation that effective management of staff absence is fundamental to ensure positive learner outcomes
- sets out some clear longer-term measures of success against which progress in improving the quality and sufficiency of supply teachers can be judged.
- works with the Education Workforce Council, regional education consortia and agencies to promote the availability of training and resources to supply teachers and learning support workers, particularly as part of its work to prepare the teaching profession for the curriculum reform roll-out from September 2022.
- clarifies if schools can arrange enough cover to release staff to prepare for the roll-out of the new curriculum from September 2022 as well as responding to demands resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. This is particularly important for Welsh-medium schools and subjects where supply shortages already exist.

2. The Welsh Government accepted points one, three and four of these recommendations but it did not accept fully the second recommendation.

3. In relation to the national framework contract for agency staff, the Auditor General concluded that the 2019-2022 national procurement framework for agency staff had benefits for learners and schools as well as supply teachers and recommended that the Welsh Government:

¹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), November 2020

² Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence](#), September 2013

³ Public Account Committee, [Covering Teachers Absence](#), May 2014

puts in place monitoring arrangements for the contract's operation to ensure that supply teachers, cover supervisors and learning support workers are working within their role description;

encourages schools to use its national contract for agency staff to benefit from its quality standards and safeguarding arrangements; and

monitors the rate of take-up of its national contract for agency staff to check if schools are switching to using agencies outside of the contract's requirements.

4. The Welsh Government accepted points two and three of this recommendation. It indicated that it did not accept point one (although it has since taken certain action).⁴

Petitions Committee

5. In March 2021, during the Fifth Senedd, the Petitions Committee published a report from its inquiry into a "Fair Deal for Supply Teachers" petition⁵. It made four recommendations, echoing some of those of the Auditor General. These were:

Recommendation 1. That the next Welsh Government should keep the impact that the National Procurement Services Framework Agreement for the provision of temporary workers and supply teachers, awarded in September 2019, under close review in order to fully understand its impact on the pay and conditions of the supply teaching workforce.

Recommendation 2. As recommended by Audit Wales, the Welsh Government should monitor the rate of take-up of the Framework Agreement to understand whether schools are using agencies outside of that contract, and in what numbers.

Recommendation 3. Alongside this, the next Welsh Government should give further consideration to alternative arrangements for supporting schools to find and employ supply teachers, including direct employment and the introduction of centralised or regional supply arrangements. We consider that a public sector solution would have significant advantages over the current model.

⁴ Auditor General [Letter to the Committee](#) October 2023, paragraph 24.

⁵ Petitions Committee: [Fair Deal for Supply Teachers](#), March 2021.

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should remit the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body to consider the pay and conditions of supply and temporary teachers as part as part of its responsibilities.

Auditor General's letter

6. In October 2023, the Auditor General wrote to this Committee setting out findings from his audit of action taken in response to his 2020 report, and certain wider developments. The letter explained that the previous Public Accounts Committee did not undertake any inquiry work following the 2020 report.⁶

7. The letter concluded that the Welsh Government had taken a range of actions in response to the Auditor General's 2020 recommendations. However, reflecting similar issues to those raised in the 2020 report, gaps in data, for example, on take-up of professional learning opportunities, a lack of evaluation to date and the absence of a clear picture of what constitutes good quality and sufficient supply cover across the education system, meant it was not clear if all actions had been effective.

8. The letter did not make any new recommendations, but it did set out some general expectations for the Welsh Government to continue monitoring various issues. Specifically, the letter made the following headline points :

Ensuring the quality and sufficiency of supply teachers for schools

- The Welsh Government has publicised its guidance on managing attendance of the school workforce and improved the methodology for collecting data on teachers' sickness absence but there remains no data on the extent of absence for other reasons.
- Schools are ultimately responsible for ensuring cover is available in the classroom and the quality of teaching, but the Welsh Government has not set out how it will know if its own supporting actions are effective.
- The Welsh Government has taken steps to provide access to professional learning opportunities for supply teachers and cover staff but there is no data on their take-up or its impact.

⁶ Auditor General [Letter to the Committee](#) October 2023

- There continue to be reports of shortages of suitable cover in some areas, subjects, and Welsh-medium, while the overall number of registered supply teachers has fallen.

National framework contract for agency staff

- While it has not put in place any systematic monitoring, since October 2020 the Welsh Government has not been informed of any instances of supply teachers or other cover staff being asked to work outside their advertised role and has reinforced its expectations.
- Use of the national framework contract has increased slightly from an already high rate, so more supply cover arrangements are benefiting from its safeguarding and employment requirements
- Schools and local authorities spent £101 million on agency staff in education through the framework contract in 2022-23. This was just over 10% more in real terms than in 2021-22 and over three times more than in 2018-19 under the previous contract
- Pay for agency supply teachers has increased, with the minimum daily rate for supply teachers employed through the contract rising to £152 in May 2023
- The Welsh Government has established a new national framework contract, building on the 2019/20 - 2022/23 arrangements but with further enhancements in the professional learning offer and employment safeguards
- Supply teachers' representatives are cautiously optimistic about the Welsh Government's new option for schools and local authorities to directly employ supply teachers through the National Supply Pool for Wales which provides access to the teachers' pension fund, but likely uptake is unknown, and costs will be higher than currently

9. After considering the letter, the Committee decided to take further evidence from the Welsh Government. The Committee held an evidence session with the Welsh Government on 21 February 2024. Subsequently, the Committee wrote to Estyn to seek their views on the current position in Wales, with reference to their

own functions and inspection work.⁷ The Committee considered this response from Estyn⁸ as well as further written evidence from the Welsh Government⁹.

⁷ PAPAC [Letter from the Public Accounts and Administration Committee to Estyn](#), 22 February 2024

⁸ Estyn, [Letter from Estyn](#), March 2024.

