



**National Standards  
for Headteachers  
(Northern Ireland  
Edition)**

# **National Standards for Headteachers Northern Ireland Edition**



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## Introduction to the National Standards for Headteachers

This revision to the National Standards for Headteachers reflects the evolving role of headship in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and incorporates current government thinking and guidance. The Standards recognise the key role that headteachers play in raising and maintaining levels of attainment in schools in order to meet the needs of every child within the framework of government policy.

The Standards embody three key principles, namely that the work of headteachers should be: learning-centred, focused on leadership and reflect the highest possible professional standards. These principles have guided this development and underpin the core purpose and key areas of headship.

### The Core Purpose of the Headteacher

The core purpose of the headteacher is to provide professional leadership and management for a school. This will promote a secure foundation from which to achieve high standards in all areas of the school's work. To gain this success a headteacher must establish high quality education by effectively managing teaching and learning and using personalised learning to realise the potential of all pupils. Headteachers must establish a culture that promotes excellence, equality and high expectations of all pupils.

The headteacher is the leading professional in the school. Accountable to the Board of Governors, the headteacher provides vision, leadership and direction for the school and ensures that it is managed and organised to meet its aims and targets. The headteacher, working with others, is responsible for evaluating the school's performance to identify the priorities for continuous improvement and raising standards; ensuring equality of opportunity for all; developing policies and practices; ensuring that resources are efficiently and effectively used to achieve the school's aims and objectives and for the day-to-day management, organisation and administration of the school.

The headteacher, working with and through others, secures the commitment of the wider community to the school by developing and maintaining effective partnerships with, for example, schools, other services and the wider educational support services. Through such partnerships and other activities, headteachers play a key role in contributing to the development of the education system as a whole and collaborating with others to raise standards locally.

Drawing on the support provided by members of the school community, the headteacher is responsible for creating a productive learning environment which is engaging and fulfilling for all pupils.

## Using the Standards

The National Standards for Headteachers are generic and are applicable to headteachers irrespective of phase and type of school. They are intended to provide a framework for professional development and action and to inform, challenge and enthuse serving and aspiring headteachers.

The Standards, therefore, have a range of uses. The objectives of the Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) Scheme will be informed by the Standards. They will assist in the recruitment of headteachers. They provide guidance to all school stakeholders in what should be expected from the role of the headteacher and are also used to identify threshold levels of performance for the assessment framework within the Professional Qualification for Headship in Northern Ireland PQH (NI).

## The key areas

The Standards are set out in six key non-hierarchical areas. These six key areas, when taken together, represent the role of the headteacher.

- ❑ Shaping the Future
- ❑ Leading Learning and Teaching
- ❑ Developing Self and Working with Others
- ❑ Managing the Organisation
- ❑ Securing Accountability
- ❑ Strengthening Community

Within each of these key areas, the knowledge requirements, professional qualities (skills, dispositions and personal capabilities headteachers bring to the role) and actions needed to achieve the core purpose are identified. Whilst particular knowledge and professional qualities are assigned to one of the six key areas, it is important to emphasise that they are interdependent and many are applicable to all key areas. Headteachers will attach relative importance to the actions, and add others, as they define the strategic and operational priorities within their own diverse contexts.

Effective headteachers are responsive to the context of the school and maintain an overview that integrates their work into a coherent whole.

## Shaping the Future

Critical to the role of headship is working with the Board of Governors and others to create a shared vision and strategic plan which inspires and motivates pupils, staff and all other members of the school community. This vision should express core educational values and moral purpose, be inclusive of stakeholders' values and beliefs and be informed by the most innovative thinking and practice on schooling and learning. The strategic planning process is critical to sustaining school improvement and ensuring that the school moves forward for the benefit of its pupils.

