



# STANDARDS

FOR **PROFESSIONALS IN EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES** in Northern Ireland

# Preface

In producing this set of standards for Education and Children's Services Professionals in Northern Ireland, the Education and Children's Services Group of Prospect has sought to bring clarity and focus to their sometimes nebulous roles, responsibilities and activities.

In co-operation with our colleagues in Scotland a set of clearly defined standards has been formulated to guide Education and Children's Services Professionals in their endeavours to ensure that every child and young person receives a high level of educational provision and experience.

The standards clearly define the knowledge, skills and attributes that can be expected to be demonstrated by an experienced and competent Education and Children's Services professional.

The standards are a set of universal principles that transcend legislative boundaries of local agencies and political jurisdictions. However, they are closely aligned with the educational context in Northern Ireland.

The standards have a degree of commonality with the competencies required to enter the education profession as a "Beginning Teacher" and also share many of the competencies and skills required for school leadership.


Collectively the standards exemplify the varying demands of school leadership and school improvement and development at local and regional level.

The standards have taken account of the major drivers for shaping education provision in Northern Ireland. It is hoped they will provide guidance to Education and Children's Services members and key stakeholders in the School Development Service in Northern Ireland.

## **Glenn Walsh**

Executive Council Representative  
Northern Ireland



A person's hand is shown writing on a whiteboard with a blue marker. The person is wearing a grey sweater and a gold ring. The background is blurred, showing other people in a meeting or classroom setting.

It is intended that this set of **Standards for Education and Children's Services Professionals** will underpin the definition and development of their roles; the services that they deliver; and the professional actions they undertake.

The Standards are based upon the work originally carried out by 'Aspect Scotland' in 2009 and have been adapted and adopted to meet the needs of Educational and Children's Services Professionals and key educational stakeholders in Northern Ireland.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

# The changing context

Policy developments in education over several years have led to realignment and broadening of the roles and responsibilities of those engaged in educational strategy, commissioning and quality service delivery. There is now a much greater emphasis on working in partnership with other organisations and agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people.

There is a greater emphasis on the need to challenge and evaluate the work and impact of educational establishments and children's services.

These Standards are designed to reflect changing roles and responsibilities of those working in educational development and improvement.

They build upon previous frameworks and aim to address the current challenges facing educational improvement professionals, governors, principals, teaching staff and educational authorities in Northern Ireland.

The Standards are designed to reflect the variety of roles and responsibilities of those employed in Education and Children's Services. They emphasise the importance of offering professional leadership to educational establishments and their communities, as well as to other organisations and teams of professionals engaged in educational development and improvement.

The Standards recognise that capacity building is central to the work of education and children's services professionals,


and that individuals and organisations concerned with improving the quality of education and well-being for all children and young people need to learn how to adapt to rapidly-changing contexts in order to sustain system-wide improvement. The Standards take account of the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government priorities for education and are also informed by several recent developments and publications

- Every School a Good School (NI Executive policy for school improvement)
- Inspection Self-Evaluation Framework (Education & Training Inspectorate NI)
- School Development Planning 2010 regulations and associated guidance (Department of Education NI)
- Guidance for School Governors – (Education Authority)
- A review of existing leadership programmes including the professional qualification in headship (PQHNI)
- Area Planning Proposals
- “The Entitlement Framework” and “Area Learning Partnerships”.

## Aims of the standards

1. To enhance the quality of work undertaken by individual education and children's services professionals in their key roles of professional leadership, ensuring accountability, advancing effective learning and teaching and promoting effective partnership working





**2.** To support the development of skills needed to operate effectively in newly-defined working environments and serve as a basis for cross-service working

**3.** To complement other existing frameworks of competencies and accountabilities as applying to the work of education and children's services professionals

**4.** To provide a clear framework for performance management to enhance the professional competency and confidence of Education and Children's Services Professionals

**5.** To support the development of a framework for accredited continuing professional development for serving Education and Children's Services Professionals and those aspiring to undertake such a role.

## Using the standards

The Standards are relevant to the work of a wide range of professionals involved in educational development and improvement including all professionals engaged in working with children and young people.

The Standards can be deployed in a range of different ways in relation to professionals in 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 in local and regional advisory and quality improvement services
- 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 child development and school improvement .

