

HOURGLASS INTERVIEW ADVICE

This advice is essentially written for NQTs – However much of what is included will assist even the most experienced of teachers ensure that all goes well on the interview day.

Interviews are an inevitable part of securing a new teaching post. Few of us are entirely at ease talking with a group of strangers about ourselves, our accomplishments and what we see ourselves achieving in the coming years. Writing these things down on an application form is one thing, but for many the idea of facing an interview panel is another matter entirely. But don't be afraid - there is a lot you can do to prepare yourself.

Interviews are not designed to trip you up

They are your opportunity to highlight your skills and achievements, strengths and ambitions. Secondly, they are a two-way process. From your perspective, you need to be sure that the school you are interviewing at is absolutely right for you in terms of how you will fit in, how well you will be supported and how well the school is going to help you to progress further as a teacher. Teaching is undoubtedly one of the best jobs in the world but it is essential you find a school that you are not only right for, but is right for you.

The purpose of any interview from a school's perspective is to find out if you meet the criteria. They are designed to determine who will fit best with the existing staff make-up, who will be able to contribute most effectively to the school, what are your motivations and goals, how do you assert yourself and what is your personal philosophy of teaching and education.

Preparation is everything

Prepare yourself; know the job description inside out, research the school by looking at their Ofsted reports, their school results, their CVA score, the school website and prospectus. If you are offered the opportunity to visit the school beforehand, do. This will give you a chance to experience the school's dynamics, speak to the children and staff and get an idea of the sort of candidate the school is looking for.

Make sure you are up to date with current affairs in the sector by reading the BBC education news site, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education/> the Department for Education's news; <https://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews> and by doing some general research on the internet.

If you are an overseas based or overseas experienced teacher – or even a UK based teacher needing more confidence then visit:

- 1 Visit this site for an overview to the British national Curriculum:
<https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum/overview>
- 2 This next site will take you deeper into the subjects, programmes of study etc. Follow this link then click side headings to give you more and more specific information:
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum>

Ask someone to give you a practice interview: your tutor, a mentor or a friend. Ask them to be blunt about bad habits, including body language.

Write out bullet points of your strengths and the questions that you would like to ask and are likely to be asked at interview. These may be on topics such as classroom management, discipline, strategy etc, so ensure you have thought about these things and formed set ideas about what you would talk about if asked.

And finally plan your journey and on the night before the interview, ensure that you get a good night's sleep!

Make the first impression count

You already know you are the best teacher anybody could hope to appoint, but how are you going to persuade the interview panel of that? Unfortunately, knowing your stuff is not always going to be enough and, with the outcome of 90 per cent of interviews decided in the first two minutes, first impressions count. No matter how superficial it may seem, it's important you look the part.

Be polite and friendly to all the school staff that you met throughout your interview day. Although the majority of staff will not be involved in the interview, you are likely to meet many of them throughout the day and their views are often canvassed. So watch out for that 'informal' chat in the staffroom. Tours by pupils are a common feature. You can relax a little here and use the tour as an ideal opportunity to understand what the children think about the school.

Teaching a lesson or leading a pupil activity is very common. You should have had the details of what is expected and time to prepare. Don't be afraid to ask for help and stick with your normal style of teaching that works well for you but be aware of how to make your lesson outstanding.

When answering questions, always include points from your application, and expand on them, ensuring that you draw on your own experience. Give examples of times you have had to deal with the situation they are asking about, how you handled it, how successful you were, what you learnt from it, and if necessary, what you would do differently if dealing with it again.

Be sure this is the job you want. Accepting one at the wrong school can be as disastrous as marrying the wrong person! If you are not sure, you can ask for 24 hours to consider. This is reasonable, although the culture in education is still to offer a position and expect an immediate answer. This far in the process you should have a fairly clear view of whether or not this is the place for you.

Once you have got the job, take every opportunity you can to spend time in the school before you start officially. That way, you will feel part of the team before the hard work really begins.

What not to do: the common mistakes

- Don't arrive late! Allow plenty of time to get to the school, park – if driving – and be there at least 10 minutes before your appointment.
- Don't be unprepared for your interview - make sure you have thoroughly researched the school and that you understand the job specification.
- Don't wear novelty clothes - dress appropriately.
- Don't talk too much - make sure you listen to the questions and answer them concisely.

- Don't be negative - you may have already have had some negative experiences, but don't focus on them. Focus on the positive ones, or talk about what you have learned from the negative ones.
- Don't try to be a comedian - many have tried and many have failed.
- Don't make things up - you are likely to be asked to give practical examples of what you have stated on your application form.
- Don't fall at the finish - if all of your questions have already been answered during the interview, take the opportunity to stress how interested you are in the position rather than say you don't have any questions.

Be prepared: questions you could be asked

- Why did you apply for the position?
- Describe a lesson that went well for you?
- Describe a lesson that did not go well for you and what you did about it, or would do about it in the future?
- What would you do to develop positive relationships with pupils?
- Describe your classroom after two months of starting your new job?
- How would you contribute to the school as a whole?
- What qualities do you think make a good teacher?
- What are your main strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?
- What strategies do you implement in the classroom to manage behaviour?
- How do you plan and structure lessons?
- What are your career aspirations?
- How do you envisage working with parents?

Finally here is a short video that offers you some really good tips and advice from those who run interviews: <http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Interview-Tips-6278912/>