

Supply Teachers

Annual survey of experiences



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INTRODUCTION

Supply teachers are integral to the education system. Without supply teachers, many pupils would be denied the opportunity to be taught by qualified and dedicated teachers who ensure that schools can continue to provide the education to which children and young people are entitled. Supply teachers make a vital contribution to securing high educational standards for all children and young people.

NASUWT's annual survey of supply teachers in Northern Ireland aims to examine the changing experiences of supply teachers, including issues and trends.

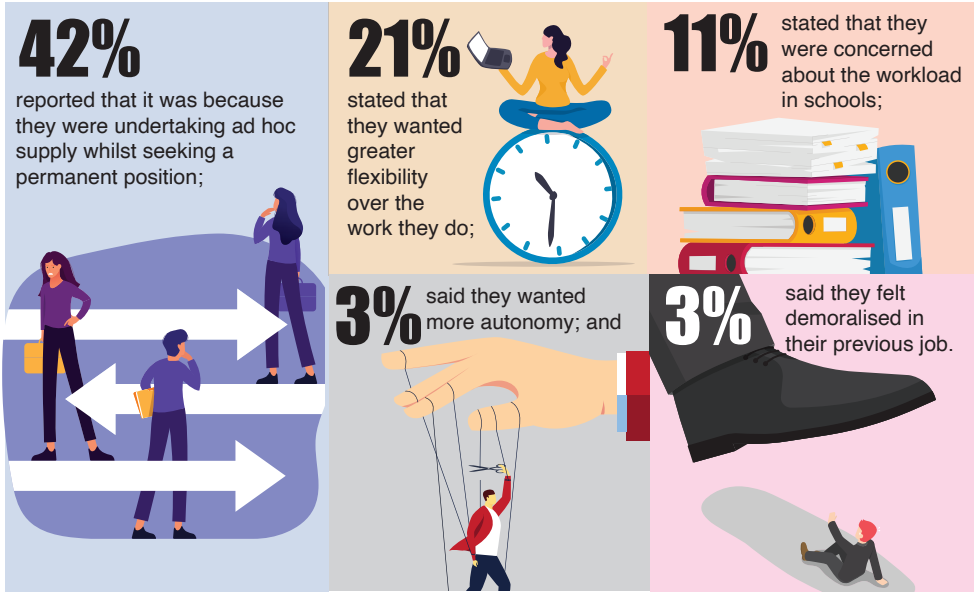
The 2022/23 survey was undertaken between July and September.

A total of 73 supply teachers responded to the survey.

THE SURVEY

Nature of work

Supply teachers were asked why they carried out supply teaching work. The top five reasons cited by supply teachers were:



Cannot get a permanent contract. Have interviewed three times and was unsuccessful each time.

When asked what other advantages/disadvantages were associated with being a supply teacher, just under a third (32%) cited the lack of job security, 14% noted the ability to see how different schools work, and under one in ten (9%) noted the fact that there was no paperwork. Just under one in ten (9%) noted the fact that there was no marking, and a further one in ten (9%) noted the fact that there were no meetings to attend.

Supply teachers were asked about their ability to secure work teaching during the academic year 2022/23. Just under four-fifths (78%) reported that they had no problems securing work, whereas 18% reported that they had some problems securing work. Just under one in 20 supply teachers (4%) reported that they had significant problems getting supply work.

I only had two weeks in total of no work.

NISTR system was not working properly.

Access to work

During the academic year 2022/23, just over two-fifths of supply teachers (41%) reported that they were working for one school, 18% reported that they were working for two schools, and just over one in ten (11%) reported that they were working for three schools. Eight per cent of supply teachers reported that they were working for four schools, and just under one in 20 (4%) reported that they were working for five schools. Just under one-fifth of supply teachers (18%) reported that they were working for more than five schools.

When asked if this was more or less than the number of schools they had worked for during the previous academic year (2021/22), a third of supply teachers (33%) stated that it was more, over a quarter (27%) stated that it was less, and two-fifths (40%) stated that it had stayed the same.

