Interview Questions for Primary and Early Years Teachers

“On interview day, remember that one of the key characteristics that Head Teachers will be looking for in candidates is the ability to engage effectively with students. Despite being in a room you have never been in, in a school that is new to you, with students you have never met before – it is very important to try and develop a relationship with the young people at every opportunity.” Head Teacher

Preparing for Your Interview

Before you start to think about the questions you might be asked, you will need to prepare for the other aspects of your interview. These could include a presentation and a micro-teaching activity as well as the panel interview. Check the details you were sent when you were invited to interview so you know exactly what you need to prepare for. You might also find our information on interviews on our website helpful.

Top Tips

- Make sure you have a copy of your application with you.
- Use the post specification and job description to help you to anticipate what the questions will be.
- Prepare your micro-teaching session and anticipate any questions that might be asked afterwards.
- If there is a tour of the school, try and engage with the children leading it and show interest.
- Make sure you are up to date about the latest developments in education policy.
- First impressions are crucial! Dress smartly but comfortably. Smile, shake hands and look enthusiastic.

A Typical Interview Schedule

Your interview will usually take place at the school, however if the school is part of a larger multi-academy trust or similar the interview may take place at the lead school instead. The assessment process may last a whole day or part of a day. There may also be a cut made part way through the day, with not everyone proceeding to the formal panel interview stage. Some or all of the following activities may be used:

- Informal talks with a Senior Teacher/Head of Department.
- Tour of the school and possibly a school lunch.
- A panel interview which will may include pupils and governors as well as staff.
  - A presentation.
  - A micro teaching session with questions.
- A presentation.
Example Questions

Below are a selection of example questions. Remember to use the specific post specification and job description for the role to help with any subject specific questions that might be asked.

Introductory Questions
- Tell us a little about yourself and why you have applied for this post in our school?
- What do you think you can offer our school/this post?
- Why do you want to work in this school?

The Course
- Tell me about your degree/PGCE course.
- When did you decide to apply for a place on a teacher training course and why?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of your course?
- What parts of the course did you find most interesting and why?
- Why did you choose this subject/these curriculum specialisms?
- I was interested to read about your project on ................. Tell me about it.
- How have you developed in your subject (e.g. PE, Maths) during your course?
- What leadership roles have you taken on during your PGCE course, including Teaching Practices?
- How would you describe your relationship with other course members?

Lesson Evaluation
- Reflect on the lesson you taught today and tell us what went well and what you would do differently with hindsight?
- Evaluate your lesson and tell us what Ofsted grade would you give your lesson and why?
- Were the learning outcomes in your lesson today achieved and how do you know?
- If you were teaching this class again tomorrow, what would you plan to do to follow up on today’s lesson?

Teaching
- Why did you choose to teach this particular age range?
- How would you use the locality of the school and its immediate environment?
- How would you structure projects to give equal access to all pupils?
- What are the important things to consider when setting up a classroom?
- Describe a successful lesson to me which you taught recently. Why was it successful?
- Give an example of a lesson you felt went particularly badly, and explain why. How did you resolve the situation?
- How do you ensure all children are involved in learning in your lessons?
- What do you think is the best way to motivate pupils?
- If I walked into your classroom during an outstanding lesson, what would I see and hear?
- What does an outstanding lesson look like?
- What have you gained by studying your main subject at University?
- How do you see (Maths, Business Education/Your subject) developing over the next three years?
- What are the major issues in education at present?

The School
- What makes a successful school?
- How would you cope with lack of enthusiasm from colleagues?
- Are you a member of a religious denomination (which)?
- Would you take part in the religious life of the school? (for religious schools)
Assessment and Progress
- Could you explain what you would do in your class to ensure each child makes good progress and achieves their maximum potential?
- Can you tell me how you use assessment to support learning?
- Please tell us about your experience of assessment for learning and assessment of learning.
- How do you assess and record your children's progress?
- How would you meet the needs of gifted and talented children in the class?
- If a child doesn't show signs of improvement after all your planning, monitoring, assessing etc, what do you do next?
- What strategies do you use to manage children with special educational needs?

Professional Issues
- What are the main qualities of a good teacher?
- What are your particular strengths as a teacher? How would you develop them further?
- What are your weak areas and how are you overcoming them?
- How would you seek to ensure high standards of discipline in your classroom?
- Which of your teaching practices was the most successful and why?
- Describe the best lesson given by you on a teaching practice.
- How would you ensure that you respond effectively to the different needs and abilities of individual pupils?

Curriculum/subject knowledge
- Why do we teach (subject) in schools?
- What experience do you have of teaching the National Curriculum?
- What do you feel is the highest level of ability you are able to teach?
- Choose a topic in your subject which is one that the pupils struggle most to understand/engage in, and tell us how you might go about teaching it?

Behaviour Management
- For NQTs, behaviour management is often a focus area in your first year. Describe the way in which you will promote good behaviour in your classroom.
- Can you tell me about a successful behaviour management strategy you have used in the past that helped engage a pupil or group of pupils?
- What behaviour management policies have you experienced, and what do you consider as having been effective?
- How would you handle a disruptive child?
- What methods and means do you use to manage the behaviour of children?

Safeguarding
- During a lesson, you notice a child has a round burn mark on their arm. You make a casual remark about it and the child tells you their father did it last night with his cigarette. What do you do next?
- Safeguarding children is a vital part of our work. Can you give me some examples of how you would contribute to making our school a safe environment for the children?
- How do you ensure that children in your class are safe?
- What would you do if a child disclosed ....?

Pastoral
- What is your experience of having parents in school?
- How would you assess your ability to make relationships with children?
- How would you seek to promote spiritual, moral and cultural development?
Career Development
- How will you develop yourself as a professional teacher?
- Where do you see yourself in 3/5 years time?
- What are your main strengths? What areas do you want to develop further.
- How will you develop yourself as a professional teacher.
- What Continuous Professional Development needs do you envisage needing to enable you to perform to the standards expected in this school?
- What has been the best bit of advice given to you and how did you act on it?

Parents
- An irate parent bounces into your classroom at 9.00 am one morning, how will you handle this?
- What experience have you had meeting and/or communicating with parents?
- How will you/have you ensure/d a positive relationship with parents?

Other questions
- If you overheard some colleagues talking about you, what would they say?
- Have you been involved in/can you contribute to any extracurricular activities?
- If we decided not to appoint you, what would we be missing out on?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us in support of your application?
- Do you have any questions for us?
- Are you still a firm candidate for the job?

General Questions
- Why did you become a teacher?
- How would you feed back to the children about their progress?
- What has attracted you to this geographical area?
- Tell me about your system of record keeping?
- How would you implement an equal opportunities policy in your class?
- How important do you think the school is in the community?
- How do you deal with disruptive behaviour?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of working in a school of this type?
- What safety factors would you keep in mind when designing a practical lesson?
- What are your views on homework?
- What would you do with a pupil who swore at you in class?

Your Own Questions
Interviews should be reciprocal affairs, providing you with the opportunity to learn more about the job, the working environment, colleagues etc. You will almost certainly be asked whether you have any questions towards the end of your interview. Only ask questions if you really want to know the answers, don't ask them solely to impress; however, they can indicate a genuine interest in the post, the school and the area.

Be aware of time constraints and do not ask too many questions. If you genuinely have no questions, reply “No, thank you, all the points I wished to raise have already been dealt with (either in the interview or earlier in the day)”. Some example questions you could ask include: - Info about the NQT process - Who will your NQT mentor be? - Support for Professional Development

Please make an appointment to see a Careers Adviser if you would like any further help or support with preparing for your interview.

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