### Knowledge

*Knows about:*

- Local, regional, national and global trends
- Ways to build, communicate and implement a shared vision
- Strategic planning processes
- Strategies for communication both within and beyond the school
- New technologies, their use and impact
- Leading change, creativity and innovation

### Professional Qualities

*Is committed to:*

- A collaborative school vision of excellence and equity that sets high standards for every pupil
- The setting and achieving of ambitious, challenging goals and targets
- The use of appropriate new technologies in enhancing learning within and beyond the school
- Inclusion and the ability and right of all to be the best they can be

*Is able to:*

- Think strategically, build and communicate a coherent vision in a range of compelling ways
- Inspire, challenge, motivate and empower others to carry the vision forward
- Model the values and vision of the school

### Actions

- Ensures the vision for the school is clearly articulated, shared, understood and acted upon effectively by all
- Works within the school community to translate the vision into agreed objectives and operational plans which will promote and sustain school improvement
- Demonstrates the vision and values in everyday work and practice
- Motivates and works with others to create a shared culture and positive climate
- Ensures creativity, innovation and the use of appropriate new technologies to achieve excellence
- Ensures that strategic planning takes account of the diversity, values and experience of the school and community at large

## Leading Learning & Teaching

Headteachers have a central responsibility for raising the quality of learning and teaching and for pupils' achievement. This implies setting high expectations and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of learning outcomes. A successful learning culture will enable pupils to become effective, enthusiastic, independent learners, committed to life-long learning.

### Knowledge

*Knows about:*

- Strategies for raising achievement and achieving excellence
- The development of a personalised learning culture within the school
- Models of learning and teaching
- The use of new and emerging technologies to support teaching and learning (within and beyond the school)
- Principles of effective teaching and assessment for learning
- Models of behaviour and attendance management
- Strategies for ensuring inclusion, diversity and access
- Curriculum design and management
- Tools for data collection and analysis
- Using ETI inspection and research evidence to inform teaching and learning
- Monitoring and evaluating performance
- School self evaluation
- Strategies for developing effective teachers

### Professional Qualities

*Is committed to:*

- The raising of standards for all in the pursuit of excellence
- The continuing learning of all members of the school community
- The entitlement of all pupils to effective teaching and learning
- Choice and flexibility in learning to meet the personalised learning needs of every child

*Is able to:*

- Demonstrate personal enthusiasm for and commitment to the learning process
- Demonstrate the principles and practice of effective teaching and learning
- Access, analyse and interpret information
- Initiate and support research and debate about effective learning and teaching and develop relevant strategies for performance improvement
- Acknowledge excellence and challenge poor performance across the school
- Promotes, facilitates and manages the school's capacity to develop and deliver appropriate curricular experience for all of its pupils

### Actions

- Ensures a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on pupils' achievement, using data and benchmarks to monitor progress in every child's learning
- Ensures that learning is at the centre of strategic planning and resource management
- Establishes creative, responsive and effective approaches to learning and teaching
- Ensures a culture and ethos of challenge and support where all pupils can achieve success and become engaged in their own learning
- Demonstrates and articulates high expectations and sets challenging targets for the whole school community
- Implements strategies which secure high standards of behaviour and attendance
- Determines, organises and implements a diverse, flexible curriculum and implements an effective assessment framework
- Takes a strategic role in the development of new and emerging technologies to enhance and extend the learning experience of pupils
- Monitors, evaluates and reviews classroom practice and promotes improvement strategies
- Challenges underperformance at all levels and ensures effective corrective action and follow-up

## Developing Self and Working with Others

Effective relationships and communication are important in headship as headteachers work with and through others. Effective headteachers manage themselves and their relationships well. Headship is about building a professional learning community which enables others to achieve. Through the management of performance and effective continuing professional development, the headteacher supports all staff to achieve high standards. To equip themselves with the capacity to deal with the complexity of the role and the range of leadership skills and actions required of them, headteachers should be committed to their own continuing professional development.

