



The Council for Subject Associations

**Response to the Consultation
on the revised
Code of Conduct and Practice for
Teachers**

(GTCE0209)

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**CfSA
Building L19
University of Reading
London Road
READING
RG1 5AQ**

**Tel: 01189 313437
Email: cfsaoffice@subjects.org.uk
www.subjectassociation.org.uk**

The Eight Principles of Conduct and Practice

1. To what extent do the principles capture the aspects of the teacher's role and responsibilities that are important to your organisation?

- Principles 2, 3 and 7 Those responses received from the subject association community broadly welcome the Eight Principles of Conduct and Practice. In particular, principles 2, 3 and 7 are recognised as most important to subject teaching associations.
- Principle 1 is over-riding and should concern anyone involved in education or working with children. However, our view is that it should refer to ECM and the Children's Plan.
- Principles 2 and 3 are generally covered in the mission statements and programmes of all subject associations. It is possible for teachers of some subjects to gain Chartered Teacher Status in recognition of a life-long commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. Such awards require evidence of the impact teachers are making in their respective subjects.

- Principle 2 Suggest **bullet 2** should read:

*'Base their practices on effective teaching and learning of **all** pupils'*

or

*'Base their practices on effective teaching and learning of all pupils including those from diverse ability, age, ethnicity, gender, **language**, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation or socio-economic backgrounds'.*

This recommendation is made because understanding of linguistic diversity is not simply an attitudinal issue, but also a teaching and learning issue.

- Principle 2 This should be strengthened with the addition of a bullet point emphasising the importance of CPD activities for teachers as an entitlement. The Code of Practice should reflect the context within which CPD activities take place and reinforce the need for schools to make proper arrangements to support teachers including budgetary planning, release and cover if the proposals are to be seen more than aspirational idealism.
- Principle 2 Suggest **bullet 7** should read:
*'Demonstrate awareness of their role as a significant figure in the lives of children and young people, lead by example, and model the **behaviours and attitudes** they are trying to inspire in young people'.*
- Principle 3 Involving children appropriately in the decision making process, the consequences of which will affect them, brings with it a responsibility to ensure that the implications of decisions are also understood.
- Principle 3 (bullet 4) Rather than supporting improvement the existing national arrangements for the assessment of year 6 pupils' actively inhibits it. A general statement must therefore empower teachers to

consider what is best for the pupils in their care without the constraint of government intervention.

- Principle 3 Suggest **bullet 5** should read:

*'Have high expectations of all children and young people, regardless of their background or particular aptitudes and **provide** activities that will challenge and support them all'.*

- Principle 3 Suggest **bullet 6** should read:

*'Manage the behaviour of children and young people in order to create **safe** environments in which they are able to learn and achieve'.*

- Principles 4 & 6 We are particularly pleased to note that these principles are presented as a key to the teachers' conduct and practice.
- Principle 4 (bullet 1) A reference to linguistic diversity should be included. The importance of respect for linguistic diversity is often overlooked in equality statements and yet we know from research that this has a powerful impact on individuals' well being.
- Principle 4 (bullet 5) It is important that teachers provide learning opportunities for pupils to begin to understand and appreciate local community perspectives by considering difference, respect and tolerance. It is through the formal curriculum that pupils will be able to consider and reflect upon the nature of their local community. In order to provide such learning opportunities teachers will need to have a grasp of the issues facing the community. In the current culture this may not always be possible. Where teachers do not fully understand local issues the implications of meeting this principle might be onerous. It would be helpful if references to the importance of engaging with local communities were strengthened.
- Principle 4 There is an ideal opportunity to link this principle to the Community Cohesion agenda.
- Principle 6 Specific references should be made to the role of specialist teachers. Exemplification of 'good practices' is needed when working with specialist colleagues and experts (e.g. visitors) to support the principles of valuing diversity, responding to all pupils' needs and collegiate working.
- Principle 6 (bullet 4) It is wrong to single out our junior colleagues in this statement. All members of the teaching community, regardless of age and seniority, should be prepared to learn from each other.
- Principle 7 Reference should be made to working with colleagues beyond individual school boundaries, as well as within schools, in order for teachers to grow and develop as effective practitioners.

