
Draft Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers

The Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers in Ireland
published by the Teaching Council in accordance with
section 7(2)(b) of the Teaching Council Act, 2001

2nd Edition – September 2011



The Teaching Council
An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta

This Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2nd Edition) is published by the Teaching Council in accordance with section 7(2)(b) of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, which states that the Teaching Council shall ‘...*establish, publish, review and maintain codes of professional conduct for teachers, which shall include standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence*’.

Introduction

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in 2006. It regulates the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers, it establishes and promotes professional standards and it promotes the continuing professional development of teachers.

The Council is required under the Teaching Council Act, 2001 ('the Act') to publish, review and maintain codes of professional conduct for teachers.

The first Codes of Professional Conduct were published by the Teaching Council in 2007. At that time, the Council committed to reviewing the Codes within a period of three to four years. This revised edition takes cognisance of a number of developments in the intervening years, including the publication of the Teaching Council (Registration) Regulations, 2009, together with its Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education.

This Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers is expressed positively in terms of the core values that characterise the work of teachers and in the elaboration of those values in required standards of professional conduct and practice. It identifies the professional responsibilities of teachers and, in so doing, reflects the complexity and varied situations which teachers deal with on a day-to-day basis and guides professional judgement and practice.

The Code applies to all registered teachers and serves as a guiding compass as teachers seek to steer an ethical and respectful course through the career of teaching. As such, it supports teachers in upholding the honour and dignity of the teaching profession. It may also be used by all of the education community and the wider public to inform their understanding

and expectations of the teaching profession in Ireland today.

The Code has a legal standing under the Act and serves as a reference point for the Council in exercising its functions under Part 5 of that Act. Under Part 5 of the Act, engaging in conduct which is contrary to this Code is defined in Section 41 as professional misconduct on the part of a teacher.

Section 41

In accordance with Section 41, the following shall constitute professional misconduct by a registered teacher:

- a) Engaging in conduct which is contrary to a code of professional conduct established by the Council under section 7(2) (b)
- b) Engaging in any improper conduct in his or her professional capacity or otherwise by reason of which he or she is unfit to teach.

“The Code applies to all registered teachers, and serves as a guiding compass as teachers seek to steer an ethical and respectful course through the career of teaching.”

The Council is committed to seeing that this Code is promoted and observed so as to maintain public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.

Ethics of the Teaching Profession

The role of the teacher is to educate. The Council expects that the following values will underpin the work of the teacher in the practice of his or her profession. These values are reflected throughout the Code.

Care

A teacher's practice is motivated by the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to his/her *care*. Teachers show this through positive influence, professional judgement and empathy in practice.

Respect

Teachers uphold human dignity and promote equality, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, teachers demonstrate *respect* for spiritual and cultural values, diversity, social justice, freedom, democracy and the environment.

Trust

Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Teachers' relationships with pupils/students, colleagues, parents/guardians, school management and the public are based on trust.

Integrity

Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in *integrity*. Teachers exercise integrity through their professional commitments, responsibilities and actions.

Standards of Professional Conduct

High standards of professional conduct and practice are central to teaching. In the statements which follow, the Teaching Council sets out the standards that are required of registered teachers.

Professional Values and Relationships

Teachers are required to:

- be positive, caring, fair, and committed to the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to their care.
- acknowledge and respect the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of pupils/students and promote their holistic development
- be committed to equality and inclusion and to respect and accommodate diversity including those differences arising from gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership of the Travelling Community and socio-economic status

- seek to develop positive relationships with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others, that are characterised by professional integrity and judgement
- work to establish and maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect in their schools.

Professional Integrity

Teachers are required to:

- act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work, having particular regard to assessment and examinations, the handling of school-related finances and the proper use of school property and facilities

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- ensure the accuracy of information prior to signing documents related to their work as teachers
 - respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information relating to colleagues, students and families gained in the course of professional practice, unless the wellbeing of an individual or a legal imperative requires disclosure
 - represent themselves, their professional status, qualifications and experience honestly
 - use only their own name, as set out in the Register of Teachers, in the course of their professional duties
 - avoid direct conflict between their professional work and private interests.
 - work within the framework of relevant legislation and regulations
 - comply with national and local policies, procedures and guidelines which aim to promote pupil/student education and welfare and child protection
 - report, where appropriate, incidents or matters which impact on pupil/student welfare
 - communicate effectively with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in a manner that is professional, collaborative and supportive, and based on trust and respect
 - ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as e-mail, texting and social networking sites

Professional Conduct

Teachers are required to:

- uphold the reputation and standing of the profession.
- take care of pupils/students under their supervision, ensuring their safety and welfare insofar as is reasonably practicable
- ensure that they do not access, download or otherwise have in their possession on school premises, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format
- ensure that they do not access, download or otherwise have in their possession, at any time or in any place, illegal materials/images in electronic or other format.

- ensure that they do not practise while under the influence of any substance which impairs their ability or medical fitness.

Professional Practice

Teachers are required to:

- meet the standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence as defined by the Council from time to time
- motivate, inspire, acknowledge and celebrate effort and success
- apply their knowledge and experience in facilitating pupils'/students' holistic development
- maintain high standards of practice in relation to pupil/student learning, planning, monitoring, assessing and reporting
- plan and communicate clear, challenging and achievable expectations for pupils/students
- create an environment where pupils/students are active agents in the learning process and support their development as fully autonomous lifelong learners
- engage with pupils/students to develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies that are differentiated as appropriate to meet their individual and collective needs and that assist pupils/students to learn in a variety of ways
- inform their professional judgement and practice by understanding and reflecting on pupil/student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum development, ethics, educational policy and legislation
- be open, and respond constructively, to feedback regarding their practice and seek appropriate support, advice and guidance where necessary.

Professional Development

Teachers are required to:

- actively maintain and improve their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure it is current, having particular regard to subject matter, pedagogical approaches and educational research pertinent to the curriculum/syllabus/programme which they teach

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- critically evaluate and reflect on their professional practice and take personal responsibility for maintaining and improving the quality of their professional practice
 - engage in career-long professional development at individual, school, regional and/or national level, in accordance with guidelines developed by the Teaching Council
 - actively participate in professional learning communities, support colleagues (including student teachers) in their professional development and contribute to the development of professional knowledge, within the classroom, school and at other levels
 - work in partnership with teacher educators, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills and other statutory and non-statutory educational and support services

Professional Collegiality and Collaboration

Teachers are required to:

- work with teaching colleagues in the interests of sharing, promoting, developing and supporting best professional practice and maintaining the highest quality of educational experiences for their pupils/students
- work in a collaborative manner with pupils/students, parents/guardians, school management, other members of staff, relevant professionals and the wider community toward meeting the needs of pupils/students
- contribute to the design, development, implementation and evaluation of curriculum at classroom, school and national level, working as agents of change and in collaboration with colleagues and other professionals.

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