

GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD TEACHERS WHO WANT GOOD JOBS



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INTRODUCTION

You're a good teacher. Don't be modest: you know you are. All the signs are there – your students make progress and behave themselves, colleagues trust and respect you, performance reviews are positive, parents are friendly at open evenings, the head teacher laughs and nods at your staff party karaoke performances, the caretaker did you a favour and got you a cheap car battery, and as for the inspectors ... OK, we won't go there.

Now, because you're good, you believe it's time you moved to a position that's better for you than the one you're currently in.

Of course you do. What would be the point of moving to something worse? How foolish would that be? Not, as we shall see, foolish enough to prevent lots of people doing it – which is one reason why you should read this book.

But I'm not here just to stop you from making mistakes – although that comes into it. My real aim is to make sure that, as you approach each step on the career ladder, the choices you make and the actions you take are really worthy of your status as a good teacher. That's to say, they are deeply considered, well researched, honest, self-aware and carried out with confidence and professionalism. Or, to put it a bit more simply, I want you to be able to say,

after you've applied and been interviewed, as you wait for the decision: 'That definitely is the right job for me. I want it, and I know I've given it my best shot.'

GOOD TEACHERS ARE FLEXIBLE VISIONARIES



GOOD TEACHERS ARE FLEXIBLE VISIONARIES

What does that mean? Quite simply, good teachers have an eye for where they might be going, and yet are alert and ready to dodge across to another path.

MOBILITY

Very few long-serving teachers are working in the school in which they started. As time's gone on, they've taken advantage of the fact that the great thing about teaching is that it happens everywhere. Find a community of human beings, look around and there'll be at least one teacher.

A friend of mine, a good teacher, decided to do two years with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas). She was sent to a remote community in the high Himalayas, where she taught wonderful children who were eager to learn.

My friend could do that because she was a good teacher. (VSO has a rigorous and lengthy selection process.) Now, as a result, she's an even better teacher, back in her home town as a class teacher in a challenging school.

That's the kind of choice you have. As a good teacher, you can carve out the career that suits you – on a ladder leading to headship and beyond, or on a winding and intriguing path through a series of jobs that broaden your experience of life.

CAREER PLAN

Does that mean you need a career plan?

That's not an easy question to answer. Here's what two long-serving teachers think.

I knew straight away what I wanted to do. I was going to be in my first headship by 35, do five years in it then move to a much bigger school, drive its results up and end up with an OBE or better. I worked hard, got promotion at every opportunity, following the jobs wherever they led, and it has all worked really well for me. I retired at 52 and now do quite a lot of lucrative consultancy.

Plan? No fear. I did teacher training to be near my partner, took a job at my placement school and stayed there for two years. Then my partner left me, so I went to China for a while

and did some English teaching. When I got back I did supply teaching in some difficult schools. I seemed able to cope, and was offered a permanent job in a unit for kids with behavioural problems. There was a lot of staff movement; I ended up running it, and that's what I still do. It's been a roller coaster and I wouldn't have missed any of it.

Which is correct, then? Make a plan, or go with the flow?

Obviously, it depends on what sort of person you are. That said, most of us have one eye on the immediate future. Maybe you've had at least one of these thoughts:

You look at your head teacher and think, 'That'll be me before too long.'

You look at your head teacher and think, 'No thanks. My future's with kids. I want to stay in the classroom.'

You look at your bank balance and think, 'I wonder if I could get by on four days a week?'

You look at a country, or a group of children with particular needs, and think, 'Those kids need me.'

If you have even tentatively pondered any of these (there are others; these are just examples) then you already have some kind of embryo career plan – call it 'Career Plan

Stage 1'. Recognise it, talk about it, think it through. Then at some point you might think it is worth moving to Stage 2.

Stage 2 simply means pinning down what your next step is going to be. So if your aim is a headship, it's about what you can do right now to help that come about. Start becoming professionally qualified? Look for a step up the ladder? Seek more responsibility in your present job?

And if your aim is to stay in the classroom, what steps can you take to become recognised as an excellent practitioner, a mentor to others and a leader of learning?

But don't fill in too much detail, because things may change. Experience, relationships, health, absorbing outside interests can all play havoc with plans that are too closely written. So, be prepared to follow the road, to seize the day.

