

Friday 7th February 2014

Let Teachers Teach

- Call from Teachers' Professional Body to investigate on-line bullying

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI), the professional and regulatory body for teachers, has condemned the sectarian intimidation of a young teacher, which has resulted in her quitting her post at a north Belfast school and seeking redeployment elsewhere.

Dr Carmel Gallagher, Registrar of the General Teaching Council said:

"I am sure I speak on behalf of the whole teaching profession in voicing grave disquiet at the intimidation of a young teacher forcing her to quit her job in a north Belfast school and to actively seek redeployment to a school in another board area.

"Teaching is a challenging vocation which deserves the respect of everyone in our society.

"This type of sectarian intimidation has no place in any workplace, least of all in our schools. It is worth nothing that Catherine Seeley was teaching a key area of the curriculum - 'Learning for Life and Work' – which helps young people to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. As a society we must do all we can to allow our teachers to get on with the important job of teaching and helping young people to succeed and think for themselves. The fact that Catherine Seeley's students were willing to campaign on Twitter in support of their teacher is evidence that she was doing a good job in nurturing young people willing to speak out for fairness.

"While it is welcome that the Board of Governors and Education Library Board have worked to ensure that Ms Seeley can continue to teach, this does not diminish the need to challenge the circumstances that forced her to leave her post. All cases of sectarian bullying of any kind, whether in cyber space or real space, deserves to be fully investigated and appropriate action taken."

ENDS

The main features of GTCNI are as follows:

1. Professional Registration

GTCNI, on behalf of the profession, ensures that only appropriately qualified teachers are registered to teach in Northern Ireland.

- Professional Registration: We check that all who wish to teach here have completed a suitable course of initial teacher education before being listed on the professional teachers' register.
- Accreditation of ITE Programmes: We accredit all Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Northern Ireland to ensure that all providers meet agreed criteria.
- Providing up-to-date Statistics: We maintain up-to-date statistics about the profession, (*for example, how many teachers are employed in each phase of education and their gender, age and subject profile*) so that there is an appropriate supply of qualified teachers for each phase.

2. Professional Regulation

GTCNI, on behalf of the profession promotes the highest standards of Professional conduct, competence and practice.

- **Professional Code and Competences:** These are set out in Teaching: the Reflective Profession' (*GTCNI 2007*) and can be accessed on the website at www.gtcni.org.uk
- **Extension to GTCNI's Regulatory Powers:** Proposals have been consulted upon and new legislation is expected to come into effect in 2014-15.

3. Professional Research

GTCNI on behalf of the profession undertakes, and provides access to, up-to-date educational research on practice.

- **Best Practice Research:** We support and disseminate best practice research to ensure that any proposed changes are informed by local, as well as global, experience and reflection.
- **On-line Surveys:** We conduct on-line research on key issues (*for example, we surveyed your views on statutory assessment in June 2013*) in order to develop advice on matters that affect teaching and learning.
- **Research Database:** We have developed the 'Access to Research Resources for Teachers Space' (ARRTS) to provide easy access to important educational research www.arrts.gtcni.org.uk

4. Professional Development

GTCNI, on behalf of the profession, advises government, employers and other stakeholders on all matters relating to teacher education, planning, performance review and professional development.

- **Policy Advice:** We have proposed that all teachers are given access to a progressive range of professional development opportunities throughout their careers, aligned to revised competence standards.
- **Policy Alignment:** We have proposed that revised competence standards are aligned to school development planning, school self-evaluation, PRSD and a 'professional update' e-portfolio.

5. Professional Voice

GTCNI is your professional voice on all matters relating to teaching. Our position is that the educational voice of the profession should lead educational policy thinking and development.

- **Policy Advocacy:** We promote informed educational policymaking and best practice at all levels and speak up for the good of young people and the profession with integrity and conviction, based on research and consultation.
- **Professional Engagement:** We consult you on matters of major concern / policy debate so that we can represent your views with authority (*for example during 2012-13 we engaged face-to-face with many Primary Principals' Associations and Area Learning Communities and undertook a major survey on statutory assessment*).
- **Consultation Responses:** We respond to all relevant educational consultations on your behalf, drawing on research and consultation evidence

GTCNI Contacts Details:

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland 3rd – 4th Floor Albany House 73 - 75 Great Victoria Street Belfast BT2 7AF Tel: +44 (0) 28 9033 3390 Fax: +44 (0) 28 9034 8787