



Teachers
Registration Board
OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Code of Conduct

FEBRUARY 2024



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Foreword

The Teachers Registration and Standards Act 2004 (the Act) was amended in 2021, allowing the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia (the Board) to “publish or adopt codes of conduct and professional standards (or both)” (Part 6A, section 31B).

Every teacher’s professional and personal conduct impacts on the standing of the entire profession. In taking on the responsibilities of a teacher, including providing for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, teachers - like other professions of public trust - are held to a high level of accountability. This Code of Conduct (the Code) has been developed to recognise the important role that teachers play in the safety and development of children and young people.

The development of this Code has considered international best-practice frameworks, recommendations from federal committees, and a review of analogous national and international codes used by teacher regulatory authorities. A significant period of consultation, which invited the contributions of teachers, school leaders, employers, unions, teacher organisations, and community and family members and organisations has helped to inform the content of the Code.

The Code reinforces the duties and expectations of both teachers and the Board and describes the expectations of professional conduct of teachers in their interactions with learners, families and colleagues. It recognises that there are high community expectations of teachers. Teacher conduct can come under scrutiny by the community at any time, and the Code seeks to guide teachers, regardless of their context, to enable them to safeguard their personal and professional integrity and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people under their stewardship.





Introduction

The teaching profession is one that is held in high regard, and on which there are substantial community expectations. The Code has been established to help meet these expectations, and serves as an overarching set of guidelines, ensuring that teachers consistently uphold a professional standard and can take pride in their profession.

The Board maintains a teacher registration system for teachers working with children and young people from birth to the end of formal schooling. The Code supports the work of the Board by making transparent the behaviour expected of teachers in South Australia. This is to assist teachers, the community and the Board in ensuring these expectations are met, thereby ensuring that high standards of professional conduct are maintained in the profession. This, in turn, safeguards the public interest by protecting not only children and young people, and ultimately, has the effect of promoting and maintaining public confidence in the teaching profession.

Teachers will bring their own values, experiences, and beliefs to the profession and sites will operate within an ethos particular to that context. However, the

Code outlines conduct that is expected of all teachers, to ensure the welfare and best interests of children and young people and the reputation of the profession. It reiterates obligations contained within the Teachers Registration and Standards Act 2004 (the Act), and national guidelines and standards including the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The Code represents what is everyday practice for most teachers. While it does not, and cannot, address every individual event, or context, it provides guidance about what is expected of the profession, and provides guidance for teachers regardless of their specific work setting.

Glossary

AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.
APST	Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
Colleague	Teachers colleagues include other teachers, employers, school leadership, SSOs, ancillary health care providers such as speech therapists or social workers, or any profession a teacher interacts with as part of their work.
Cultural Safety	The ability to understand, communicate effectively and sensitively interact with students, families, communities and staff in a way that is sensitive to cultural considerations.
ECA	Early Childhood Australia.
Family	Anyone who cares for children and young people in home-based settings, including parents, grand-parents, foster-parents, and other carers.
Fit and Proper	Fitness to teach means the character, reputation and conduct of a person are such that the person should be entrusted with the care of children and permitted to teach in a school, preschool or kindergarten. The Board must be satisfied, amongst other things, that a teacher is competent, knowledgeable, and of good character.
ITE	Initial Teacher Education. Higher education providers deliver accredited ITE programs to pre-service teachers.
Learner	Anyone who attends a site to receive education, in particular children and young people.
PST	Pre-service teacher. Someone who is completing an ITE course with the aim of becoming a registered teacher.
SAT	Special Authority to Teach. The Teachers Registration Board may, on application by a person who is not a registered teacher, in its discretion, grant the applicant a special authority to teach for a period and subject to conditions specified by the Board. Holders of SATs are approved to teach in particular locations, to teach particular subject specialisations, or to allow them to teach while they are completing an ITE qualification. Holders of SATs are considered in the same way as registered teachers in the Code.
Site	Anywhere that teaching occurs (face to face or online), including long day care centres, kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools.
Teacher	Any individual who holds registration with the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia.
The Code	The Teachers Registration Board of South Australia Code of Conduct.
The Board	The Teachers Registration Board of South Australia.

Purpose of the Code

The Code has been designed to be practical, transparent, and achievable.

For teachers the Code:

- represents conduct expected of those in the profession;
- allows them to feel proud of the profession that they represent, and which represents them;
- reflects the high standing held by teachers in the community;
- provides a consistent, transparent, profession-wide tool to reflect on circumstances faced by members of the profession, and to assist in their resolution;
- represents a career-long resource as they move between employers;
- provides a tool through which they can protect their professional reputations; and
- allows them to understand the expectations of both the community and the Board.

