

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London, SW1P 3BT

By email

**5 January 2020**

Dear Secretary of State,

**Support for agency supply teachers and support staff**

I am writing to you as a matter of urgency, to seek your support for supply teachers who cannot work as a result of new lockdown measures.

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation represents the UK recruitment industry, including 350 businesses supplying education staff. As I'm sure you'll agree, supply teachers and other agency support staff provide a vital service to schools and colleges. At this time of great uncertainty, whilst schools are shut and there is very little work available, it is important that they are supported financially. The REC is seeking your help to ensure the Chancellor provides this support.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been a much needed and generous scheme. The REC was pleased to see temporary workers included in the scheme and many of our members have furloughed supply teachers and temporary support staff.

Under the current guidance, a school that is forced to close will be able to put their staff on furlough and will also be eligible for additional support from government. This additional support, however, is not available to education agencies who furlough supply staff. This means that where an agency furloughs a worker, they are required to pay the worker's national insurance and pension contributions themselves, with no additional support or funding from government. These additional costs, multiplied across potentially hundreds of supply teachers, could be the difference in whether an agency is able to continue operating or not. Where agencies can't afford these costs, they will not be able to furlough supply teachers. Education agencies have been crucial in providing schools with supply teachers and key support staff during the pandemic. It is imperative that they are given the support they need to continue providing schools with essential workers.

Given the timing of the lockdown, additional questions will need to be addressed for supply teachers in particular. Half-term is scheduled for February this year, and clarity and guidance will be needed as to whether supply teachers can be furloughed during a school holiday. Workers need to have clear information so they can manage their finances. We raise this because whether supply teachers were eligible for furlough during school holidays was a grey area last year, and it is important that this ambiguity is avoided during the new lockdown.

The REC has written to the Chancellor to raise our concerns and put forward a solution. We appreciate that this is primarily a matter for Treasury, however, we would greatly value your support on this issue. The furlough scheme is welcomed, however, it doesn't work if employers can't afford to use it. We would welcome a call with your advisers at an early stage to provide further input and explore how the REC can help support your key priorities. Ellie Goddard ([ellie.goddard@rec.uk.com](mailto:ellie.goddard@rec.uk.com)) in my office will be able to arrange a time at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Kate Shoesmith

Deputy CEO