**Six dimensions are identified which reflect the working practices of education and children's services professionals. These are:**

**1**

**Developing self and others**

**2**

**Professional leadership to build capacity**

**3**

**Accountability: evaluating practice**

**4**

**Promoting learning, teaching and well-being**

**5**

**Working with and developing organisations and services**

**6**

**Developing and sustaining partnerships**

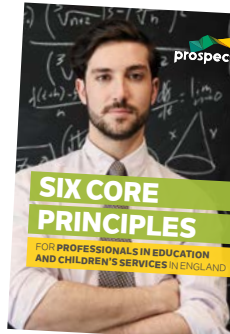


## Each dimension has three elements:

- Professional knowledge and understanding which underpin effective performance
- Professional skills and attitudes which relate to the capacity of education and children's services professionals to fulfil roles and responsibilities and their commitment to underpinning values
- Professional actions which represent the work of professionals on behalf of children and young people.

## The standards are underpinned by our six core principles:

- Encourage personalised success and enrichment for all learners promoting positive outcomes for children, young people and families
- Advocate all elements of well-being, social justice and equality of opportunity
- Exert professional leadership through vision, strategy, and initiative
- Recognise and build upon interdependence between individuals and professional disciplines and across agencies as well as within and between organisations
- Demonstrate a high level of integrity based on a moral purpose and display sound personal behaviour, approaches and relationships
- Value professional and systematic holistic approaches to learning and promote self and organisational development.



# DEVELOPING SELF AND OTHERS

Education and children's services professionals interact with others in diverse contexts and for multiple purposes. They have a clear and shared understanding of what is involved in providing high-quality services to children and young people and are motivated and meaningfully involved in improving the quality of provision.

To be successful they must appreciate the need to build trusting relationships and they should recognise the importance of taking full account of the feelings and needs of others, as well as their own and to manage this appropriately. They should be sensitive to context when weighing their responsibility to negotiate approaches that impinge professionally on others and set this against the need to act decisively.

All staff working in services for children and young people have a responsibility to undertake continuing professional development leading to self-improvement.

Organisations employing education and children's services professionals have a responsibility to ensure access to appropriate continuing professional development on a regular basis. Self-employed consultants have a responsibility to ensure that they also access regular CPD relevant to their role.

## Professional knowledge and understanding

**Education and children's services professionals know and understand how to:**

- Demonstrate a clear commitment to collegiality
- Maintain partnerships across professional boundaries
- Influence, coach and mentor others effectively
- Influence and work within the structure of national and local agreements and developments
- Support, maintain and promote existing effective practice
- Build supportive learning networks by engaging effectively with educational establishments and their communities
- Develop strategies to counter the impact of discrimination and deprivation in learning environments and interact positively with people from diverse backgrounds
- Manage emotions so they enhance rather than hinder performance
- Balance the need for challenge and support



- Evaluate and respond positively to wide-ranging social situations and interact appropriately in building relationships and managing conflicts
- Maintain and demonstrate clear knowledge of statutory obligations.

## Professional skills and attitudes

### Education and children's services professionals should:

- Model learning for life by being 'leading learners' themselves
- Apply knowledge and critical understanding of contemporary developments in key policy areas relating to services for children and young people
- Enhance the life chances of all children and young people
- Work collaboratively to raise educational standards
- Demonstrate self-awareness and ability to inspire and motivate others
- Build and sustain personal credibility
- Work to create a positive atmosphere within the educational community
- Know how and when to make decisions and use evidence and information to support and inform their judgements
- Listen well and give clear expression to ideas and feelings in person and providing high quality feedback.

## Professional actions

### Education and children's services professionals demonstrate a commitment to:

- Equality, social justice and inclusion
- Operate effectively as a member of a team and in leadership roles
- Hold, articulate and argue for professionally sound and consistent values
- Set expectations of high levels of respect for self and others
- Respond well to challenge
- Provide well-planned, continuing professional development, matched to individual and team needs drawing on local and national expertise.

# PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP TO BUILD CAPACITY

Education and children's services professionals work with a range of agencies, partners and establishments to influence the creation and implementation of a long-term vision for the education and well-being of children and young people that is shared by all stakeholders.

This vision is underpinned by a strong belief in the ethical purpose of advancing effective learning and teaching.

