

Education Secretary calls for ex-teachers to return to classrooms

The Government is asking former teachers who have the skills and time to return to the classroom [to sign up](#) from today.

The Omicron variant is expected to continue to cause increased staff absence levels in the spring term, and some local areas may struggle to find sufficient numbers of supply teachers available unless former staff come forward.

It remains important the same comprehensive checks go ahead as they always would for anyone working with children. Potential teachers are therefore encouraged to get the process started as soon as possible and ideally before Christmas Eve to be ready to join the workforce from January.

Those who are recently retired, or trained as a teacher and moved career, are asked to consider whether they can find even a day a week for the spring term to help protect face-to-face education.

Targeted communications will begin to go out from today across a range of government, stakeholder and direct channels to encourage those eligible to apply.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

It has been my absolute priority since day one in the role to do everything in my power to protect education – which is why today I am asking any teachers no longer in the profession to come forward if they are available to temporarily fill absences in the new year.

Although 99.9% of schools have consistently been open this term, with cases of Omicron increasing we must make sure schools and colleges have the teachers available to remain open for face-to-face education.

Anyone who thinks they can help should get the process started now [on the Get Into Teaching website](#), and everyone should get boosted now to help reduce the amount of disruption from the virus in the new year.

Supply teacher agencies across the country will continue to manage local supply and demand to help make sure schools and colleges do not need to close as a result of lack of staff.

Former teachers are encouraged to approach those agencies identified on the sign up page as being registered on the Government's framework. This guarantees fair business practices and the agency's support in completing

pre-employment checks to ensure they can be placed in schools and colleges as soon as possible, but those eligible can approach any agency they prefer.

The Government is providing social media and communications support to schools and colleges, trusts, local authorities, teaching unions, supply teacher agencies, and sector organisations such as Teach First to help them engage with their networks and contact databases to reach those who are most likely to be able to answer the Education Secretary's call.

The Government will also be working to reach former teachers through its own communications channels, including through Get Into Teaching, the Teacher Pension Scheme and internet search advertising.

Department for Education staff eligible to come forward will be released to do so, as long as they are not working on the Department's own covid response.

The Disclosure and Barring Service has confirmed it will be ready to meet any spikes in demand for its service, continuing to meet its current turnaround times of 80% of Enhanced Checks issued within 14 days, of which 30% are issued within a day.

The Government is also working with Teach First to explore how those of their alumni who have trained as teachers but currently work outside the profession could make a temporary return to the classroom to support the resilience of the wider school workforce in the new year.

Russell Hobby, CEO of Teach First said:

Teachers have gone above and beyond throughout the pandemic, doing an inspirational job to support their pupils and communities in the face of adversity. Yet the disruption to school life and extended periods at home mean pupils' education has inevitably suffered, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Given the challenges that schools now face, we want to see what more can be done to help – including how we, and those of our alumni who have trained as teachers but currently work outside the profession, may be able to support schools to remain open safely in the new year.

Many areas are also facing pressures with high absence among social care staff. A temporary register was set up in March 2020 during the first peak of the pandemic to support former social workers to return to frontline practice. Any social worker who left the profession in the previous two years, was fit to practise and had not opted out was automatically added. Those individuals who remain on the temporary register are encouraged to contact their local authority children's social care team or sign up with a local agency if they can support at this time.

It remains vital for everyone to get their primary and booster vaccination

doses as soon as possible to help stem the spread of Omicron, reducing the number of absences faced by schools and across education in the new year.