

# Guidance on how to apply successfully for a teaching post

## Introduction

Applying for a job takes time and concentration. You need to give yourself enough time to think clearly and be well organised so that you avoid making mistakes. This booklet has been produced to help you and includes some checklists to guide you through every step in the process of finding a new job.

The School Workforce Development Team at Hertfordshire Development Centre is always happy to help if you want more support. You can contact us on 01582 830351.

Remember you may not be successful at your first attempt but somewhere there are pupils and a school waiting for you.

Good luck with your applications and interviews.

## 1. Searching for Jobs

1. Hertfordshire Schools have their own online recruitment website for schools and those wishing to work in them. The website is managed by schools and posts are advertised directly on the internet at [www.teachinherts.com](http://www.teachinherts.com). You can search for jobs to match your criteria and can apply online directly through the website. The process is simple and user friendly and is an accepted form of application for our schools. You can also register your details online and job alerts will be sent to you weekly by email with details of any jobs that match your requirements.
2. Schools can also search through the database of members registered and contact you directly - the schools have access via their own nominated username and password.
3. School Vacancy Bulletin - this is generated by our website and is circulated to all school staffrooms with details of all posts that are presently being advertised. You can also find copies in libraries and careers centres or request a copy to be sent to you by ringing 01992 555820
4. Press - local and national press also carry advertisements for teaching and support roles in schools - the Times Educational Supplement is published each Friday.
5. Word of mouth - networking with other teachers, colleagues, fellow students - keep your ear to the ground!
6. Contact schools directly to find out if and when they will be recruiting. School contact details can be found in the Schools Address Book on [www.hertsdirect.org/teachinherts](http://www.hertsdirect.org/teachinherts).

## 2 Dealing with advertisements

7. Cut out the advertisement if it is in the press or print off/save a copy from the internet and make a note of the name and date of the source.
8. Read what it is asking for carefully – it can help to underline the main requirements.
9. When you apply, follow the instructions in the advertisement on how to get further details and an application form.
10. If you decide to send your details and want to include a short letter to the school, you should address the Headteacher by name (e.g. Dear Mr Philips); do not use a general "Dear Sir or Madam".
11. Make note of the dates you send letters or telephone.
12. Keep copies of the advertisement and all correspondence.

### 3. Completing the application form

1. More and more schools in Hertfordshire are encouraging online or electronic application. The [teachinherts.com](http://teachinherts.com) website (Hertfordshire's own online recruitment website for schools and those who wish to work in them) provides the opportunity to complete the application form online, which means that you only need to complete it once and can use the same form for multiple applications. The easy to complete online version can be completed and saved page by page. There is also an option to download an electronic copy of the form in Word, which can then be completed on the screen, saved and used as an attachment to be emailed to the school.
2. If completing by hand, many people find it helpful to photocopy the form and practise filling in details on the copy first. Plan, draft and edit before completing the real form. Read the form very carefully and follow instructions. Use black fountain pen if possible and write neatly. Capitals are acceptable on the form if your handwriting is not clear. (Do not write any letters in capital letters).
3. Check spelling and grammar carefully and ask a friend to proof read it when you finish.
4. Do not leave questions unanswered but write "not applicable" against questions not relevant to you. (e.g. Previous Teaching Post if you are an NQT).

### 4. Completing letter of application or supporting statement

(Sometimes this section is called "Any other information" on an application form or something similar and it is very important)

1. The letter should not be too short or too long (i.e. lacking relevant details or going into too much depth. Headteachers are short of time). About 2 sides of A4 are appropriate, so be concise. For NQTs' supporting statement 1 side of A4 is requested.
2. Electronic or typed letters and hand written letters are acceptable (some Headteachers prefer one, some the other. You can ring the school to ask about this). Make sure it is well presented and tailored to the requirements of the individual school.
3. Emphasise your achievements and give concrete examples of what you have done.
4. Highlight relevant skills including transferable skills from outside teaching, e.g. IT capability, scenery painting
5. Make positive statements and give a strong picture of yourself.
6. Avoid jargon and keep a clear, logical flow to your writing. An interview panel will be looking for accurate use of clear, fluent English.
7. Use active tense verbs, e.g. "I started a volleyball club" not "a volleyball club was started".
8. Use emphasising adjectives (**Sole** responsibility, **excellent** progress).
9. Show how you contribute fully to each part of a teacher's role.
10. Show you are organised, ambitious and enthusiastic.
11. Show that you can make a positive difference in a school and are worthy of inviting to an interview.

Once the original form and letter (either manual or via website) are completed, forward them to the school promptly, keeping a copy for your records. If you want to know if your application has been received you can attach a self-addressed stamped post card.

Do check to ensure that the school has received your application - both the post and the internet can not always be relied upon!

## 5. Visits to schools.

It is perfectly acceptable to ask to visit a school before confirming an application – adverts often say *visits welcome*. Remember that during the visit you will be making judgements about what you see – others will be making judgements about you. Have a list of questions you want answered.

## 6. Successful interview techniques

If you do receive an invitation to an interview, respond by phone or letter as soon as possible, out of courtesy. If you have two interviews on one day you will need to liaise with both schools.

The interview should be a two way process – you need to find out if working in the school will be right for you and the Headteacher and panel will need to establish if you will be an asset to the school.

## 7. The Interview

Make sure you are clear why you want the job and what you have to offer. Do not forget skills developed outside teaching. Read through the job description and your application before the interview. Prepare questions that you could ask at the end of the interview. These could relate to the actual post, the school or career prospects. Try to find out more information about the school - you may find the County Council's web site useful, [www.hertsdirect.org/teachinherts](http://www.hertsdirect.org/teachinherts) and can access the Schools Address Book through here which provides contact details. Most schools now have their own websites and can give you a good feel for the ethos and standards of the school. Some have their own recruitment pages on the website.

