

Written response to the report from the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Supply Teaching from the Minister for Education and Skills.

The Welsh Government fully recognises that effective cover arrangements are fundamental to ensuring positive learner outcomes. The role of supply teachers within the education system is therefore crucially important. The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring that the necessary structures, resources and networks are in place to support supply teachers at all stages of their career.

I am therefore grateful for this inquiry and for this Committee's report. I put on record my appreciation for the hard work by all members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee in collecting the evidence, responses and presenting their findings.

The recommendations contained in the report generally fit well with our assessment of the current and intended policy direction of this area and I am pleased to be able to accept the majority of them. Some require further consideration and I support the intent of these recommendations.

The education system is in a transformational period, underpinned by the development of the new curriculum as set out by Professor Graham Donaldson in *Successful Futures*. In addition, the New Deal for the Education Workforce offers all practitioners, including supply teachers, an entitlement to access world class professional learning opportunities to develop their teaching practice throughout their career. There is also significant development anticipated in relation to the proposed changes in initial teacher training following the report by Professor John Furlong.

Developing and implementing the new curriculum and the New Deal will require a collaborative approach to develop innovative, sustainable and inclusive cover arrangements. A new teacher training system can provide us with opportunities to support and develop our NQTs in the earliest stages of their career. We want to ensure that schools across Wales have access to a highly skilled, motivated and flexible teaching workforce, whose value is recognised across the sector.

The changing context of the education system in Wales provides us with the opportunity to consider the workforce that we need for the future. The Silk Commission recommendation to devolve teachers' pay and conditions, if taken forward, is another opportunity that may help shape a future workforce where both flexibility and quality will be key. In this context, it is important that we consider carefully how absence is currently covered in schools and that we explore potential options for alternative delivery models for the provision of supply that will reflect the requirements of the new education system.

In response to the reports written by Estyn, the Wales Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee on absence management, the Welsh Government

published the *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance in July 2015. I was pleased that the Committee recognised the value of the guidance and the potential to develop the guidance further to address some of the issues raised by stakeholders.

On publication, we stated that this guidance is a living document to be regularly updated. We therefore particularly welcomed the Committee's decision to consult with stakeholders on the guidance, as part of this inquiry. The Committee's report, alongside further engagement with stakeholders, will inform an updated version to be published during the summer term 2016. The guidance will be further informed by a thematic review on its effectiveness, to be undertaken by Estyn in 2016-17.

The Welsh Government recognises the need to work with a range of delivery partners to improve supply teaching in Wales including local authorities, consortia, schools and supply agencies. This is reflected in the Committee's report, and many of its recommendations will require other organisations, working with the Welsh Government, to take significant steps to improve the direction and effectiveness of cover arrangements in Wales.

The Committee's report and the evidence presented throughout the inquiry will provide crucial information to assist us in the development of policy in this area. I thank the Committee again for its support in raising awareness and addressing the issues in relation to cover arrangements in Wales.

Detailed responses to the report's recommendations are set out below:

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that:

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

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. The Welsh Government supports the direction of this recommendation, which will be taken forward in parallel with the development of the new curriculum, New Deal and the ongoing work to reform Initial Teacher Training. In addition it aligns with our recent consultation exploring alternative delivery models across the public sector in Wales.

Following the publication of the report *Is the Feeling Mutual?: New ways of designing and delivering public services in Wales* in July 2015, the Welsh Government produced an Action Plan for consultation addressing the recommendations made in the report. In response to the report's

recommendation to “jointly commission further work with local education departments on the potential of establishing secondary cooperatives for supply teachers,” the Welsh Government committed to continue to consider options for alternative delivery models for the provision of supply teachers.

The consultation on the Action Plan closed on 13 January 2016; the findings from this consultation will assist in informing our longer term vision for the provision of a flexible teaching resource in schools.

The Welsh Government published the *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance document in July 2015. The document sets out the range of options available to schools when considering how to cover absence. To accompany this guidance, we are collating evidence of effective practice from schools where alternative methods of delivery to cover classroom absences are in place. This evidence will be shared with the profession to inform practice.