Changes to NISTR system and funding cuts (Engage Programme etc.)

Just over two-fifths of supply teachers (41%) reported travelling between 0-10 miles for an assignment, 29% reported travelling between 11-20 miles, just over one in ten (11%) reported travelling between 21-30 miles, just under one in ten (9%) reported travelling between 31-40 miles for an assignment, and 7% of supply teachers reported travelling between 41-50 miles. Just 3% reported travelling between 51-60 miles for an assignment.

A fifth of supply teachers (20%) reported that they had to travel further than in previous years in order to secure work. Over three-fifths of supply teachers (62%) stated that the cost-of-living crisis had a detrimental impact on how far they were willing to travel to undertake an assignment.

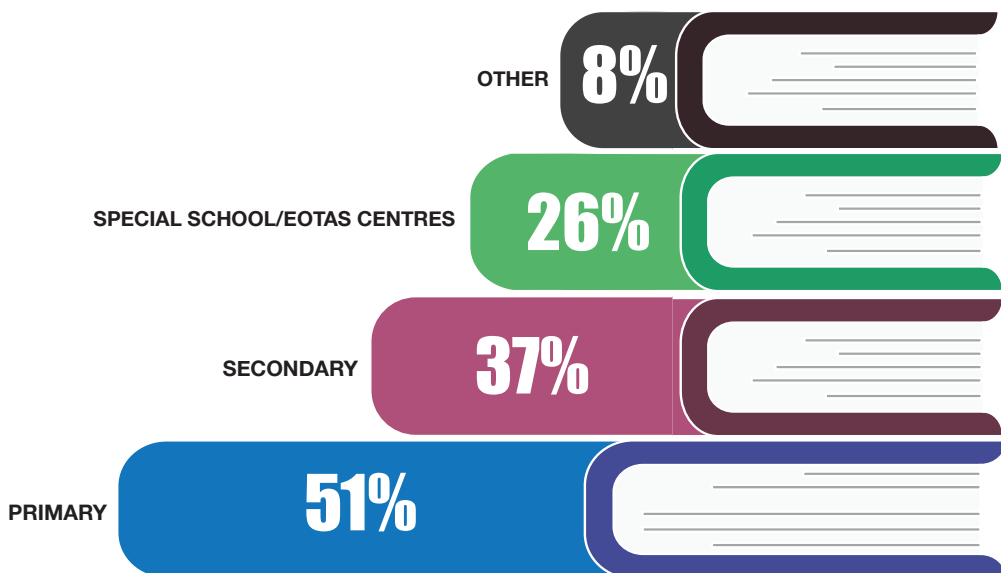
Not as many schools requesting supply teachers. Schools not using NISTR.

Availability of work

Supply teachers were asked where they were able to obtain work during the academic year 2022/23.

Just over half of supply teachers (51%) who responded to the survey stated that they were able to secure work in primary schools, well over a third (37%) stated that they were able to secure work in secondary schools, and just over a quarter (26%) reported that they were able to secure work in special schools/Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) centres.

Where supply teachers secured work during the academic year 2022/23



For those supply teachers who reported that they were able to secure work during the academic year 2022/23, just over a quarter (26%) reported that the majority of their supply teaching was short-term supply (e.g. ad hoc for two days or fewer), just over one in ten (12%) said that this was weekly assignments, and just over one in 20 (6%) stated that this was monthly assignments. One in ten supply teachers (10%) reported that the majority of their work was termly assignments, and well in excess of two-fifths (46%) stated that the majority of their teaching was on longer term assignments in excess of a term.

When supply teachers were asked how many days on average they were able to obtain work during the academic year 2022/23, just under one in 20 (4%) said they secured work one day a week, 13% two days a week, and just under one-fifth (19%) three days a week. Fourteen per cent of supply teachers in the survey said they were able to secure work for four days a week, and half of supply teachers (50%) stated that they were able to secure work five days a week.

Seventeen per cent of supply teachers stated that the amount of supply work had decreased during 2022/23 compared to the previous academic year, whereas just under a quarter of supply teachers (24%) stated that the amount of supply work had increased. Just under three-fifths of respondents (59%) stated that the amount of supply work they were able to secure had stayed the same.

