



Department
for Education

Early Years Initial Teacher Training – Requesting Places and Allocations Methodology 2026 to 2027 Academic Year

February 2026

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Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). It has been produced to provide accredited initial teacher training providers with the methodology used to allocate places on their early years initial teacher training courses for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for accredited providers offering early years initial teacher training courses in England for the 2026-2027 academic year. In this guidance, accredited ITT providers offering EYITT courses are referred to as accredited EYITT providers.

Main points

Each year the DfE requires accredited providers offering early years initial teacher training courses in England to communicate how many trainees they wish to recruit onto their courses for the following academic year. The DfE then grants a number of allocations to each provider for each relevant early years initial teacher training course and asks providers not to recruit above that number.

For the 2026-2027 academic year, the allocations process is relevant only to providers wishing to offer Early Years courses leading to Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS).

Introduction

The DfE is responsible for regulating the volume of trainee early years teachers in England where training leads to the award of EYTS. The department also aims to support recruitment for all initial teacher training (ITT) courses in order to meet teacher demand from schools in England, efficiently using public funds and minimising an oversupply of teachers.

This document provides guidance on early years teacher trainee recruitment for the 2026-2027 academic year, and the methodology for allocating training places for the 2026-2027 recruitment cycle. It is intended to be of use to accredited EYITT providers across the country.

To formulate this approach, DfE has:

- accounted for previous recruitment patterns;
- listened to sector feedback;
- analysed the information supplied by accredited EYITT providers and lead schools during the allocation request period in November 2024; and
- analysed the data provided in the ITT Census for academic year 2025-2026 taken in November 2025.

DfE, or any successor organisation, may modify or amend the approach taken in future years.

This guidance applies to the academic year 2026-2027 only.

Early years courses leading to EYTS

There are four training routes available for people to train as an early years teacher and be awarded EYTS upon successful completion:

- **Graduate entry:** where a training grant is allocated to providers by DfE to assist course fees coverage for graduate trainees studying full-time. Bursaries are available for eligible trainees (see 'ITT funding' section).
- **Graduate employment-based:** where a [training grant and employer incentive](#) is given respectively to graduate trainees and to the trainee's employer. This is a route open to graduates in paid employment, working in an early years setting and requiring further training to demonstrate Teachers' Standards (Early Years). Trainees must have the right to work in the UK for the duration of the training.
- **Undergraduate:** where a tuition fee is payable by a person studying for a full-time degree (three or four year-long) in an early childhood-related subject. Funding is not available for trainees on this route, but trainees may be eligible to receive [a tuition fee or maintenance loan](#).
- **Assessment only:** a route for experienced practitioners (who may have gained qualifications overseas). This route is self-funded.

Recruitment

EYITT courses leading to EYTS for the 2026-2027 academic year fall into the 'allocated' category, meaning providers are given a limited number of trainees they can recruit.

Allocated recruitment to courses is limited by the number of places granted by the DfE to providers. 'Allocations' indicate the number of places available for each organisation to recruit trainees for each of their ITT courses in this category.

To recruit for early years courses leading to EYTS, accredited providers must first complete specific actions (see 'Recruiting for courses: allocated category' section). On the basis of national early years professional demand and providers' requests, DfE grants an established set of allocations to providers for courses in this category. Providers must not recruit over their granted allocations, unless in-year requests are permitted, or communicated otherwise by DfE.

Preparing for recruitment

Provider-led training courses are held by ITT providers. All organisations offering EYITT courses must ensure they have taken the adequate steps to ensure they are ready to recruit.

ITT accreditation

To ensure ITT providers and lead schools can offer early years courses for the 2026-2027 academic year and recruit trainees for these, they must firstly ensure they have received accreditation by DfE.

Following the government's response to the [2021 ITT Market Review](#), all organisations delivering ITT leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) must be accredited against new criteria, including the new quality requirements. Passing this accreditation process is a mandatory requirement to deliver EYITT courses. A list of accredited ITT providers is available on gov.uk.

Providers may want to consider using the [initial teacher training and early career framework](#) when developing their programme to mirror the same standards across their offerings.

All EYITT courses must enable trainee teachers to meet all of the [teachers' standards \(early years\)](#) in order to be able to be lead to an award of EYTS.

