

Support for managing staff absences

We know schools are doing everything they can to make sure pupils can attend, while dealing with higher levels of staff absence than normal. To help manage this, we've highlighted some options available to you below to support the existing [operational guidance](#) and [contingency framework](#).

Staffing options

While you may want to minimise visitors to your school, this shouldn't take priority over ensuring sufficient staffing levels – and individuals can move between schools providing they follow safety measures in place.

- You can continue to make use of agency staff and supply teachers – find a list of preferred local agencies using our [online tool](#). Supply agencies in your area can also be found using an [online finder](#).
- For those schools already hosting initial teacher training (ITT) trainees, we encourage them to continue doing so this academic year, and for those schools not already doing so, we recommend contacting their local ITT providers to explore opportunities to do so.
- ITT trainees can play a key role in schools. They can also help schools to meet their future recruitment needs, and offer excellent professional development opportunities for their existing workforce. To learn more about hosting trainees, please contact your local ITT providers or email itt.engagement@education.gov.uk. Search for ITT providers near you through the [Find Postgraduate Teacher Training service](#).
- Our [Teaching Vacancies service](#) facilitates easier recruitment by allowing you to list vacancies for both permanent and fixed-term teaching and educational support roles quickly and for free. We've also published advice on conducting interviews remotely.
- Exploring with staff who have existing flexible working arrangements in place (for example part-time staff or staff with different working patterns) and who could be an option for short-term basis support. You will need to consider the types of compensation for any new agreed arrangements.
- Support staff can cover lessons provided they are directed and supervised by a qualified teacher and the headteacher is satisfied they have the relevant skills, expertise and experience required.
- Volunteers can support schools providing they are properly supported, given appropriate roles, and schools follow all legal requirements. You may wish to consider reaching out to former teachers to help, which could be on either a voluntary or paid basis. Our [return to teaching](#) webpage for useful online resources, and [top tips](#) to help bring back valuable experience to the classroom.

Additional support available in cases of staff absences

- **Funding has been made available through the re-opening of the [covid workforce fund](#)** for schools and colleges to cover absences from 22 November until 31 December 2021. The fund covers the costs of teacher absences over a threshold in schools and colleges, for those with high staff absences that are also facing significant financial pressures. The claims process will open in spring 2022 and full guidance on the claims process will be published in due course.
- **Wellbeing support is available.** We have awarded a contract to charity Education Support, to provide peer support and counselling to around 2,000 school leaders until March 2023. School leaders can access support by visiting Education Support's [website](#). [Education Support](#) also provides a free helpline for school staff with targeted support for mental health and wellbeing. Here's a list of [mental health resources for parents, children, young people and staff](#) and our [Education Staff Wellbeing Charter](#), which you may find useful when planning your approach.
- **Free peer-to-peer support for schools and colleges on using technology** is available. Our [EdTech Demonstrator Programme](#) can support schools to access help and advice on educational technology for free. For more information, accessibility criteria and to register for support, schools and colleges can visit the [EdTech Demonstrator Website](#). Schools can also access a range of resources on our [Get Help with Remote Education - GOV.UK](#) page, including free staff training.
- **You should advise staff to test regularly at home.** Testing is voluntary but staff are strongly encouraged to participate. Home test kits are available for all staff in educational settings for regular testing. Staff, regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time, should be offered testing.
- **All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine**, including boosters. Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. To book a vaccination, please visit nhs.uk/CovidVaccine

If you still have concerns about staffing capacity after exploring all of the available options, please speak to your local authority or trust.

The [Teaching Blog](#) contains advice and support on a range of issues from heads and classroom teachers. You can also get updates on DfE guidance and resources by signing up to the [Teacher Bulletin](#).