



# **STANDARDS**

**FOR PROFESSIONALS IN EDUCATION  
AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

# **GUIDANCE NOTES**

# Standards for Professionals in Education and Children's Services

## Guidance Notes

### 1. Introduction

The 'Standards for Professionals in Education and Children's Services' have been published by the Prospect Education and Children's Services Group to reflect policy developments and the changing roles of professionals engaged in educational strategy, commissioning and service delivery. Separate Standards have been published for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to reflect the different policies and means of service deliveries within the devolved National Administrations. The Standards form the basis for a consistent approach to understanding, developing and improving the work and leadership of professionals in education and children's services. They provide a key element in describing the professional competencies in areas of work that can be difficult to characterise. The distinctive areas of professional knowledge and understanding, professional skills and attitudes and professional actions associated with the advice, support and challenge roles, fulfilled by professionals in education and children's services, are defined, but not prescribed by the Standards.

The Standards aim to:

- enhance the quality of work undertaken by individual professionals in education and children's services in their key roles of developing self and others, organisations and services; providing professional leadership; ensuring accountability; advancing effective learning, teaching and well-being; and promoting effective partnership working

- support the development of skills needed to operate effectively in newly-defined working environments and serve as a basis for cross-service working
- complement other existing frameworks of competencies and accountabilities as applying to the work of professionals in education and children's services. For example, in England increasingly schools are using Teachers Standards alongside individually negotiated targets, governors are using Headteachers Standards alongside their individually negotiated targets and Initial Teacher Training uses the Teachers Standards for progression of teachers into the workforce. In Scotland, the Professional Standards for school staff are defined by the General Teaching Council for Scotland Standard for Full Registration, Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning and Standards for Leadership and Management. In Northern Ireland, the Professional Standards for school staff are defined by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland teacher competences and the National Standards for Headteachers (Northern Ireland Edition)
- provide a clear framework for performance management to enhance the professional competency and confidence of professionals in education and children's services
- support the development of a framework for accredited continuing professional development for serving professionals in education and children's services and those aspiring to undertake such a role. The Standards can be used flexibly and adapted to local circumstances in order to authenticate the variety of features of how professionals in education and children's services function and execute their roles.

They can be aligned with other quality frameworks that operate both as internal and external processes and should provide an important source of evidence that can be fed into such other frameworks. The Standards are relevant to all staff working in a professional capacity to promote the educational development, achievement and wellbeing of children and young people. This guidance is intended for use by senior managers, team leaders, individual professionals in education and children's services, and self-employed consultants and advisers in evaluating their work and planning for professional development.

## 2. Interpreting the Standards

The Standards can be used at various levels within organisations to include the whole service, the team and the individual. They provide a common language for describing and recognising the work of professionals in education and children's services within and across services and with stakeholders. They are presented as six key dimensions which cover the work of professionals in education and children's services. Each dimension consists of three elements within which specific Standards are stated.

## 3. Using the Standards

An initial introduction to the Standards at whole service level enables professionals in education services and others to:

- have a common understanding of the Standards
- know which Standards are relevant to their role
- have a framework against which to assess their own performance
- understand how the Standards are used in the performance management process
- know how they are expected to evidence their performance
- know how their professional development needs will be identified
- identify links with other self-evaluation frameworks.

Many professionals in education and children's services work in teams which are increasingly composed of cross-agency personnel. It is essential that the team has a shared understanding of the Standards and which apply to their role. This will contribute to the achievement of consistency across the team and support peer review as part of the performance management process.

The Standards can be deployed in a range of different ways in relation to education and children's services. In particular, they can be applied and used within the context of the post-holder's actual remit and responsibilities to:

- target continuing professional development for staff involved in securing and/or delivering quality improvement services
- develop and refine performance management systems for education and children's services professionals
- support career development planning, succession and recruitment processes
- support the induction of staff
- provide a consistent basis for the formal accreditation of the work of professionals engaged in education and children's services.

### Important Questions

In planning to use the Standards certain questions are likely to arise, for example:

#### *a) How can the Standards be used?*

The Standards may be used by managers in activities to identify strengths and areas for development at a whole service level. This process will familiarise all professionals in education and children's services with the Standards and help to ensure a common interpretation of them across the whole team. It will also support the identification of which Standards are generic to the whole team and which are role specific.

Alternatively, the assessment of strengths and areas for development can be carried out within teams or by individuals but this will require prior work to ensure that there is

a common interpretation of the Standards and which Standards relate to particular roles. The assessment of strengths and areas for development can be based on the collective outcomes of performance management and can form the basis for training and individuals' professional development plans.