Education and children's services professionals have the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and new ideas. They encourage others to do likewise, and support organisations and individuals to build capacity to sustain improvement as circumstances change and new challenges emerge.

Education and children's services professionals help to identify trends and assess progress, they moderate and validate self-evaluation and self-improvement and help to establish priorities as a basis for effective strategic planning.

## Professional knowledge and understanding

### Education and children's services professionals know and understand:

- The nature of high quality educational provision at all levels and in different contexts
- Ways of maintaining a working awareness of local, national and global trends and initiatives in education and their relationships to each other
- The theory and practice of approaches to development that build capacity
- Ways to build, communicate and implement shared vision
- Strategic planning processes
- Effective change processes and their impact on creativity and innovation
- New technologies, their use and impact on learning and teaching, and on the quality of service provision
- The need to develop systems for shared leadership

- The political and social context and how this may impact on service provision
- Specialist information, research and policy in relation to their discipline.

## Professional skills and attitudes

### Education and children's services professionals should:

- Seek to improve service provision for all partners in education and all services for children
- Promote equality and impartiality in all aspects of service provision
- Provide leadership in implementing strategies to improve the quality of practice in delivering services to children and young people
- Work collaboratively with individual partners, agencies and other stakeholders and ensuring high standards for all
- Set and achieve ambitious and challenging targets for improvement
- Adopt problem-solving approaches
- Use appropriate new technologies to advance learning and improve the overall quality of services
- Accurately analyse, interpret and communicate complex information across professional boundaries.

## Professional actions

### Education and children's services professionals demonstrate a commitment to:

- Promote a coherent long-term vision for high-quality education and development of life skills for all learners
- Support establishments, local authorities and other service providers in implementing change and adapting to new ideas
- Work with establishments and their communities to provide support and challenge in a coherent and consistent way
- Use and interpret quantitative and qualitative data to improve well-being, learning and to raise achievement
- Motivate and work with others to create professional learning communities characterised by clear ethical purpose, shared values and beliefs
- Work with establishments and other organisations to explore creative approaches to learning and development
- Prepare oral and written briefings for those responsible for leadership and governance.

# ACCOUNTABILITY: EVALUATION PRACTICE

Education and children's services professionals view evaluation as both an individual and a corporate activity.

They work with individuals and organisations to evaluate the quality of experience provided to children and young people in their care and to ensure there is capacity to allow for continuous improvement.

Education and children's service professionals need to possess a thorough understanding of how educational provision can be enhanced through the skills of accurate analysis, interpretation and communication of complex information across professional backgrounds.

Education and children's services professionals must ensure that they use self-evaluation to analyse their own contribution to the work of the educational community they serve.

## **Professional knowledge and understanding**

**Education and children's services professionals know and understand how to:**

- Use approaches to the theory and practice of evaluation in an educational context
- Utilise a relevant range of data management systems
- Analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data
- Make best strategic and operational use of available resources to create, maintain and monitor an appropriate environment to ensure well-being and learning for all children
- Support and maintain existing effective practice and encourage and promote constant improvement in the development of children and young people



- Ensure that a coherent approach to improvement is taken to all aspects of service provision and learner achievement
- Draw on a wide range of advice and evidence to ensure that self-evaluation is rigorous, systematic and transparent.

## Professional skills and attitudes

### Education and children's services professionals should:

- Ensure that agreed vision, values and aims are used as the basis for reviewing their work and that of others
- Carry out direct observation of practice based on rigorous quality indicators
- Ensure a consistent focus on positive outcomes for children and young people
- Ensure that well-being, learning and achievement is at the centre of strategic planning and resource management
- Provide constructive feedback to individuals on the basis of sound evidence and identifying appropriate changes to provision
- Review and revise self-evaluation processes, as appropriate, to ensure improvement
- Use local and national data to judge performance and challenge barriers to participation and any underachievement of groups of learners; e.g. by gender, ethnicity, special educational needs and prior attainment
- Help to build capacity of organisations to carry out rigorous and effective self-evaluation
- Have effective systems to gather views of stakeholders about the quality of provision.

