

10 tips on getting your first headship

From being wary of powerpoint to knowing data inside out, headteachers, governors and education experts share tips on getting the top job

Andrew Green-Howard, principal of [Sandymoor school](#)

Don't be afraid to refer to notes: I had a folder with key data from the school and Ofsted that I took to interviews with me. It's not a memory game, but a process where you are hopefully showing that you are a capable leader. I never go into meetings without my notes, so why would I do that at an interview?

Spend time with governors at your school: One thing I found to be very helpful was accompanying my head to governing board meetings in my role as deputy. I also led briefings for governors on aspects of the curriculum. It meant I was more aware of the audience I was talking to in interviews.

Consider getting a [National Professional Qualification for Headship](#): I would recommend anyone thinking of becoming a head to go through the NPQH process. It's a very thorough exposition of the different elements of being a head and gave selection panels the confidence that I knew what being a head was about. The journey of getting mine was useful mainly as a reflective process. It helped me to shape and define my personal vision and ethos on education.

Ruth Agnew, chair of governors of [Locking Stumps primary school](#)

Know the data: There's so much school data in the public domain now and you'll almost certainly be asked to do a data task as part of the interview. It's not unreasonable for a governing body to ask: "what does our data suggest to you about the school?" Start preparing for this in advance by looking at Ofsted's data on the school and get a feel for the areas for development. Remember that when you're presenting your findings in the interview the audience is governors.

Martin Blair, business director at [Hays Leadership Appointments](#)

Use down time wisely: It can often be worthwhile using down time during the interview day to look around the school, talk to children and staff and go out into the playground. You will get to know the school better, with the added bonus of letting people see that you are visible and interested. Governors may not witness it, but it will get back to them.

Know your stories: The interview is your opportunity to sell yourself and your selling points are all of the successes you have had, so be ready to articulate them. Before the interview, reflect on your career and consider a range of situations which highlight the different qualities you have. Within these stories you must articulate your rationale for your actions. What you did may not be relevant to your new school, but the way you did it will be.

Jill Berry, former headteacher and education consultant

Visualise yourself in the role: I'm currently doing research into the transition from deputy headship to headship and this keeps coming up. As you release one professional persona (that of a deputy) and take on another (that of a head) your confidence builds and you increasingly start to see yourself as a head.

Harry French, principal of [Greenwood Academy](#)

Be organised: One of the most important things I did when I was applying to be a head was to collate all of the data I could find about the school on to one page. I found it really helpful when quickly answering data questions and in some cases priority planning.

Siôn Humphreys, policy advisor for curriculum and assessment for the [National Association of Head Teachers](#)

Be wary of powerpoint: I've found in that over elaborate use of powerpoint can be distracting. The medium obscures the message.

Chris Gabbett, principal of [Trinity Catholic school](#)

Pay attention in the pupil panel interview: This may seem mundane, but in the inevitable pupil panel interview, do your best to address the young people by name.

Taken from The Guardian Teacher Network.