

To find out more about the work of the Council or to register please contact us.

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

3rd-4th Floor, Albany House
73 - 75 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7AF

Tel: 028 9033 3390

Email: info@gtcni.org.uk

Website: www.gtcni.org.uk

twitter.com/GTCNI

Office hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 to 16:45



**General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland**

Promoting Teacher Professionalism

Code of Values and Professional Practice



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Chair's Foreword



This republication of the Council's *Code of Values and Professional Practice* emphasises once again teachers' commitment to the highest standards of professional practice. It sets out clearly that our professionalism is fundamentally underpinned by an agreed value system. These shared values find practical expression in how we work in our schools. They shape how we teach our pupils and interact with their parents or carers.

They also provide a system to enable us to interact at all levels of the profession in ways that promote mutual respect and co-operation which, as we know, is ultimately for the benefit of our pupils, our schools and indeed each other.

The Code is also a public proclamation of our commitment to the highest standards of ethical practice. We are also conscious that we have a privileged standing in our community and it seeks to recognise and give expression to this.

I commend this expression of the fundamental values of the profession which sets out our responsibilities and aspirations as a testimony to the profession's commitment to excellence in and for all.

David Canning

David Canning
GTCNI, Chair

INTRODUCTION

Teachers as a group have always understood the professional nature of their task. They have always been conscious of the special purpose behind their endeavours and how, in essence, they shape the future of society through their work with those young people entrusted to their care. That duty of care, allied to a sense of professional responsibility, is the hallmark of true professionals. In discharging this responsibility teachers have been guided by a set of values that, to date, have been implicit rather than explicit.

Values are often seen as aspirations or driving forces, often not openly articulated, which effectively shape people's lives and determine where they will direct their energies and what they will hold to be of importance. Many within our community have both understood and benefited from the profession's implicit values, and the commitment and professionalism that were an inevitable outcome of these.

There is, however, merit in articulating those values if only to celebrate the high ethical standards that underpin the work of teachers in Northern Ireland. This Code provides our teachers with an explicit and public statement of values and professional practice. The values enshrined within the Code are also those that underpin the work of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and will inform its deliberations in regard to internal policy development and external policy initiatives.



The Code seeks to:

- set out clearly the core values underpinning professional practice;
- encourage attitudes and conduct commensurate with the core values of the profession;
- provide a framework for evaluating both policies and practice; and
- affirm the diverse professional heritage of teachers and enhance the status of the profession in the eyes of the public.

Core Values

Trust	Honesty	Commitment	Excellence
Respect	Fairness	Equality	
Dignity	Integrity	Tolerance	Service

A commitment to serve lies at the heart of professional behaviour. In addition, members of the profession will exemplify the values listed above in their working and in their relationships with others; recognising in particular the unique and privileged relationship that exists between teachers and their pupils. In keeping with the spirit of professional service and commitment, teachers will at all times be conscious of their responsibilities to others: learners, colleagues and indeed the profession itself.

Many of the commitments that follow are also underpinned by legislation and the profession will always seek, as a minimum, to comply with both the spirit and detail of relevant legislative requirements.

COMMITMENT TO LEARNERS

Teachers:

- maintain professional relationships with those pupils entrusted to their care which respect the learner as a person and encourage growth and development;
- acknowledge and respect the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of each pupil and thus provide appropriate learning experiences; and
- aim to motivate and inspire pupils with a view to helping each realise his/her potential.

COMMITMENT TO COLLEAGUES AND OTHERS

Teachers:

- work with colleagues and others to create a professional community that supports the social, intellectual, spiritual / moral, emotional and physical development of pupils;
- promote collegiality among colleagues by respecting their professional standing and opinions and, in that spirit, be prepared to offer advice and share professional practice with colleagues;
- cooperate, where appropriate, with professionals from other agencies in the interests of pupils;
- ensure that relationships with the parents, guardians or carers of pupils, in their capacity as partners in the educational process, are characterised by respect and trust ; and
- respect confidential information relating to pupils or colleagues gained in the course of professional practice, unless the well-being of an individual or legal imperative requires disclosure.

COMMITMENT TO THE PROFESSION

Teachers:

- as reflective practitioners contribute to the review and revision of policies and practices with a view to optimising the opportunities for pupils or addressing identified individual or institutional needs; and
- in keeping with the concept of professional integrity assume responsibility for their ongoing professional development needs as an essential expression of their professionalism.

COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

Teachers:

- promote good community relations within and between schools and across the wider society in Northern Ireland; and
- promote social justice and equality of opportunity as fundamental to community development and well being.

