

Best Practice Guide: Employability

These recommendations are collated from ITEC meetings and School Direct Review and Development meetings.

1. Ensure that all trainees are aware of the DfE portal for jobs:

<https://teaching-vacancies.service.gov.uk/>

2. January/February appears to be the best time for initial input into job-seeking. Around that time, consider a session which:
 - Looks at job specifications and websites and read them together to identify what the adverts are asking for
 - Draft application cover letters or personal statements and share within a group for peer assessment / feedback
3. Where possible, offer trainees the opportunity to do a mock interview and receive feedback.
4. Advise trainees to ask for feedback if they are unsuccessful at interview
5. Consider suggesting that trainees create an interview portfolio (see information for trainees below).

Please see below for suggested interview information for trainees.

POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

It is impossible to predict interview questions as there is an infinite number of possibilities and because they are often dependent on the interviewer's interests or needs for the job. But the questions below give you a sense of the range of questions that might be asked.

1. Safeguarding – What would you do if a student approached you and disclosed an issue which has potential safeguarding ramifications?
2. What would you do if a student was looking tired and when you asked what was wrong they disclosed to you that they hadn't eaten in two days because their parents were away?
-What if you were in the middle of a lesson and couldn't do it straight away?
-What if the safeguarding team ignored you or brushed it off as nothing?
3. Differentiation: How would you differentiate so that all students could succeed?
-What if you had no access to a printer to print supporting resources for these students like structure strips and paragraph frames etc?
4. How would you contribute to the safety and wellbeing of our students?
5. Are you reading anything at the moment and would it be suitable to discuss if a pupil asked?
6. If you were able to choose a novel, poem and play to teach, what would they be and why?
7. What do you see as your strengths as an English teacher?
8. What are your main areas for development as a teacher?
9. How has target-setting helped to improve your teaching?
10. What does an outstanding lesson look like?
11. Describe your worst lesson and what you learned from it?
12. Tell us about the best lesson you've taught?
13. What have you enjoyed most about your school experience?
14. You've mentioned an interest in media/drama in your application? How would you like to develop this?
15. How would you interest a disillusioned year 9 class in Shakespeare?
16. How will you engage boys with reading?
17. How will you cope with the year 10 boy who only wants to read Stephen King?
18. Imagine you have a despondent child in your class. What do you do?
19. Imagine you have a group of rowdy boys in your class. What do you do?
20. English teachers need to spend more time teaching spelling. What do you think?
21. Tell me about your own interests and enthusiasms in English teaching?
22. I notice you've been teaching in a rural comprehensive - this a city school. What differences do you think you might find?

23. How would you justify teaching poetry in school to parents and governors who hated it themselves?
24. Can you describe a lesson where you have successfully used innovative technology / interactive technology?
25. What have been your perceptions of the current battles and politics of English teaching?
26. Which age group have you enjoyed teaching the most and why?
27. Which of our school values do you consider most important and why?
28. How do your values fit with the values/vision of the school?
29. We're very concerned about boys' underachievement in this school – how would your teaching address this concern?
30. There's too much talking and not enough listening in schools today. What do you think?
31. We're very keen to develop a spelling policy in this school – how could you help us with this?
32. Can you describe some ways in which you have differentiated successfully in your teaching?
33. What can you offer to the life of the whole school community?
34. What do you see as the importance of parents' evenings?
35. So, you've been training in Exeter - you're aware that London children will be very different to Devon children?
36. Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
37. What does outstanding teaching look like?
38. If you could teach any book, what would it be and why?
39. What extracurricular interests/ skills will you bring to the school?
40. How will you balance your extracurricular interests with teaching?
41. What are the key things you've learned from your PGCE?
42. Give us two good reasons why we should employ you?
43. Why do you want to go into teaching?
44. How much are you expecting to be paid?
45. We have a strict policy on attendance, and rates of staff being off sick are very low - would this be the right fit for you?

INTERVIEW PORTFOLIO

You might like to take a portfolio to your interview to demonstrate some of your achievements. This should be visually attractive, personal and not too big. Ideally put it into one of the plastic wallets which contain clear polypockets so that the readers can see everything simply by turning the pages. Or have a very personalised presentation. These tend to come as wallets of 10, 20 or 40 polypockets – 20 is the size you need. It could include any of the following:

- Copies of anything from your IDP that shows good evaluations of your teaching (reports; lesson observations; UVT visit records)
- Your most recent FRAP – use a different colour font for your reflection
- A photograph of displays you have made
- An example of Scheme of Work
- An example of a lesson plan
- An example of how you mark students' work - with the work itself anonymised
- An example of how you track students' progress (assessment record keeping) - *being careful with data protection here*
- An example of a particularly good piece of students' work, including those by low ability children who have produced better work than usual - again, work must be anonymised
- An example of an imaginative resource you've designed
- An example of use of IT
- The programme for a school production/activity you have helped with.
- Anything else which looks creative or innovative or says something about you.

Give the portfolio to the Head of Department / Key Stage / Assistant Head early in the interview procedure, preferably first thing, not just before you are interviewed, or they won't have a chance to look at it. Don't be disappointed if they appear totally disinterested – they may not expect to receive something like this. But it has made a difference to applicants on several occasions and it helps to generate interview questions which are on safe ground, and to give you evidence which you can reassuringly refer to during an interview.

THE DEMONSTRATION LESSON

Many schools ask applicants to do a lesson or part lesson during the selection process. This is often half a class and may be watched by a student group, and by staff. It is highly important in influencing the final decision, so it is worth really planning it carefully. Some schools are very clear about what is wanted eg Teach any poem of your choice to 20 year 7 students (mixed ability); whereas others will be horribly vague. Ring the school for any clarification you need: eg is PPT available? But if they remain vague, don't worry, just take ownership of the task and plan it confidently. It is also worth asking if the school can send you the names of the students in the class and any attainment data.

In general, you do not have class management problems on an interview demonstration, because so many people are watching! But try to make sure you show your class management skills – confident assertive voice, clear boundaries and time limits, carefully-managed groupings, good relationships, and be quick to act on misbehaviour. However, given that class management is not the real focus, the school will be looking at the quality of teaching and learning in your lesson, so this is a time to pull out all the stops and do an all-singing, all-dancing lesson. But one which you feel comfortable with!

Plan the lesson carefully. Remember all that we have looked at about lesson structure, scaffolding, building up the lesson, good engaging intro; clear plenary/conclusion. Above all, make sure that you choose a sufficiently focused and appropriate learning objective and that the lesson content matches the learning objective. If there is time, try it out with one of your own classes and ask your Lead Mentor or another teacher to give feedback. Placement schools are usually extremely good at supporting the interview process.

Some things to think about to give it that little bit extra:

1. The quality of the resources you use
2. Show that you are monitoring learning through the lesson
3. Show that you know what they have learned by the end of the lesson
4. Lively, engaging activities
5. Excellent questioning, probing for learning
6. Well-focused group work
7. How you would differentiate if you knew the abilities of the group: if you were able to get attainment data, do at least one task where you group by attainment, or target your questions by attainment

The other aspect that will be considered is your relationship with students. If you are able to get student names in advance, familiarise yourselves with the names, and make name labels for the class. Make sure these are large enough for you to read! If not, make/take blank name labels and ask them to write their names in large letters at the start of the lesson. Show an interest in them and their responses; try to learn names as you go, and use them; smile; and generally show that you have a rapport with the group.