

Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers

HM Government of Gibraltar
Department of Education

- The Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers sets out to describe what is expected of teachers in their professional role.
- The Department of Education urges teachers as professionals to study the Code and take time to reflect on the standards expected.
- The Code is designed to guide teachers' professional judgement and practice.

Purpose of the Code

- 1. It should serve as a guiding compass as teachers seek to steer an ethical and respectful course through their career in teaching.
- 2. It may be used by the wider public to inform their understanding and expectations of the teaching profession.
- 3. It has an important legal standing and will be used as a reference point in exercising disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures.

The following ethical values underpin the standards set out in the Code:

- Teachers promote equality and demonstrate respect for spiritual and cultural values, and diversity.
- Teachers are motivated and care about the pupils entrusted to them.
- Teachers exercise integrity through their professional commitments, responsibilities and actions.
- Teachers build relationships with their pupils, work colleagues, parents and school management based on trust.

Professional Values and Relationships - teachers should:

- Seek to motivate, inspire and celebrate effort and success;
- Recognise the specific learning needs of pupils;
- Seek to build positive relationships with pupils, work colleagues, parents and school management;
- Work to establish a culture of trust and mutual respect.

Professional Integrity - teachers should:

- Act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work;
- Respect the confidentiality of information gained unless a legal imperative requires a disclosure or there is a legitimate concern for the wellbeing of an individual;
- Always represent themselves, their professional status, qualifications and experience honestly;
- Avoid conflict between their professional work and private interests.

Professional Conduct - teachers should:

- Take all reasonable steps in relation to the care of pupils under their supervision, thus ensuring their safety and welfare;
- Comply with agreed school policies, procedures and guidelines;
- Report, where appropriate, incidents or matters which impact on pupil welfare;
- Communicate with pupils, parents, work colleagues and school management in a professional, collaborative and supportive manner based on trust and respect;
- Ensure that any communication with pupils, parents, work colleagues and school management is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social network sites.
- Ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession, inappropriate or illicit materials/images in electronic or other format;
- Ensure that they do not practise while under the influence of any substance which impairs their ability to teach.
- Uphold the reputation and standing of the profession both in and out of school.

Professional Conduct - the use of online social networking sites

- Publication by a teacher, whether deliberately or otherwise, on a social media forum of material which is confidential, critical of a pupil, parent or work colleague, or which is likely to bring the reputation of the teaching profession into disrepute, or which is illegal, defamatory, offensive or otherwise damaging to a pupil, parent, work colleague or the Department of a Education, may be considered to be an act of misconduct and be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Professional Practice - teachers should:

- Strive to maintain high standards of practice in relation to pupil learning, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback through marking and otherwise;
- Plan and communicate clear, challenging and achievable objectives for pupils;
- Strive to teach pupils how to develop lifelong learning skills;
- Develop strategies that support differentiated learning;
- Take charge of their own professional development and keep up to date on matters relating to pedagogy, curriculum development and education in general;
- Be open to constructive feedback relating to their practice and if necessary seek appropriate support and guidance;
- Always act in the best interest of pupils.

Disciplinary and Capability Procedures

- These procedures will apply to all teachers;
- All teachers are expected to familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct;
- When a teacher's performance, conduct or attitude is a serious cause for concern, a disciplinary or capability procedure is triggered;
- Disciplinary and capability issues can occasionally overlap; it therefore becomes crucially important to establish the facts before triggering one procedure or the other.

Disciplinary Procedure Triggered - Stage 1

- The teacher in question is given the opportunity of providing explanations as to the alleged misconduct; a meeting is scheduled with a minimum 24 hours notice given.
- The meeting is held in school and chaired by the Headteacher with a/the Deputy present and taking notes of proceedings.
- If the Headteacher is satisfied with the explanations afforded, no further action is taken and the notes taken are shredded; the teacher is released from the staged procedure.
- If the Headteacher is not satisfied with the explanations given by the teacher, a verbal warning is issued, highlighting the particular area in which improvement is required. The teacher is also informed as to the length of time that the warning will be "held" live; the notes of proceedings are kept for this length of time.
- If no further issues occur within this length of time, the teacher is released from the staged procedure and the notes taken at the initial meeting are shredded.

Disciplinary Procedure Triggered - Stage 2

- If the conduct has not improved within the prescribed timescale, or a further act of misconduct has been perpetrated, the teacher is given an opportunity to provide explanations; a meeting is scheduled with a minimum 24 hours notice given.
- The meeting is held in school and chaired by the Headteacher with a/the Deputy present and taking notes of proceedings.
- If the Headteacher is satisfied with the explanations afforded, no further action is taken and the notes taken at this meeting (and at the previous meeting) are shredded; the teacher is released from the staged procedure.
- If the Headteacher is not satisfied with the explanations afforded, a written warning is issued informing the teacher of the following: (a) the nature of the misconduct and the improvement required on the part of the teacher; (b) the length of time that the warning will be "held" live (this length of time should be at least double the time the verbal warning was "held" live); (c) that any further misconduct occurring within this length of time will result in the matter being referred to the Department of Education; (d) that the notes of all proceedings conducted thus far together with a copy of the written warning will be filed.
- If no further issues occur within this length of time, the teacher is released from the staged procedure.

Disciplinary Procedure Triggered - Stage 3

- If the conduct has not improved within the prescribed timescale, or a further act of misconduct has been perpetrated, the teacher is asked to attend a meeting at the Department of Education; the teacher may be accompanied by a friend or union official and is advised about this. A minimum of three days notice is given.
- The meeting is chaired by the Senior Education Advisor (SEA); another Senior Officer from the Department is present and takes notes of proceedings. The SEA will have received all the pertinent documentation prior to the meeting.
- It is unlikely that the SEA will be satisfied with the explanations afforded by the teacher once the matter has reached the Department. However, should this be the case, then no further action is taken and the teacher is released from the staged procedure. The notes taken at this meeting, and at previous meetings, together with the written warning, would still be kept on file.
- If the SEA is not satisfied with the explanations afforded, he/she can issue a second written warning informing the teacher of the following: (a) the nature of the misconduct and the improvements required; (b) the length of time that the warning will be "held" live (this length of time should never be less than two years from the issuing of this second written warning); (c) that any further misconduct occurring within this length of time will result in the matter being referred to the Director of Education and the Human Resources Manager; (d) that the notes of all proceedings conducted thus far together with copies of the written warnings will be kept on file.
- If no further issues occur within this length of time, the teacher is released from the staged procedure.

Disciplinary Procedures Triggered - Stage 4

- If the teacher's conduct has not improved within the prescribed timescale, or a further act of misconduct has been perpetrated, the matter is referred to the Director of Education and the Human Resources Manager, with all the supporting written evidence including the notes taken at meetings and copies of the written warnings issued.
- Human Resources protocols would then take over. By this stage the issues are considered extremely serious and could lead to a full disciplinary hearing.