But whatever unfolds, never look back and wallow in regret.

KEY POINTS

- Have a career plan, but keep it flexible, and always be prepared to rip it up and write a new one.
- Whether you have a long-term strategy or not, always have an eye on your next step.
- If you think you see an opportunity, never be afraid to ask about it.

GOOD TEACHERS MOVE TO GOOD JOBS FOR GOOD REASONS



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Because teaching has for so long been a mobile profession, you may well have an inbuilt assumption that you will eventually move on from where you are.

That being so, you need add to that assumption one that says, whenever you do move, at whatever career stage from newly qualified to executive principal, it will be for a positive reason, and to a job you really want.

Well, excuse me? You wouldn't move to a job you didn't want, would you?

Of course not. It's just that many people do. They take a new job, whether first job, or a promotion, and work through the inevitable early feelings of dislocation and unfamiliarity only to find the initial discomfort isn't going away. Gradually, despite strong efforts at denial to self, family, cat and canary, it becomes apparent that they're in the wrong job. All that remains is to make the best of things while waiting for the first decent opportunity to leave. (And as an aside, let's just point out that looking for the first available exit is a sure-fire way of replaying the 'frying pan and fire' metaphor in living colour.)

But you're a good teacher. All the evidence speaks to the truth of that, which makes it really important that you have confidence in yourself and avoid being side-tracked

into unsuitable career moves. So, for starters, here are three ‘keep the faith’ reminders:

- **It’s your own career you’re interested in.**

Just because people you know, trained with or worked alongside are ‘getting on’ does not mean they are making better decisions. The reverse may well be the case.

- **Be prepared to wait.**

Do your job, build up goodwill, add to your CV, demonstrate your strengths, keep reading job ads, going to teacher gatherings, and keeping your eyes and ears open, and sooner or later the opportunity will come. It’s like the search for a good used car. You want the two-litre ‘R’ model in opalescent red, with leather upholstery and sports suspension, so wait for it and don’t be pushed into the ‘S’ version in hearing-aid beige that happens to be in stock.

- **Rise above current discomfort.**

The fact that you don’t like your current job should make you more, rather than less, discerning about where you want to work in future.

THIS INVALUABLE GUIDE CONTAINS EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INTERVIEWS, JOBS AND CAREER PROGRESSION.

You're a good teacher. Don't be modest, you know you are. The key to satisfaction lies in knowing who you are and what you want, and then making the choices that suit you. The real aim here is to make sure that, as you approach each step on the career ladder, the choices you make and the actions you take are really worthy of your status as a good teacher. That's to say they will be deeply considered, well researched, honest, self-aware and carried out with confidence and professionalism.

Good teachers *are flexible visionaries*. Good teachers *are doers*. Good teachers *know where to find the jobs*. Good teachers *do not count their chickens*. Good teachers *know that, in job hunting, knowledge is power*. Good teachers *know how to fill in application forms*. Good teachers *have good answers to interview questions*. Good teachers *avoid interview pitfalls*. Good teachers *don't feel rejected*. Good teachers *are decisive about the job offer*.

“GOOD TEACHERS WILL BE GREAT IF THEY TAKE THESE TIPS ON BOARD.”

Sir Mark Grundy, Shireland Collegiate Academy

“Just about everyone needs to read this book. Even if you are part of the foundations of your school, and have no intention of moving on, this book will help you evaluate your decisions and aspirations.”

Paul Bannister, Head Teacher, Jerudong International School

“Full of common-sense advice for the ambitious teacher, at any stage of their career ... certainly a must-read for those wishing to make healthy career choices.”

Beverley Dandy, Head Teacher, Outwoods Primary School

“Gerald Haigh is one of the most insightful and experienced education writers.”

Pete Henshaw, Editor, *SecEd* magazine



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GERALD HAIGH has been writing about education throughout his long and varied career, as the author of various books and many articles in the *TES* and other journals. He was a teacher for 30 years, 11 of them as a middle school head, and has also been a governor and an external examiner for two teacher training establishments. In this latest book, he shares everything he has learnt about jobs and interviews, helping good teachers to get the jobs they want.

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