

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont

29 May 2025
AQW 26998/22-27

Nick Mathison MLA has asked:

To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 26142/22-27, to outline what recommendations in the report from the Review on the Use of Temporary and Substitute Teachers (i) have been actioned; and (ii) require additional resources.

ANSWER

A detailed assessment of the recommendations from the Review on the Use of Temporary and Substitute Teachers has been jointly carried out with the trade unions.

Recommendations which (i) have been actioned; and (ii) require additional resources has been deposited in the Assembly Library.

It has also been agreed that the Independent Review of Teachers' Workload, including the Heads of Agreement which was part of the 2024/25 Teachers' pay agreement, will form the basis on which teachers' and school leaders' workload issues will be addressed going forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Givan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education

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(i)	Recommendations that have been actioned
A1	Consider improvements to operational issues impacting on Effective Engagement: The NISTR system should include functionality which enables permanent part-time teachers to register/update their account indicating they are on a permanent part-time contract and only wish to provide supply cover within their own school and limiting them to select that school only. This would enable an expedited registration without the standard pre-employment checks and negate the need for a teacher to pay for another Access NI check or future biennial NISTR vetting checks. This might initially require manual checks with payroll to ensure the teacher is on the permanent payroll at the stated school and might eventually be enabled automatically through system interactions between the NISTR solution and the EA One solution. It is envisaged this solution would offer benefits by reducing administrative burdens from the teacher/school who are currently required to complete NISTR registration in order to be paid for additional days and resolve issues around differing compliance requirements for permanent teachers versus substitute teachers (e.g. Access NI biennial rechecks).
A2	Consideration and funding should be given to the need for additional resources to support the ongoing administration of the NISTR system to ensure that the system is fully supported and monitored.
A3	Continue to enhance the functionality of the new NISTR system to meet the needs of schools and supply teachers.
A4	Introduce monitoring and improved systems of accountability that promote good practices in respect of temporary and supply teacher engagement: Consider establishment of joint MS/NITC panel to bring forward issues for collective discussion including assessing the appropriate use of NISTR by schools for example through the review of NISTR reports regarding prolonged periods of engagement. The panel would provide advice to schools and teachers regarding appropriate engagement and actions to be taken to address inappropriate engagements and report findings to employing authorities and the Department of Education.
A5	Consider the introduction of administrative charges for non-compliance with guidance which might include:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Late sign-off on bookings that results in the need for a manual payment to be processed for a supply teacher. b. Regular requests to the NISTR administrative team for the creation of retrospective bookings.
A6	Teachers registered on the NISTR should be provided with individual C2k email accounts to enable access to key guidance and information such as DE Circulars, changes to curriculum, professional learning training opportunities and other guidance and topical information. Consideration could be given to functionality to enable the supply teachers C2k account to be linked to a school for each period of the temporary engagement only.
A7	Principalship professional learning training on HR and Employment should be extended to ensure that new school leaders are provided with opportunities to learn about effective good practices around recruitment and selection of both permanent and non-permanent staff including management of permanent and fixed-term contracts.
A8	The ongoing requirement for biennial vetting checks for teachers on the NISTR (in line with DE Circulars 2008/16 and 2013/01) should be reviewed. This might consider the need to re-check teachers who are in permanent part-time employment and NISTR teachers that are working regularly with no continuous break in service of more than 3 months. It might also consider any panel developed under recommendation 5a, could be the key contact notified by the PSNI of any ongoing investigations.
A9	Pending any legislative change, consideration might be given to the feasibility of a change in payroll operation of using the NISTR as a means to pay temporary teachers on a fixed-term contract of less than 12 months. EA One may offer alternative for placing temporary teachers on the system for a fixed period via online form / sign-off of hours. The basic principle behind this is to move NISTR to a position where it only contains the details of 'genuine' substitute teachers who wish to be available for searching and booking by schools, and away from the current position whereby it contains details of all temporary and fixed-term teachers (<12 months). It will eliminate administration for the teacher/school who are currently required to complete the further step of NISTR registration in order to be paid.

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A10	Permanent contracts should contain reference to the need for the teacher to de-activate their NISTR account asap if full-time or ensure part-time days are blocked out as unavailable if wishing to continue to source additional work through NISTR. A checking mechanism might also be considered when a new teacher is added to the permanent/main payroll that the NISTR administrative team are notified of TR number and working pattern and can follow-up with teacher regarding continued need for NISTR account.
A11	Pending any legislative change, the NISTR system should be monitored and effective management built in to ensure that any teacher continuously engaged by one school/employer for 12 months or more should be moved to the 1/365 pay rate to ensure they gain entitlement to leave provisions until the end of that engagement.
A12	Consideration of removal of centre supported funding (following a clear process) for substitution costs relating to NISTR engagement exceeding six months without a reasonable and robust justification. It will be important to ensure protections for all employees as part of any process.
A13	Current gaps in Performance Review and Performance Management for Supply Teachers must be addressed without delay: TNC should review Circular 2015/03 in respect of the requirement at Annex B for schools to refer to specific procedures developed by TNC for supply teachers in the case of allegations of abuse. The procedural guidance referenced does not appear to have been developed to date and should be produced without delay.
A14	There is a need to plug the 'no employer' gap in respect of concerns around capability and conduct of teachers registered on the NISTR and establish an agreed process for managing complaints or concerns raised. The recommended long-term option would be to explore how any future regulator of the teaching profession's role could be developed to meet this need, which is timely given the new legislation on the future role is currently being drafted and will be consulted upon. NISCC, in terms of how they manage the fitness to practice of social workers, provides a useful benchmark in this regard. In the interim period and without delay, TNC should consider an addendum to the teacher's disciplinary procedure setting out how issues should be managed when a teacher is working across schools or employing authorities and establishing a cross-

