



**GTC Scotland Survey of Draft Professional Standards
Children In Scotland
November 2020**

About Children in Scotland

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

Children in Scotland conducts a range of policy and project work in relation to education in Scotland. In 2018-19, we co-delivered the Scottish Learner Panel with the Children's Parliament, Scottish Youth Parliament and Young Scot. We are currently recruiting young people to take part in the new [Education Recovery Youth Panel](#), working again with Young Scot. Our [Wellbeing Resource](#) for teachers, produced in partnership with the Scottish Government, was published in August 2019. We have also contributed to a range of calls for evidence by the Scottish Parliament's Education and Skills Committee.

Children in Scotland is pleased to respond to the GTCS' consultation on the draft Professional Standards and to be able to contribute to the ongoing development of key documents in supporting teachers across Scotland. Given the role of the documents in setting benchmarks for Scottish teachers, they form a key component of the quality of education received by children and young people nationally.

We were commissioned by General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) in 2018 and 2019 to engage with children and young people in the process of reviewing and refreshing the Professional Standards and developing the Professional Code. We have drawn from this engagement work, and our wider experience to inform this response.

1. Is the structure, language and content of the Professional Standards 2021 coherent and usable?

We recognise and welcome the progress made from the initial draft Standards at the end of 2019 to the current draft and acknowledge the significant changes GTCS has made, based on feedback from children and young people and the other stakeholders who took part in the process.

We can identify that the layout and language reflect other relevant documents and guidance for teachers in Scotland, such as [Curriculum For Excellence](#), including benchmark documents and [How Good Is Our School?](#) (4th edition).

We also see clear progression in the language used, and therefore the professional expectations, between provisional registration, full registration, career-long professional learning, middle leadership and headship. The comparison document also supports the inter-relationship between the Standards documents.

In our [2018 report](#) we made recommendations to GTCS based on the voices, opinions and experiences of the children and young people who took part in the consultation process, part of the national conversation. We called for GTCS to ensure that relationship-based pedagogy and a rights-based approach must be central pillars in developing knowledge and skills in initial teacher education and throughout a teacher's career.

Based on this, we welcome the following aspects of the redrafted Standards:

- The aim: to ensure these documents are relevant and contemporary and reflect the current educational landscape, thus reflecting the diversity of experience of children and young people in Scotland.
- Recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion under Social Justice: including 'the influence of gender, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds on experiences of learning, taking account of specific learning needs and seeking to reduce barriers to learning and supporting

learners who are experiencing or who have experienced trauma, children and young people from a care experienced background and understanding responsibilities as a corporate parent'.

- Professional Commitment: also 'promotes equality and diversity, paying careful attention to the needs of learners from diverse groups and in upholding children's rights'.
- Trust And Respect: acknowledges the importance of engendering a rights-respecting culture, understanding wellbeing and the importance of positive and purposeful relationships to provide and ensure a safe and secure environment for all learners and colleagues within a caring and compassionate ethos.
- The clear subheadings of Being A Teacher In Scotland, Knowledge and Understanding and Skills And Abilities: we believe this gives a clear link between values and actions.
- Learner Participation under The Learning Context: we believe this aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), recognising all children and young people have the right to have their views heard and considered in all aspects of their lives.
- Build Positive Relationships for Learning under the Learning Context: the children and young people we worked with to inform these standards were quite clear that a positive relationship between teachers and pupils (and parents/families) is essential for children and young people to feel comfortable and ready to learn. Kindness was recognised as key to supporting them to a position where learning was possible; "It lifts your spirits. You want to do stuff a lot better because you are happy."¹

We are aware the target audience for these documents is teachers and the language used is likely to be accessible and understandable to them. However, we have concerns about how clear and accessible the documents would be for other stakeholders, including children, young people and parents. The lack of accessibility for children, young people and families will have a large knock-on effect on how the documents can be used.

