

■ ■ “If you were a biscuit...” and other truly bizarre teacher interview moments

Ah, the teacher job interview – a nerve-wracking rite of passage involving lesson plans, panel questions, and... hula hoops?

Every year, we hear from Teacher Tappers who have endured the weird, the wonderful, and the why-did-I-even-bother in the pursuit of a new job. While some processes are slick and supportive, others feel more like obstacle courses with a surprise appearance from Batman (yes, really).

Here’s what you told us about the most bizarre, baffling, and occasionally brilliant things you’ve faced in teacher interviews.

■ ■ When interviews go off the rails...

Some questions make you think. Others make you question reality.

Top of the nonsense pile? The classic: “If you were a biscuit, what biscuit would you be?” Variants included animals, vegetables, and TV characters. One person was even told their biscuit answer could be a dealbreaker. (We’re hoping they went with Hobnob – reliable and crumbly under pressure.)

And then there were the “please perform” moments: one candidate was asked to sing, another to summarise their career in a limerick, while a third was handed sushi mats and told to teach the governors how to roll maki. (Spoiler: it ended in rice chaos.)

Others were caught out with “no prep” lessons, surprise choir warm-ups, and philosophical riddles like: “What am I thinking right now?” (Answer: probably “I’d like to leave.”)

■ ■ Timetables? Never heard of them.

A surprising number of you arrived at interviews to discover... no one was expecting you. One person waited 90 minutes alone in a staff room, while another was left in a portacabin. Last-minute schedule changes were rife – from being hauled into the head’s office unexpectedly, to being observed on break duty, to being asked to cover a lesson when a teacher popped out.

In one "X Factor-style" horror, candidates were eliminated in front of each other. In another, someone was asked to rank the school behaviour policy... in front of the headteacher.

Worst of all? The dreaded "sham interview" – where internal candidates clearly had the job sewn up and everyone else was along for the ride (or "equality monitoring", as one unfortunate was told outright).

■ Wait, did they really ask that?

Sadly, some questions crossed the line from strange to downright inappropriate. Women reported being asked if they planned to have children, or how they'd manage "as a single parent." One candidate was quizzed on why her clothes were "too clingy"; another told she "looked like a librarian." There were queries about religion, childhood trauma, and – incredibly – why someone's postcode was from an "impoverished area".

And then there were the bizarre judgments: "Why only an A, not an A*?" or, "Why do you have a master's – are you trying to be better than everyone else?"

Right.

■■ Fire alarms, farting, and falling asleep

You also shared the many chaotic moments interviews threw your way. Fire alarms going off mid-lesson. Technology failing at the crucial moment. Children shouting, stripping, or throwing cricket bats. A headteacher dressed as a vampire. A candidate's bra wire emerging mid-interview. (Honestly, we could write a book.)

Panels were no better: one deputy sat so close the candidate had to "lean back to avoid smelling his breath," while another interviewee looked up to find the headteacher's eyes closed. ("I thought he was dead." He wasn't. Just bored.)

■■ Against all odds... they got the job

In the midst of it all, there were heartening tales too. One person spilled water on a governor's lap and still got hired. Another swore mid-interview – job secured. One even turned up late, laddered their tights, and was offered an SLT role.

There were empathetic heads who prompted candidates when they froze, or admitted they'd made a mistake in rejecting them – in the car park. And for every awful story, there were glimmers of hope that not all interviews are bizarre, unfair, or humiliating.

■■ So, what does this all mean?

If there's one thing these stories show, it's that teacher interviews are often a test of resilience rather than readiness. The strangest scenarios may raise a chuckle – but the volume of unprofessional or discriminatory behaviour is no joke. Candidates deserve clear expectations, respectful treatment, and a focus on their actual teaching – not their favourite biscuit.

Let's leave the chaos to World Book Day costumes, shall we?