Working for a school during the academic year 2022/23

Supply teachers were asked about their experiences working for a school during the academic year 2022/23.

Experiences with schools, staff, parents and pupils when undertaking assignments

Seventy-one per cent of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome *by the school*, and 18% stated that they are often made to feel welcome by the school. However, 9% stated that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the school, and 2% of supply teachers reported that they are never made to feel welcome by the school.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel *by the teaching staff in schools*, 30% of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and well in excess of half (57%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the teaching staff in schools. However, just under one in ten supply teachers (9%) stated that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the teaching staff in schools, and 4% reported that they are never made to feel welcome by the teaching staff in schools.

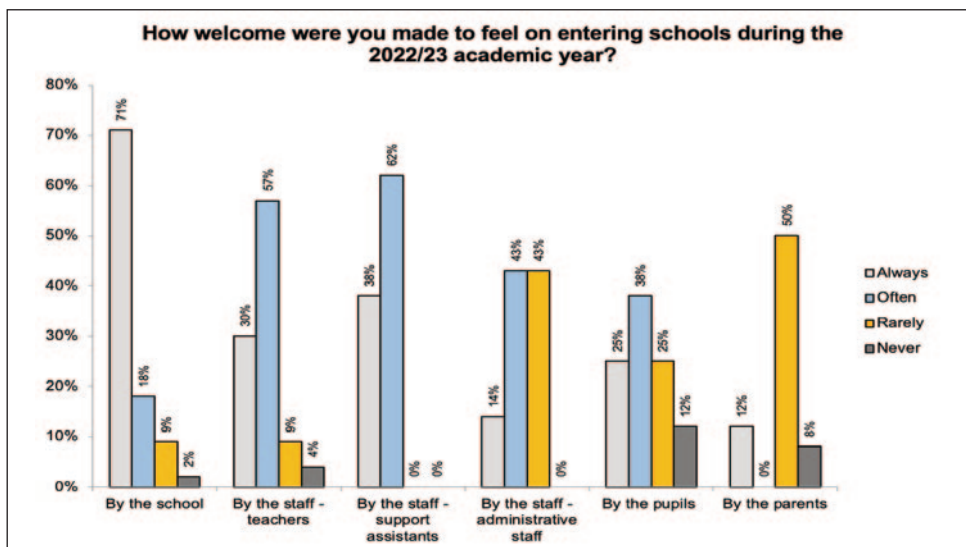
I feel I am not considered an equal subject teacher by staff or pupils. I always get low ability classes.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel *by the support assistants in schools*, 38% of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and just over three-fifths (62%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the support assistants in schools.

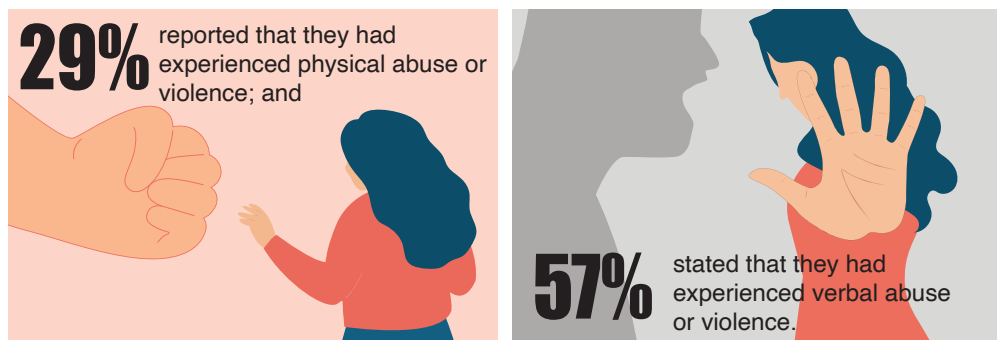
When asked how welcome they are made to feel *by the administrative staff in schools*, 14% of supply teachers reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and well over two-fifths (43%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the administrative staff in schools. However, well over two-fifths (43%) reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the administrative staff in schools.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel *by the pupils in schools*, just a quarter of supply teachers (25%) reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and just under two-fifths (38%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by pupils in schools. A quarter of supply teachers (25%) reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the pupils, and 12% stated that they are never made to feel welcome by the pupils.