For the community, including families, the Code:

- illustrates the consistent standards expected of teachers regardless of their employer; and
- provides assurance as to the standards to which those caring for children and young people are held.

For the Board, the Code:

- communicates clearly the conduct expected of all teachers; and
- provides a tool by which issues related to conduct can be evaluated.

How teachers can use the Code

The Code has been written to reiterate the requirements of teacher registration, and illustrate the hallmarks or the distinctive features of the profession that teachers recognise and value in each other.

It includes some of the fundamental components of the teaching profession, as well as some more complex ideas. The Code is not a prescriptive list and is not designed to cover every situation or scenario a teacher may experience, but allows those using it to reflect on behaviour and conduct, and their own judgement and actions. Teachers are expected to apply their own professional judgement in applying the principles and pillars of the Code to their individual teaching contexts. The Code applies to all those who hold teacher registration,

and to those unregistered persons holding a Special Authority to Teach (SAT) in South Australia. It can also be used as a guiding tool for pre-service teachers (PSTs), who are completing a university degree, to assist them in understanding the expectations of the profession they are preparing to enter.

Teachers, particularly early career teachers, are encouraged to seek advice from mentors, or site leadership, should they have questions regarding a particular situation that relates to them.

How the Board can use the Code

The Code illustrates the Board and community's expectations of what constitutes professional conduct within the teaching profession. A departure from the Code is one of a number of grounds on which the Board may conclude that there is proper cause for regulatory action against a teacher. A breach of the Code may also call into question a teacher's fitness and propriety to be entrusted with the education and care of children.

When a notification or report is received by the Board alleging that there is proper cause for disciplinary action against a teacher, it is considered against all available evidence to determine what action, if any, the Board will take to safeguard the public interest. Matters taken into consideration in that endeavour include: the risk to young people, the veracity and severity of the allegation, the fitness and propriety of the teacher and if the teacher has had previous allegations reported to the Board. Each notification or report is assessed on its merits and individual circumstances by the Registrar who may determine to:

- take no action and close the matter;
- issue a letter of advice reminding the teacher of their professional standards obligations;
- issue a letter of warning which is reported to the Board;
- recommend agreed conditions be imposed on the teacher's registration;

- lay a complaint to initiate a Disciplinary Inquiry alleging that there is proper cause for disciplinary action against the teacher;
- refer a new or renewing applicant to an Admissions Hearing to determine if the person is fit and proper to be a registered teacher.

If the Board determines at a Disciplinary Inquiry that there is proper cause for disciplinary action against a teacher, sanctions available to the Board include:

- issuing a reprimand;
- imposing a fine;
- imposing conditions and/or suspending or cancelling the teacher's registration; and
- disqualifying the teacher from being registered as a teacher.

While the conduct described herein is applicable to all registered teachers and holders of a SAT it should be noted context is important. Some elements of conduct may be magnified for those working in small communities, particularly in rural or remote areas. Teachers may be working at sites attended by their own children or family members. The Code should be read considering factors such as these, as context will impact on the choices a teacher makes regarding their conduct. Depending on the details of an allegation the Board may receive, context is one of the factors that may be considered when deciding on any potential action.

The Teachers Registration Board Code of Ethics

The elements of conduct described in the Code are underpinned by the three values established in the Board's Code of Ethics: respect **R**, integrity **I**, and responsibility **R**. These ethical values are identified in the relevant sections of the Code.

Employer Codes

Almost all teachers will have an employer endorsed code of conduct related to their employment. These are essential documents that relate to a teacher's employment at a site, school or within a sector, and set out the requirements of their contract of employment. These codes will vary from employer to employer and relate to the expectations of that specific context. Failure to meet the requirements of an employer code may result in a teacher's employment being terminated. Depending on the circumstances, this may or may not need to be reported to the Board (see Sections 24 and 37 of the Act). It is possible that a teacher may, depending on the circumstances, breach their employer's code and lose their employment, but still hold teacher registration.

The Board Code relates to the act of holding registration, and the expectations of the community and the Board. It describes the conduct expected of all teachers regardless of where they work. It should be a constant through a teacher's career as they move between employers. It does not represent a single reference source for determining employment disputes (see figure 1).

Other Guidelines and Codes

Examples of other guidelines that sit under, or supplement this Code include the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics, and the Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people (the Protective Practices Guidelines). The Protective Practices Guidelines is a document unique to the South Australian context. It has been developed by representative employer groups – the Department for Education, the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia, and Catholic Education South Australia. It has also been endorsed as an approved guideline by the Board. The Protective Practices Guidelines cover all people working in education settings, not just teachers, and provide appropriate situational advice that should be read by teachers in conjunction with the Code (see figure 1). See the end of this document for a list of resources that may help put the Code into a broader context.