## 8. Other useful sources are:

Times Educational Supplement

[www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)

[www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)

[www.nc.org.uk](http://www.nc.org.uk)

[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes)

[www.rm.com](http://www.rm.com)

[www.viglen.co.uk](http://www.viglen.co.uk)

(Published each Friday) The web site is [www.tes.co.uk](http://www.tes.co.uk)

Website for teachers

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

National Curriculum details

The Department for Education and Skills site

National Education issues

Schemes of work

Information about ICT in schools from a major supplier,

Research Machines

Another ICT supplier to schools

Many of these web sites have links with one another and to other educational sites.

## 9. Personal Preparation

First impressions matter, so prepare carefully.

Do:

- ◆ Dress appropriately with neat, tidy well fitting clothes (not too much jewellery) and clean shoes.
- ◆ Carry an appropriate sized bag, rather than a large holdall.
- ◆ Make sure your watch or mobile phone is switched off.
- ◆ Speak clearly and in a confident voice – not too quiet or too loud.
- ◆ Sit up straight and try to maintain eye contact with different members of the interviewing panel as much as possible.
- ◆ Smile when you meet people and thank them if they are helpful.
- ◆ Don't get flustered by arriving late – **be punctual**.

## 10. Interview Questions

Areas likely to be covered:

- ◆ Why are you applying to this particular school?
- ◆ Your understanding of the curriculum
- ◆ Teaching and learning – Your philosophy
  - Your teaching style/discipline
  - Your strategies and resources
  - How you assess pupil progress.
- ◆ Dealing with difficult pupils
- ◆ Dealing with difficult people/situations
- ◆ Relationships with parents, teachers, fellow professionals
- ◆ Extra curricular activities
- ◆ What else you can offer
- ◆ Weaknesses

You will be welcomed to the interview by the Chairperson of the panel. The first question is often to ask you for relevant previous experience and how it has prepared you for the post. Whatever the first question is, it is usually a “settling in” question that you can answer relatively easily so you can relax a bit, lose some nervousness and concentrate on answering the questions.

During the interview, listen to the questions carefully and ask for clarification if you are not sure what is being asked. Keep your answers relevant and try to give examples to support your answers.

Unless you are a Modern Foreign Languages teacher, all your lessons in school will be in English, so the panel will be interested in your ability to speak clear, fluent English. Think carefully about the structure of your answers, and try to keep them reasonably straight forward and logical. Avoid one word answers but try not to become tied up in long complicated sentences where you forget what you are trying to say!

Do not criticise previous colleagues, employers or managers. Direct your answer to the questioner, but glance at other members of the panel too. Stress your experience, strengths and achievements in relation to the questions. If you feel you have some experience or skill that has not been mentioned in the interview, bring it up at the end of the session. Try not to waffle!

## 11. This is a possible sequence of questions, which could be asked:

(There are many other possibilities too)

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | Why did you decide to be a teacher?  | (settling in)                           |
| 2. | Why do you want to work at this school?  | (choice of school)                      |
| 3. | What would I notice if I visited the classroom you taught in on teaching practice? | (teaching style, strategies, resources) |
| 4. | How important are displays in the classroom?<br>What displays have you produced?   | (philosophy, strategies<br>(Resources)  |
| 5. | How would you prepare to teach a humanities  | (curriculum understanding)              |

project on \_\_\_\_\_?

6. If you found that one of the groups you were teaching did not appear to be responding or learning and some pupils were beginning to be disruptive, what would you do? (strategies, resources, dealing with difficult pupils)
7. If a parent told you his child has gone backwards in reading/English since you started teaching her, what would you do? (dealing with difficult people/situation curriculum understanding)
8. If your key stage leader comes up with a ridiculous idea which she insists you must do, what would you do? (relationships with fellow professionals)
9. How would you assess a class's work in the course of a year? (assessment)
10. What skills do you feel you can offer the team from both an educational and personal perspective? (what else you can offer)
11. What is your attitude to the increased administration required by a teacher now?
12. If you are offered the post, what would be your priority in service needs? How else can the school support you? (staff development)
13. Is there anything you would like to ask us? (conclusion)

The answers should show your common sense approach and how you would handle situations but no-one is expecting perfect answers. Your answers will show how you would deal with issues – that is what is important.

You may find it helpful to go through the questions and work out possible answers, which you could also discuss with your friends. There are no perfect responses but obviously some are better than others. Your willingness to face up to problems, prepare for all eventualities so difficulties will be minimised and to work hard to make your classroom a welcoming and productive learning area, should be clear in your answers. If difficulties do continue in an area of work, it is appropriate to refer to a higher authority in school.

If you are asked about weaknesses you should try to find a response that turns the idea around. If something was difficult for you, it doesn't mean it was a weakness. People learn from an experience, cope with it and build positively on what they learned to make this an area of strength in the future.

If you are offered feedback/debriefing after the interview, always accept because you can learn how to improve your interview techniques. (Sometimes after an interview you feel you just want to get away, but feedback is often valuable).

When you leave at the end of the interview, smile and thank everyone for their time and trouble. Do not give way to your emotions if you are not successful. You might need to come back some day.

## 12. The offer of a job.

If you are offered the post, check all aspects of the job description – eg. exactly what you will be teaching. A contract exists at the time the verbal offer is made and you say “Yes”. The written one comes weeks later. The offer may be subject to such things as a medical, a Criminal Records (CRB) Check and satisfactory references

Find out when you will receive details of your timetable and, if you are an NQT, what support you will be given for your induction year.

Agree the level of salary you will receive. This will nearly always governed by length of service but there are certain aspects which are open to negotiation.