

A charter for supply teachers

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ATL believes supply teachers are educational professionals with a specialised skill set. They are a vital piece of the education jigsaw, providing a trained and capable reserve when schools need additional teachers. This document sets out ATL's position, provides a checklist for supply teachers and includes a charter for schools to adopt.

ATL's supply charter

For many it is a career choice, and supply teachers are proud of the unique skills they have developed. Able to quickly adapt to new situations, experienced supply teachers ensure a high level of teaching and learning is maintained in the classroom when permanent staff are absent. ATL believes all pupils should have access to qualified staff and that supply teachers can provide this continuity of learning in the absence of the regular class teacher.

ATL believes its supply teacher charter will ensure the continued availability of high-calibre supply teachers who can provide qualified support to schools. As such, ATL urges the government and employers to:

- pay supply teachers at a rate appropriate to their level of experience and the demands of the role
- open membership of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) to all supply teachers, including those employed via agencies
- employ suitably qualified teachers
- use support staff appropriately
- offer supply teachers access to CPD opportunities
- end the payment of finders' fees
- treat supply teachers with respect and recognise their professionalism at all times.

ATL will be encouraging all schools, including academies and free schools, to adopt this charter.

Pay

Salaries of teachers contracted by the local authority or directly by the school must be set in accordance with the pay ranges set out in the School Teachers' Pay and

Conditions Document. Since September 2013, schools have been able to determine the salary of a teacher at the start of each assignment. ATL believes schools must recognise the experience of a supply teacher when determining salaries and not seek to appoint supply teachers at the lowest possible salary.

Teachers employed through agencies or who work in academies or free schools should be paid in accordance with the school's pay policy and full recognition should be made of the supply teacher's experience.

Consideration should be taken of the amount of time the supply teacher will need to undertake preparation, planning or assessment (PPA) before or after the assignment, and this should be reflected in the amount paid to the teacher.

Appropriate use of supply teachers

Supply teachers are professionals who will ensure a high standard of teaching and learning continues in the absence of a class's assigned teacher. ATL recognises that there are occasions when it is appropriate for a teacher's absence to be covered by a member of the school support staff but there is no substitute for the added value a supply teacher can bring to the school. Support staff should only ever be used as a temporary short-term replacement. Pupils deserve to be taught by qualified teachers and schools should seek to cover absences with appropriately qualified staff.

ATL supports the National Agreement in Raising Standards and Tackling Workload, which clarified the roles of some members of the school support staff. As part of the agreement, appropriately trained higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) and cover supervisors may, in limited circumstances and for short periods of time, lead classes.

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- HLTAs should be used to complement the professional work of teachers by taking responsibility for agreed learning activities under an agreed system of supervision. This may involve planning, preparing and delivering learning activities for individuals/groups or short term for whole classes.
- Cover supervisors should only be used where students are undertaking work set by a teacher and no active teaching is taking place.

Other members of the school support staff should never be used to cover whole or part classes.

Contractual arrangements

Most supply teachers will be engaged on a day-to-day basis. Where it is clear a supply teacher is needed for a longer period of time (for example to cover a long-term absence or maternity cover) then the school and the supply teacher should consider the option of a fixed-term contract rather than a supply contract. A fixed-term contract gives the teacher additional rights, including payment throughout periods of school closure and for periods of sickness. It may be, however, that some teachers prefer to remain as a supply teacher for longer assignments and this should be agreed between the school and the teacher.

ATL expects schools to honour agreements with teachers and they should not end assignments mid-way through the day or make short-notice cancellations.

ATL opposes the use of zero-hour contracts for education staff.

Teacher supply agencies and the Agency Worker Regulations

ATL would prefer schools to engage supply teachers directly rather than through agencies. We believe directly recruiting a supply teacher helps to build a relationship between the teacher and the school that both will ultimately benefit from. Directly engaging a teacher also removes the additional cost of paying the agency for assigning a teacher.

The Agency Worker Regulations 2012 were introduced to ensure agency workers are afforded the same rights as permanent employees after 12 continuous weeks working with the same employer. During the negotiations on the implementation of the Agency Worker Regulations, ATL successfully argued that the school closure periods should be ignored when calculating the 12-week continuous period.

Also, part of these regulations is the requirement for employers to advertise vacancies to agency staff. ATL welcomes this and encourages schools to make available permanent posts to teachers who have previously worked at the school. We note that some schools are reluctant to do this because agencies often charge the school a finder's fee. ATL believes finders' fees should not be paid, but that if they are paid they should not be seen as a deterrent to appointing an agency teacher to a permanent post.