⁹ Welsh Government, [letter from Welsh Government](#) March 2024.

2. Current picture of teacher absence and supply teacher availability

Do we have the right data?

10. The Auditor General's 2020 report concluded that despite action being taken by the Welsh Government to address teacher absence:

"... gaps in data mean that it is still difficult to say whether some of these actions are having the intended effects."¹⁰

11. This message was reiterated in the Auditor General's letter to the Committee:

*"Our previous reports have highlighted the lack of information on the extent of teachers' absence from the classroom other than for reasons of sickness. This continues to be the case."*¹¹

12. Estyn confirmed to the Committee that it does not collect this information:

*"During inspection and monitoring activity we discuss teacher absence and its impact on pupils, but we don't collect information about the use of supply teachers."*¹²

Non-sickness related absence

13. In oral evidence to the Committee, Sioned Evans, the Director General for public services and Welsh language in the Welsh Government, indicated that

*"The 2021 national education workforce survey...identified workload concerns as being the main issue, other than pure sickness, for teacher absence."*¹³

¹⁰ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), November 2020

¹¹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering teachers' absence: Follow-up 2023](#), October 2023

¹² Estyn, [Letter from Estyn](#), March 2024.

¹³ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 53

14. Sioned Evans described how the Welsh Government is taking action to address the issue of absence due to workload issues through the creation of a strategic workload coordination group to:

“oversee all issues relating to reducing workload and bureaucracy in relation to schools...There was also a ministerial statement on 24 November¹⁴ around reducing workload and bureaucracy for school staff, and that referred to workload impact assessments.”¹⁵

15. Owain Lloyd, the Welsh Government’s Director of Education and Welsh Language, described action being taken in a number of areas to reduce workload and that the government is:

“working very closely with local authorities, with Estyn, with consortia, to try and streamline some of our funding streams to try and reduce some of the reporting requirements that are on schools and local authorities. I think there is a range of things that we’re looking at. There’s no one silver bullet.”¹⁶

16. However, Welsh Government oral evidence also indicated that there is no monitoring of absence levels for reasons other than sickness and therefore no indication of an acceptable level of such absence, or of the trends in this area.¹⁷

17. The Auditor General commented in his letter that:

“The Welsh Government has publicised its guidance on managing attendance of the school workforce and improved the methodology for collecting data on teachers’ sickness absence but there remains no data on the extent of absence for other reasons.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Welsh Government [Written Statement: Update - reducing workload and bureaucracy for school staff](#) November 2024

¹⁵ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 53

¹⁶ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 61

¹⁷ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 67

¹⁸ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers’ Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023.

Sickness absence rates

18. The Auditor General's letter noted that:

"From 2020/21, the Welsh Government improved the methodology for collecting data on sickness absence, providing for greater coverage. Reporting is also now on an academic year rather than calendar year basis. These changes mean that we cannot directly compare teachers' sickness absence data from 2020/21 onwards with earlier years. Data for 2021/22 shows that sickness absence was higher in 2021/22 than 2020/21 on several indicators."¹⁹

19. More recent figures on sickness absence rates for the 2022/23 academic year became available after the Committee's evidence session. Care must be taken in interpreting any trend from these figures because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The figures show that in three of the four data sets highlighted by the Auditor General, sickness absence has improved slightly since 2021/22 but remain higher than 2020/21²⁰:

- In 2022/23, 35,880 periods of sickness absence were either opened or closed. This is a slight improvement on 2021/22 (38,900) but still more than twice as many as in 2020/21 (17,475).
- In 2022/23, 60.9% of teachers took at least one period of sickness absence. This shows a small improvement from the 2021/22 figure of 65.2% but remains higher than 2020/21 (40%).
- In 2022/23, 7.0% of teachers lost more than 20 working days to sickness. This is a marginal improvement from 2021/22 (8.3%) but higher than 5.5% in 2020/21.

20. However, in 2022/23 an average of 11.3 working days were lost per teacher who took absence, down from 12.8 in 2021/22 and 11.9 in 2020/21.

Our view

21. The latest figures show that sickness absence remains a concern. Whilst the changes in the way data is collected and the impact of the pandemic mean this

¹⁹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 6

²⁰ StatsWales [Teacher sickness absence \(SWAC\)](#)

data should be interpreted with care, the evolving picture needs to be closely monitored.

22. The Committee is concerned that the continued lack of data in this area means that the impact of the roll-out of the curriculum, or other reasons for absence other than sickness, remain an unknown and inhibit the ability of the Welsh Government to plan effectively, both generally and specifically in subject and geographical areas of shortage.

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government should as a matter of priority address the lack of monitoring and reporting on the extent of teacher's absence from the classroom for reasons other than sickness.

Supply teacher availability

23. In his letter, the Auditor General highlighted the challenges schools and local authorities face in finding adequate cover, including shortages of suitable cover in some areas, subjects, and through the medium of Welsh:

*"All seven directors of education...highlighted examples affecting rural areas, secondary schools, Welsh medium, and some subjects. These gaps also mirror areas where there have been shortfalls in recruiting to initial teacher education, for example for secondary education and Welsh."*²¹

24. The Director of Education and Welsh Language acknowledged these specific issues:

*"the recruitment and retention of teachers is, on the whole, quite stable. But, certainly, we are seeing difficulties and challenges in terms of recruiting teachers in certain subjects ... and in certain parts of Wales as well. And I think that that is certainly true when it comes to the Welsh language, but there are also other subjects in the secondary sector—maths, for example—where it is a challenge for schools."*²²

²¹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraphs 16 & 17.

²² Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 72

25. The specific issues in relation to Welsh language supply teaching was also highlighted in the Auditor General's 2020 report on the new curriculum for Wales:

*"The Welsh Government's ambitions are threatened by a longstanding lack of teachers who can teach Welsh and teach other subjects through the medium of Welsh."*²³

26. In relation to these specifics, Mr Lloyd said:

*"There is a challenge in terms of recruiting people who are bilingual into the sector as teachers. We do have an education workforce plan in terms of the Welsh language, which was published about two years ago. There are various things in that that we're trying to do in order to tackle the situation".*²⁴

27. Mr Lloyd further identified that *'there are rural geographical areas where there is a specific problem.'*²⁵

28. The most recent figures available to the Committee, at the time of the evidence session, were the annual education workforce statistics for Wales 2023²⁶.

29. The Auditor General's letter highlighted that there had been a 16.6% reduction in the overall number of registered supply teachers between 2020 and 2023, (from 4,635 in 2020 to 3,867 in 2023). The reasons he identifies for this include the impact of supply teachers moving to other sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic and supply teachers and learning support workers being recruited to new roles created by schools using funding from the Welsh Government's 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards' programme to support pupils most affected by the pandemic.²⁷

²³ Auditor General for Wales, [The new Curriculum for Wales](#), May 2022, para 3.6.

²⁴ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 76

²⁵ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 74

²⁶ Education Workforce Council, [Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales](#), 2023

²⁷ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 19

30. More recently, the 2024 figures have shown an increase from 3867 in 2023 to 4051.²⁸ This represents a modest increase of about 5 per cent from 2023 and welcome though that is, it remains well below the number registered in 2020.

31. The Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee took evidence from teaching unions in January 2024. The unions expressed concerns around the general availability of supply teachers, and how the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill could exacerbate shortages through increased demand for cover. They also raised a concern about the impact of the Bill on the availability of suitable cover for older age groups around exams.²⁹

32. The CYPE Committee also heard from teaching unions in June 2022, as part of its inquiry into pupil absences. The unions highlighted the impact teacher absences can have on pupil absences. This was against the backdrop of COVID-related teacher absences, but they also linked this to the extra workload pressures of the new Curriculum for Wales.³⁰

33. The Auditor General also commented on the impact of the roll-out of the curriculum on the supply teachers in his report published in May 2022, noting that:

“On top of the direct costs of curriculum reform, schools face substantial opportunity costs. These represent the time staff are not available for other work because they are doing activities related to the new curriculum and which is not covered by Welsh Government grants for supply teachers to replace them.”³¹

34. The Auditor General noted in his October 2023 letter:

“Our 2020 report said that supply cover would be needed to allow teachers to prepare for the roll-out of the new curriculum. We were unclear if there were sufficient supply teachers available.”³²

²⁸ Education Workforce Council, [Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales](#), 2024

²⁹ Children, Young People and Education Committee, [Residential Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill – evidence session 4](#), 11 January 2024

³⁰ Children, Young People and Education Committee, [Pupil absence – evidence session 4](#), 23 June 2022

³¹ Auditor General for Wales, [The new Curriculum for Wales](#), May 2022

³² Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 20

35. Recognising that the Welsh Government had legislated for an additional in-service training day in from 2019/20, and that this has been continued for a further three academic years from 2022/23. He continued:

“The lack of information on reasons for cover means that we do not know how many of these expected days were covered.”³³

Recruitment and retention incentives

36. The Welsh Government has a number of specific incentives aimed at ensuring sufficient levels of teachers overall which impacts on supply teacher recruitment and retention. Three Initial Teacher Education (ITE) incentives are available:

- The Priority Subject Incentive of £15,000 for Biology, Chemistry, Design & Technology, Information Technology, Mathematics, Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), Physics and Welsh³⁴
- The *Iaith Athrawon Yfory* Welsh language incentive scheme provides £5,000 for those studying to teach through the medium of Welsh or to teach Welsh as a subject.³⁵
- The Ethnic Minority ITE incentive of up to £5,000.³⁶

37. As noted in the Auditor General's letter:

“The Welsh Government has been providing incentives to train in shortage areas for several years. In April 2023, it announced additional incentives for Welsh-medium teachers, including a £5,000 retention payment for secondary teachers who have completed three years of teaching after achieving qualified teacher status. Supply teachers who can demonstrate that they have undertaken the equivalent of three years secondary teaching and remain working in

³³ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 20

³⁴ Welsh Government: [Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\) Priority Subject Incentive: Guidance for students 2024 to 2025](#).

³⁵ Welsh Government: [Iaith Athrawon Yfory Incentive Scheme: guidance for students 2023 to 2024](#).

³⁶ Welsh Government [Ethnic Minority Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\) Incentive 2024 to 2025: guidance for students](#):

Welsh-medium secondary schools will be able to apply for the bursary.”³⁷

38. In 2019, the Education Workforce Council (EWC) reported on the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) incentives that operate in England and Wales.³⁸ It found that the subject incentives were higher in England than Wales and that this contributed to increasing cross border flows. The report made a number of recommendations to improve subject recruitment including a suggestion that *“higher spending may be required in Wales to effectively compete with bursary increases in England in recent years”*.

39. Since this report, the gap between the value of subject specific incentives has grown. For example, the Initial Teacher Incentive in Wales for physics is £15,000³⁹ compared with bursaries and scholarships worth between £29,000- £31,000 in England⁴⁰. (Although this could be supplemented in Wales if the individual were able to access the *laith Athrawon Yfory* or the Ethnic Minority ITE incentive.)

