



Independent | Salaried | Qualified



Advice for teacher training applicants

HMC (the Headmasters' & Headmistresses' Conference) is a professional association of heads of many of the world's leading independent schools. HMC schools will therefore be seeking to recruit highly professional subject specialists with the ability to become excellent teachers and to make a significant contribution to wider school life.

The advice below is general in nature, and given the independent status of HMC schools there are likely to be cases where some of it does not necessarily apply.

For some vacancies schools will be particularly looking to recruit an unqualified trainee, whereas for others they may consider NQTs and experienced teachers as well as trainees. Whilst experienced teachers and NQTs may have an advantage in terms of their teaching experience, schools which advertise their vacancies with us are genuinely interested in recruiting unqualified trainees and will be considering the subject matter knowledge, individual qualities and long-term potential of all candidates regardless of their teaching experience.

Before you apply for individual vacancies

Get some experience in a school

Training teachers is a significant investment by schools. Consequently schools will want to feel confident that candidates are serious about teaching as a career and will expect you to be able to demonstrate commitment and initial aptitude for teaching at interview.

Therefore it is strongly recommended that you gain some experience in the classroom in either independent schools or high performing state schools before you apply. This will help you to know whether teaching is the right profession for you, provide you with experience to draw upon in your application and at interview, and demonstrate a level of commitment to pursuing a career in teaching.

Take the opportunity to talk to the teachers you work with during this time to gain insight into how they plan and deliver high quality lessons. Ask their advice about how to approach teaching an observed lesson at interview – this will prove valuable later on.

Do not limit your options

Training at a HMC school provides the opportunity to work and train in some of the UK's most outstanding schools, but we operate at a small scale in terms of the number of training places in comparison to some other options. We would therefore encourage you to think as broadly as possible about the locations and types of school in which you might enjoy working. If you believe that you may be a strong candidate for a particular vacancy in your subject, but are unsure about the particular location or school, we would recommend that you talk to the recruiting school to find out more before you make a decision about whether or not to apply.

Find out more about the recruiting school

We strongly recommend that you contact the recruiting school prior to writing your application, and arrange a visit if possible. This will enable you to better understand their ethos and requirements and to tailor your application accordingly. It will also give you the opportunity to introduce yourself and to get an idea whether this may be the right opportunity for you. To make the best impression it is advisable to research a little about the school online prior to contacting them.

Schools may sometimes make appointments ahead of published closing dates in order to secure particularly strong applicants. This can result in vacancies remaining advertised for short periods of time when they have actually already been filled. Contacting the school ahead of working on your application will help to avoid wasting your time if this is the case.

Your application

Application processes will differ between recruiting schools, but your application should demonstrate your:

1. Subject matter expertise and passion for your subject
2. Commitment to teaching as a profession, and to helping young people develop and achieve the best that they can
3. Understanding of the recruiting school's context, ethos and the requirements of the post
4. Potential contribution to the wider life of the school through co-curricular activities
5. Prior relevant experience e.g. of teaching or coaching young people etc

Preparing for interview

As with any job interview, you will be expected to have an understanding of the recruiting organisation, so do some further research ahead of your interview so that you can demonstrate some knowledge and tailor your interview responses to fit. As well as visiting the school website you can access their latest inspection report at www.isi.net.

Schools need to be confident that their trainees have the potential to become excellent teachers. It is therefore almost inevitable that you will be expected to be observed teaching as part of the interview process. Draw upon your experience gained in school to demonstrate your potential to inspire pupils to learn – this is about more than just your subject knowledge so make sure you understand the difference between lecturing and teaching.

You are also likely to be asked about your potential contribution to wider school life through co-curricular activities and to the pastoral care of students. Be prepared to demonstrate your enthusiasm in these areas.

Keeping abreast of current education related issues in the media such as exam and curriculum reform is also likely to help you demonstrate a genuine interest in the teaching profession and may help you to stand out.

Following your interview

If you are successful and receive a conditional offer of employment, your school will work with you to plan your induction, training and support.

If you are not successful, do not give up. In general only one person will be recruited per vacancy, and it is likely that further opportunities will become available. Gaining feedback from an unsuccessful interview can be one of the best ways to increase your chances of success in the future, so always request this if possible.