We believe it is essential that children, young people and families are able to engage with these documents to support them to have a clear understanding of what they can and should expect from teachers. The children and young people we worked with in December 2019 were clear in their belief that pupils should be involved in the PRD (Professional Review And Development) process for teachers. Teachers

¹ <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/files/the-standards/Children-In-Scotland-Review-of-Professional-Standards.pdf>

should 'ask pupils what they can do better' because of their daily interactions with teachers "Kids know best."
Accessibility for children and young people and parents means better accessibility for all. As the children shared with us in December 2019 "Everyone is human after all."

Improving accessibility could include the presentation of the content such as use of better use of images, infographics, colour-coding etc. The children and young people shared with us in December 2019 "visuals can help them connect the meaning" and make it "easy and eye-catching". Use of infographics could demonstrate how the various aspects link to the outcomes and experiences of children and young people themselves.

We would also encourage GTCS to consider use of quotations from children and young people. This would bring the document to life and exemplify the impact that teachers can and do have. They would show how the broad themes and educational theory within the Standards relate to day-to-day teaching and ensure they are cognisant of the needs and views of children and young people. Our reports on the views of children and young people in 2018 and early 2020 provide a range of quotes and examples which could be used to strengthen these aspects of the refreshed documents. For example, the children and young people we worked with in December 2019 suggested including more detail on building relationships such as "saying hello is important" and body language because "facial expressions are important".

2.How well do the Professional Standards 2021 articulate what it means to be a teacher in Scotland?

The children and young people we worked with in December 2019 recognised the importance of the Professional Standards as "It will tell you rules how to be a great teacher", teachers "could use the document to see what they have achieved" and it will support their development so they "will be better for the pupils."

We believe that the refreshed Professional Standards clearly place the teacher in a central role within the school community and within the learning of all their pupils. We believe that the draft Standards present an ambitious and appropriate view of teaching in Scotland. The Standards provide a clear framework for professional learning, laying out the expectation for teachers with regards to Professional Learning and PRD.

In our [2018 report](#) we called for the refreshed Professional Standards to be embedded in daily professional practice and be clearly linked to the lived learning experience of Scotland's children and young people, ensuring that every child has an equal chance to flourish. Thus we welcome the strong focus at the start of each document on Professional Values which reflects a commitment to the growth and wellbeing of all learners. We also welcome the commitment to the relationship between Professional Values and actions in the Professional Commitment, with clear components outlined under the Professional Illustrations.

In our [2018 report](#) we shared children and young people's views on the importance of teachers understanding individuals' needs "Makes you feel more confident when you're getting the help you need." We believe this is recognised clearly under Professional Commitment with reference to a number of additional support needs such as ADHD and Autism.

We also welcome the strengthened aspect of equality and diversity, with the recognition under Professional Commitment that 'Teachers recognise, see and acknowledge the value in everyone and have a deep awareness of the need for culturally responsive pedagogies. They promote equality and diversity, paying careful attention to the needs of learners from diverse groups.'

As we stated under question 1, Children in Scotland believes that the refreshed Standards could be strengthened by making direct reference to the views of children and young people within our reports from 2018 and January 2020. It is our view that this would lend weight to the Standards as teachers would be able to see where these interact directly with what children and young people want from a teacher in daily practice.

3. What help is needed to support the enactment of the Professional Standards 2021 as central to teacher professional learning and development?

If teachers are to be fully supported to engage in ongoing professional development, they also require less contact time and more opportunities to access training and learning opportunities. Through our wide-ranging work we are concerned that at present the Standards provide a framework that may be unrealistic for teachers to achieve within the current context.

The children and young people we worked with on this process in December 2019 recognised that teachers must find time to do this and this can be a challenge, but they were able to suggest "No contact

with pupils for a few hours a week” or “working on group tasks” or “having shorter periods than they’d want to learn” may be a help with this. They also thought teachers could ask pupils to help them with the process because “they learn from the students”.

4. Between 19 October - 13 November 2020, GTC Scotland will be facilitating focus groups on the Professional Standards 2021.

Yes - we would you like to volunteer to take part in one of these sessions.

For more information please contact Amy Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Projects And Participation awoodhouse@childreninscotland.org.uk