



Guide to Supply



Being a supply worker is a challenging though rewarding job. It's our role to help and support you in every possible way. We, like you, are committed to the best in education. There are a number of options when choosing to work with us:

Permanent Positions:

You may feel that the way forward for you is to commit to a permanent role at a school, being employed and paid by the Local Education Authority. If you think that the security of this kind of role is for you and it is time to make that commitment then these posts are often advertised in the TES and on LEA websites, so why go to an agency?

Some schools prefer to reduce their advertising and administration and pass even these posts on to an agency. It is then up to us to find suitable candidates and put forward the most appropriate people for interview. The successful person then goes on a direct contract.

From the workers point of view it also means that someone else does all the administration and you are saved time and expense.

This kind of role is only open to those with the right to work full-time in the UK or for whom a school is prepared to apply for a work permit. Such contracts may be a permanent contract or for a set period of time, i.e. a term or a year. There will be a half-term notice period and salary will need to be negotiated with the school and is usually dependent on experience.

Long-Term Supply:

Longer-term supply posts can last from half a term to a year or more. This allows you to become part of school life and a person in this position will be expected to take on all the responsibilities of a permanent member of staff. It does offer flexibility as either the worker or the school can end the position with minimal notice. In a position of this kind you will be paid weekly through your agency by producing a signed/authorised timesheet. The daily rate will be discussed and negotiated with you and will take all extra responsibilities into account.

Schools employ workers on this basis to cover vacancies they may have been unable to fill, or long-term sick leaves, or maternity leaves. Workers on restrictive permits, e.g. working holiday visas, often enjoy these roles as they provide the chance to establish a relationship in a school while remaining flexible, so allowing scope for travel, to enjoy a number of different schools, etc.

Often longer-term positions stem from daily or short-term supply. If a teacher particularly enjoys a school and is regularly asked back, he or she may well end up staying at the school for as long as possible!

Short-Term Supply:

Schools require supply workers to cover courses, events, illness, etc. at short notice. Daily supply suits a worker who is not ready to make a longer term commitment, maybe unsure of plans, wanting to travel or move, preferring to see a wide variety and range of schools and to gain what is often invaluable experience. This kind of supply work requires flexibility and can be booked in advance or often in the morning as schools find they are short staffed...especially in flu season!



The Process and Going to School

At your interview with Axcis your consultant will have discussed your preferences as well as your expectations and concerns. After the interview, vetting checks will be carried out and you will be quickly cleared and ready to work. Your consultant will give you a call to tell you this is the case and you then need to ring in regularly with your availability. It is important to call in on a Friday with your availability for the next week and to always keep us informed about your plans.

If you have expressed an interest in long term or permanent positions, we will call you to discuss roles as they become available. You will be given as much information about a post as possible and if you are interested your CV will be sent to the school and we will try to arrange an interview or trial day. We will always speak to you and answer any questions before forwarding your details for a role, though we will actively market your details to schools we consider suitable if this has been discussed with and agreed by you at interview.

If you are asked to attend an interview we will do our best to help you prepare with examples of questions and information. After the interview we ask both you and the school for detailed feedback and will keep you informed every step of the way.

If you have opted to start with or only cover daily or short-term supply posts, we will try and get you as much work as possible in advance. You will be expected to arrive at school by 8.30am to familiarise yourself with the day, and are not expected to leave until all responsibilities have been fulfilled. Following a morning call you should endeavour to reach the school as quickly as possible, usually within the hour.

Although the school should always have work set, a good teacher will have a “bag of tricks” - lesson ideas for many different subject areas and abilities. You should also ensure that set work is completed and notes left for the regular teacher about work done and any particularly noticeable behaviour, both good and unsatisfactory. You should also ensure that school disciplinary and other policies are adhered to.

Primary, Secondary and SEND

Primary generally covers Pre-School (Nursery), Foundation Stage (Reception), Infant or KS1 (Years 1 and 2) and Junior or KS2 (Years 3-6).

In many primary classes, especially at the younger ages you can expect to have a Classroom Assistant or a Nursery Nurse. These members of staff know the children well and are an invaluable asset. However, always remember that it is up to the teacher to be in control.

All ages follow a set curriculum and you are expected to be familiar with at least the basics of this. Information can be obtained from many sources, e.g. www.nationalcurriculum.co.uk

With primary pupils you will be expected to take a register and possibly to collect dinner money as well as to escort pupils to assemblies and be responsible for their behaviour. You may also be expected to do playground supervision at either break or part of lunchtime. With younger children, you should remain with pupils until they are collected at the end of the day.

Secondary covers KS3 (Years 7-9) and KS4 (Years 10-11). Older pupils are part of the post-compulsory sector. Again, there may be support staff working with individual pupils with special needs or second language support. Secondary schools are usually much larger than primary schools and have more staff with specific responsibilities.

Special Schools cater for pupils who are likely to thrive in a more specialised environment. Each class will have at least one and often a number of Learning Support Assistants who know the children well. They will be responsible for feeding and toileting as required, though the teacher should always be prepared to help. It's sensible to dress quite casually in most special schools unless told otherwise.

MLD: moderate learning difficulties, often language and literacy learning issues. These schools are quite rare and have around 10 pupils to a class.

SLD/PMLD: severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, e.g. degrees of autism, Downs Syndrome, children may be non-mobile, non-verbal. Schools like this can be distressing at times. Pupils work to IEPs (Individual Education Plans). Class sizes can range from 3 to about 6 maximum usually. Some students may exhibit violent outbursts when they are distressed. Please be aware of this if you are considered a higher/particular risk to infections such as Hepatitis B. You should consider ensuring you have appropriate vaccinations. If working with severe ASD or SEMH/SEBD students you should also be clear about your own liability insurance (if unsure then talk to your umbrella service). Many mainstream teachers who move into special education find it immensely rewarding.

SEMH/SEBD/PRU: emotional and behavioural difficulties and pupil referral units. Again, class sizes tend to be very small and these schools can be run quite differently to mainstream to allow the pupils to adapt. The children can be extremely challenging and people who work here need to be very calm and flexible.

With all supply work, it's important to enjoy working with the pupils, and to adapt to their needs. You get back what you are prepared to give, and we will support you every step of the way.

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