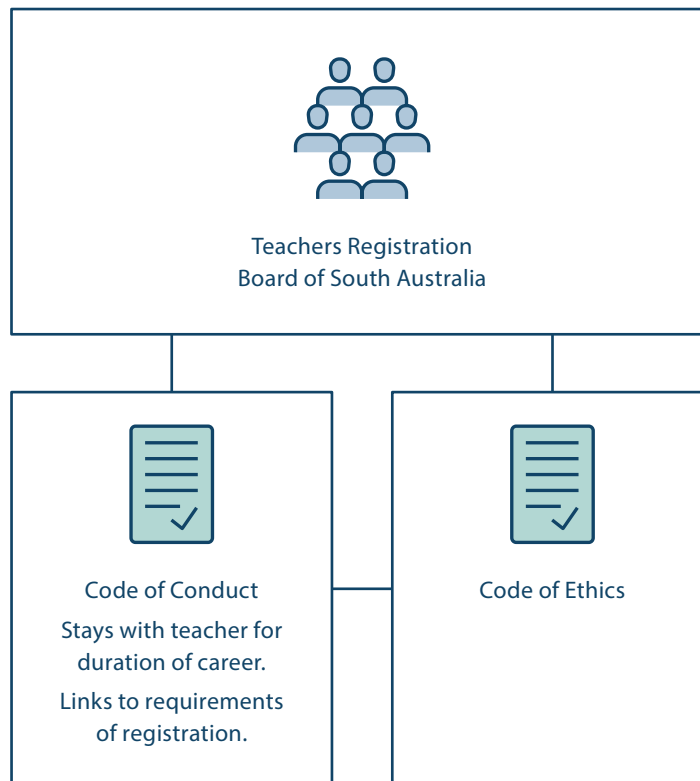
The Board may publish or adopt further guidelines to provide detailed guidance regarding a principle or conduct as set out in the Code. If this were to occur, the Board commits to doing so in consultation with the teaching profession and stakeholders.

Figure 1

Conduct Framework

This structure is in place to uphold the professional standards of teaching, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

STATE LEVEL



SITE LEVEL



Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

The Code supports the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), in particular 7.1 “Meet professional ethics and responsibilities”. As such it should contribute to Initial Teacher Education programs, and be used by registered teachers as they progress from provisional registration, and throughout their teaching career.

Implementation and Review

The Code was introduced by the Board in 2023. It will undergo regular cycles of review, to ensure that it is in-step with expectations of the profession and the community, and adapts to changes in Australian society and advances in technology.

A note about language

The Board registers teachers working in early childhood, primary, and secondary settings. To reflect the diversity of teaching, the Code refers to learners, sites, and families. Learners reflects all those under the care of teachers, from birth to senior secondary learners. Sites reflect places where teachers work, including long day care centres, kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools, including special focus and outdoor settings. It is recognised that care is provided to children and young people by a variety of adults in contemporary Australian society. The term ‘family’ refers to parents, guardians, carers, grandparents, or any individual who cares for a learner at home.

The use of the term teacher in this document refers to any individual who is registered with the Board regardless of their employment, including those working outside of education (including holders of SATs, who are considered in the same way as registered teachers for the purpose of the Code). See page 8 for a full glossary of terms.





Pillar 1

Teachers, Learners and Families

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is one of the primary roles of the teacher. Teachers take responsibility for providing safe learning environments that support individual learner's intellectual, social, and cultural needs. Learning environments are complex and often teachers need to be aware, and respond to, a diverse range of learner needs and backgrounds.

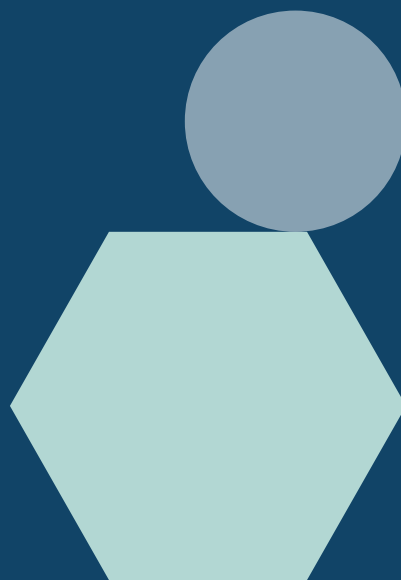
Teacher conduct supports this aim through:

