

100 Ideas for Supply Teachers, by Julia Murphy,

Continuum, £8.99

Loved by staff (who would otherwise be covering for absent colleagues) and seen as fair game by some pupils, supply teachers deserve our admiration.

So a book of tried and tested lesson tips seems a very good idea and one hundred of them for £8.99 surely a bargain. I have to confess to being disappointed. First, I don't think all of the ideas are actually ideas.

Number one tells us why people become supply teachers. Idea two is about how to get supply work. Idea four lists important documents and a reminder of the need to be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau.

These are all important, but I'm not sure they are the kind of "ideas" we were expecting.

Given the frantic day-to-day routines of supply teachers – hurtling off from tutor time at one end of the school to a PE lesson at the other – I assumed that the book would serve up a fast-food approach to teaching: digestible tips in convenient packaging.

Much of the advice is under subject headings. For Maths there's the radical idea of getting students to do some times tables (idea 31) or play *Countdown* (idea 34). For German there's an unexpected list of useful words and phrases such as "tracksuit" and "My friend's dog is..." (idea 51).

There's nothing if you're called on to cover Citizenship or PSHE, but some decent suggestions for covering a tutor group and carrying a mobile phone for emergencies. But I found myself wanting shorter paragraphs, subheadings and bullet-points, those typographical tools that help to make texts accessible.

Overall I felt a bit short-changed by the book because it could easily have been so useful. The best bits are the excellent lists of websites. The worst bits, in a book of 100 ideas, are some of the ideas.

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