



Over recent weeks, as schools across the country have closed their doors to all except the children of key workers and those classed as vulnerable, staff recruitment has understandably taken a back seat. However, headteachers are now starting to ramp up their recruitment efforts to ensure they have everyone in place ready for the new school year in September.

Whilst we are socially distancing, we will need to rely on technology to help us through the recruitment process, and many schools are now conducting video interviews online. With this in mind we thought it would be helpful for us to provide a few hints and tips for candidates facing this new and challenging experience.

Firstly, it's important to say that many Hertfordshire schools have managed to move their recruitment online during lockdown, including 7 successful head teacher appointments, so we know that it is very doable!

At HFL we have been successfully using Microsoft Teams, but some schools are also utilising applications such as Skype, which offer a similar service.

These programmes are free and very straightforward to use, and the school will provide you with detailed instructions on how to join the 'meeting'.

On the plus side, you won't need to worry about travel or other logistics, and can be on home turf while the interview is taking place. Doing things electronically reduces our environmental impact too.

However, interviewing online and interviewing in person are two completely different experiences.

Test your equipment in advance

Both interviewer and candidate are advised to prepare well and practise ahead of an online interview:

- Agree a suitable time that works for everyone. This is especially important at the moment as many people now have their own children at home with them, so flexibility is key.
- Think about other people – especially children – who might be around. Try to minimise the risk of interruptions.
- Make sure you have a reliable connection and know how to connect (and disconnect) on your chosen app. If possible have a trial call with a friend beforehand to check everything is working and that you are audible.
- Make sure you have properly checked the agreed time and contact details. Nb: On Teams each person must log themselves onto the meeting individually at the appointed time.

Be well seen on screen:

It can be more challenging to connect with interviewers online because there is often less small talk and it's harder to pick up on non-verbal cues.

- Dress for success! If you would normally wear a suit to interview, then wear a suit.
- Think about your surroundings. Sitting in front of your drinks collection may not be advisable! Ideally find a quiet, neutral space with minimal distractions (on Teams there is an option to 'blur my background' which can help if you do not have a suitably neutral space that you can use – click on the three dots ... on the tool bar once you have joined the meeting)
- Think about light sources in the location where you plan to position your tablet/laptop. Check in advance that you are clearly visible so as to ensure facial expressions can be read by the interviewer (try to avoid a very dark room, or glaring sunshine or a bright lamp shining on your face!)
- While the interviewers might be displayed on a screen or monitor, try to look into the camera occasionally to replicate eye contact.

Some other things to think about:

Be prepared! Do your research, especially if you have not had chance to visit the school in person, have a good look at the school website and prepare any questions you may have in advance. It might also be possible for you to talk to someone not on the selection panel about the school, to get a feel for the ethos and culture.

Be clear about what you want to say and what you want the interviewers to know about you. Why are you perfect for the role?

Although classroom observation is normally a big part of the teacher recruitment process, this is not possible for most schools at the moment so be prepared to talk about your classroom experience and think about how you can reassure your interviewers. What examples can you give to demonstrate good classroom management/ differentiation?

Some interviewers may require you to undertake additional assessment exercises remotely as well as an 'interview' – there might be tests or documents that are sent to you, to analyse, answer on and return, or links to online portals to complete exercises. Make sure you have a suitable mail address that can be reached, and that you have confirmed (and can guarantee) your availability to perform these – or if you know you can't, try to negotiate a suitable time where you will be undisturbed and able to complete these without interruptions. Don't forget, you won't be able to ask a question as you might have at an on-site session, so ensure you know what is expected and how you send your responses back.

Some assessors are now trying to recreate classroom observation via other means e.g. staged role-plays with a brief to candidates. Think about how you can prepare for this: If you haven't done role plays before and think you might freeze, go bright red or burst out laughing while you're online "pretending to feed back to someone" perhaps you could practice with a friend?

You should also expect some additional questions on safeguarding, as schools are still conforming to the same high standards and checks, so think about how you can prepare for that too.

What about DBS and GDPR?!

There has been a temporary relaxation in the rules about how schools check ID, which will enable them to make an appointment before seeing a candidate's physical documentation. However,

they will still need to see electronic copies. Documents including the childcare disqualification form (which is usually opened at interview) should be scanned and emailed to the interviewer at the start of the interview. Follow instructions from the school. In the short term these will be stored electronically until such a time as hard copies for the successful candidate can be seen, once the schools are open again. Equally, as the application form cannot be signed at interview, a copy will need to be signed once school is open. This will need to take place as soon as possible in order for HCC to generate the contract document.

Any documents relating to unsuccessful candidates will be kept for 6 months and then deleted in line with GDPR.

Further information

We hope that the above is helpful. For more on video interviewing, please see the following:

https://www.tes.com/news/job-hunters-school-closures-neednt-derail-your-career?utm_source=distro

<https://time.com/3074830/how-to-ace-a-video-job-interview/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashiraprossack1/2019/04/26/video-job-interview-tips/#7a765f515978>

We wish you the best of luck!