

# Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers



*2nd Edition, 2012*



*An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta*  
**The Teaching Council**

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

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# Foreword

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The role of the Teaching Council is to regulate the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers, to establish and promote professional standards, to support the continuing professional development of teachers and to promote teaching as a profession. Its establishment in 2006 represented a milestone in the development of teaching as a profession in Ireland, and had been advocated for by many in the teaching profession over several decades.

Today, there are almost 73,000 registered teachers in Ireland, serving education at primary, post-primary and further education levels. With more than 4,000 schools involving close to a million pupils/students, the contribution which the teaching profession makes to society is significant. Having a well-established tradition of service in Ireland, the profession enjoys high levels of public confidence and trust as evidenced by research undertaken by the Teaching Council in 2009.

Among the many important developments initiated in recent years to strengthen and underpin teaching in Ireland was the adoption of the *Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers* in 2007. This was done in accordance with Section 7(2)(b) of the Teaching Council Act, 2001 which provides that the Council shall “establish, publish, review and maintain codes of professional conduct for teachers, which shall include standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence”.

The Council made a commitment to review the 2007 Codes within a period of three to four years. Initiating the review in 2009, the Council took account of a number of developments in the intervening years including the publication of the *Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations, 2009* and the Council’s *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. A revised Draft Code issued in 2011 and was the subject of an extensive consultation process with education partners and stakeholders, including the general public, teachers and interested bodies. The Teaching Council has taken careful account of all the submissions and observations provided and has now approved the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2nd Edition)* in accordance with the requirements of the Teaching Council Act, 2001.

The Teaching Council is committed to ensuring that the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* is promoted and observed so as to maintain public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.



Micheál Ó Gríofa  
Chairperson



Tomás Ó Ruairc  
Director

Date: 28 May 2012

# Glossary

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## **Pupil/Student**

The Code applies to registered teachers at primary and post-primary levels as well as in the further education sector. The term “pupil/student” denotes learners at primary, post-primary and further education levels.

## **Parent**

The term “parent” denotes parents and legal guardians.

## **Teacher**

The term “teacher” denotes a teacher registered with the Teaching Council.

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# Introduction

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The teaching profession has a distinguished record of service in Ireland. This *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* reiterates and makes explicit the values and standards that have long been experienced by pupils/students through their participation in education.

## Purpose of the Code

The *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* applies to all registered teachers.

Its purpose is threefold:

1. It serves as a guiding compass as teachers seek to steer an ethical and respectful course through their career in teaching and to uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession.
2. It may be used by the education community and the wider public to inform their understanding and expectations of the teaching profession in Ireland.
3. It has an important legal standing and will be used by the Council as a reference point in exercising its investigative and disciplinary functions under Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, dealing with fitness to teach.

Professional misconduct by a registered teacher is defined in Section 41 of the Act in the following terms:

“(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.”

It is envisaged that the Council will exercise its powers in this respect when the requisite legal effect is given to Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act.

In respect of each individual complaint against a registered teacher, the Council, according to its procedures, will consider whether the conduct complained of amounts to a serious falling short on the part of the teacher, of the standards of teaching, knowledge, skill, competence and conduct that could reasonably be expected.

Existing nationally agreed procedures for dealing with difficulties and complaints at school level will continue to operate. The Council believes that, in most cases, these will offer the best means for resolving problems as they arise in the day-to-day operation of the education system.

## Structure of the Code

Having regard to the three purposes set out above, the Code begins by setting out the ethical foundation for the teaching profession. This is encapsulated in the values of **Respect, Care, Integrity** and **Trust** that are reflected throughout the Code. These core values underpin the work of the teacher in the practice of his or her profession.

The Code then sets out the standards which are central to the practice of teaching and expected of registered teachers. The standards identify teachers' professional responsibilities and are framed as statements under six separate headings: values and relationships; integrity; conduct; practice; professional development; collegiality and collaboration. The standards reflect the complexity and variety of teaching and serve to guide professional judgement and practice.

## Context

The Code is in accord with the Council's *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* which envisions the teacher as a reflective practitioner whose key role is to educate. It also sees teachers as members of professional learning communities and advocates a role for the profession in supporting student teachers and newly qualified teachers. The Code has also been developed in the context of the Council's future role in relation to continuing professional development.<sup>1</sup>

In adopting and promoting the Code, the Teaching Council has particular regard for the broader context in which teaching takes place.

The Council is mindful of the rights of pupils/students, including their right to have a voice in matters affecting them.

The Council is also mindful of the rights of parents and the rights of teachers and of the responsibilities that accompany those rights. A valuable synergy has been developed between parents and teachers and this has great potential to benefit pupils/students and their education.

The Council recognises the civic and social value of education and the profound contribution that the teaching profession has made to the social, cultural and economic development of Ireland over many decades. It also recognises the key role of teacher educators in ensuring the quality of teaching. It believes that education, the teaching profession and the process of teacher education merit the active attention and support of the State and the community.

The Council is also conscious of the myriad factors beyond teachers' control which have a bearing on their work including:

- the engagement of parents and the wider community
- the commitment and engagement of pupils/students
- the availability of resources and supports
- opportunities for teachers' professional development
- the accelerated degree of educational change
- the pace of legislative change
- economic and societal factors.

The Council believes that the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* provides an ethical foundation along with explicit standards of conduct to be observed at all times, having regard to the broader context set out above.

In conclusion, the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* encapsulates the fundamental ethics that inform the work of teachers. The core values and professional standards that teachers subscribe to are expressed in terms that are accessible to educators and to all others with an interest in education. Since the education system reaches into virtually every home in the country, and affects so many so deeply, it is crucial that the teaching profession's value system and professional standards are clear and readily understandable.

The Teaching Council believes that the adoption of this *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* will enhance and deepen the confidence and trust that society places in teachers.

<sup>1</sup> At the time of publication, the Teaching Council is committed to developing a national framework and guidelines for CPD in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

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# Standards of Teaching, Knowledge, Skill, Competence and Conduct

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The role of the teacher is to educate. The following ethical values underpin the standards of teaching, knowledge, skill, competence and conduct as set out in this Code.

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## Respect

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

## Care

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

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## Integrity

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

## Trust

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

**On behalf of the teaching profession, the Teaching Council sets out the following standards that apply to all registered teachers regardless of their position.**

## **1. Professional Values and Relationships**

Teachers should:

- 1.1. be caring, fair and committed to the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to their care, and seek to motivate, inspire and celebrate effort and success
- 1.2. acknowledge and respect the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of pupils/students and promote their holistic development
- 1.3. be committed to equality and inclusion and to respecting and accommodating diversity including those differences arising from gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership of the Traveller community and socio-economic status, and any further grounds as may be referenced in equality legislation in the future.
- 1.4. seek to develop positive relationships with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in the school community, that are characterised by professional integrity and judgement
- 1.5. work to establish and maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect in their schools.

## **2. Professional Integrity**

Teachers should:

- 2.1. act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work
- 2.2. respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information gained in the course of professional practice, unless a legal imperative requires disclosure or there is a legitimate concern for the wellbeing of an individual
- 2.3. represent themselves, their professional status, qualifications and experience honestly
- 2.4. use their name/names as set out in the Register of Teachers, in the course of their professional duties
- 2.5. avoid conflict between their professional work and private interests which could reasonably be deemed to impact negatively on pupils/students.



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### 3. Professional Conduct

Teachers should:

- 3.1. uphold the reputation and standing of the profession
- 3.2. take all reasonable steps in relation to the care of pupils/students under their supervision, so as to ensure their safety and welfare
- 3.3. work within the framework of relevant legislation and regulations
- 3.4. comply with agreed national and school policies, procedures and guidelines which aim to promote pupil/student education and welfare and child protection
- 3.5. report, where appropriate, incidents or matters which impact on pupil/student welfare
- 3.6. communicate effectively with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in the school community in a manner that is professional, collaborative and supportive, and based on trust and respect
- 3.7. 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
- 3.8. ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format
- 3.9. ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession, illicit materials/images in electronic or other format
- 3.10 ensure that they do not practise while under the influence of any substance which impairs their fitness to teach.

### 4. Professional Practice

Teachers should:

- 4.1. maintain high standards of practice in relation to pupil/student learning, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback
- 4.2. apply their knowledge and experience in facilitating pupils'/students' holistic development
- 4.3. plan and communicate clear, challenging and achievable expectations for pupils/students
- 4.4. create an environment where pupils/students can become active agents in the learning process and develop lifelong learning skills
- 4.5. develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies that support differentiated learning in a way that respects the dignity of all pupils/students
- 4.6. inform their professional judgement and practice by engaging with, and reflecting on, pupil/student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum development, ethical practice, educational policy and legislation
- 4.7. in a context of mutual respect, be open and responsive to constructive feedback regarding their practice and, if necessary, seek appropriate support, advice and guidance
- 4.8. act in the best interest of pupils/students.

## 5. Professional Development

Teachers should:

5.1. take personal responsibility for sustaining and improving the quality of their professional practice by:

- actively maintaining their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure it is current
- reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base
- availing of opportunities for career-long professional development.

## 6. Professional Collegiality and Collaboration

Teachers should:

6.1. work with teaching colleagues and student teachers in the interests of sharing, developing and supporting good practice and maintaining the highest quality of educational experiences for pupils/students

6.2. work in a collaborative manner with pupils/students, parents/guardians, school management, other members of staff, relevant professionals and the wider school community, as appropriate, in seeking to effectively meet the needs of pupils/students

6.3. cooperate with the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills and other statutory and public non-statutory educational and support services, as appropriate

6.4. engage with the planning, implementation and evaluation of curriculum at classroom and school level.