The Welsh Government is supporting the consortia to ensure that Pioneer Schools (schools selected to help develop the new curriculum and New Deal) are encouraged to work collaboratively to consider innovative, sustainable and inclusive cover arrangements. It is our intention to review these practices to inform further policy development in this area. Once again, evidence of effective practice will be collated and shared amongst the profession in Wales.

The Welsh Government will continue to engage with local authorities, regional consortia, education unions and the profession to inform policy development within this area.

Financial Implications – These will need to be considered further as policy is developed.

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

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that:

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

Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. Since its publication, the Welsh Government has stated that the *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance document will be a living document and updated when appropriate. The guidance was co-constructed with a local authority and we engaged with key

stakeholders (including education unions, school practitioners, Estyn and the Wales Audit Office) in its development.

We meet regularly with key stakeholders through a range of formal and informal meetings and stakeholders will have the opportunity to feed into the on going development of this guidance document.

Through our engagement with Education HR leads in the local authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association has agreed to coordinate the collection of model policies to accompany the guidance.

It is our intention to update and strengthen this guidance, to reflect the recommendations of the Committee's report and stakeholders views during the summer term 2016.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that:

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

Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. Estyn's report will be made public and the Welsh Government will provide a formal response to the report and its recommendations. We will ensure that Estyn's report and the Welsh Government's response will be forwarded directly to any future responsible Committee.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

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

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that:

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

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. The Committee has recognised the *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance document provides a framework for stakeholders to understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to improving attendance, including their responsibilities around data collection, dissemination and analysis. The guidance will be further strengthened to reflect the Committee's recommendations.

The Welsh Government has recently strengthened the *National Model for Regional Working* guidance document (November 2015), including an update on data templates developed by the consortia for headteachers to use to report to governors, on a termly or half termly basis, on a school's in-year performance. The revised guidance now requires the template to include information on staff sickness absence and other absences (including covered lesson arrangements and the costs of supply). This information will provide all stakeholders with a clearer understanding of teacher absence and assist in identifying any issues to be addressed.

As we have outlined in response to Recommendation 1, the Welsh Government is committed to reviewing alternative delivery models for the provision of supply teachers and consideration of a more simplified system.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that:

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

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. We recognise that we need the best teachers to work with learners from deprived backgrounds, if we are to continue to make progress in closing the gap between the attainment of learners who are eligible for free school meals (e-FSM) and their peers.

We are not aware of any research which definitively links the prevalence of supply teaching with areas of high deprivation and the impact that this may have on the educational progress of learners. However, the Welsh Government recognises the importance of establishing whether there is evidence that such a link exists.

The Welsh Government will explore whether any data is available on the use of supply teachers by geographic area or through the Welsh Index of Multiple

Deprivation. We do know, for example, that there has been research elsewhere confirming a trend of higher teacher absenteeism in lower income schools as well as the fact that disadvantaged learners are more affected by this absence (Charles Clotfelter et al., 2007). These studies are however based in the USA and corresponding causes can not necessarily be generalised to Wales.

We will consider subsequently if more research is required and the added value that this may bring to this policy area.

In the meantime, the Welsh Government has asked Estyn to undertake a review of the impact of the *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance document. Estyn has been asked to look at several areas including:

- Assess the impact on learner attainment of teacher absence within the primary sector, with specific reference to the outcomes for pupils in Welsh medium settings and disadvantaged areas.
- Analyse the usage of supply teachers within disadvantaged areas in comparison to other areas.

Financial Implications – These will need to be considered further once the Estyn review has taken place.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that:

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

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. It is the responsibility of the local authority, as the employer and the regional consortia as the school improvement service, working with schools to ensure that they are setting themselves targets, including, if appropriate, targets for monitoring absence. These targets will be reflected in the School Development Plans and should be informed by robust comparative data against school performance.

The revised *National Model for Regional Working* guidance document (November 2015) outlines the responsibility on consortia to develop data templates with schools, for headteachers to report to governors on their performance, which includes a requirement to report on staff sickness absence and other absences (including covered lesson arrangements and the costs of supply).

