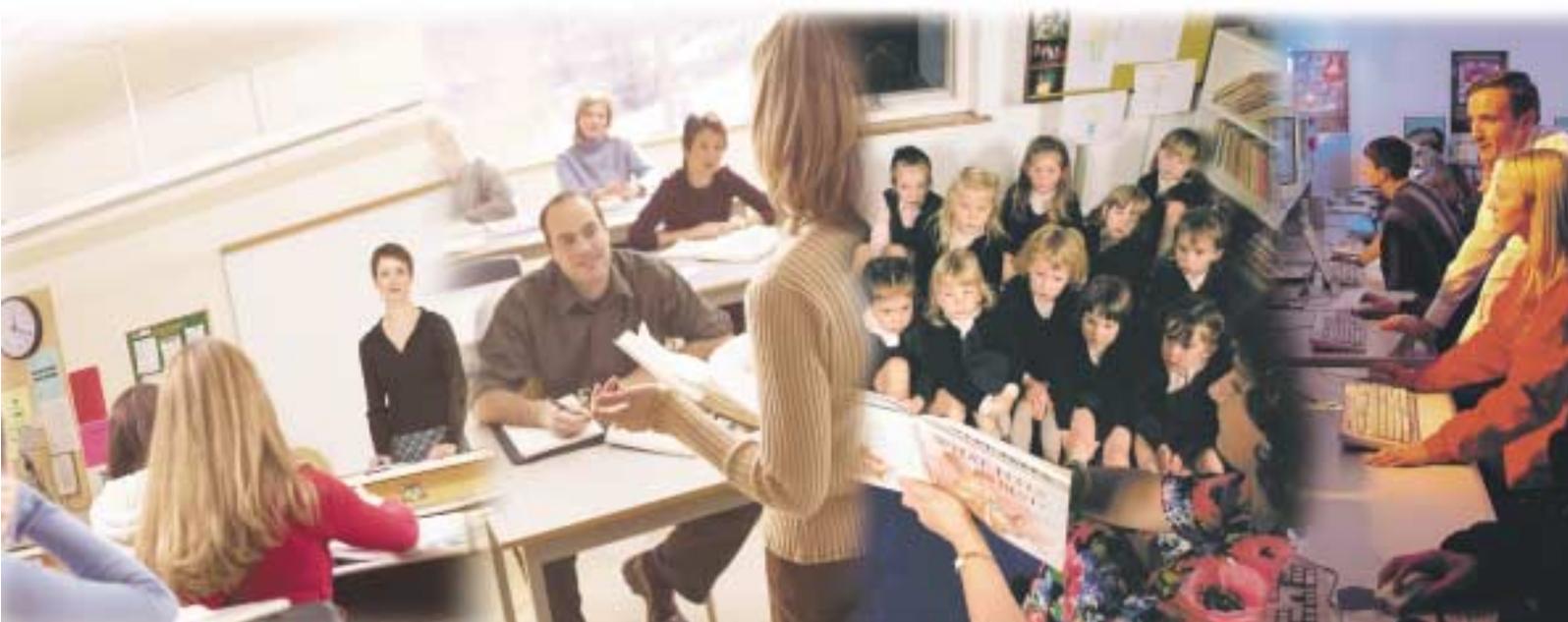




General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

Code of Values and Professional Practice

Building dynamic professional communities





Foreword

One of the hallmarks of any profession is the commitment of its members to a code of ethics which sets out professional values and responsibilities. In establishing our Code of Values and Professional Practice we are affirming our commitment to these values and setting out our aspirations. The achievement of these lofty goals will require diligence and energy allied to a clear sense of purpose and an understanding of the significance, for both pupils and society at large, of our endeavours.

The importance to society of the process of schooling and the work of teachers should not be underestimated. Indeed, education lies at the heart of both social and economic progress. It empowers and celebrates; it shapes society and effectively secures future well-being. It is appropriate that those who are entrusted with this role should publicly affirm their commitment to excellence. The codification of the underlying values, responsibilities and aspirations of the profession is eloquent testimony to the profession's commitment to excellence in and for all.

Eddie McArdle

Registrar

September 2004

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, for the first time, 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
- enhance the status of the profession in the eyes of the public.

The Code effectively incorporates the core values articulated within the Teacher Competences Framework and those set out by the Nolan Committee.

Core Values

The core values of the profession are as follows:

Trust	Honesty	Commitment
Respect	Fairness	Equality
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 outlined below 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 will:

- maintain professional relationships with those pupils / learners 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 pupils 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 will:

- 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 educative 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 a legal imperative requires disclosure.

Commitment to the Profession

Teachers will:

- 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 as an essential expression of their professionalism.

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