40. The Auditor General noted in 2022 that:

“Recent initiatives to attract people with Welsh-language skills do not appear to have led to a significant increase. The numbers of people starting initial teacher education either to teach in Welsh or who are fluent in Welsh increased in 2019/20 compared to the previous year but was still less than in 2014/15.”⁴¹

41. Officials acknowledged that there are specific issues in a range of subject areas. Owain Lloyd commented:

“The figures that we have do show that the recruitment and retention of teachers is, on the whole, quite stable. But, certainly, we are seeing difficulties and challenges in terms of recruiting teachers in certain subjects, to be fair, and in certain parts of Wales as well. And I think that that is certainly true when it comes to the Welsh language, but

³⁷ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 18

³⁸ Education Workforce Council [A comparison of teacher training incentives in Wales and England](#), May 2019

³⁹ Welsh Government: [Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\) Priority Subject Incentive: Guidance for students 2024 to 2025](#)

⁴⁰ UK Govt Dept of Education: [Bursaries and scholarships for postgraduate teacher training](#)

⁴¹ Auditor General for Wales, [The new Curriculum for Wales](#), May 2022

*there are also other subjects in the secondary sector—maths, for example.*⁴²

42. The latest figures, for 2021/22, should be treated with a degree of caution because of the impact of the pandemic, however, they show that overall, 76 per cent of Welsh students pursuing Initial Teacher Education are undertaking courses in Wales. This represents a welcome increase on 2019/20, when the figure was 59 per cent. However, for some priority subjects, this is lower (50 per cent for physics and 60 per cent for chemistry).⁴³

43. In relation to the Welsh-medium, Sioned Evans commented:

*“Iaith Athrawon Yfory ... has seen an increase in the number of teachers coming through, and 72 eligible individuals received the Welsh-medium teacher retention bursary in 2023. So, it's having an impact, but it's quite early days, and therefore we won't yet have done the assessment that we need to do to have a look at the overall impact of that and the longer term impact.”*⁴⁴

44. However, recent official statistics suggest that the numbers of students with Welsh language skills starting Initial Teacher Education has increased in recent years:

Table 1 Self-reported Welsh speaking ability and ability to teach in Welsh of students starting Initial Teacher Education⁴⁵

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Training to teach in Welsh	235	210	175	235	335	325
Fluent Welsh speaker	350	305	265	300	385	390

⁴² Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 72

⁴³ StatsWales [First Years from Wales on secondary school ITE courses in the UK by subject and country of study](#)

⁴⁴ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 84

⁴⁵ Welsh Government, [Initial Teacher Education September 2021 to August 2022](#), May 2023

Our view

45. It is critical that Welsh Government incentives to aid recruitment of students to Initial Teacher Education are effective. The Committee is concerned that the evidence in this area is mixed and in some cases points to a relative decline in the incentive level compared to England.

46. Now that the *laith Athrawon Yfory* scheme is more than five years old, there should be an expectation of it having an impact. The scheme is crucial to increasing the number of teachers able to teach Welsh and other subjects through the medium of Welsh, and therefore to the aim of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050⁴⁶.

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Welsh Government should rapidly review and assess the impact of all incentives to aid recruitment of students into Initial Teacher Education, including the *laith Athrawon Yfory* scheme to ensure that these are adequate and competitive, and report annually on their longer term impact.

⁴⁶ Welsh Government, [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#), July 2017.

3. Agency cover framework costs and fees

47. In September 2023, the Welsh Government's new temporary workers contract came into operation, replacing the 2019-2023 contract. The contract is split into lots for temporary workers in several sectors with 41 agencies successfully joining the agency framework at the time of launch.

48. In his letter to the Committee, the Auditor General letter states that schools and local authorities spent £101 million on agency staff in education (including non-classroom staff such as caretakers, administrative and catering staff) through the previous contract in 2022-23. This was 10.7 per cent more in real terms than in 2021-22 and over three times more than in 2018-19 under the previous contract.⁴⁷

49. The Auditor General has identified that several factors contributed to the increase in spending:

- an increased number of days of cover;
- an increase in daily charge to schools for supply teachers and teaching assistants, reflecting an increase in the minimum pay for supply teachers; and
- an increase in the proportion of total agency expenditure through the framework.

50. The Auditor General noted that under the new contract:

"Agencies will continue to pay a 0.5% fee for each day purchased through the national framework to the Welsh Government to cover the cost of managing the framework. The Welsh Government has not confirmed how much it received under this arrangement."⁴⁸

51. The Committee asked the Welsh Government officials whether they were comfortable with that level of spending, and to what extent they are able to recoup their costs in managing the agency framework through the 0.5 per cent the Welsh Government charges under the contract. Sioned Evans indicated that, for the last full year, the Welsh Government had received income of £504,000

⁴⁷ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 31

⁴⁸ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 36

through the 0.5 per cent charge. They explained that costs for commercial procurement service staff, who manage in the region of 30 national contracts, were supported by this income. However, they were not able to confirm staff costs specific to managing this contract.”⁴⁹

52. The Welsh Government wrote to the Committee with further information about this contract indicating that:

“the agency fee element is approximately 16 per cent of the total charge when engaging a supply teacher.”⁵⁰

53. In his 2020 report, the Auditor General highlighted a risk that schools could look to cut costs by switching to agencies outside the framework that are not required to pay a minimum rate to supply teachers. The Welsh Government estimates that the proportion of overall expenditure with agencies through the framework has increased from 89.6% in 2019-20 to 92% in 2021-22. As noted by the Auditor General in his recent letter, this suggests that this risk has not materialised.⁵¹

54. Nevertheless, evidence from Welsh Government officials acknowledged the need to identify further the extent of the non-framework spend. Sioned Evans commented:

“it is really important, because we're having a lot of noise around that and we probably need to understand why schools are still choosing to go off the framework, so that we can try and plug that gap in a way that provides more consistency for the schools, for the local authorities and for the teachers involved in this space.”⁵²

55. The Welsh Government contract requires agencies to be accredited by one of three named UK recruitment industry bodies. This is in addition to regulation by UK Government’s Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate, which enforces and ensures compliance with the law for all recruitment agencies. The

⁴⁹ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 101

⁵⁰ Welsh Government, [letter from Welsh Government](#) March 2024.

