



the National Parent Forum of Scotland

GTCS Professional Standards and Professional Code Consultation

The National Parent Forum Scotland (NPFS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the GTCS's consultation on the refreshed set of Professional Standards and Professional Code. As part of an empowered system, NPFS recognises the importance of the Professional Standards and Professional Code as not only a tool for teachers and practitioners, but also as important documents for parents, carers, and the wider public. This will ensure that parents have the information required to fulfil their role as part of the empowered system. Therefore, it is important that these documents are accessible and clear so that parents can work together with schools and teachers and have an understanding of the standards they can expect.

Introduction to the Professional Standards and Professional Code

We are pleased that the introduction clearly outlines what the key documents to read in conjunction are, as this will enable anyone to navigate them efficiently and access the information they require. It is helpful for parents to have access to the separate, shorter documents. This is useful for parents who may be seeking out a specific piece of information relating to their child's teaching but may not have the need or the time to read the standards in full.

We welcome the recognition of the impact of professional standards and codes beyond the school itself, particularly in stating how the standards and code can be used to identify "what our learners, their families and communities, and the public can expect from us."

Professional Code

We as parents are pleased that the GTCS has recognised "learners, their families and communities, and the public as a whole" in section 1.1 of the introduction. This places parents and families as central to education, which is important for ensuring parents are heard and empowered. Parental Involvement has a significant impact on children's educational opportunities and attainment, and we therefore welcome the recognition of parents and families as key stakeholders.

NPFS would suggest that parents as a distinct group need to be included in the bullet points under heading 2, addressing 'How can and should this code be used?'. The list includes "the public as a whole" but does not identify parents in particular.

We would also suggest that although it is important for parents to understand how they should be treated by teachers, in an empowered system the role of parents in education goes beyond this. We would suggest that another point is included detailing how the Code

can also be used by parents to identify how teachers should be meeting their children's needs, promoting inclusivity, parental involvement, and empowerment. Parents are not passive in their child's education; they are active contributors. Therefore, the code should highlight how teachers should actively work with parents and carers to promote parental involvement. This goes beyond simply how teachers should treat the public.

The relationship between parents and teachers is important, as it is this relationship that empowers parents to be involved in their child's education. We at NPFS took part in a workshop with GTCS, where we were able to share what values parents would like to see in an ideal teacher. Parents emphasised the importance of how teachers make them feel and agreed that they wanted to be treated with empathy and dignity. It is these values that make parents feel empowered to take part and contribute to important decisions surrounding their children's education. We would therefore recommend that the GTCS Professional Code further emphasises the importance of the parent teacher relationship, and for the expectation for teachers to treat parents with dignity and empathy.

We as parents are pleased to see the inclusion of "respect the critical role my learners' families play in supporting learning" as one of the commitments. Similarly, we welcome the inclusion of families' roles in the Glossary, and in particular value the attention given to the variety of adults who may perform the parenting role in a child's life.

The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning: Supporting the Development of Teacher Professional Learning

NPFS would recommend the inclusion of parents and families in section 2.4 detailing Educational Contexts. The inclusion of "working collaboratively across disciplines, professions and communities, locally and globally" is helpful, however we would suggest that specific mention of the learners' family and home is a key educational context to be considered. Parents and Carers play a valuable role in constructive feedback and dialogue in order to challenge systems, and the need for teachers to work collaboratively with parents and carers is essential.

The Standards for Registration: Mandatory Requirements for Registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland

We would recommend that under section 2.1.3 where there is reference to teachers selecting "the most appropriate methods to meet all learners' needs" there should be specific reference to Additional Support Needs. Parents often identify the challenges of ensuring that Additional Support Needs are met. It is important for Student Teachers to have a grasp of the importance of this and to be equipped with appropriate methods for meeting these needs in the classroom.

We would also suggest that section 2.2.2 'Learning Communities' makes reference to involving parents in the learning community. In order to ensure parental involvement in education it is important that parents can be integrated into learning communities so that parents can take part in an empowered system without facing barriers.

We are pleased with the inclusion in section 3.1.5 of the expectation for Registered Teachers to “create and sustain effective working relationships” with parents and carers. In order for parents to be able to take part in their child’s education, it is important that there are opportunities for parents and carers to build working relationships with teachers. This will help parents and teachers to communicate and work together to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Standards for Leadership and Management: Supporting Leadership and Management Development

NPFS would encourage the inclusion of parents, carers, and families under section 2.1.2 ‘Collaboration’ as we view parents as being able to offer a significant contribution to the strategy vision, ethos, and aims of schools.

We are pleased to see reference to empowerment in section 3.1 for Senior Leaders and Headteachers. We would, however, encourage GTCS to consider further elaboration of the empowerment system and who this involves. This would provide headteachers and senior leaders with a better understanding of the variety of relationships to develop and maintain to ensure that their school is embodying the ethos and culture of empowerment. We would recommend that the eight equal partners in the empowerment jigsaw are clearly stated so the equal roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in influencing education are clear.

Parents are encouraged to see the inclusion in section 3.4 of the role for Senior Leaders and Headteachers to “actively promote, support and develop trusting relationships with families, parents and carers and value the importance and impact of fostering the home learning environment.” We would suggest that in addition to this, the role of Senior Leaders and Headteachers to seek the views of their Parent Council and the Parent Forum is clearly stated. This is outlined in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. It is important this is included so that practitioners are reminded of their responsibilities in law towards Parent Councils, and to ensure that Parent Councils continue to be consulted on school’s arrangements and decisions, such as when appointing senior positions at the school.

Summary

Overall, we are pleased with the accessible nature of the documents and believe that the separate and succinct documents will be easier for parents to navigate quickly and efficiently. We are encouraged to see the inclusion of parents, carers, and families as playing a key role in education. We do however think that the GTCS could include more specific reference to the requirements for teachers to enable parental involvement and empowerment. In summary, we recommend:

- Throughout the Standards and Code parents are recognised as a distinct and important stakeholder beyond simply “the public as a whole.”
- An emphasis on the documents not only being available to parents so they know how they should be treated by teachers, but to also highlight how teachers should

meet their children's needs, promote inclusivity, and encourage parental involvement and empowerment.

- Further recognition of the home learning environment as a key educational context.
- Specific reference to Additional Support Needs in the requirements for teachers to be equipped with appropriate methods and support to meet needs.
- Parents and Families to be included as part of the Learning Community in order to promote parental involvement.
- More detail to be provided on the Empowerment System to ensure that teachers are aware of the eight key stakeholders and the equal role they play in education.
- Specific reference for Senior Leaders and Headteachers to consult parent forums and councils in order to incorporate their views into key decisions as outlined in the 2006 Act.

We appreciate the opportunity provided by the GTCS to contribute to the Professional Standards and Professional Code consultation.

Kind Regards,

Joanna Murphy, Chair, National Parent Forum of Scotland