BEING AUTHENTIC AT INTERVIEW AT HEART OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

Teaching an unknown class for an hour on a topic you've haven't chosen in front of people you've never met but want to impress is an oddity. However, we don't have the capacity to drive around the country watching people teach classes they know in an environment that they're familiar with and so, until we come up with something better, the interview lesson is here to stay.

So in order to make the odd slightly less unknown and awkward we've put together the following ideas and educational philosophy in the hope of making your preparation slightly easier. An interview day takes a lot of time and effort on your part as it does on ours and we would like you to feel equipped to give as accurate a reflection of your professional self as possible.

One of our underlying principles at Heart of England School is that no one is the finished article. This idea sums up both the beauty and the frustration of the job; one day you might teach a lesson that gives you the eureka moment thinking that you've cracked 'it' only to be followed by a lesson which firmly reminds you that you still have a lot to learn about teaching a class of 25 teenagers.

So when you come to plan and deliver the teaching element of the interview programme, please bear this in mind. We are not looking for The Ultimate Teacher. There will be many strings to your bow and many activities that are typical for your classroom which you simply are not going to be able to fit into an hour's lesson with a group of students that you haven't met before. Please don't be tempted to try to show off all of your favourite teaching tricks; leave the whistles and bells at home.

We are a school that has an observation classroom, on-going Disciplined Enquiry groups and attends ResearchED events all of which point to what we're interested in when it comes to appointing teachers: professional curiosity. We're interested in teachers who are interested in building expertise by working with others to find out what works in your classroom in our context. A lot has been said recently about teaching becoming a research-based or research-informed profession but we're a long way off from that as most of us don't have the time or the capacity to wade through education research. What does interest us however is evidence-informed education. We are looking for people who are inquisitive about what the best evidence is saying regarding classroom practice and are able to translate it through the filter of their own experience.

This generation of students who live in an age of Google and tablets will have to sit exams with only a pen and their brains to help them. We're interested in how we best prepare them for that dichotomy. How do we best build memory in our subject? What does the hackneyed 'literacy across the curriculum' really look like in a meaningful way in a classroom? Can the platitude 'the students should work harder than the teacher' become a reality any time soon?

When watching candidates teach we look for the following qualities:

- Strong subject knowledge including a good grip on common student misconceptions
- Effective questioning and capacity to engage students with the subject matter
- Ability to be flexible and adapt to student needs rather than adhere rigidly to the lesson plan
- Good use of formative assessment

From what's gone before it should be clear that cosmetic practices such as 'progress every 20 minutes' mini-plenaries have no place in our classrooms. They usually only serve to slow down the learning.

Naturally, during the interview you will be asked to reflect on the lesson you taught. This is where more than once a candidate who has taught a very run-of-the-mill lesson has gone on to impress the panel by their ability and willingness to reflect accurately and honestly on the short-comings of their lesson. As we said early on we're not looking to appoint The Ultimate Teacher but rather reflective, professionally curious people who yearn to get just a little bit closer to being that tantalisingly unachievable Finished Article.