⁵¹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 28

⁵² Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 108

Committee noted that the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate carried out a review of the agencies appointed to the new agency framework.

56. Sioned Evans commented that, in comparison with a review undertaken during the previous framework:

"The number of issues identified fell, but there was an issue with one framework agency and corrective measures are being taken on that front."⁵³

Our view

57. The Committee is concerned that the Welsh Government is not able to provide data comparing the income it receives from its 0.5 per charge on agencies and its costs in managing this agency framework.

58. The Committee was reassured to note that risk of schools switching to agencies outside the framework that are not required to pay a minimum rate to supply teachers, does not appear to have materialised.

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government should set out how the costs of managing the contract compare with the amount it receives through the 0.5 per cent fee that it levies on agencies.

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should take steps to monitor and understand the reasons why some schools are not choosing to use the supply teacher agency framework.

59. We welcome the Welsh Government's requirement for supply teaching agencies to be accredited by one of three named UK recruitment industry bodies. We note that this is in addition to regulation by UK Government's Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate and we are pleased this inspection regime is in place.

60. The Welsh Government's evidence suggests that the overall number of issues identified by these regulations fell but that there was an issue with one agency and 'corrective measures' were being taken. Without knowing what the issue or the corrective measures were we cannot comment on their significance. However,

⁵³ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 126

we welcome the fact these audits have taken place and corrective measures have been taken.

Are cover staff roles appropriate?

61. In 2020, the Auditor General recommended that the Welsh Government:

“puts in place monitoring arrangements for the contract’s operation to ensure that supply teachers, cover supervisors and learning support workers are working within their role description.”⁵⁴

62. This recommendation was not accepted by the Welsh Government, but the Auditor General noted that it “encouraged schools, individuals and agencies to report instances where cover staff have been asked to work outside of their specified role”. The letter reports that the Welsh Government’s has not had any such report since October 2020.⁵⁵

63. The Auditor General also considered risks related to schools using more unqualified staff for cover, noting that “supply teachers accounted for a slightly lesser proportion of cover days booked through the agency framework in 2021-22 (37%) compared to 2019-20 (40%)” but concluded that “without doing more detailed work, we could not describe the extent to which schools had been using unqualified staff to reduce costs or for other reasons.”⁵⁶

64. The teachers’ unions NASUWT and NEU conduct annual surveys of their members who are supply teachers ⁵⁷. NEU’s survey for England and Wales in 2022/23 included both supply teachers and supply support staff. It found that 20 per cent of respondents reported “that they had accepted work which had been offered as ‘cover supervision’ but had in practice required actual teaching”.

65. In its written submission, Estyn expressed concerns that:

“There is considerable variation in the quality of agency staff and their expectations when deployed. As noted previously, in some areas of Wales, quality isn’t a significant problem, although headteachers report that only a few agency staff come into school expecting to

⁵⁴ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers’ Absence: Follow-up](#), November 2020, Recommendation 2

⁵⁵ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers’ Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 26

⁵⁶ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers’ Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 29

⁵⁷ NASUWT, [Annual Supply Teacher Survey \(Wales\)](#), March 2023; NEU, [Supply member survey for 2022/23](#), April 2023

teach. In other areas, senior leaders feel that supply staff are often of poor quality and unreliable.”⁵⁸

66. In his letter the Auditor General commented that:

“The Welsh Government’s response to our recommendation stressed the responsibilities of schools and their governing bodies for determining the types of cover roles required and ensuring staff members are working in the role appointed to.”⁵⁹

67. The Committee asked the Welsh Government about the risk, in the context of budget pressures, of schools employing unqualified staff for cover, both short term and long term, rather than employing teachers,. Sioned Evans acknowledged that:

“It is an issue....there is quite a lot of noise in the space around individuals being asked to perform duties that they are either not qualified for or are certainly not being paid for, which is a really big issue. We’ve not had any formal notification of anything along those lines as far as I’m aware.”⁶⁰

Our view

68. Evidence from the teaching union surveys, Estyn and to some extent from Welsh Government officials suggest that there remains an issue with schools still employing unqualified staff to provide teaching cover. Given this evidence, whilst the Committee understand why the Welsh Government does not wish to monitor at an individual school level, we are disappointed that the Government still considers that this is not an area that requires further monitoring, as originally recommended by the Auditor General.

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should put in place arrangements to provide assurance that supply teachers, cover supervisors and learning support workers are working within their role description.

⁵⁸ Estyn [Written evidence](#), 28 March 2024

⁵⁹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers’ Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 25

⁶⁰ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 130

Agency fees

69. The Auditor General provided details of the fees charged by agencies through the agency framework. In 2023/24 the maximum fees range between £20 and £70 a day.

70. The Committee wanted to explore whether the fees charged by agencies represent value for money, the Welsh Government's understanding of agencies' justification for their fees, and whether the Welsh Government is comfortable with such wide variation in fees.