As part of the DfE's approach to quality assurance, from the 2026/27 academic year, Ofsted will inspect EYITT delivery for all accredited providers every 4 years under the [initial teacher training and early career framework](#).

Further information on the ITT reaccreditation process can be found in the [Initial teacher training \(ITT\): accreditation for the academic year 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#) guidance.

Lead settings

Existing lead settings must ensure they have the ability to recruit with the EYITT provider they partner with. New lead settings should contact becomingateacher@digital.education.gov.uk for guidance, in order to be able to recruit. It is advised that settings that wish to become a lead setting first consider joining an existing partnership in their area. The minimum partnership size is five partner settings (or three for special schools).

Recruiting for courses: allocations

To recruit trainees for courses in the allocated recruitment category for the 2026-2027 academic year, accredited providers had to:

- Request permission to recruit trainees by contacting the EYITT allocations mailbox (eyitt.ALLOCATIONS@education.gov.uk)
- Receive allocations

Requesting permission to recruit trainees

The process to request permission to recruit for courses in the 'allocated' category for academic year 2026 to 2027 had to be completed by all accredited EYITT providers by Friday 14 November 2025. Accredited EYITT providers were instructed to inform DfE of their recruitment figures for each of their courses in the allocated recruitment category for the 2026-2027 academic year (see 'Recruitment figures' section). Partnerships were able to decide for themselves whether lead setting requests were completed by the lead setting or the EYITT provider, as long as the EYITT provider submitted the request to DfE.

The request to offer this course and the recruitment figures were to be submitted via a Microsoft Form. The form was sent via email from GOV.UK to all accredited EYITT providers by DfE.

Recruitment figures

When requesting permission to recruit for courses in the 'allocated' recruitment category, providers were required to specify the recruitment figures for their EYITT courses for the 2026-2027 academic year. DfE requires this information to understand demand and capacity in the system nationally.

When considering these figures, accredited EYITT providers and lead settings should account for their most recent cohort sizes, recent recruitment patterns, current or anticipated growth in partnership arrangements, recent trends in applicant route preferences, a realistic assessment of employment need in the local area, and advice from DfE about the likelihood that allocations for future years will be lower than 2026-2027 academic year allocations. This applies to the capacity for training that their partnerships can accommodate and their ability to attract high quality trainees who will make excellent teachers. Accredited EYITT providers and lead settings have a responsibility to ensure that DfE funding, data and reporting requirements are met, and therefore are responsible for submitting accurate information on the capacity of their training programmes. Any errors in submission are the sole responsibility of the accredited EYITT provider or lead

setting. Requests to amend or correct data beyond the deadline will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Allocations

DfE published the policy paper '[Giving every child the best start in life](#)' in September 2025, which sets out a commitment to increase the number of early years teachers, with the long-term aim of an early years teacher in every nursery setting. One of the ways that the Department is intending to do this is to significantly increase the number of funded training places on early years initial teacher training (EYITT) courses over 3 years, aiming to more than double the number of places by 2028. In response to strong demand, DfE can confirm that we were able to allocate more places than originally planned for academic year 2026/27. This uplift reflects our shared commitment to growing EYITT as a route to increasing the number of teachers in the early years workforce.

The increase in places for 2026/27 should be seen as a one-off adjustment. Overall allocations for 2027 - 2028 academic year may be lower than in the 2026–2027 academic year, although they are still expected to exceed previous years. DfE intends to continue to prioritise sustainability to ensure all providers remain viable and therefore providers should continue to plan carefully and manage recruitment expectations for places beyond viability minimums.

DfE has also undertaken significant work to refine the allocations process based on analytical forecasts of attrition rates to enable the allocation of as many places as possible each financial year. As a result, allocations in 2026/7 are higher than in previous years.

It is unlikely that DfE will be offering additional allocations rounds during the year, as has happened previously.

Opening and closing courses

Accredited EYITT providers are able to open their courses to applicants once their allocations have been granted and start recruiting trainees. Providers are advised to close their courses when they run out of places for courses. They may want to re-open these courses should they have newly freed places, such as if a candidate withdraws their accepted offer.

Data accuracy

Accredited ITT providers who report inaccurate data may be impacted in their permission to recruit or in their granted allocations in subsequent years. Following the [ITT criteria and supporting advice](#), failure to comply with DfE data requirements may lead to withdrawal of accreditation.



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