



8 WAYS TO ACE THAT INTERVIEW



WITH CAROLINE BENTLEY-DAVIES' TOP TIPS, THAT MIDDLE LEADERSHIP JOB WILL BE IN THE BAG...

1 PREPARATION IS KEY...

...and never more so than when preparing for a middle leader's role. Whilst you will want to research the school and check what the most recent Ofsted report highlights as strengths and weaknesses, don't forget the more obvious preparation. Have you got something smart to wear? You need to feel that you look the part to convince an interview panel and to boost your own confidence. Make sure you know how to find the school (remember sat navs often lie) and check it will be a suitable commute.

2 PROVE YOU CAN DO IT

Interviewers are looking for someone credible, enthusiastic and with whom they are going to like working. Expect either to give a presentation about 'your vision for the department' or to be asked a lot of questions about key areas. Think about each of the aspects the role covers and mind map some thoughts. So, if the application pack talks about 'driving improvements', 'reviewing interventions' and 'raising results', jot down examples of when you have been successful in these areas. Great interviewees back up their assertions with evidence and examples.

3 BE UP TO SPEED

There are likely to be some areas of the job that you have not done before, particularly if this is your first leadership role. It is a good idea to read some management and leadership books; these will ensure that you are thinking as a leader or co-ordinator rather than just as a skilled class room teacher. Make sure that you are familiar with any changes and



ABOUT THE EXPERT



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developments in your curriculum area, exam changes and government developments – such as Progress 8.

4 THINK THROUGH LIKELY QUESTIONS...

...and answers. Some can be predicted: 'Tell me about your strengths?' 'Where do you see yourself in five years' time?' 'Why are you interested in being head of maths/working at this school?' Make sure that you have thought of suitable and apt replies. "My current head of department is a megalomaniac, the pupils are uncontrollable and my wife has told me to get another job" might all be true, but do not perhaps make up the best response. Think of what the new role has to offer, rather than why you want to leave your current post.

5 EXPECT A CURVE BALL

If you are going to be running a team, then the interview panel will want to see that you can remain calm under pressure. You might be asked to complete an 'in tray exercise' whereby you are given a list of things and have to decide in which order to do them. During one interview I was in, the head teacher removed two picture postcards from the wall and asked how I'd teach a lesson using them.

I was surprised, but came up with a couple of good ideas. Another interviewee said she didn't see the point; she didn't get the job.

6 STAY AWARE

From the moment you arrive at the school, during a tour, teaching a lesson, at lunch – you will be being observed and evaluated. Be yourself, engage with pupils, ask questions, but always be super professional and polite. Use this opportunity to get a flavour of what the school is really like.

7 TEACH A CRACKING LESSON...

...that engages and challenges all pupils. Think ahead and have enough resources, spare pens, a memory stick and even stickers to record pupils' names. Show the school that you know what makes an outstanding lesson. They will be looking to see whether you are a good role model for your team.

8 REMEMBER THAT THE INTERVIEW IS A TWO WAY PROCESS

How a school treats you on interview will tell you a lot about the establishment's culture. Are you offered refreshments? Do you get invited to meet the department or are you kept hidden away? Does it seem like a calm, orderly and engaging place to be in? Is there a lively buzz in lessons? Sometimes you get a feeling that things aren't quite right and if your interviewer doesn't show you your department area or introduce you to the other department members then the warning light should be flashing. Can you imagine yourself working here and leading a team? If so, go for it, and let your energy and enthusiasm shine through.