71. . As the Welsh Government set out in their letter to the Committee, these fees are not synonymous with profit:

With this spend, agencies must also cover the provision of additional services and costs (not just provision and pay of the worker). These costs include back-office support staff and account managers, payrolling services, DBS and safeguarding checks, annual accreditation and audits ... cyber essentials and carbon reduction policy compliance, along with providing training and development for their workers...⁶¹

72. Sioned Evans, in her evidence to the Committee, commented:

"The agencies are commercial entities ... the schools are free to use whichever agency best suits their purposes. What we have done through guidance and the controls ... is to ensure that those fees are as transparent as possible so that, when schools have to make the decision around finding supply cover, they are really clear about what that cover will cost them and the terms and conditions"⁶²

73. The Welsh Government provided further information on the variation in fees in their subsequent letter and stated that *"approximately £40 agency fee per day represents only 16% of the total daily charge for a supply teacher"*.⁶³

⁶¹ Welsh Government, [letter from Welsh Government](#) March 2024, p, para 4,

⁶² Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 141

⁶³ Welsh Government, [letter from Welsh Government](#) March 2024.

74. The Auditor General notes that:

“The framework contract requires agencies to state a maximum agency fee and provide invoices for schools that break down charges clearly. We have not checked whether those requirements are being met.”⁶⁴

75. Welsh Government officials indicated that they were confident that these requirements of the contract were being met.

Our view

76. There is a wide variation in the fees being charged by different agencies. Without adequate monitoring, it is impossible to know what the justification for these fees is or whether they represent value for money for the public purse

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government should monitor carefully the application, justification and variation in agency fees in order to secure the best possible value for money.

⁶⁴ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 33

4. The National Supply Pool for Wales

77. The Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru's cooperation agreement included a commitment to work towards:

"a more sustainable model of supply teaching with fair work at its heart, which will include local authority-led and school-led alternatives" ⁶⁵

78. This led to a The National Supply Pool for Wales ("the booking platform") being developed. This allows supply teachers to be directly employed by schools and local authorities with access to the teachers' pension fund and the opportunity to be paid "to scale", so that their pay reflects their years of work. The contract to develop the booking platform was awarded to *TeacherBooker Ltd*.

79. It is accepted that these new arrangements with enhanced pension and pay will, be more expensive for schools compared to using agencies⁶⁶, a point that was confirmed by Sioned Evans in her evidence.⁶⁷

80. The Auditor General's letter states that the core cost of the booking platform for the Welsh Government is up to £231,750 + VAT per year, with the final cost dependant on its take-up by schools and local authorities. ⁶⁸

81. The Auditor General's letter outlines feedback received from local authority directors of education. While some pointed towards the possible benefits of the booking platform in terms of quality of teaching and streamlining, others expressed uncertainty around school uptake, the sufficiency of the pool within it, and administration time.⁶⁹

82. The Welsh Government's approach is to implement the booking platform gradually with Ynys Môn County Council moving its existing pool of supply staff onto the booking platform from autumn 2023. The intention was that by using a local authority with an established supply pool, the booking platform could be

⁶⁵ Welsh Government, [The Co-operation Agreement, 2021](#), November 2021

⁶⁶ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 44

⁶⁷ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 167

⁶⁸ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 43

⁶⁹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 46

tested early in the roll out before establishing it within local authorities that did not already hold a centralised supply pool.

83. At the time that the Committee took evidence, the formal evaluation of the pilot had not been completed but Welsh Government officials reported that:

“feedback has been broadly positive ... approximately 50 per cent are now using the teacher booking system, and 80 per cent of jobs have been filled, with 94.5 days of work booked via TeacherBooker on Ynys Môn”⁷⁰

84. However, Estyn reported in their evidence to the Committee that:

“Senior leaders are often unaware of [the] new booking platform or have not made much use of it because of the lack of availability of supply teachers in some areas.”⁷¹

85. In their subsequent letter the Welsh Government reported that:

“At the outset schools were initially able to use both the booking platform as well as contacting the local authority directly to secure supply staff. However, we understand Ynys Môn is now intending for all schools to transition to booking entirely via the new platform in the coming weeks. We are happy to liaise with Ynys Môn colleagues to provide their initial assessment of the platform and experiences of the rollout following this transition.”⁷²

86. A key issue to be addressed before the pilot system could be applied elsewhere is how the booking platform would be set up in local authorities without an established central pool of supply teachers. Sioned Evans commented:

“We are working with the Welsh Local Government Association to see whether we can agree on the platform that would need to be created as an employer, because we would really need a national platform to

⁷⁰ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 153

⁷¹ Estyn, [Written evidence](#), 28 March 2024

⁷² Welsh Government, [letter from Welsh Government](#) March 2024.

employ. At the moment, it's worked quite well with Ynys Môn, because they already had an existing payroll for the teachers and it linked really well with the teacher booking system. If you are then rolling this out across the whole of Wales, you ... need that payroll platform”⁷³

87. The Committee also asked whether the Welsh Government has set out what it considers would be a sufficient pool for those local authorities that do not have an established central pool of supply teachers. Sioned Evans said:

“We don't know what 'sufficient' is going to be. That's the very simple answer. We don't know what that's going to look like.”⁷⁴

Our view

88. In 2021 the Senedd Petitions Committee recommended that the Welsh Government should further consider alternative arrangements for supporting schools to find and employ supply teachers. Following the establishment of the pilot in Ynys Môn, it is imperative that this pilot is evaluated and that rapid progress is made to extend this nationwide.

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should conclude and publish its evaluation of the supply teacher booking platform and set out its proposals to implement this on a nationwide basis. This should include an assessment of the critical mass of teachers needed on the booking platform, details of any consideration and findings arising from the initial assessment of the platform and experiences of the rollout following the transition to this system by Ynys Môn County Council. Following this, the Welsh Government should ensure that it reports regularly on progress.

