
Interview Day Preparation

At Pearson Whiffin Education we understand that preparing for an interview can be one of the hardest things to do as a teacher. For that reason we have created this guide to support you through the process.

There are lots of things you can do to be better prepared ahead of the day itself:

- Review, fully, the school's website
- Review any past and recent Ofsted reports
- Research the department you are interviewing for – what can you learn about size, staff, exam boards and levels taught?
- Plan your route and parking / travel arrangements
- Plan your outfit - it should be smart and business like
- Limit your jewellery, make-up and perfume / aftershave – these can distract an interviewer
- Plan your lesson well in advance to allow yourself time to practice and perfect it
- Pack your 'kit' – pen, paper, CV, diary, water bottle so you appear organised but be careful not to seem disorganised by taking too much!

Your Interview

Your teaching interview will be designed to cover the following main areas:

- Suitability for the role
- Teaching and Learning (normally more than one question)
- Progress and Attainment
- The school itself (contextual)
- Safeguarding
- Behaviour Management
- Colleagues (establishing professional relationships)
- Assessment strategies
- Career aspirations

Prior to your interview you should review the above and prepare to show exemplary performance in each area. Where possible, provide specific examples, evidencing the particular skill or attribute.

Below is a list of typical questions posed at interview that you may want to use to prepare:

1. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?

- Most headteachers will want to hear strengths based around your pupils. Don't be afraid to discuss a weakness (this shows good self assessment) but follow it up with your plans to combat it.

2. What do you think you can bring to this role?

- This is a great opportunity to show that you have undertaken detailed research on this school and this role. Quote from the website or from the Ofsted report in your answer.

3. In your opinion what do you think makes a successful teacher?

- This question is about your ethos as a teacher and the best answer will be an honest and open one. Try to relate your answer to what you know of the schools values.

4. What is your understanding of high quality Teaching and Learning?

- Consider again the value and ambitions of the school in your answer. A perfect answer would likely match the interviewer's own opinion and school values.

5. Can you describe to me what you think a good lesson would look like?

- This is a great opportunity to quote an example lesson from your past BUT remember that the interviewer also wants to hear a solid understanding of good teaching methodology.

6. If I came into your classroom during a lesson what would I see?

- Again, an example would be a good answer. The interviewer may be looking for things like student interaction, engaged students actively participating in and enjoying their lesson, a clean and safe working environment, multiple teaching media being used and evidence of learning.

7. What do you think are the important factors to consider when setting a classroom in readiness for your pupils?

- Consider, carefully, your subject here. A Food Technology lesson would require a very different answer to a Maths lesson. Your interviewer is looking for an understanding of how to encourage learning and create a positive learning environment for all pupils.

8. How would you motivate a reluctant and disinterested learner in your class?

- Quote an example, demonstrate your role in encouraging that student and do not forget the outcome.

9. How can you ensure progress for high attaining and low attaining pupils in your class?

- Clearly this question is designed to test your understanding of differentiation. Start by displaying your understanding and then offer an example of how you might put this into practice in your subject.

10. How would you deal with a pupil who is constantly being disruptive and effecting the learning of others in the class?

- This can be a difficult question to answer since you may not yet know the behaviour policy of the school. The worst way to answer would be simply say that you would follow policy. Your interviewer is looking for a student centred approach to behaviour management – what can you do to support this learner or affect their behaviour. You could conclude by stating that if your efforts are not successful you would follow policy or work with the support of your colleagues to manage the situation.

11. Safeguarding children is paramount in our school. Tell me what you would do if you were concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a pupil in your care?

- Questions around safeguarding and child protection are almost mandatory in a teaching interview. Answer with passion and enthusiasm and confidently quote safeguarding policy as you know it.

12. How often do you use technology in the classroom?

- On the face of it this question is all about technology and you should start your answer there BUT a good strategy would be to balance your answer by quoting other media to engage your pupils and encourage learning.