The Welsh Government will ensure that local authorities, regional consortia and Governing Bodies are aware of the Committee's recommendation.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that:

7. The Welsh Government should consider urgently the implications for NQTs who are used as supply teachers, to enable them to be able to fully demonstrate their attainment of professional teacher standards.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. All Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) who work as supply teachers must undertake statutory induction to demonstrate that they have attained the Practising Teacher Standards.

The Welsh Government is currently collaborating with two of the regional consortia to pilot enhanced packages of support for NQTs this academic year, which include specific consideration of the needs of supply teachers. It is intended that the lessons learned will be used to shape induction provision across all regions from September 2016.

The guidance on the induction programme for NQTs is being refreshed and within this we will be ensuring that all NQTs, including short term supply, have access to an external mentor as soon as they register commencing their induction with Education Workforce Council (EWC). Currently NQTs have to undertake 50 sessions before being allocated an external mentor. This change in the process will provide them with expertise, support and advice throughout the duration of their induction period to assist them in receiving Practising Teacher Status.

Financial Implications – These will need to be considered further following a review of the pilot projects.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that:

8. The Welsh Government must ensure that clear direction is provided to local authorities and consortia on their role in relation to the use of supply teachers. This is particularly relevant to the quality of teaching and the impact this has on standards in schools. The Welsh Government may wish to revise the Guidance on Effective Management of School Workforce Attendance to help achieve this.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. The *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance is a living document. We will work with stakeholders to review how the document can be strengthened to reflect this recommendation. It must be noted however that responsibility for school improvement lies with the regional consortia.

We will take this recommendation into consideration as part of our ongoing work in to alternative delivery models for the provision of supply.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that:

9. The Welsh Government should commission research into the effects of supply teaching on pupil outcomes, with particular reference to disadvantaged areas, and the link to pupil behaviour.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. We recognise that evidence presented to the Committee by Estyn supports the view that teacher absence impacts on pupils across the ability range. In primary and secondary schools learners make less progress when their usual class teacher is absent, and in secondary schools learners' behaviour can often be worse. This is especially the case when cover is provided through supply teachers brought in from outside the school rather than covered by members of school staff.

The Committee's report has identified that some schools, particularly, in rural and deprived areas, had difficulty in finding suitable supply teachers with a potential subsequent impact on learner outcome. However, the extent of that impact is unclear.

Increasing the skills and capacity of the workforce through professional development is core to raising standards in schools. The Welsh Government has ensured that as part of the New Deal, a significant amount of new resources and tools have been added to Learning Wales and Hwb. These resources are for all teachers and include professional learning model resources in relation to effective collaboration, use of data and research. A learning pack is also being completed which will contribute to a Masters in Educational Practice.

In terms of raising deprived learner's attainment and addressing behaviour, we have already taken action through the *Re-writing the Future* programme as well as publishing Behaviour Management Handbooks for primary and secondary schools. These handbooks offer a range of methods and approaches that can be applied in the classroom where instances of difficult behaviour occur, which can be particularly relevant to supply teachers.

As mentioned in recommendation 5, the Welsh Government has asked Estyn to undertake a review of the impact of the *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance document. The review covers several areas including:

- Assess the impact on learner attainment of teacher absence within the primary sector, with specific reference to the outcomes for pupils in Welsh medium settings and disadvantaged areas.
- Analyse the usage of supply teachers within disadvantaged areas in comparison to other areas.

We will consider subsequently if more research is required and the added value that this may bring to this policy area.

Financial Implications – These will need to be considered further once the Estyn review has taken place.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that:

10. The Welsh Government should ensure that the Guidance on Effective Management of Absence includes a greater role for local authorities or regional consortia oversight in a school's use of supply teachers in relation to the quality of teaching and impact on standards.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. The *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance is a living document. We will work with stakeholders to review how the document can be strengthened to reflect this recommendation. It must be noted however, that responsibility for school improvement lies with the consortia.