⁷³ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 153

⁷⁴ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 158

5. Quality of supply and professional learning

89. In its 2020 report, *Covering Teachers Absence: Follow-up*, Audit Wales recommended that the Welsh Government should establish:

“clear longer-term measures of success against which progress in improving the quality and sufficiency of supply teachers can be judged.”⁷⁵

90. The Welsh Government did not fully accept this recommendation, arguing that measuring the quality or capability of school staff is a matter for individual school leaders, although, as the Auditor General points out in his letter:

“the Welsh Government’s response described how it planned to address shortages, build capacity, and promote quality. It has supported schools and local authorities, for example by issuing guidance, managing, and developing the framework contract, and providing access to professional learning for cover staff.”⁷⁶

91. The Auditor General still believes in the merits of doing so stating:

“We understand the differing responsibilities for delivering cover and ensuring quality, but still believe there is merit in the Welsh Government setting out what good quality and capacity would look like across the education system. This would enable scrutiny and evaluation of the effectiveness of its actions in achieving its desired outcomes.”⁷⁷

92. During the Committee’s scrutiny Welsh Government officials said that they had reflected further on this recommendation but that:

⁷⁵ Auditor General for Wales [Covering Teachers Absence: Follow-up](#), November 2020 Recommendation 1

⁷⁶ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers’ Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 8

⁷⁷ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers’ Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 9

"We're still clear that measuring standards is the role of schools. We're not in a place where we can measure standards and how teachers respond in the classroom."⁷⁸

Our view

93. The Committee recognises the reluctance of the Welsh Government to seek to involve itself directly in the standards of teaching in the classroom. Ultimately schools are responsible for the quality of teaching in the classroom and that any cover needed is adequate. However, as the Auditor General stated:

"the Welsh Government has not set out how it will know if its own supporting actions are effective".⁷⁹

94. The Committee agrees with the Auditor General that clear measures of success must be established, against which progress in improving the quality and sufficiency of supply teachers can be judged. Without this, the Welsh Government cannot be clear whether its interventions are having any appreciable impact.

Recommendation 8. The Welsh Government should establish clear measures of success against which progress in improving the quality and sufficiency of supply teachers can be judged.

95. The Auditor General summarised the situation relating to quality of supply and professional learning for supply teachers in his letter:

"The Welsh Government has taken steps to provide access to professional learning opportunities for supply teachers and cover staff but there is no data on their take-up or its impact".⁸⁰

96. The Auditor General further outlines in his letter the work of the Education Workforce Council (EWC) in providing the professional learning passport and the Welsh Government funding received by the EWC to develop the Educators Wales

⁷⁸ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 178

⁷⁹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 8

⁸⁰ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 10

website. In addition to this the Welsh Government makes professional learning materials available to supply teachers on Hwb.⁸¹ However he concludes:

“uptake of these materials by supply teachers is unknown and their effectiveness has not been evaluated.”⁸²

The National Professional Learning Entitlement

97. In February 2022, the Welsh Government proposed a new National Professional Learning Entitlement. This national approach to career-long professional learning for the school workforce, including supply teachers and learning support workers, includes access to professional learning and an expectation that teachers and others will actively engage with and pursue professional development. The new national framework contract from September 2023 includes a requirement for agencies to include access to the Entitlement in their terms of employment.⁸³

98. The Committee was particularly interested to understand what measures the Welsh Government has in place to ensure that commercial agencies are providing professional learning entitlements and the INSET training that is required of all school teaching staff.

99. Oral evidence from the Welsh Government officials indicated that:

“In 2020, there were 723 training courses provided by the framework agencies, and that that, by 2023, had risen to ... around 2,149. Nine thousand workers, in terms of agencies, back in 2020 were trained, and that's risen to 18,000 in 2023.”⁸⁴

100. The Committee noted that the NASUWT's survey of supply teachers in Wales in 2021/22 found that 31 per cent of supply teachers “had not been given access to continuing professional development opportunities in the last 12 months”.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 11

⁸² Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 11

⁸³ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 14

⁸⁴ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 195

⁸⁵ NASUWT [Supply Teacher Annual Survey \(Wales\)](#), 2022, p 16

101. However, Welsh Government officials were not able to provide any corresponding percentage figures on the numbers of supply teachers who had received training annually.⁸⁶ Subsequently, the Welsh Government wrote to the Committee stating that

“Welsh Government collects data on the number and name of the training courses provided by framework agencies during each quarter, and the number of workers that have attended training during this period.”⁸⁷

Our view

102. The evidence suggests that much progress has been made in making sure that learning opportunities and materials are available to supply staff. However, it also suggests that this is far from universal. Without appropriate monitoring and benchmarking, the Government will not be able to track progress. It is essential that this is rectified.

Recommendation 9. The Welsh Government, having put in place measures to provide continuing professional development and training opportunities to supply teachers and cover staff, should establish meaningful monitoring arrangements on take up, and report on the success of these arrangements.

⁸⁶ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 203

⁸⁷ Welsh Government, [letter from Welsh Government](#) March 2024.

6. Supply teachers' pay and conditions

Independent Wales Pay Review Body

103. In December 2021, The Welsh Government asked the Independent Wales Pay Review Body (IWPRB) to conduct a review on supply teachers' pay and conditions.

104. It has been clarified in correspondence between the Chair of the IWPRB and the Auditor General that the Welsh Government decided to include *only* supply teachers employed directly by schools and local authorities within the remit of the IWPRB review. The IWPRB was asked explicitly to exclude supply teachers provided by agencies (the vast majority of supply teachers in Wales).⁸⁸ In March 2022, 81% of supply teachers said that most of their employment was through an agency (compared to 77% in 2021 and 58% in March 2018⁸⁹), meaning the review did not consider the vast majority of supply teachers. Sioned Evans told the Committee that this was because:

"they're the only ones that were covered by the schoolteachers' pay and conditions (Wales) document."⁹⁰

105. The circumstances surrounding the delayed publication of the report are set out in the IWPRB's strategic review of the structure of teachers' and leaders' pay and conditions⁹¹ which was published by the Welsh Government in April 2024. The IWPRB had submitted its original report, as required, on 30 April 2023. The Minister subsequently asked the IWPRB to consider allowing oral representations and permitted additional time for the resubmission of the report. Following these representations, the updated report was submitted to the Welsh Government in October 2023. Officials told the committee in February 2024 that it would be published "within the next few weeks". The report was published in April 2024⁹².

