

Mentor Handout 4.4

Interviewing an experienced colleague about subject misconceptions and how to support pupils in overcoming them

You can use the following questions to support you in interviewing an experienced colleague. You should feel free to add questions that you think of that are useful to you while you have the opportunity to talk to a colleague.

There are two crucial pieces of information you need to gather:

1. What are the common misconceptions pupils have in this subject?
2. How can pupils be helped to master important concepts within the subject?

You are likely to have around 30 minutes to interview your colleague, so it is important you narrow the focus enough to make the conversation meaningful.

Narrowing your focus:

- For secondary school teachers, focusing on one subject (e.g. humanities teachers might teach a range, so focus on just history) in one key phase or year group (e.g. Key Stage 3 or Year 7).
- For primary teachers, focusing on one subject area (e.g. literacy) within the year group they work with.
- For special schools, focusing on a particular subject and/or phase or a particular group of pupils.
- For post-16, focusing on one topic or unit within a subject.
- For Early Years, focusing on communication and language development.

You may be able to narrow the focus even further to a single topic. It may be beneficial to select a topic you will be teaching next, e.g:

- KS3 Physics – the teaching of forces
- KS4 English Literature – poetry anthology.

Possible questions:

1. How important is it to have a good understanding of what likely misconceptions there are in a subject/topic?
2. When teaching XX, what do you find a lot of pupils misunderstand?
3. Have you found ways of teaching XX that reduces the amount of pupils who misunderstand?
4. What strategies do you use to identify whether pupils hold misconceptions about a particular topic?
5. When you identify a misconception, how do you deal with it? Can you give me some examples?
6. Are misconceptions generally topic specific or do they relate to wider misunderstanding? Can you give examples?