2. Are any elements of the teacher's role and responsibilities missing from the principles? If so, what are they?

- Principle 2 This should include an explicit reference to the need for teachers to take personal responsibility for maintaining and enhancing their own subject knowledge in the subject(s) they cover in their teaching.

3. *Do the principles include any elements that should not be there? If so, what are they?*

- Generally the principles are satisfactory. However, within Principle 5 there should be an acknowledgement that, particularly in secondary schools, the whole school framework will influence the extent to which individual teachers are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers.

The Values

1. *The draft Code sets out some values that underpin the behaviours described in the principles. How helpful is it to include such values in the Code?*

The subject association community supports all the core values and hope they would apply to any organisation.

The values give a useful stem from which the principles grow. Therefore it is essential for the Code of Conduct and Practice to begin with a clear statement of the core values which underpin teacher professionalism and that the draft 8 principles are appropriate.

2. *Are the values the appropriate ones for the Code of Conduct and Practice for Teaching?*

There is a general consensus that the values are aspirational. However, it would not be helpful for the GTCE to adopt aspirational values and use them to prosecute teachers. It is not realistic to expect all teachers to uphold all aspirational values all the time!

It might be helpful if some of the values were developed e.g.:

- Excellence, supported and maintained through on-going professional development
- Involvement, *engagement* and empowerment

3. *Is anything missing from the list of values?*

Not directly, but as is often the case with such documents words could be interpreted broadly or narrowly. Take, for example, the use of the word 'Respect' in Values (bullet 5). While readers (including legal practitioners) might take this in its broadest sense to mean respect across the board, others may interpret the meaning as respect for self; for colleagues; for students. The danger of such succinct wording is that it can be interpreted differently

for a variety of purposes; the interpretation that the GTCE will put on such words needs to be made clear throughout.

4. *Does the list of values include anything that should not be there?*

No, though the use of 'responsiveness' implies a reactive, rather than a proactive profession. Whilst there will always be a need for teachers to respond to changes in circumstances, they need to be responsible for taking initiatives, both in their personal development and in deciding what and how their students should be taught.

The language of the draft Code

1. *Is the draft Code clearly written? Please give any comments that you may have on the clarity of the language.*

- Generally, the draft Code is clearly written and the language and tone of the language is appropriate, however, as mentioned previously there should be no room for misinterpretation if the Code is likely to be used as a legal document.
- It would help to have the eight core values in the same order as the eight principles to make cross-referencing easier.
- If it is intended that examples (currently Messages from the Consultation) are to be included in the final version. The CfSA would welcome the inclusion of examples that acknowledge of the roles of subject specialist staff in helping all children to succeed.
- In order for the draft Code to play a role in helping parents and pupils understand what they have a right to expect from teachers, versions of the code should be made available in a range of community languages.

2. *Is the tone of the language in the draft Code appropriate? Please give any comments you may have on the tone of the language*

- The code has a clear and un-patronising tone. However, it is written *about* teachers (in the third person), not *for* teachers (in the first person) so comes across as slightly impersonal.
- The supporting evidence for each Principle detracts from the essential formality of the statement of guiding principles. If it must be included at all, it should be removed to an appendix.

3. *Overall, how successful is the draft Code in setting out clear statements about teacher professionalism that apply to all teachers in England, no matter what subject or age of children they teach, their role or level of experience, or the context in which they work? (Please give reasons for your views)*

- The draft Code is successful in setting out clear statements about teacher professionalism that apply to all teachers in England, no matter what subject or age of children they teach, their role or level of experience, or the

context in which they work. All efforts should be made to avoid wording that might be interpreted in a variety of ways.