### Knowledge

*Knows about:*

- The significance of interpersonal relationships, adult learning and models of continuing professional development (CPD)
- Strategies to promote individual and team development
- Building and sustaining a learning community
- The relationship between the management of performance, CPD and sustained school improvement
- The impact of change on organisations and individuals

### Professional Qualities

*Is committed to:*

- Effective working relationships
- Shared leadership
- Effective team working
- Continuing professional development for self and all others within the school

*Is able to:*

- Foster an open, fair, equitable culture and manage conflict
- Develop, empower and sustain individuals and teams
- Collaborate and network with others within and beyond the school
- Challenge, influence and motivate others to attain high goals
- Give and receive effective feedback and act to improve personal performance
- Accept support from others including colleagues, governors and the employing body

### Actions

- Treats people fairly, equitably and with dignity and respect to create and maintain a positive school culture
- Builds a collaborative learning culture within the school and actively engages with other schools to build effective learning communities
- Develops and maintains effective strategies and procedures for staff induction, professional development and performance review
- Ensures effective planning, allocation, support and evaluation of work undertaken by teams and individuals, ensuring clear delegation of tasks and devolution of responsibilities
- Acknowledges the responsibilities and celebrates the achievements of individuals and teams
- Develops and maintains a culture of high expectations for self and for others and takes appropriate action when performance is unsatisfactory
- Regularly reviews own practice, sets personal targets and takes responsibility for own personal development
- Manages own workload and that of others to allow an appropriate work/life balance



## Managing the Organisation

Headteachers need to provide effective organisation and management of the school and seek ways of improving organisational structures and functions based on rigorous self-evaluation. Headteachers should ensure that the school and the people and resources within it are organised and managed to provide an efficient, effective and safe learning environment. These management responsibilities imply the re-examination of the roles and responsibilities of those adults working in the school to build capacity across the workforce and ensure resources are deployed to achieve value for money. Headteachers should also seek to build successful organisations through effective collaborations with others.

### Knowledge

*Knows about:*

- Models of organisations and principles of organisational development
- Principles and models of self-evaluation
- Principles and practice of earned autonomy
- Principles and strategies of school improvement
- Project management for planning and implementing change
- Policy creation, through consultation and review
- Informed decision-making
- Strategic financial planning, budgetary management and principles of best value
- Management of performance to include the Performance Review and Staff Development Scheme
- Issues relating to the diverse use of school facilities
- Legal issues relating to managing a school
- The use of new and emerging technologies to enhance organisational effectiveness

### Professional Qualities

*Is committed to:*

- Distributed leadership and management
- The equitable management of staff and resources
- The sustaining of personal motivation and that of all staff
- The developing and sustaining of a safe, secure and healthy school environment
- Collaborating with others in order to strengthen the school's organisational capacity and contribute to the development of capacity in other schools

*Is able to:*

- Establish and sustain appropriate structures and systems
- Manage the school efficiently and effectively on a day-to-day basis
- Delegate management tasks and monitor their implementation
- Prioritise, plan and organise themselves and others
- Make professional, managerial and organisational decisions based on informed judgements
- Think creatively to anticipate and solve problems

### Actions

- Creates an organisational structure which reflects the school's values, and enables the management systems, structures and processes to work effectively in line with legal requirements
- Produces and implements clear, evidence-based improvement plans and policies for the development of the school and its facilities
- Ensures that, within an autonomous culture, policies and practices take account of national, regional and local circumstances, policies and initiatives
- Manages the school's financial and human resources effectively and efficiently to achieve the school's educational goals and priorities
- Recruits, retains and deploys staff appropriately and manages their workload to achieve the vision and goals of the school
- Implements processes for the effective management of performance for all staff
- Manages and organises the school environment efficiently and effectively to ensure that it meets the needs of the curriculum and health and safety regulations
- Ensures that the range, quality and use of all available resources is monitored, evaluated and reviewed to improve the quality of education for all pupils and provide value for money
- Uses and integrates a range of technologies effectively and efficiently to manage the school

## Securing Accountability

With values at the heart of their leadership, headteachers have a responsibility to the whole school community. In carrying out this responsibility, headteachers are accountable to a wide range of groups, particularly pupils, parents, carers, governors and the employing body. They are accountable for ensuring that pupils enjoy and benefit from a high quality education, for promoting collective responsibility within the whole school community and for contributing to the education service more widely. Headteachers are legally and contractually accountable to the Board of Governors for the school, its environment and all its work.

