



Department for Education 06.11.2020

This is your daily email to keep you updated on the government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Responding to staff absences in schools

We know education settings are doing everything they can to respond to higher than usual levels of staff absence. Our guidance on the [actions schools should take during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) provides information to support school leaders.

Whilst we advise that schools consider how to minimise the number of visitors where possible, this shouldn't take priority over ensuring sufficient staffing levels. Schools can continue to employ supply teachers and other supply staff during this period. We recommend that schools consider using the Department for Education and [Crown Commercial Service's agency supply deal](#) when hiring agency workers, as this offers a list of preferred suppliers that must be transparent about the rates they charge.

Initial teacher training (ITT) trainees can play a significant supporting role to schools. Trainees take responsibility, with the usual mentor oversight, for small groups of pupils, creating online learning materials, re-planning sequences of lessons or delivering catch-up lessons. Learn more about hosting trainees by contacting [ITT providers in your area](#).

[Teaching Vacancies](#) is the free, national service for searching and listing teaching roles, provided by the Department for Education, making it easy to continue to recruit staff. We have published [advice on conducting interviews remotely](#).

To reduce the impact of staff absences on education we recommend that school leaders develop contingency

arrangements for key members of staff who are required for schools to remain open safely, such as cleaners and first aiders. You may wish to maintain links with a number of suppliers to ensure there is capacity available should you need it.

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

The information below hasn't changed since our last update

Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline – opening hours

The Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline is available to answer questions about coronavirus (COVID-19) relating to education settings and children's social care.

Please listen carefully to all of the available options before selecting the most appropriate option for your nursery, school, college or university.

Please select option 1 or 2 if you require specific advice on the action to take to respond to a positive case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your setting. This option will take you through to a dedicated team of NHS Business Services Authority advisors who will work through a risk assessment with you to identify close contacts and will inform you what action is needed based on the latest public health advice.

Please select option 3 or 4 for any other questions about coronavirus (COVID-19) relating to education settings and children's social care.

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm

Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm

Look up your unique organisation number (UON)

If you have not received your unique organisation number (UON) for ordering new coronavirus (COVID-19) test kits you can [look it up using your unique reference number \(URN\) or your UK provider reference number \(UKPRN\)](#) or by calling the Test and Trace helpdesk on 119.

Department for Education guidance

Our guidance to support education providers, local authorities and parents during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak can be accessed using the links below:

- [Guidance for early years and childcare providers](#)
- [Guidance for schools](#)
- [Guidance for further and higher education providers](#)
- [Guidance for local authority children's services](#)
- [Guidance for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings](#)