

Dealing with staff absences

We know that schools are doing everything they can to deal with higher levels of staff absence than normal. However, we wanted to make sure that the guidance was clear and that you were aware of all of the options available to you.

You can find full details in the workforce section of the [full opening guidance](#), but we've pulled out some of the key points below.

Using external staff

While you should of course seek to minimise visitors to your school, this shouldn't take priority over ensuring sufficient staffing levels – individuals can move between schools providing they follow the system of controls that are in place.

- **You can still make use of agency staff and supply teachers** – you can find a list of preferred local agencies using our [online tool](#).
- **ITT trainees can play a significant supporting role**, including taking responsibility for small groups of pupils with mentor oversight. To learn more about hosting trainees, contact ITT providers – you can find providers offering courses near you by searching the [find teacher training website](#).
- **Our [Teaching Vacancies](#) service makes it easy to continue to recruit staff**. It allows you to list vacancies for both permanent and fixed-term teaching staff quickly and for free. We've also published [advice on conducting interviews remotely](#).
- **Volunteers can also be used to support schools** as would usually be the case, providing they are properly supported, given appropriate roles, and schools [follow all legal requirements](#). You may also wish to consider reaching out to **part-time staff and former teachers** to help, which could be on either a voluntary or paid basis.
- **Any individual 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. In deciding how long such cover can last heads will clearly need to consider the appropriateness of arrangements for pupil outcomes and staff, and whether supply teachers could be a more effective option.



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Reducing the impact of absences

- **Develop contingency arrangements for key members of staff** who are required for schools to remain open safely, such as cleaners and first aiders. For instance, you may wish to maintain links with a number of suppliers to ensure there is capacity available should you need it.
- **You can advise staff to use the range of testing options available** – booking a test at a drive-in centre or ordering a home test kit. You can also use your supply of home test kits if needed to help those symptomatic staff who test negative – and are not close contacts of confirmed cases – to get back to work as soon as they feel well enough. **Guidance on testing is available on GOV.UK.**

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

Don't forget, you can read examples on the [DfE Teaching Blog](#) directly from heads and classroom teachers on how they've been maintaining bubbles to reduce risk, looking after staff wellbeing and delivering a remote curriculum. You can also get updates on the DfE guidance and resources by signing up to the [DfE Teacher Bulletin](#).