### Knowledge

*Knows about:*

- Statutory educational frameworks, including governance
- Public services policy and accountability frameworks, including self-evaluation and multi-agency working
- The contribution that education makes to developing, promoting and sustaining a fair and equitable society
- The use of a range of evidence, including performance data, to support, monitor, evaluate and improve aspects of school life, including challenging poor performance
- The contribution that evidence from ETI inspection and research can make to school development
- The principles and practice of quality assurance systems, including school review, self-evaluation and the management of performance
- Stakeholder and community engagement in, and accountability for, the success and celebration of the school's performance

### Professional Qualities

*Is committed to:*

- Principles and practice of school self-evaluation
- The school working effectively and efficiently towards the academic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development of all its pupils
- Individual, team and whole-school accountability for pupil learning outcomes

*Is able to:*

- Demonstrate political insight and anticipate trends
- Engage the school community in the systematic and rigorous self-evaluation of the work of the school
- Collect and use a rich set of data to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school
- Combine the outcomes of regular school self-review with ETI inspection evidence and other external evaluations in order to develop the school

### Actions

- Fulfils commitments arising from contractual accountability to the Board of Governors
- Develops a school ethos which enables everyone to work collaboratively, share knowledge and understanding, celebrate success and accept responsibility for outcomes
- Ensures individual staff accountabilities are clearly defined, understood and agreed and are subject to rigorous review and evaluation
- Works with the Board of Governors (providing information, objective advice and support) to enable it to meet its responsibilities
- Develops and presents a coherent, understandable and accurate account of the school's performance to a range of audiences including governors, parents and carers
- Reflects on personal contribution to school achievements and takes account of feedback from others

## Strengthening Community

Schools exist in a distinctive social context, which has a direct impact on what happens inside the school. School leadership should commit to engaging with the internal and external school community to secure equity and entitlement.

Headteachers should collaborate with other schools in order to share expertise and bring positive benefits to their own and other schools. They should work collaboratively at both strategic and operational levels with parents and carers and across multiple agencies for the well-being of all children. Headteachers share responsibility for leadership of the wider educational system and should be aware that school improvement and community development are interdependent. Young people should be both well equipped with qualifications and be prepared adequately to take their place as active citizens contributing to the social, economic, environmental and moral health of the NI community.

### Knowledge

*Knows about:*

- ❑ Current issues and future trends that impact on the school community
- ❑ The rich and diverse resources within local communities – both human and physical
- ❑ The wider curriculum beyond school and the opportunities it provides for pupils and the school community
- ❑ Models of school, home, community and business partnerships
- ❑ The work of other agencies and opportunities for collaboration
- ❑ Strategies which encourage parents and carers to support their children's learning
- ❑ The strengths, capabilities and objectives of other schools

### Professional Qualities

*Is committed to:*

- ❑ Effective team work within the school and with external partners
- ❑ Work with other agencies for the well-being of all pupils and their families
- ❑ Involvement of parents and the community in supporting the learning of children and in defining and realising the school vision
- ❑ Collaboration and networking with other schools to improve outcomes

*Is able to:*

- ❑ Recognise and take account of the richness and diversity of the school's communities
- ❑ Engage in a dialogue which builds partnerships and community consensus on values, beliefs and shared responsibilities
- ❑ Listen to, reflect and act on community feedback
- ❑ Build and maintain effective relationships with parents, carers, partners and the community, that enhance the education of all pupils

### Actions

- ❑ Builds a school culture and curriculum which takes account of the richness and diversity of the school's communities
- ❑ Promotes positive strategies for challenging prejudice and dealing with harassment, fostering respect for diversity and encouraging understanding across communities
- ❑ Ensures learning experiences for pupils are linked into and integrated with the wider community
- ❑ Ensures a range of community-based learning experiences
- ❑ Collaborates with other agencies including other providers, the business and industrial world and independent careers services in providing for the academic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural well-being of pupils and their families
- ❑ Promotes an effective partnership with parents and carers to support and improve pupils' achievement and personal development
- ❑ Seeks opportunities to invite parents and carers, community figures, businesses or other organisations into the school to enhance and enrich the school and its value to the wider community
- ❑ Contributes to the development of the education community by, for example, sharing effective practice, working in partnership with other schools and promoting initiatives
- ❑ Co-operates and works with relevant agencies to ensure that children are protected

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