In respect of being made to feel welcome *by the parents*, 12% of supply teachers stated that they are often made to feel welcome, and half of supply teachers (50%) reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome. However, under two-fifths (8%) reported that they are never made to feel welcome by the parents.



Almost three out of ten supply teachers (29%) reported that they had experienced physical abuse or violence from pupils when undertaking an assignment, and well in excess of half (57%) stated that they had experienced verbal abuse or violence from pupils when undertaking an assignment during the 2022/23 academic year.



Just under nine out of ten supply teachers (88%) indicated that they had reported the incident/s to someone in the school; however, of those who did report the incident, 18% stated that no action was taken against the pupil, and just under two-fifths (39%) stated that they didn't know or were not informed whether or not any action was taken.

Assaulted by a pupil which resulted in pain and panic attacks.

Provision of key information when undertaking assignments

Of those supply teachers able to secure work during the 2022/23 academic year, just over half (51%) stated that they were not given the school's overall risk assessment, and just under one in ten (9%) stated that they were not sure.

Well over two-fifths of supply teachers (43%) stated that they were not given the arrangements in place for supply teachers to report safely to the workplace, and just under half (49%) stated that they were not given the details of any procedures and protective measures in regards to Covid-19, including any financial support available.

A third (33%) stated that they were not provided with the details regarding access to, and availability of, hand sanitiser, and just over two-fifths of supply teachers (42%) reported that they were not provided with the details in place to ensure classrooms and work areas were well ventilated.

Just under a quarter (23%) stated that they were not provided with the details of any designated contact(s) for any questions, problems or emergencies, and just over a fifth of supply teachers (21%) reported that they were not given the details of who and where to report to each day, including details of the signing in process.

Well over a third of supply teachers (36%) reported that they were not provided with the details of how to raise any concerns about health and safety, and just over a third (34%) reported that they were not provided with the details of how to call for assistance, including first aid. Furthermore, 47% of supply teachers reported that they were not provided with the details of the nearest first aid room or appropriate area.

In regards to the school's fire evacuation plans, including routes and procedures, over a third of supply teachers (35%) reported that this was not provided to them when undertaking assignments in schools during the 2022/23 academic year.

A third of respondents (33%) stated that they had not been given a tour of the school site, including identifying where they would be teaching when undertaking assignments in schools.

In respect to the timetable, including breaks and lunch periods, as well as expectations on staff during such times, over a fifth of supply teachers (23%) reported that information regarding this had not been provided to them when undertaking assignments in schools.

Over a quarter of respondents (27%) reported that they had not been provided with the details of the registration process and expectations for the appropriate movement of pupils around the school site between lessons, at breaks, at lunchtimes, and at the end of the school day when undertaking assignments during the 2022/23 academic year.

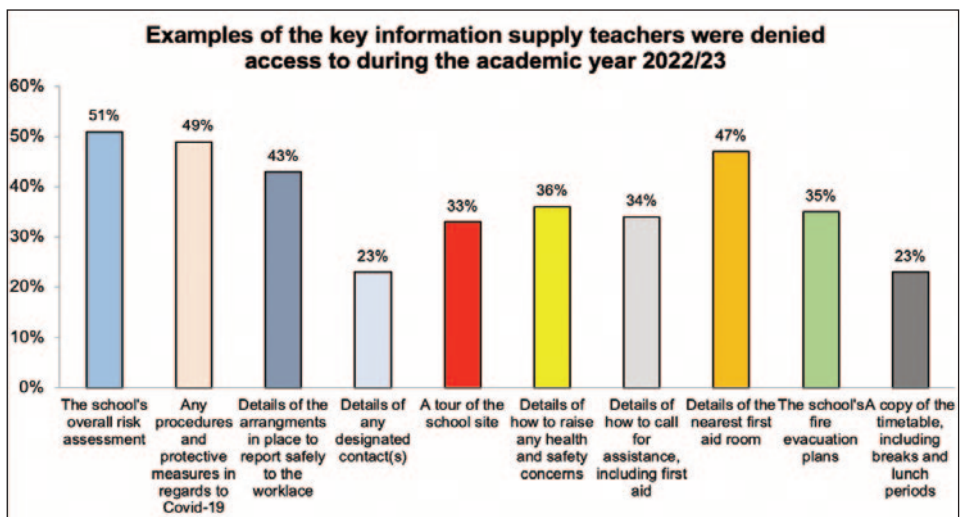
In regards to teaching, 28% of supply teachers reported that they were not provided with details of how to access relevant information on schemes of work for the subjects they were expected to teach, and 30% reported that they had not been provided with access to relevant teaching materials.