We will take this recommendation into consideration as part of our consideration of alternative delivery models for the provision of supply.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that:

11. The Welsh Government must provide clarity on how the New Deal and School Development Plans can be used to positively support the CPD needs of supply teachers, particularly those on shorter-term contracts.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. We will develop specific guidance detailing how supply teachers will be able to access their entitlement to develop their teaching practice, through the New Deal. As the implementation of the School Development Plans is reviewed, consideration will be given as to whether the Plans could provide additional support for the development of supply teachers.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that:

12. The Welsh Government should promote the importance of face to face CPD alongside online learning within its CPD strategies. This should be done across the board, but with specific focus on CPD for supply teachers.

Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. We are developing a national network of Pioneer Schools to support the delivery of face to face CPD, this will include provision for all teachers.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that:

13. The Welsh Government should explore the potential for mandatory CPD, including the potential to establish annual CPD requirements to maintain registration, as has been piloted by the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. We will be seeking wide stakeholder input as to whether we should develop and enhance the role of the EWC, into a professional body that more closely mirrors that of other professions. Proposals will be included in a Welsh Government public consultation.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that:

14. The Minister must set out clearly his vision for the Education Workforce Council in developing CPD, with particular reference to supply teachers.

Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. The EWC is already leading on the development of a Professional Learning Passport which will “underpin practitioners’ career pathways and support them to record, reflect on and identify the most appropriate professional learning opportunities to develop and deepen their practice at every stage of their career.

In addition, the Welsh Government will be seeking wider stakeholder input regarding whether we should develop and enhance the role of the EWC into a professional body that more closely mirrors that of other professions.

Enhancing the role of the EWC in supporting effective professional learning for all practitioners, could act as the focus for national coordination of professional learning opportunities. All this information/guidance could be made accessible via the Professional Learning Passport.

The recommendations from the Donaldson and Furlong reviews clearly indicate that there needs to be renewed focus on the development of practitioners’ pedagogical skills to ensure that they are fully prepared to deliver the demands of the new educational system in Wales.

An enhanced role for the EWC would signal trust in the profession to lead on changes in teaching and to further support and develop the profession.

I have been clear that I want to ensure that the EWC is given the appropriate time to ‘bed in’, focussing on their core functions of registration; including the registration of the new categories of practitioners (school and FE learning support workers, Work Based Learning and Youth Workers).

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that:

15. The Welsh Government should work directly with supply agencies to look at the potential to refresh essential elements of training, including the potential for increasing the provision of CPD during school holidays.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. As part of the Framework Agreement let by the National Procurement Service for Wales, there is a

requirement for the Framework Providers to provide CPD and an element of performance management. The Welsh Government meets with the Framework Provider to discuss policy issues such as CPD and performance management provision, to ensure that supply teachers registered with them are receiving the support required. We will continue to engage with the Framework Provider to enhance CPD opportunities, and will strengthen the *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance document to reflect this recommendation.

The Welsh Government is funding a pilot project to provide training on the Welsh Government Hwb learning platform targeted at supply teachers. The results of this pilot project will inform further policy development within this area.

Financial Implications – These will need to be considered further as policy is developed.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that:

16. The Welsh Government should ensure that Estyn, as part of its review of the new Guidance, should consider whether (or not) the statement in the guidance relating to "a school's provision for supporting professional development..." has had the unintended consequence of schools employing a series of short term staff where a longer term option may have been more appropriate.

Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. The Welsh Government has asked Estyn to review the effectiveness and impact of *the Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance on cover arrangements within primary schools. Estyn will:

- Review schools' approaches to providing arrangements to cover teacher absence and assess the effectiveness of the options available for cover.
- Assess the impact on learner attainment of teacher absence within the primary sector, with specific reference to the outcomes for pupils in Welsh medium settings and disadvantaged areas.
- Review the employment, training and deployment of supply teachers within the primary sector.
- Analyse the usage of supply teachers within disadvantaged areas in comparison to other areas.