13. Tell me how you assess learning in your classroom?

- Your interviewer is testing your teaching methodology. Good practice is to regularly assess learning using a range of strategies. A good answer would discuss your favourite methods and relate it to your subject by giving an example of these methods in practice.

14. How would you ensure that you develop a professional and productive working relationship with all of your colleagues in the school?

- Schools are increasingly looking for adaptable and supportive staff willing to share their expertise and work together with colleagues (especially less experienced teachers). Think about ways you could support new staff, ways you could work with and ease the workload on your head of department or school leaders and how you would engage with school support staff.

15. How would you like to see your career develop in the future?

- An honest answer will be best here. Anything less than that is likely to be obvious. Think not only about career progression but about what skills you want to develop and what areas of education you want to explore more.

Your school may also use competency based questions to assess your skill set. A competency based question asks you to evidence a particular skill by discussing an example from your background. For example:

- 1. Tell me about a time when you have managed a particularly disruptive student.**
- 2. Give us an example of how you have impacted school wide teaching and learning.**
- 3. Describe the best lesson you have ever taught.**

Answering competency based questions can be very tricky if you are not prepared. Before your interview read through the job spec, school Ofsted etc and prepare examples for skills or needs you believe the school may want to assess. When answering competency based questions use the STAR technique:

S - Situation - describe the situation in which this example takes place. When, where, background etc.

T - Tasks - what actually happened.

A - Actions - what actions did YOU complete. Remember to focus on examples in which you are a prominent participant. Be specific here.

R - Results - what was the outcome and what impact did this have on the student / class / school.

During your interview you will be assessed not only on your presentation and answers but also your body language and personality so be aware of this and focus on the below:

- Give a firm and confident handshake when you meet new staff in school
- Be confident and open at all times
- Sit up straight and maintain eye contact during the interview.
- Be enthusiastic and positive throughout
- Listen to questions and frame your answers accordingly
- When you discuss your career, stick to the relevant sections and relate to this role as much as possible
- When asked about your future be confident and ambitious

Remember you are interviewing the school as well so always take 2 or 3 questions to ask them. Good questions will revolve around the school improvement plan, recent Ofsted inspection commentary and recent news stories. Try to avoid asking basic questions around the next interview stage or start dates etc. Schools will be impressed if you have taken the time to consider good questions.

Your lesson

Planning your lesson will start by ensuring you have all of the information you will need. Teaching students that you have never met and have little information on their backgrounds can be tricky so always get as much as you can in advance. Consider asking for:

- Number of students and the year group
- Male / female mix
- Number of SEND and information to support this
- Levels or predicted grades
- Details of previous lessons or where this lesson sits in the current scheme

You will also want to ask about the layout of the room and what facilities or materials are available to use. Never assume that there will be a projector / whiteboard etc.

Finally you need to carefully consider the lesson objective that you have been set and undertake sufficient research in the subject matter.

Plan a simple but interactive and engaging lesson. Try not to rely too much on technology but do use different media to teach. Do not spend too much time talking or stood at the front of a classroom. Often school leaders are assessing your ability to engage with students more than they are assessing your actual lesson delivery. Ask questions and regularly assess learning. Be prepared to adapt your lesson and consider having backup activities if your plan A does not work. Use student names as much as possible – this will reinforce relationship building.

Finally, reflect on your lesson and when asked be honest. Consider what you could have done better or what you might do differently given the opportunity. Don't forget to highlight positives though and never assume your observers have seen everything.

A Tour

Schools will often include a tour in your day. Remember that you are still being interviewed.

A tour is a great chance to learn about a school, develop your understanding of school practices ahead of an interview and to help you relate your answers back to the school and role.

Engage with your tour guide (especially if it is a student or students) and ask lots of questions.

Finishing the day

At the end of the interview day you want to leave a positive imprint on your interviewer. Always make sure you are positive, thank them for their time and if possible discuss some positives about the school, the role or your day and why you are still keen on the role.

After the day

Remember to call Pearson Whiffin Education and let us know how you felt the interview went and any questions you might have.

Good Luck!