I am rarely given any information in a day-to-day supply post, and then schools often appear to blame subs for any incidents, even though the sub is often not even made aware of SEN pupils or prior incidents to be aware of. We are going in blind and it is not safe.

In addition, just over a fifth of supply teachers (21%) stated that they were not provided with the details regarding access to computers, with log-in details and what to do at the end of the school day, and over two-fifths (43%) reported that they were not provided with the details of any resources they might reasonably be expected to provide to students, such as pens.

Twenty-nine per cent of respondents (29%) stated that they were not provided with a list of the pupils in the class(es) they would be teaching, including details of any medical conditions, behavioural issues or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and just over two-fifths of supply teachers (42%) stated that they had not been provided with the details of any pupils known to be potentially violent, and how this should be managed.

Furthermore, 31% of supply teachers reported that they had not been provided with the behaviour management policy when undertaking assignments in schools, including who to contact. Just under a third of supply teachers (31%) reported that they had not been provided with the details of any events, meetings or specific activities taking place, and a third of supply teachers (33%) stated that they had not been provided with the arrangements for school transport, as appropriate, when undertaking assignments during the 2022/23 academic year.



Access to facilities and amenities in schools when undertaking assignments

When asked about their most recent assignment, just under a fifth of supply teachers (19%) stated that they do not always have access to staff rooms where they were available, over a third (36%) stated that they do not always have access to staff food and drink facilities, and just over one in ten (11%) said that they do not always have access to toilet/washroom facilities. Just over a fifth (21%) reported that they do not always have access to car parking.

Over a third of respondents (36%) stated that they do not always have access to staff food and drink facilities when undertaking assignments.

Issues and concerns, including health and safety, for supply teachers during the academic year 2022/23

Sixteen per cent of supply teachers stated that they do not feel that any issues and concerns they have raised are taken seriously, and a third (33%) stated that they didn't know.

Just under two-fifths of supply teachers (38%) who secured work during the academic year 2022/23 stated that they were concerned about their health and safety when undertaking supply work in schools, and 8% of supply teachers thought that they may have been penalised or had work cancelled for disclosing personal information about their health and safety (e.g. pregnant).

Lack of entry/exit fobs, left alone with SEN pupils, no details for emergencies.

Rates of pay for supply teachers during the academic year 2022/23

In respect of rates of pay, supply teachers were asked if they had been paid at the correct point on the teachers' pay scale for the work they had undertaken during the academic year 2022/23.

Just over nine out of ten (91%) reported that they had been paid on the correct point on the teachers' pay scale, but 9% of supply teachers stated that this was not the case.

I was paid incorrectly until December (I was paid on M1 and should have been UPS3).

Well over four-fifths of supply teachers (86%) reported that the daily rate of remuneration offered during the academic year 2022/23 was in line with their level of experience and expertise.

Just under a quarter of supply teachers (24%) reported that they have been offered work as a cover supervisor, teaching assistant or similar role, and, where they have been offered these roles, well in excess of two-fifths (44%) reported that these were offered at a lower rate of pay than would have been received for teaching.