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	employer panel to consider cases. Taking into consideration the potential significant detriment of precautionary suspension and access to pay, clear protocols and decision-making authority need to be developed around suspension and/or removal of registration.
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(ii) Recommendations that require additional resources	
R1	Amend the Teachers' Salaries Regulations to re-categorise Supply and Temporary Teachers to differentiate between casual, extended and fixed-term contracted engagement with clearly defined pay and conditions for each category, ensuring compatibility with the Fixed-term Employees Regulations.
R2	Should recommendations 8 and 9 x be progressed resulting in greater recruitment through fixed term contracts; consideration should be given to enhancing Employing Authority HR resources (in respect of administrative processes, ratification, accountability etc.). This might also include access to such HR services and support for VGS, GMI and IM schools via a Service Level Agreement arrangement as referenced in the Review of the Employment Model.
R3	Survey highlighted that many teachers are willing to travel more than 90 minutes for a substitute position. Consideration should be given to meeting the costs of Travel and Subsistence (T&S) costs in certain instances. For example This is in particular for rural schools or Irish Medium schools that are a long distance from appropriate supply teacher home locations or difficult/expensive to access (e.g. Rathlin Island), leading NISTR teachers to turn down work. The mechanism for this could entail an individual school applying to access a fund for T&S providing evidence of a supply issue.
R4	School leader survey highlighted a deficit of supply teachers with subject expertise for example STEM, ability to teach in immersive Irish and expertise in special educational needs. Consideration should be given to more proactive workforce planning and potential need for incentives in certain areas of initial teacher education training.
R5	Management will consider providing ongoing and promoted (through NISTR) access to mandatory professional learning training such as that provided for Child Protection through similar online opportunities. Professional learning training packages of this nature should be reasonably short and accessible at any time through eLearning packages.
R6	Where eLearning is introduced, this should be supported by some form of online forum to provide expert responses to queries within reasonable timescales.

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R7	Should supply teachers be expected to attend ‘delivered’ set-time courses, this should attract remuneration.
R8	The potential merits of link schools for professional learning training/mentoring or need for designated training schools (Finland model) should be considered. Ideally this would be formally established under one body, preferably an enhanced role of the restructured GTCNI as the professional body. In practice this might involve administration of a scheme that enabled volunteer mentors to apply stating their areas of expertise and matched them to less experienced teachers seeking general or subject-specific advice and guidance either in cluster groups or individually depending on the nature of the support sought. This would be extremely beneficial, especially for early career teachers during completion of their EPD. This might also provide an avenue for referral of teachers about whom schools had raised concerns regarding conduct or performance. The scheme would provide centrally funded time off timetable for mentors.
R9	The Review Group are of the view that NISTR remains the most effective model to engage supply teachers however there is potential to provide schools with additional engagement methods which might provide other routes to meet their needs: Consideration of a blanket/centralised recruitment process to provide a pool of suitable candidates engaged on fixed-term contracts (possibly across a cluster of schools) in order to effectively and efficiently utilise specific 'pots' of funding such as the 'Engage' Programme that require additional teachers to be engaged in schools.
R10	Consideration should be given to provision of options to simplify/ expedite the recruitment and selection process for fixed-term contracts, particularly those for less than 12 months: A centralised competition could be administered annually for fixed term contracts less than 12 months with pre-established merit order lists from which schools could choose to access rather than run individual competitions.
R11	An open ‘pipeline’ could be established (possibly via NISTR or a Taleo type system) of potential applicants interested in fixed-term contracts within defined geographical areas who have already undergone pre-employment checks and completed an application form allowing schools to draw down candidates. This might include fuller competency-based

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	applications to enable selection without interview for positions less than six months or to enable shortlisting for interview if post more than six months (Annex 3 provides a potential proposal).
R12	A voluntary pilot to assess the merits of a standard contract (to include start and end date and basic terms and conditions) that could be downloaded and issued through NISTR for shorter-term engagements (of less than 12 months) with a simplified NISTR-based selection process as outlined at 10b or drawing off the centralised competition lists at 10a.
R13	Potential for greater digitisation of pre-employment checks could be further explored.