

What UK Head Teachers are Looking For

Anita Laws (Principal Holme Court School, Cambridge www.holmecourt.com. October 2019

1) Beforehand

- RRR will do everything possible to match you to a school and a teacher within that school so you can exchange emails beforehand, but this is not always possible
- When you know the name of the school, check out their website, there will be a huge amount of information on it
- You need to look to see what/how it is done (for example, behaviour management procedures will be on here, so will the special educational needs provision)
- Many schools have an intranet that you may be given access to; here will be staff documents, such as lesson plans for staff to adapt
- We have a National Curriculum, within this each individual school will have its own policies, procedures, lesson-planning format etc.
- Secondary schools use an exam board that gives a syllabus

2) You need to think why you are doing this

- You are coming for a professional opportunity, take it seriously
- Yes, you want to see the city/country, but that is at the weekends

3) Make sure RRR and the school know what you are looking for before you start

- What do you want to get out of the experience?
- What do you want to do?
- What are your university's expectations?
- Always have a plan that you discuss with RRR/the school, but be prepared to change this as your field experience develops
- If you are early in your teacher instruction, you might want to work with individuals/groups and observe other teachers
- If this is your last, or nearly your last, school experience, you might want to do more whole class teaching
- A general rule is to observe initially (especially the teacher you are working with), then work with groups, then take a class.
- Some students build quickly and spend a lot of time teaching classes
- Some students teach just a lesson or two before they leave
- Schools will work with you to see you get the right

4) You need to think about your host school:

- Schools are welcoming
- Schools are busy places
- They are expecting a young professional, keen to learn and contribute
- They will be expecting you to attend every day for the whole day, unless you are ill (in which case you need to tell the school and RRR as early as you possibly can on the day of your illness)
- Don't put your teacher or the school 'on the spot' e.g., arrange a trip somewhere, book it and then tell the school you need to leave early one day

5) Your behaviour

- You are visiting a school, and visiting a different culture, respect both
- Look professional; find out the school's code before you start

6) Your approach/attitude

- Expect differences from what you are used to, surely that's what you are hoping for, new experiences, new opportunities Schools are different, classes within a school can be very different
- There are no 'right' and 'wrong' answers, teaching and learning isn't that simple, find out why the school does what it does, it might help inform your practice as a teacher, you should try to take something away from every field experience, and this one is no different
- Be non-judgemental
- Be eager to learn; this is a wonderful opportunity to see how an education system in a different country is facing similar opportunities and challenges to your own\
- Have an open mind; expect similarities and differences, embrace them (why are they different? What is the thinking behind the differences?)
- Be willing to get involved, to contribute
- Demonstrate a willingness to be part of the team
- Attend all sessions
- Attend anything you can that is happening during your time in the school; staff training, parents' evenings, extra curricula etc

7) Does that sound particularly different from your approach to a field experience here? Of course not, and that should give you confidence as you approach your teaching overseas experience

8) Above all, enjoy being in school!