## Professional actions

### Education and children's services professionals demonstrate a commitment to:

- Raise educational standards and promote well-being in a wide range of contexts
- Evaluate service provision objectively, on the basis of sound evidence
- Self-evaluation of their own performance and taking appropriate consequent action
- Gather and analyse relevant evidence from a comprehensive range of internal and external sources
- Analyse performance data relating to individual children, to groups of children and to organisations and communities
- Formulate clear, secure judgements, and making recommendations based on evidence
- Provide constructive feedback that forms the basis for future improvements
- Build the capacity of others to carry out self-evaluation.

---

# PROMOTING LEARNING, TEACHING AND WELL-BEING

Education and children's services professionals are familiar with what is understood about the process of learning and child development.

They see learning holistically and recognise that a wide range of partners contribute to the development of children and young people.

They use their understanding of learning and development to inform policy and practice, and to identify and disseminate effective practice.

Education and children's services professionals model effective practice when they lead professional development activities.

## **Professional knowledge and understanding**

**Education and children's services professionals demonstrate that they know and understand how to:**

- Develop provisions that enhance the capacities of children and young people to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors
- Promote strategies to encourage effective practice which impacts upon young people's attainment and achievement and addresses barriers to progress
- Recognise the importance of research and development in facilitating effective learning and well-being
- Recognise the influence of emotional intelligence in facilitating effective learning and well-being

- Utilise appropriate assessment and evaluation techniques as a positive aid to promoting improved learning and teaching child support processes
- Monitor and evaluate educational and well-being processes and outcomes
- Develop the culture of a 'learning organisation' and promote CPD opportunities for staff
- Develop effective partnerships with learners, parents/carers and families
- Develop effective approaches to ensure inclusion and participation.

## Professional skills and attitudes

### Education and children's services professionals should:

- Engage critically with literature, research and policy
- Promote individual and organisational learning
- Promote the use of appropriate education and well-being practices to raise attainment and achievement
- Demonstrate how national and local initiatives can improve practices and raise standards
- Suggest appropriate person-centred approaches to engage children more fully in planning their learning and well-being.

## Professional actions

### Education and children's services professionals demonstrate a commitment to:

- Promote aspirational outcomes for all children and young people
- Find ways to motivate and engage all children and young people
- Recognise lifelong learning as an activity for all
- See the learning process and well-being in a holistic way, involving children and young people, parents, carers, other appropriate professionals and the wider community
- Recognise, reward and celebrate all forms of achievement
- Seek and disseminate examples of effective practice
- Recognise and analyse aspects of effective practice which will transfer to other contexts
- Initiate and support action research into effective learning, teaching and well-being
- Synthesise knowledge from a range of sources to improve learning, teaching and well-being
- Make appropriate use of technology and evaluate its impact on achieving relevant outcomes.

# WORKING WITH AND DEVELOPING ORGANISATIONS AND SERVICES

Education and children's services professionals work to build capacity within educational organisations and services and support others in managing and sustaining improvement.

They understand the connection between personal and organisational/service development, and the complex web of forces that influence education. Capacity is built by creating learning organisations – education and children's services professionals facilitate this process by working with leaders at all levels in challenging and supportive partnerships.

Education and children's services professionals understand organisational development. They work alongside educational establishments, other organisations, agencies and individuals to promote local partnerships so that resources are deployed effectively to improve all outcomes for all children and young people.

## **Professional knowledge and understanding**

**Education and children's services professionals demonstrate that they know and understand:**

- The principles and systems that promote workplace well-being and sustain a learning organisation
- Different models and structures of learning organisations and their values/belief systems and how they build capacity for sustainable development
- The impact of legislation and current government initiatives
- Strategic planning and systems for capacity building and securing continuous improvement
- External and internal factors which impede or enhance organisational/service effectiveness
- Effective models of self-evaluation at all levels



- The importance of working collaboratively with multi-agency stakeholders in order to deliver outcomes for all children and young people
- How to put in place coherent and focused development through effective project management techniques
- The construction, validation and use of indicators to guide and evaluate organisational/services development
- Leadership styles and approaches and their impact on development strategies
- Effective financial management and principles of ‘best value’
- Performance management and the role of continuous professional development in capacity building.

## Professional skills and attitudes

### Education and children's services professionals should:

- Lead and help individual organisations/ services and groups of organisations/ services to develop and improve strategic planning and partnership working
- Support and moderate organisational self-evaluation
- Evaluate the capacity for improvement within organisations/services
- Develop appropriate leadership styles and management systems
- Promote and support effective multi-agency working
- Identify, analyse and share effective practice within organisations/services and between partner organisations/services.

