

HEALTH AND SAFETY CHECKLIST

Supply teachers have a vital role to play in raising and maintaining high educational standards in schools. Campaigning to secure professional entitlements for supply teachers is a key priority of the NASUWT, together with securing decent pay and working conditions for all supply teachers.

The NASUWT is committed to ensuring that all individual members, including supply teachers, have the information they need to help them stay safe.

The purpose of this checklist is to assist supply teachers to stay safe and to ensure you are aware of your health and safety responsibilities in terms of keeping yourself and others safe.

Schools and employers remain obliged to risk assess and take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all staff and pupils.

Where supply teachers are required to undertake work, they should ensure that they are fully informed about any health and safety issues with each assignment, provided with access to information on the safety arrangements (i.e. risk assessments) and that these are provided as soon as possible after a supply teacher is booked for an assignment.

Before taking up supply work with a school, in order to stay safe, you should ask for:

- The overall risk assessment for the school.
- The arrangements in place for supply teachers to report safely to the workplace.
- Any reasonable adjustments you may require if you have a disability or are a pregnant or breastfeeding mother.
- Details of any designated contact should you have any questions, or in the event of a problem or emergency, where and to whom you should report each day.

As a supply teacher, on first reporting for work at a school (or beforehand if possible), in order to stay safe, you should ask for:

- Details of the procedures and arrangements for any visitors (e.g. supply teachers) to ensure that there is adequate time to be made aware of, and understand, the systems in place in the school/college when undertaking an assignment.
- Details of any designated contact should you have any questions, or in the event of a problem or emergency.
- Details of who and where you should report to each day, including details of the signing-in process.
- Any guidance for staff in respect of safe working practices.
- Details of how to raise any concerns about health and safety.
- Details of how to call for assistance, including first aid.
- A tour of the school site, identifying where you will be teaching.
- Details of the nearest first-aid room or appropriate area.

- Details of the nearest fire exit and any revised evacuation plans, including routes and procedures.
- Details of the staffroom and toilets.
- A copy of the timetable, including breaks and lunch periods, as well as expectations on staff during such times, including, as appropriate, the supervision of pupils.
- Details of how to access relevant information on schemes of work for the subjects you will be expected to teach.
- Details of access to computers (including laptops or fixed computers), with log-in details and what to do at the end of the school day.
- Details of any resources you may reasonably be expected to provide (such as pens) to minimise contact, and where these can be safely and securely stored.
- Details of the schemes of work and programmes of study, including the provision and access to relevant teaching materials.
- Details regarding access to, and availability of, hand sanitiser to enable you to wash your hands frequently throughout the school day.
- Details of the provisions in place to ensure classrooms and work areas are kept well ventilated.
- A list of the pupils in the class(es) you will be teaching, including details of any medical conditions, behavioural issues or special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and the details of how these should be managed.
- Details of any pupils known to be potentially violent, and how this will be managed, including revised risk assessments in place, including any specific training which is required, along with how this can be appropriately accessed.
- Details of the registration process and expectations for the appropriate movement of pupils around the school site between lessons, at breaks, and at lunchtimes, and at the end of the school day.
- Specific details of the school behaviour management procedure, including the support that is available to assist in managing behaviour effectively.
- Details of any events, meetings or specific activities taking place during an assignment.
- Details of the arrangements for school transport, as appropriate.

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978

The Health and Safety at Work Order places a responsibility on all employers to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all employees and non-employees in their workplace. This includes identifying and assessing risks to health and safety, and steps to reduce or eliminate these risks, so that all those working in a school are safe, including supply teachers. This applies to COVID-19 in the same way as it would to any other hazard.

The role of the ‘competent person’

A ‘competent person’ should be someone in the school or college who has sufficient training and experience or knowledge to assist in the process properly.

The level of competence required will depend on the complexity of the situation, but there is an expectation that the competent person is able to offer the specific advice and guidance required.

This can include the employer or someone within the school or college. If this is the case, you should enquire as to their experience and expertise so you can be satisfied that any and all concerns you have regarding your situation can be addressed accordingly.

Your duties as a supply teacher

Whilst your employer and the school have responsibilities in regards to your health and safety, you also have a duty to take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of other people who may be affected by your actions at work.

You must co-operate with your employer and the end user where you are working, including by providing them with any information which may necessitate the provision of a risk assessment before you undertake an assignment with a school.

For example, if there is a concern over your situation which makes it difficult for you to undertake an assignment in a school, or which should be disclosed to a school prior to an assignment, then you should disclose this as soon as possible.

Once disclosed to an employer, they have a statutory obligation to consider any measures necessary to enable you to undertake each assignment safely.

However, this should not automatically impact on your ability to undertake an assignment, provided there is evidence that this has been factored into any risk assessment and you have been fully advised before you undertake the assignment.

The NASUWT would want to hear from supply teachers if an assignment is cancelled on the basis of providing such information. If information is provided which does not impact on your ability to undertake an assignment but the assignment is cancelled nevertheless, you should contact the NASUWT for further advice and guidance at: advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk.

Substitute teachers with a disability

If you are a supply teacher with a disability, the employer is required to consider whether they have taken 'reasonable steps', so far as 'reasonably practicable', if necessary by amending their health and safety policies, procedures and practices, to ensure that employees and non-employees (i.e. supply teachers) with disabilities are not placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Employers need to assess the risks to the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by their activities, including supply teachers. This may require employers taking advice from other professionals (e.g. medical professionals) on specific risks for supply teachers with a disability, so that they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Assessments may be needed at different levels. At the **generic level**, they should examine what reasonable steps can be taken to minimise health and safety risk generally, while avoiding disability discrimination. An **individual risk assessment** will relate specifically to the member of staff, including a supply teacher with a disability.

However, it should be recognised that having a disability does not necessarily mean that a specific individual risk assessment is required. An individual risk assessment would only be necessary if the disability puts the individual at increased risk.

Where there are specific health and safety risks, including to supply teachers with a disability, these should be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Once disclosed to the agency, it has a statutory obligation to consider any measures necessary to enable you to undertake each assignment safely.

Details of any adjustments made (as appropriate) if you are a supply teacher with a disability should be agreed in advance of your first day of work.

If you are subsequently denied access to work after disclosing a disability, this may be unlawful, and members are strongly encouraged to contact the NASUWT immediately for advice.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The provisions under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and subsequent secondary legislation passed either at Westminster or by the Northern Ireland Assembly apply to supply teachers in the same way as any other employee.

The DDA bans disability discrimination by employers against disabled job seekers and employees. It imposes a duty on employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people to help them remove barriers in gaining and remaining in employment and in accessing and using goods and services.

All school risk assessments should be equality impact assessed to ensure that there are no discriminatory provisions or practices for supply teachers with a disability.