

Resource 13: Inducting supply teachers – a scenario

Interviewer: As someone who is a 'professional supply teacher', in that all of your work is on supply and you're not looking for permanent employment in a school, what's your experience of being inducted in schools?

Supply teacher: Varied, to say the least! In some schools I'm very much thrown in at the deep end and have to sink or swim but others do take at least some time to make sure I've got all I need.

Interviewer: Have you ever received what might be called formal induction into a school, even though you're a supply teacher?

Supply teacher: Yes I have and those are the schools that I'm most likely to return to. There isn't ever a lot of time for this kind of thing, and part of my role as a professional is to 'hit the ground running', but any efforts a school can make to help me do that will be appreciated.

Interviewer: What's helped you most?

Supply teacher: One school I go to whenever I'm asked has given me a ring binder full of general information about the school such as a school map, phone numbers, pay claim forms, feedback forms and so on. I bring that to the school in the morning and my timetable for the day is waiting in the office along with class lists and detailed lesson plans, complete with resources lists and where to find everything. I just slot these pages into the binder and everything I need is right there. Teaching there is a real dream because all I need to concentrate on is the children. Everything else is taken care of. The feedback forms they have given me have tick boxes so I can convey a lot of information to the returning teacher without it taking me ages to do. I get invited to any professional development that might be going on during the day too, which is great for me.

Interviewer: I can see that works well in a school you're familiar with, but what about new schools? What have been your induction experiences so far?

Supply teacher: One school had a senior member of staff waiting for me to arrive and as soon as I had signed in he showed me round the school, pointing out all the vital rooms. Having taken me to the staffroom and cloakroom and so on we ended up in the classroom where I was to be based all day and he went through the lesson plans and resources as well as introducing me to the teacher in the next room who was to be my contact if I needed anything. It sounds like a lot but the whole thing took less than ten minutes and really helped.

But in another school I don't think any member of staff even made any eye contact with me until I stumbled across what I thought was the right classroom. I wasn't entirely sure if I had the right class and had to ask them if they were expecting a supply teacher. It wasn't a completely disastrous morning, but could have been so much better if I'd had some information on the classes, what I should expect them to achieve, how the school operated certain policies and where I could find basic resources like paper and spare pens.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice for schools when it comes to inducting supply teachers?

Supply teacher: Yes I do... we don't need much time spent on us but a little goes a very long way. If I'm going to teach the classes I cover rather than just 'baby-sit' them I need to know a little about the children and the work I have to do with them as well as basic information about how a school functions. I can't, and won't, go into a classroom without knowing essential details about the behaviour policy at the school for example. If a lot of that information can be conveyed on paper all the better, and if I can get into a school in advance of the day I'm teaching there to collect it that's best, as I can digest it all well in time. Basically, a little support goes a long way and helps me adapt to the ways in which a school works. It has to be worth it if it helps supply teachers to support the children they're teaching.