## Professional actions

### Education and children's services professionals demonstrate a commitment to:

- Develop learning organisations/services with the objective of building capacity for sustained improvement
- Identify and realise potential in order to raise attainment and achievement and to promote well-being
- Develop approaches to leadership which build capacity and ensure sustained improvement
- Promote collaborative working and development
- Hold people accountable for the development of themselves and others
- Take a creative and systematic approach to strategic planning and making appropriate connections
- Apply knowledge of the broader context in which organisations/services function
- Manage complex projects to meet timescales and deadlines and secure improvement
- Analyse, interpret and apply qualitative and quantitative data
- Work effectively and equitably with colleagues from a wide range of organisations/services
- Make informed professional judgements that respect the viewpoints and perceptions of others
- Model effective leadership behaviours
- Provide evaluative and developmental reports both orally and in writing.

---

# DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

Networks and partnerships are an important means by which an individual organisation can harness additional ideas, resources and approaches. Such partnerships may benefit from external brokering and support.

Education and children's services professionals have an important role to play in identifying when such networks and partnerships will be beneficial, and in helping to create the conditions in which a partnership can better serve the community as a whole.

With the growth of a commitment to integrated children's services, there is a clear need to embrace partnership working across a diverse group of professionals to improve the quality of services to children, young people, families and communities.

Education and children's services professionals will be key members of such partnerships and often take on a leadership role within this context.

## **Professional knowledge and understanding**

**Education and children's services professionals demonstrate that they know and understand:**

- The conditions necessary to build and sustain effective partnerships
- Models of partnership working
- Potential barriers to effective partnership working and how to address these
- The roles and responsibilities of the range of agencies working within the community
- Strategies for communicating across a wide, and sometimes disparate, range of agencies
- The wider context in which stakeholders and partners are working.

## Professional skills and attitudes

### Education and children's services professionals should:

- Work in constructive ways with a wide range of professionals
- Use enquiry or research-based approaches to promoting change
- Establish and support existing and new networks across educational establishments and other organisations/ services, and supporting the agencies that work with them.
- Be creative in solving problems
- Think systemically about change
- Be sensitive to the impact of change on different stakeholders and different parts of the system in which they are working
- Work effectively with a range of people in other agencies to support educational improvement
- Interpret social situations and networks accurately, interacting effectively, managing conflict and building bonds
- Promote innovation and researched-based approaches to evaluating outcomes.

## Professional actions

### Education and children's services professionals demonstrate a commitment to:

- Share evidence appropriately with key partners in order to gain a fully informed basis for proposing action and making decisions
- Articulate a clear vision for organisational/ service improvement in specific contexts
- Work with partnerships and networks to advance effective learning, development and well-being of all children and young people
- Work with educational establishments, local authority, communities, partners and agency stakeholders in order to develop and implement integrated strategic plans
- Work with voluntary and community organisations in the development and evaluation of practice
- Ensure that legal and regulatory responsibilities are being met.

**“I have found the Prospect Standards for Professionals in Education and Children's Services (in England) an invaluable guide for signposting existing practice and provision and giving a competitive edge”**

Vinod Hallon  
Consultant and trainer

The Education and Children's Services Group of Prospect is the only professional association and trade union exclusively representing professionals working in school improvement.

These professionals play a vital role in shaping and influencing the lives of millions of children and young people.

National professional standards play an integral role in supporting improvements to service provision. They also assist with the development of individual roles and skills and enhance the professional reputation of highly skilled workers.

The Education and Children's Services Group has developed professional standards for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

**"I have worked in Children's Services for over 35 years in a variety of roles. I have mostly been employed by Local Authorities but also spent a period of time as an individual consultant and am currently working for a large Multi Academy Trust.**

**The standards have also provided a benchmark for me to check my own quality of work and to give support and challenge to colleagues.**

**I have used them as the framework within which to develop work streams and the principles as a basis to develop mission and values ensuring that CPD for staff is at the heart of any service delivery. The quality of our services depends on this."**

**Sara Griffiths**

National lead for attendance



**Prospect.org.uk/ECS  
@ProspectECSG**

**Prospect Education and Children's Services Group**

International House, Turner Way, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 8EF

T 01924 207890 E wakefield@prospect.org.uk