Financial situation during the academic year 2022/23

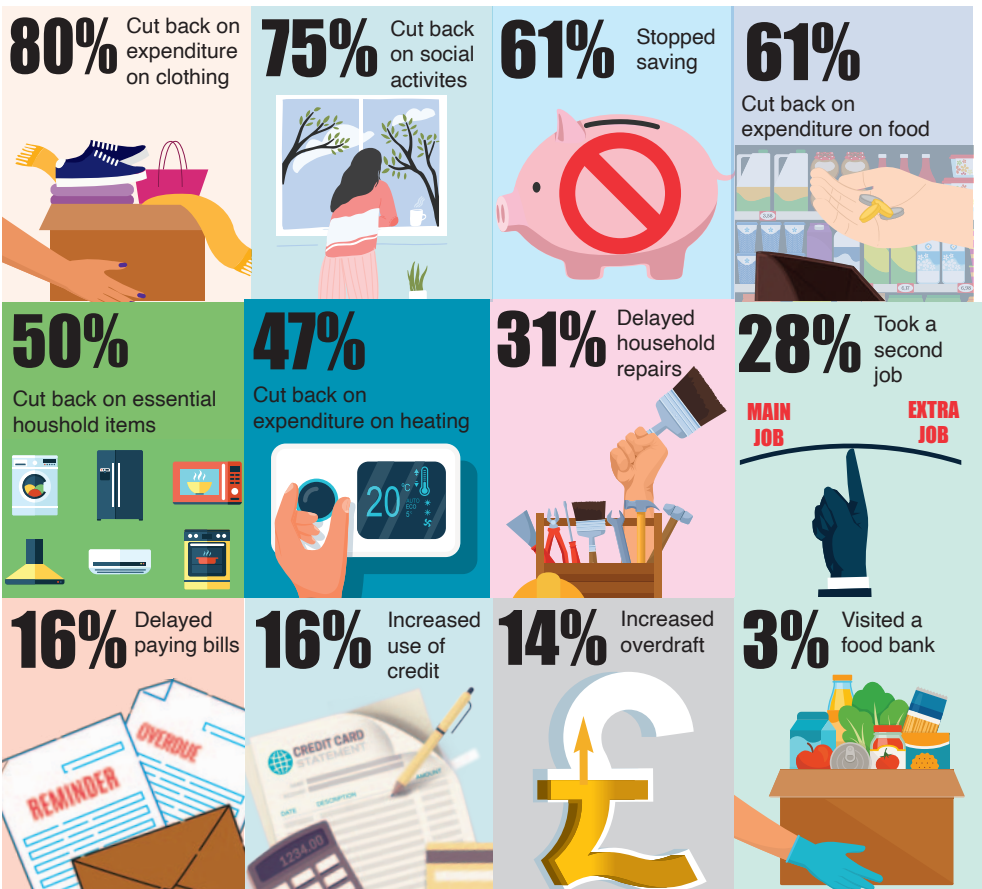
Supply teachers were asked about their financial situation during the academic year 2022/23.

A third of supply teachers (33%) reported that they had sourced work elsewhere other than teaching during the academic year. Of those, just over three-quarters (76%) stated that the work sourced elsewhere other than teaching failed to provide the same level of financial income that they would have obtained had they been able to obtain work teaching.

Fifteen per cent of supply teachers reported having to claim some form of state benefit during the academic year (e.g. Universal Credit), and just under three-fifths of respondents (59%) stated that they had experienced financial hardship as a supply teacher over the same period.

I had to get a loan to pay my bills over the summer months.

Accept help from family and friends.



59% of supply teachers stated that they had experienced financial hardship.

70% of supply teachers who responded stated that undertaking supply work, and the inability to secure a permanent post, had affected their ability to make significant life decisions.

Have been denied mortgage due to not being in a proper contract and not getting the same payment each month.

A fifth of supply teachers (20%) reported that they were required to self-isolate during the academic year 2022/23. Of those, just under half of supply teachers (48%) stated that the employer did not make them aware of whether they were eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), and 92% stated that there were not eligible for any financial support/did not know if they were eligible for any financial support.

As a consequence, a third of supply teachers (33%) reported that the requirement to self-isolate had a detrimental impact on their income.

