



**Cyngor Addysgu Cyffredinol Cymru**  
**General Teaching Council for Wales**

# **Professionalism in Practice**

A good practice guide

## Professionalism in Practice

The General Teaching Council for Wales is the statutory, self-regulating professional body for teachers in Wales. It seeks to raise the status of teaching by maintaining and promoting the highest standards of professional practice and conduct in the interests of teachers, pupils and the general public.

An integral part of a teacher's responsibility is to maintain the high standards of conduct expected of a professional who is entrusted with the care and education of pupils. Undoubtedly, common sense and avoiding risky or inappropriate situations will go a very long way to achieving this. However, the Council considers that it is helpful to teachers to have an awareness and understanding of issues and situations which might potentially arise and which could call a teacher's professionalism into question. This leaflet is intended to aid teachers by setting out examples of such issues and situations. It is not intended to be a code of conduct or instrument to be used for disciplinary purposes by the Council.

This leaflet should be read in conjunction with the *Statement of Professional Values and Practice*.

### Teachers and pupils

*Teachers ensure that relationships with pupils are based on mutual trust and respect*

Innocent comments or contact between pupils and teachers can be misconstrued. Teachers should always ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils concerned. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care.

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Teachers should ensure that:

- they are aware of the potential dangers of being in a one-to-one situation with a pupil at any time but especially outside the school setting. This includes giving lifts to pupils, visiting their homes or contact in a social context;
- any photographing/videoing of pupils complies with LEA/school guidelines;
- in the course of carrying out any pastoral role, they conduct conversations with a pupil about sensitive issues professionally;
- they have regard to the safety and welfare of pupils.

Teachers should ensure that they do not:

- have inappropriate physical contact with pupils;
- engage in personal correspondence with pupils;
- discuss their own personal relationships with pupils;
- swear at pupils, use offensive names or make inappropriate remarks about their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, age, language or special needs.

## Working with colleagues

*Teachers support and co-operate with their colleagues to maintain effective professional relationships*

A teacher should treat all colleagues, teachers and other professionals fairly.

Teachers should ensure that they do not:

- allow professional relationships with colleagues to be prejudiced by views about colleagues' gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, age, language or special needs;
- undermine, or are perceived to undermine, the authority and professional standing of the headteacher or any colleague;
- take part in inappropriate workplace 'banter' or practical jokes, which could be perceived as being unprofessional or the harassment of others.

## Honesty and integrity

*Teachers strive to conduct themselves with integrity*

A teacher should seek to maintain standards of honesty and integrity.

Teachers should ensure that:

- they comply with LEA/school policies and procedures in respect of the use of school property, facilities and finance;
- they are fully accountable when handling school finances or funds entrusted to them and do not use school property or facilities inappropriately;
- they take reasonable care to ensure the accuracy of information prior to signing documents, such as passport applications.

Teachers should ensure that they do not:

- misrepresent their professional position, qualifications or experience;
- misrepresent the true costs of, for example travel expenses, school trips or the costs of materials.

## Educational visits and school trips

*Teachers strive to teach individuals and groups of pupils to best effect, using a range of approaches*

These play an important part in school life and can greatly enrich the educational experience of the pupils involved. Physical safety is of prime importance and teachers should take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others involved in trips and outings.

The environment can be very different to the school setting and relationships can sometimes be less formal. However, teachers should acknowledge that the standard of professional behaviour expected of them outside school is no different from that within school.

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Teachers should ensure that:

- they comply with LEA/school procedures and guidelines for such activities;
- they maintain a balance between formality and informality in relation to the pupils under their responsibility;
- they avoid situations that could be perceived by others to be of an inappropriate nature.

### **Inappropriate material, the internet and e-mail**

A teacher should avoid situations both within and outside school which could bring them into conflict with the law or have an actual or perceived impact upon their status as a teacher.

Teachers should ensure that:

- they fully comply with LEA/school policies and procedures for the use of ICT facilities, e-mail and the internet;
- they exercise caution in communicating with pupils, including via e-mail, text messaging, other media messaging or in sharing e-mail addresses;
- they exercise caution in relation to contact/web cam sites (for example, chat rooms, message boards and newsgroups).

Teachers should ensure that they do not:

- have in their possession inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format on school premises;
- have in their possession at any time illegal materials/images in electronic or other format;
- access inappropriate websites or download inappropriate materials on school premises;
- access at any time illegal websites or download such materials at any time or in any place.

## Examinations and assessment

*Teachers make effective use of information they gather from a wide range of internal and external assessments*

A teacher should be aware of situations involving examinations and assessment that might call their professional integrity into question.

Teachers should ensure that:

- they comply with all regulations and procedures relating to assessment and examinations;
- they conduct assessment and examination-related tasks with unquestionable integrity.

## Confidentiality

*Teachers are sensitive to the need, where appropriate, for confidentiality*

A teacher should be sensitive to issues of confidentiality, while acknowledging that on occasions, teachers will have a professional duty to disclose certain matters.

Teachers should ensure that:

- they comply with LEA/school policies and procedures with regard to communications with parents, pupils or colleagues;
- they do not divulge or misrepresent confidential discussions, where this would be deemed inappropriate.

## Criminal offences

Should a teacher commit a criminal offence which results in one of the following sanctions, the police will report the matter to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES):

- a criminal conviction;
- a formal caution;
- a reprimand or warning administered by a police force;
- a bind over.

Where the offence involves the safety and welfare of children, issues of health or a teacher is unregistered, then the DfES will consider the matter. All other criminal offences are referred to GTCW to determine whether or not they are relevant to a teacher's registration.

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Where the DfES or the Council receives a referral involving a criminal offence, it will always seek details of any previous offences committed from the police and also consider these in respect of the teacher's 'wider' conduct and whether or not it falls short of that expected of a teacher. A trend of persistent re-offending would be viewed in a more serious light.

### Personal behaviour outside of school

A teacher in his or her private life should be conscious of the expectations that the profession and society has of them. They should be mindful of this in conducting their private lives.

### The regulatory role

Since 1st June 2001, GTCW has held responsibility for investigating and hearing cases against a registered teacher where it is alleged that he/she is guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, serious professional incompetence or is convicted of a relevant criminal offence.

Referrals to the Council can occur in the following ways:

- from an employer (including a private supply agency) where a registered teacher is dismissed for reasons of misconduct or incompetence or where he/she resigns in circumstances where dismissal was a possibility;
- from the police, where a criminal offence has been committed by a registered teacher;
- from a member of the public, parent, pupil or colleague, who may make an allegation of unacceptable professional conduct (but not of incompetence) to the Council.

The Council does not have responsibility for considering misconduct relating to the safety and welfare of children, issues of health or unregistered teachers. These matters are dealt with by the DfES.