- The draft Code is clear on what the GTCEs regulatory functions and procedures are. However, as a list of examples are given and the phrase *'the GTCE may take action'*, is used, this only further emphasises that it is a grey area and can be very subjective. We do not want teachers to feel victimised, demoralised or have unrealistic out of work lifestyles imposed. If the document is to be used to support cases against teachers then this needs to be made clear in the rubric.
4. *Overall, how successful is the draft Code in Explaining the sorts of behaviours that have fallen seriously short of expected standards of conduct and practice and that may lead to a teacher's registration status being investigated and further action taken by the GTCE? (Please give reasons for your views)*
- Additional guidance is needed about the types of behaviour that 'falls short of the expected standards of conduct and practice'. It should be made clear in the document how the Code will be applied in practice.
 - Inevitably this aspect of the Code of Conduct has to be built around a focus on minimum acceptable, or unacceptable, behaviours. There seems to be several occasions where further exemplification is needed e.g. the words 'appropriate' and 'professional' are often mentioned without qualification.
 - The Code should be cross-referenced to any other GTCE information on standards and conduct and Trade Union codes of practice.
5. *Supporting teachers' professional judgements and decisions by providing clear statements of the expected norms of conduct and practice? (Please give reasons for your views)*

See above comments

6. *Communicating to people outside the profession the nature of the teacher's role and expertise? (Please give reasons for your views)*
- A secure balance has been struck between the need for clear and explicit, professionally worded, statements for professionals and accessible language for individuals not involved in teaching. However, it is worth noting that most people know the GTCE as a regulatory body and not so much as a body communicating a teacher's role or expertise.
 - The notion of cooperation with other professional colleagues is welcomed, but there needs to be further advice about how that is achieved. There is concern about the increasing number of professionals who support schools, especially in curriculum delivery, in specific areas of learning e.g. in PSHE.
 - Much has been made about schools not being allowed to abdicate their responsibility in favour of these 'expert visitors'. Such contributions should enhance learning and enable pupils to thrive and succeed. Professional contributions to pupil's learning are vital. However, it must be made clear

that the teacher has the task of interpreting the professional input to match the curriculum requirements.

- The relationship with parents is vital and teachers need to work with them so that the parents can support their child's learning beyond school. This means that teachers need to ensure that they meet with parents to discuss the child's learning and give opportunities for parents to attend sessions where changes, developments to planned learning is discussed and explained.

Communication and use of the Code

1. *We would welcome your views on the most appropriate channels for disseminating the code, once finalised, and on how it can best be employed to make it an effective support for teachers in their professional lives, decisions and judgements.*

- As the implications of the Code are far reaching and affect teachers, parents, LAs, professional colleagues, etc. it should be circulated widely with an emphasis on digital format.
- The most obvious place for the Code is on the GTCE website in an area accessible to all members of the public.
- All teachers should be provided with written notification of the existence of the Code, as should all governing bodies, LAs and other relevant bodies working alongside schools and teachers.
- All prospective teachers should become familiar with the contents of the Code, through their ITE establishments. The Code should also be disseminated through HEIs and CPD activities, through Unions and subject associations.
- Governing Bodies of schools should be required to inform the parents and carers of pupils and students in their schools of the existence and location of the Code on the GTCE website.

Please make any further comments that you would like the GTCE to consider in revising the draft Code to produce the final version.

It is imperative that the rights of both the adult/teacher/educator, and the rights of the child/pupil/student, are incorporated into the Code. The extent of the legal power of the GTCE is of great interest to all in the education sector and, to some, interpretation of the Code will affect their career. There should be sufficient clarity within the code to enable decisions about teachers conduct to be reached swiftly.

Acknowledgments

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- The Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment (AAIA)
- The Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT)
- The Association for Science Education (ASE)
- The Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM)
- The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC)
- The National Association for Primary Education (NAPE)
- The National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE)
- The National Dance Teachers Association (NDTA)
- The National Health Education Group (NHEG)

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Building L19
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London Road
READING
RG1 5AQ**

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