Training and behaviour management support

Just under half of supply teachers (49%) stated that they had not been given access to continuing professional development (CPD) in the last 12 months.

For those supply teachers who accessed CPD, 31% stated that this had been provided by the education authority, over four-fifths (83%) stated that this had been provided by schools, 14% stated that this had been provided by their trade union, and one in ten (10%) reported that it had been provided by a subject specialist organisation/exam board.

Just under half of supply teachers (49%) stated that they had not been given access to CPD.

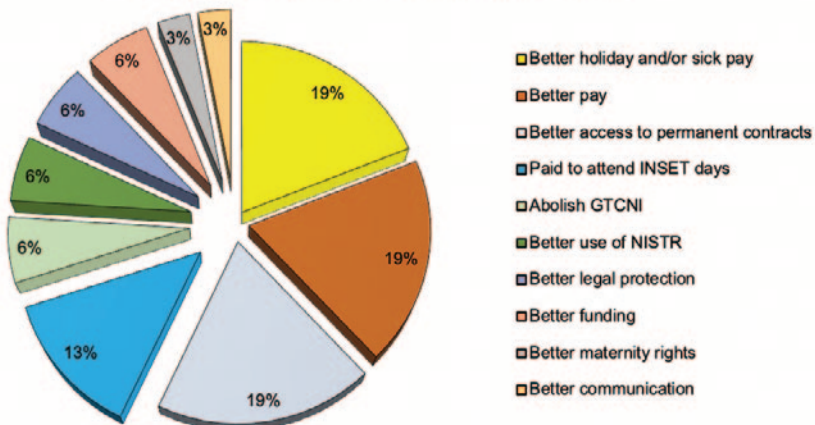
In regards to participating in in-service training (INSET) days provided by schools during the 2022/23 academic year, over two-fifths (42%) reported that they were asked to participate in all the INSET days in schools where they undertook assignments, whereas just over one in 20 (6%) reported that the majority of schools asked them to participate in INSET days, and 8% stated that a few schools asked them to participate in INSET days.

Well over two-fifths of supply teachers (44%) reported that they were not asked to participate in any INSET provided by the schools where they undertook assignments.

A quarter of supply teachers (25%) reported that they do not feel they are treated with respect and dignity.

*Definitely not always respected by pupils and other teachers.
Mostly by classroom assistants.*

Ways in which the Northern Ireland Government could best support supply teachers moving forwards



Soul-destroying, a tough year, exhausting.

It has been a really hard year. I have spent most of it looking for another job.

Just under three-fifths of supply teachers (58%) who responded stated that, based on their experiences during the 2022/23 academic year, they were currently looking for work outside of teaching.

CONCLUSION

The survey of supply teachers emphasises the crucial role that supply teachers have played in schools in Northern Ireland during the 2022/23 academic year.

However, the survey suggests that the experiences of supply teachers throughout the 2022/23 academic year have been varied. For some supply teachers, the opportunities for work has increased, whereas others have found that they have been forced to travel further in order to secure work, despite the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Indeed, some supply teachers faced the unenviable situation where the cost of living had a detrimental impact of how far they were willing to travel in order to secure work.

Given the vagaries of intermittent and insecure employment, a number of supply teachers have had to make tough decisions about their expenditure, including cutting back on their expenditure on food and making use of food banks. In addition, some supply teachers have been forced to claim Universal Credit and there are those who have had to rely on the generosity of family and friends to make ends meet.

Furthermore, the 2022/23 survey indicates that many schools are still routinely failing to provide key information to hard-working and dedicated supply teachers, including in regards to the pupils they are expected to teach, as well as critical health and safety information to enable them to discharge their duties safely as a supply teacher when undertaking an assignment.

There are concerns that these disparities in treatment are impacting disproportionately on women, Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and disabled teachers, who are more likely to be employed as supply teachers.

In this context, the results from the 2022/23 survey substantiate the pressing need for a better deal for supply teachers which recognises and values the important and significant contribution they make to the education system in Northern Ireland.



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