We will work with Estyn to ensure that the review also addresses this recommendation.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that:

17. The Welsh Government should work with supply agencies to help ensure that performance management is provided for all supply teachers, not just those who are underperforming.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. As part of the Framework Agreement let by the National Procurement Service for Wales, there is a requirement for the Framework Provider to provide CPD and an element of performance management. The Welsh Government meets with the Framework Provider to discuss policy issues such as performance management provision, to ensure that supply teachers registered with them are receiving the support required. The Welsh Government is aware that the Framework Provider is currently developing a more enhanced performance management process for their supply teachers. This will be in operation from September 2016. We will also review the guidance to see how the document can be strengthened to reflect this recommendation.

Financial Implications – None.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that:

18. The Welsh Government must work with stakeholders to build a more robust system for providing feedback on the performance of supply teachers. The Minister should consider whether the new Guidance could be adapted to include a greater role for local authorities or regional consortia in supporting performance management of short-term supply teachers.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. The guidance is a living document. We will work with stakeholders to see how the document can be strengthened to reflect this recommendation.

The Welsh Government is prepared to discuss a more robust feedback system with stakeholders. This role would be for schools, local authorities and supply agencies to take forward, for performance management and quality assurance purposes. Performance management of supply teachers will depend upon who they are employed by. Local authorities are expected to performance manage the staff they employ. Similarly, agencies are expected

to performance manage the staff that they employ. It is not for Welsh Government to intervene in these matters and impinge on contracts. However, it may be possible to offer further advice on this issue in the guidance.

We will consider this recommendation as part of our ongoing work into alternative delivery models for the provision of supply.

Financial Implications – These will need to be considered further as policy is developed.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that:

19. The Welsh Government should consult with agencies and supply teachers to consider whether the establishment of a Wales-specific accreditation or kite mark for supply teachers would improve quality assurance, and should work to establish such a kite mark if appropriate.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. The Welsh Government will engage with stakeholders including supply teachers, agencies, education unions and National Procurement Service to consider whether the establishment of a Wales-specific accreditation or kite mark for supply teachers would improve quality assurance. We will consider the financial and practical implications of operating such a kite mark if appropriate.

The guidance document includes a section on the minimum requirements that the Welsh Government requires schools to consider when selecting a supply agency, as reflected in the NPS Framework Provider tender process.

The Welsh Government will continue to engage with supply agencies to encourage better management practices with their employees, such as ensuring effective performance management systems and providing professional development.

Financial Implications – These will need to be considered further as policy is developed.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that:

20. The Welsh Government should ensure that the new Guidance includes a clearer explanation on the rules for using umbrella companies (the Swedish derogation) to ensure this does not have a negative impact on the quality or provision of supply teachers or on the CPD responsibilities of an agency.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. As outlined above, the guidance document is a living document that the Welsh Government is pleased to develop in collaboration with stakeholders and practitioners. Further advice will be included and published in the summer term 2016.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that:

21. As part of its request to Estyn to undertake a further thematic review of cover arrangements in 2016/17, the Welsh Government should include the issue of supply teaching through the Welsh medium.

Response: Accept

I accept this recommendation. The Welsh Government has asked Estyn to review the effectiveness and impact of the *Effective management of workforce attendance* guidance on cover arrangements within primary schools. Estyn will:

- Review schools' approaches to providing arrangements to cover teacher absence and assess the effectiveness of the options available for cover.
- Assess the impact on learner attainment of teacher absence within the primary sector, with specific reference to the outcomes for pupils in Welsh medium settings and disadvantaged areas.
- Review the employment, training and deployment of supply teachers within the primary sector
- Analyse the usage of supply teachers within disadvantaged areas in comparison to other areas

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that:

22. As part of the recommended research into the effect of supply teaching on pupil outcomes (see recommendation 9), there should be specific reference to the outcomes for pupils in Welsh Medium settings.

Response: Accept in principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. As outlined above we will undertake further work to consider whether further research will add value to this policy area.

We have asked Estyn to look at several areas including:

- Assess the impact on learner attainment of teacher absence within the primary sector, with specific reference to the outcomes for pupils in Welsh medium settings and disadvantaged areas.

Financial Implications – These will need to be considered further once the Estyn review has taken place.

Huw Lewis, Minister for Education and Skills