⁸⁸ Auditor General for Wales, [Covering Teachers' Absence: Follow-up](#), October 2023, paragraph 40

⁸⁹ Education Workforce Council, [Data insights: Supply school teacher data](#), 2022.

⁹⁰ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 210

⁹¹ Welsh Government, Cabinet Secretary for Education, [Written Statement: Publication of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body's strategic review of the structure of teachers' and leaders' pay and conditions in Wales](#), 9 April 2024

⁹² Welsh Government, Cabinet Secretary for Education, [Written Statement: Publication of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body's Review of the roles and responsibilities of supply teachers in Wales employed through local authorities or directly by schools letter from Welsh Government](#) 18 April 2024

To date there has been no substantive Welsh Government response, despite a full calendar year having elapsed since the updated report was submitted.

106. The report by the IWPRB made eleven recommendations, all of which refer specifically to supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools. The recommendations included:

Recommendation 1: We recommend that supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools are explicitly referenced in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document (STPC(W)D).

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the roles and responsibilities of short-term supply teachers and long-term supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools are defined in the STPC(W)D and that the descriptors at Appendix A of this report are used.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that all supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools are paid on the salary point to which they have progressed in accordance with the STPC(W)D, irrespective of whether they are providing short-term or long-term cover.

Recommendation 4: We recommend that there should be a clear statement in the STPC(W)D that supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools are entitled to the benefits of the pay and conditions requirements.

Recommendation 5: We recommend that as part of the implementation of the new booking platform, the benefits included in recommendation 4 are articulated to all stakeholders when communicating the operation of the new system.

Recommendation 6: We recommend that the Welsh Government clarify in the induction guidance and, where applicable, in the STPC(W)D:

- mentoring arrangements for long-term NQT supply teachers
- practical advice on how NQT supply teachers can access 13 days of
- professional learning
- guidance for any payment to NQT supply teachers in accordance with paragraph 61 of the STPC(W)D

- practical guidance on how the entitlement to reduced teaching time operates within the NQT supply teacher timetable

Recommendation 7: We recommend that the Welsh Government works with local authorities to assign host schools to NQT supply staff for the purposes of CPD.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the Welsh Government clarify within the National Professional Learning Entitlement and, where applicable, the STPC(W)D:

- the arrangements for accessing CPD for all supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools

- the guidance for any payment to supply teachers in accordance with paragraph 61 of the STPC(W)D

Recommendation 9: We recommend that the Welsh Government works with local authorities to develop a system where all supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools are made aware of professional learning opportunities.

Recommendation 10: We recommend that the Welsh Government works with local authorities and schools to facilitate the appraisal and professional development needs of all supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools, regardless of length of employment period. We recommend that this is done through a system of host schools.

Recommendation 11: We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the collection and analysis of data for supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools, in light of the findings of this report, to inform government policy and financial planning.

Teachers pay award 2022/23

107. In April 2023, the Welsh Government announced a new pay settlement for teachers.⁹³ These changes made to teachers' pay during the year were backdated to the start of the academic year. However, this pay increase was not backdated

⁹³ Welsh Government [Written Statement: Teachers' Pay Award 2022/23](#), April 2023

for supply teachers who were not on the on the agency framework. Sioned Evans confirmed:

"... it was so complex to go back to look at what every school was doing individually in terms of how they were employing teachers that it was impossible for us to go back and look at this for supply teachers who had been working in several different schools or local authorities. It was just impossible to do that..."⁹⁴

108. The Committee also asked the Welsh Government how it ensures that agencies comply with their contract to pay the minimum rate of teachers' pay. The evidence from the Welsh Government is that compliance is very high. Owain Lloyd commented:

"compliance is around 99 per cent with the framework, and certainly in terms of the minimum pay rate among the agencies...analysis does show that about 92 per cent of the expenditure ... is happening within the agency framework."⁹⁵

Our view

109. Supply teachers play an important role within the education system whether they are short term or long term cover. The Committee welcomes the decision by the Welsh Government to commission a review of supply teachers' pay and conditions. However, it is now over three years since that review was commissioned. There is no room for further delay.

110. The Committee has not heard a persuasive reason why the Welsh Government specified that the review carried out by IWPRB should not have included all supply teachers, including those employed by agencies. Whilst not all recommendations will be applicable to all supply teachers, we urge that the recommendations made with regard to those employed directly by schools and local authorities should be reviewed for their applicability to agency supply teachers.

⁹⁴ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 212

⁹⁵ Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, [21 February, Record of Proceedings](#), paragraph 215 & 216

Recommendation 11. The Welsh Government should respond to the Independent Wales Pay Review Body (IWPRB) review on supply teachers' pay and conditions, including pension arrangements, as soon as possible and set a timetable for doing so in the meantime.

Recommendation 12. The Welsh Government should set out how it intends to ensure that relevant recommendations proposed for supply teachers employed through local authorities or directly by schools are reviewed for their applicability to supply teachers employed through agencies. Following this, the Welsh Government should set a timetable for implementation and report back on progress.

Annex 1: List of oral evidence sessions.

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Date	Name and Organisation
21 February 2024	<p>Sioned Evans, Director General, Public Services and Welsh Language Group Welsh Government</p> <p>Owain Lloyd, Director of Education and Welsh Language Welsh Government</p>

Annex 2: List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All Consultation responses and additional written information can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Organisation
Estyn: HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales