

# Middle School Teacher interview questions

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## What to expect

Middle school interviews usually involve a panel of two to four people: a deputy principal or head of middle years, a faculty head and sometimes a member of the wellbeing team. Panels are checking that you can run a class from day one, that you understand your child safety obligations, and that you can work with parents and colleagues without needing to be managed closely.

- **Process and planning:** How you plan a unit, sequence lessons and use assessment data across a term.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of managing behaviour, working with a difficult parent, or supporting a struggling student.
- **Safety and compliance scenario:** What you would do if a student disclosed harm, or if a situation raised a mandatory reporting duty under the Child Safe Standards.
- **Technical and curriculum:** Differentiation, EAL/D support, NCCD adjustments, literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- **Client-facing and communication:** How you build trust with parents and carers, including in difficult conversations.
- **Pastoral and wellbeing:** How you read student wellbeing in early adolescence and where you draw the line between support and your scope of practice.

Expect a short introduction from the panel, then a set of questions that moves from planning and teaching through to behaviour, wellbeing and child safety, with time at the end for your questions. Some schools add a short teaching demonstration or a written task on a scenario, and larger panels may split the curriculum questions from the wellbeing questions across two interviewers.

## 1. Walk us through how you plan a unit of work for a year 7 class across a term.

### Why they ask

Panels want to see that planning starts from the curriculum and assessment, not from a list of activities, and that you build in checkpoints you can act on.

### How to structure your answer

Use a walk-through: starting point, sequence of steps, checkpoints, and how you know it worked. Finish with what you changed next time.

### Example answer

*"I start with the achievement standard and the content descriptions from the Australian Curriculum, then unpack what students actually need to be able to do by the end. From there I plan the assessment backwards: the task, the marking guide and the two or three formative checkpoints that tell me whether students are on track. I sequence the lessons so each one builds on the last, with the first few weeks heavier on routines and modelled writing because year 7 students are still learning how secondary classes run. Differentiation sits in the planning document, not in a separate folder, so students with Individual Learning Plans or EAL/D backgrounds have their adjustments written into the tasks from the start. At the end of the unit I look at the assessment data and my own notes, and I usually rewrite one or two lessons before I teach it again."*

## 2. Tell me about a time you managed a challenging behaviour in a classroom.

### Why they ask

They are testing whether your response is calm, consistent and proportionate, and whether you understand that behaviour is usually communication.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result. Keep the action step detailed and the result honest, including what changed over time rather than in one lesson.

#### **Example answer**

*"I had a year 8 student who was regularly walking out of my English class about ten minutes in, which was disrupting the room and putting him behind on the unit. I spoke with his year coordinator and found he was avoiding the reading tasks because he found them humiliating in front of his peers. I changed his task so he could listen to the text through headphones and record responses instead of reading aloud, and I gave him a quiet exit card he could use without a confrontation if he needed a break. I also checked in with him briefly at the start of each lesson rather than only when things went wrong. Over the following weeks he stopped leaving the room and started contributing in small group work, and he completed the unit assessment. The bigger change for me was building the check-in into my lesson routine for the whole class, not just for students I was worried about."*

### **3. A year 8 student tells you at recess that things at home are not safe. What do you do?**

#### **Why they ask**

This is the question that shows whether you know your legal obligations under the Child Safe Standards and your state or territory mandatory reporting requirements, and whether you can keep your head under pressure.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Answer as a sequence of judgement calls under pressure: immediate response, what you do not do, who you tell, what you record, and how you support the student afterwards.

#### **Example answer**

*"My first step is to stay calm and listen, and let the student say what they need to say without interrupting or asking leading questions. I would not promise confidentiality, because I cannot keep that promise, and I would explain gently that I have to pass this on to keep them safe. I would take what they have told me straight to the principal or the designated child safety officer, following our school policy and my mandatory reporting obligations under the legislation in my state, and I would record what was said in writing with their words rather than mine. I would not investigate it myself or contact the family, because that is not my role and it could put the student at further risk. Afterwards I would check in with the student at a normal moment, keep the conversation private, and make sure the wellbeing team is aware, and I would use our employee assistance program if I needed to debrief."*

### **4. How do you differentiate for students with additional learning needs and EAL/D learners in a mainstream class?**

#### **Why they ask**

This role carries a broad mix of students in one room, and panels want practical methods rather than general statements about inclusion.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Use a structured method: how you find out, what you adjust, who you work with, and how you check it worked.

#### **Example answer**

*"I start with the data I already have: previous reports, NCCD records, Individual Learning Plans, EAL/D levels and my own first fortnight of diagnostic work. Then I adjust the content, the process or the product depending on the barrier. For a student with a learning difficulty, that might mean*

*pre-teaching vocabulary and giving a scaffolded writing frame; for an EAL/D student, it might mean bilingual glossaries, sentence starters and more visual support, with the same underlying learning goal. I work with the learning support teacher and the EAL/D coordinator rather than trying to solve it alone, and I keep the adjustments in my program so anyone covering my class can see them. I check whether it worked by looking at the student's work against the goal, not by whether the task was easier, and I adjust again if the gap has not moved."*

## **5. How do you handle a difficult conversation with a parent or carer?**

### **Why they ask**

Middle years parents are often anxious about the shift to secondary schooling, and schools want staff who can hold a firm, warm conversation without escalating it.

### **How to structure your answer**

Use a client-facing structure: prepare with evidence, open with the student, name the concern plainly, agree actions together, and follow up in writing.

### **Example answer**

*"I prepare first. I bring the student's assessment record, attendance notes if attendance is part of it, and one or two specific examples rather than a general impression. I open with something true and specific about the student, because that sets the tone that we are both there for the same person. Then I name the concern plainly and without blame, for example that the last three major tasks have not been submitted and the pattern started around the middle of term. I ask what they are seeing at home, because often they have information I do not, and we agree on two or three actions with a date attached. I follow up in an email summarising what we agreed, so there is a shared record, and I check in again in a fortnight. If a conversation becomes heated, I stay calm, keep to the facts and offer to bring the year coordinator into the next meeting rather than continuing on my own."*

## **6. How do you support a student's wellbeing while still holding them to academic expectations?**

### **Why they ask**

Early adolescence is where wellbeing and engagement are most tightly linked, and panels want to see that you neither ignore the warning signs nor drop your standards.

### **How to structure your answer**

Use a balance-and-boundaries structure: what you notice, what you do within your role, where you refer, and how you keep the academic expectation in place.

### **Example answer**

*"I notice changes in the small things first: a usually chatty student going quiet, work submitted late who never misses anything, or a sudden change in who they sit with. I would check in privately and briefly, ask how they are going rather than launching into the missed work, and then decide whether this is something I can manage with a conversation and a reasonable adjustment, or whether it needs the year coordinator or the school counsellor. I am clear about my scope, so I refer on rather than trying to counsel a student myself. At the same time I keep the expectation visible: we agree on a revised deadline, or I break the task into smaller pieces with a check-in partway through, but the work still gets done. I follow up with the family where it is appropriate, and I keep brief notes so the next conversation starts from what has already been tried."*