### *b) Which Standards are relevant to an individual role?*

The Standards are not presented in relation to specific roles within a service. Some professionals in education and children's services will provide challenge and support for establishments. Some will provide training and support for the curriculum, learning and teaching or leadership and management. Some take a lead role on specific strategic priorities; whilst others' work is less discrete and they work across many of these strands.

Dimensions 1, 2 and 3, 'Developing self and others', 'Professional leadership to build capacity' and 'Accountability – evaluating practice' are likely to apply to all professionals in education and children's services. The specific applicability of the Standards within Dimensions 4, 5 & 6, 'Promoting learning, teaching and well-being', 'Working with and developing organisations and services' and 'Developing and sustaining partnerships' will be a decision to be made within each service as the Standards are introduced.

### *c) How can an individual provide evidence of having achieved the Standards?*

Ongoing self-evaluation is part of the culture of professionals in education and children's services daily work and as such individuals will have opportunities to reflect and to discuss aspects of their work with line-managers and peers. Professionals in education and children's services should be able to provide reference to any evidence which supports their judgement for each of the Standards.

Self-evaluation requires individuals to note the sources of evidence for each of their judgements. It must be stressed that this is evidence normally collected during work activities. The evidence should be referenced not duplicated. Individual services may choose to develop reflective, individual professional portfolios which could include the individual's job description, self-evaluation profile, performance management outcomes and records of continuing professional development.

Overall this will provide a record of professional goals, growth and achievement and could be a foundation for career-long, self-directed professional development.

### *d) How can the Standards be used for an annual review?*

Individual professionals in education and children's services can use the Standards for self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for development. This would prepare

them for an annual review meeting and be a means by which professional development needs are identified. Key factors in the self-assessment process are:

- In planning assessment of an individual's role both the line manager and the individual must agree on the relevant Standards to be used.
- Judgements should be based on evidence.

Where any Standard is not applicable to the professionals in an education and children's services specific role, it should not be evaluated. Not all the Standards can be measured precisely and evaluation should be based on professional judgement taking into account the available evidence. This should be benchmarked in the review meeting with the line manager. Where peer/stakeholder review is included in the process, this provides an additional contribution to benchmarking of the judgements.

## 4. Performance Management

Effective performance management is a crucial process for individual and service development. The Standards offer opportunities for professionals in education and children's services and their managers, through the performance management process, to:

- set and meet clear targets to achieve the aims of the service
- contribute to the improved learning, standards of achievement and well-being of children and young people in schools and other settings.
- support professionals in education and children's services choosing to reflect on these Standard as part of their professional learning. The Standards will help them to identify, plan and develop their own professional learning needs and to ensure continuing development of professional practice.

It is therefore essential that use of the Standards is integral to the Performance Management System within the service. Individual services or may operate different models of performance management. The Standards are, however, sufficiently flexible to allow integration into a range of models; while they are not role specific competencies, they will add rigour to performance management systems where self-evaluation criteria are more generic in nature.

The Standards are intended to be used for self-evaluation and assessment by the line manager in identifying strengths, areas for development and professional development needs. The process can be enhanced further by a 360-degree approach involving peers within the team and service, colleagues from other service areas and other stakeholders.

## **5. Professional Development**

A professional development strategy is essential to keep staff up-to-date, prepare them for changing roles or promotion within the education and children's services sector, or to support them for other chosen career paths. Use of the Standards will enable a professional development strategy to be put in place for the whole service, teams and individuals. They will ensure that the strategy is based on rigorous skills/needs analysis derived from reflective self-assessment and performance management. Use of the Standards for individuals and teams will enable leaders to recognise and celebrate strengths within the service. These strengths should be utilised for the development of others within the team.

## **6. Induction**

Understanding the Standards needs to be an element within induction processes. The Standards will support the recognition of the existing knowledge and understanding, skills and attitudes, and professional actions that a newly appointed professional in education and children's services brings with them and will enable identification of initial training needs, thus providing a focus for activity within the workplace induction programme.

## **7. Career development, planning succession and recruitment processes**

The Standards meet the needs of newly appointed, established and experienced professionals in education and children's services, and those leading and managing the professional development of others. Rigorous use of the Standards will provide a progression route for these professionals and will support the development, retention and recruitment of high-quality leaders for the future. Use of the Standards in the preparation of job descriptions and person specifications would add rigour to the recruitment process. It would ensure a focus on the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding for the post and would provide clarity of job role.

You can find the Standards and Principles by visiting <https://prospect.org.uk/news/our-new-education-principles-and-standards-documents>

If you would like paper copies or to discuss how to use the Standards, please contact [wakefield@prospect.org.uk](mailto:wakefield@prospect.org.uk)



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