Pensions

Saving for retirement is important and supply teachers should be offered the opportunity of contributing to the TPS. Employing a teacher directly, rather than through an agency, will allow the teacher to contribute to the TPS. ATL continues to press for agency teachers to be allowed to join the TPS.

Supply agencies must offer a pension scheme to all supply teachers as part of the government policy on auto-enrolment into occupational pension schemes.

Respect and professionalism

An ATL survey of supply teachers revealed that some feel that they are poorly treated in some schools by management, teachers, support staff and pupils. Supply teachers are professionals who should be afforded the same respect and courtesy as permanent members of staff. Highly adaptable and skilled, experienced supply teachers have often worked in a broad range of educational environments and bring that knowledge to each assignment. Schools should ensure supply teachers are welcomed and given as much information as they need to fit into the routine of the school.

A checklist for supply teachers

When you start an appointment as a supply teacher, the school should provide you with the following:

1. The basics – what is the relevant timetable(s), where are the staff toilets and staffroom, and a staff list with full names, and the fire alarm procedures.
2. Class lists – including a comment box so the supply teacher is forewarned of any potential known problems or pupils with particular needs.
3. Has work been set and tick-lists for work covered been provided? If so, where are they? And have the necessary books/equipment/spare paper for students been provided?
4. An information handbook so the supply teacher can familiarise himself or herself with the relevant school policies and procedures. Ideally, this should include a one- or two-page brief guide to the most important points.
5. Details of who the ATL rep at the school is, so the supply teacher can contact him or her if necessary.
6. Contact details for the headteacher, other members of the SMT and a member of the department, in case the supply teacher needs them at any time.
7. The school's behaviour and child protection strategies, so the supply teacher is fully aware of the school policies on behaviour management, restraint and child protection.
8. Vulnerable children – is there any relevant information the supply teacher should know?
9. Medical information – including where the nearest first aid kit is located.
10. Playground duty – who, where and when?
11. Computer log-ins should be made available in advance of entering the classroom.
12. A school map.

A framework for schools

This school believes supply teachers are an essential part of the education workforce and deserve to be recognised as such. This school will employ suitably qualified supply teachers for all absences where teaching and learning is expected to continue.

Teaching. Teaching is the primary role of the supply teacher and we will ensure they know what they are expected to teach, and we will provide them with the necessary resources. If supply teachers are required to prepare lessons or mark pupils' work we will ensure a reasonable allocation of time is given to undertake this.

Respect. Supply teachers are a vital part of the school workforce and will be afforded the same respect as all other members of staff. All supply teachers will have access to the same facilities and resources as permanent staff. Pupil misbehaviour in supply teacher-led lessons will not be tolerated.

Pay. Supply teachers will be paid on a salary appropriate to their experience and the work they are undertaking. Where an agency is used to recruit supply teachers we will ensure that the pay of the teacher reflects the salary appropriate to their experience and the work that they are undertaking.

Pay progression. Where a supply teacher has an ongoing relationship with the school we will consider the teacher for progression on the pay range as at 1 September each year. Where a teacher is engaged by the school or a period of one term or more, we will undertake performance appraisal and set appropriate objectives.

Pensions. Wherever possible, we will appoint supply teachers through the local authority or directly by the school to give them access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

Pupils. We will provide supply teachers with the information needed, including details of vulnerable pupils and/or pupils with additional needs.

Notice. We will honour any commitment made either verbally or in writing for the length of any supply contract. We will give as much notice as possible for supply teachers when we need them. Where there is an ongoing need for a supply teacher to cover a vacancy or an absent colleague, we will discuss with the teacher whether they would wish to remain on a supply or fixed-term contract basis.

Recruitment. We will inform supply staff of all vacancies at the school. Where an agency imposes a 'finder's fee' for the recruitment into a permanent role at the school, this will not disadvantage the teacher in any recruitment process.

References. We will provide supply teachers with honest references when requested by prospective employers.

Training. We will ensure supply teachers are included in our INSET training days and that, where possible, continued professional development is made available to them.

Equalities. We will recruit the most appropriate person for the role regardless of gender, age, race, religion or sexuality.

Zero-hours contracts. We will not use zero-hours or other flexible-hours contracts for supply staff.