- a) Respecting the diversity of their learning communities, including families, by promoting an inclusive learning environment, including:
- R I R**
- Responding to the impact on learners' wellbeing because of exposure to humiliation, intolerance or prejudice.
 - Using respectful and non-judgmental language when interacting with learners, colleagues, and family members.
- b) Approaching all learners and their families with integrity and opportunity, without favour or bias.
- R I R**
- c) Creating environments where learners' privacy is respected, with personal discussions or information not disclosed unless the learner's safety is in jeopardy, is required by law, or the learner has given permission.
- R I R**
- d) Taking the cultural safety of all in their communities into consideration.
- R I R**

- R** Respect
I Integrity
R Responsibility



Pillar 2
Teachers
in the
Community



Being a member of the teaching profession is a role that holds community expectations, including about how teachers will conduct themselves while in their community. There is no single definition of community, and everyone is a member of multiple communities. However, it is reasonable to expect that teachers may be identified as members of the profession in a number of contexts outside of their place of employment, similar to other professions such as doctors or accountants.

The Board recognises that teachers working in regional areas or remote locations, in particular, may encounter situations where their social group includes learners' families. Teachers in any location may teach at a school attended by their own children, meaning that their children's friends are their learners and this will also impact on how they interact with their communities.

Being a visible participant in their communities can be a complex and fluid consideration for teachers. This does not mean that teachers cannot have personal lives or opinions, and they are not expected to be infallible. This section of the Code should be read within the context in which a teacher finds themselves, e.g. being on site versus participating in personal activities. This section of the Code provides not only expectations for all contexts, but also offers advice to teachers to help them make appropriate decisions to protect their own professional reputations.

On site

- a) Behaving in a manner that reflects their professional role in the learner's life, rather than as a friend or guardian.

I R

- b) Respecting the power-imbalance that exists between teacher and learner, maintaining professional relationships and boundaries. Sexual contact between a teacher and a learner is never acceptable.

R I R

It should be noted that this power-imbalance may continue to exist after a learner has left a site. This imbalance must be respected, and teachers be aware that this may be part of any deliberations the Board may make on receipt of a notification.

- c) Being respectful of the cultural and social backgrounds of families and tailoring communication in a way that facilitates their involvement in a learner's education.

R R

In public, including media platforms

Private lives are increasingly visible in public spaces, including online. It is recognised that online tools can be a powerful educational resource when used appropriately. Some social media platforms have professional outcomes such as professional profiles on LinkedIn or sites that allow teachers to share resources. While using such platforms teachers should be aware of how they represent the profession.

Most individuals will have personal social media accounts, including but not limited to Facebook, or Instagram. Others may choose to participate in other media opportunities, for example quiz-shows or reality TV. In these contexts teachers should consider how this may reflect on them as a professional.

When presenting themselves in public teachers must:

- d) Represent the profession, and their employer, respectfully.
R I R
- e) Respect others' privacy, not posting the image or name of a learner, their family, or a colleague on an accessible platform without the appropriate permissions.
R I R

- R Respect
- I Integrity
- R Responsibility

To assist with protecting their own professional integrity teachers should consider the following:

- Carry out personal online activity anonymously, judiciously, and/or using strong settings to protect their own privacy. Teachers must be aware that regardless of steps taken to protect their privacy, online material can be found by anyone in the community. Teachers should consider the potential consequences of content that may reflect poorly on their registration.
I R
- Report online activity that may cause their reputation to be at risk.
I R
- Recognise that personal behaviour, either online or in public, may be considered by the wider community as a reflection on the teaching profession.
I R
- Use judgement about where it may not be appropriate to share social spaces with learners and their families, and choose to absent themselves from these spaces.
I R





Pillar 3

Teachers and their Colleagues

Teachers carry out different roles in educational contexts, from early career teachers to leadership roles. Some teachers do not work at educational sites at all. Regardless of their place of employment teachers must consistently model professional conduct to contribute to building trust and confidence in themselves as individual practitioners, and collaborative partnerships with the learning community.

Regardless of their place of employment teachers are part of a group of professionals and professional conduct includes treating colleagues as partners in the profession, from top down and from bottom up, including:

a) Recognising that bullying and harassment can take a variety of forms, and represents unprofessional conduct.

R **I** **R**

b) Discussing professional differences collaboratively, and giving and receiving feedback constructively, including engaging openly in conflict resolution with colleagues and leadership when necessary.

R **I** **R**

c) Working collaboratively to support colleagues, especially early career teachers.

R **I** **R**

d) Recognising that teachers are viewed as a professional group in the wider community, and that the conduct of individuals can impact on the profession as a whole.

I **R**

R Respect
I Integrity
R Responsibility



Pillar 4

Regulatory and Reporting Obligations of the Teacher

There are a number of regulatory and reporting requirements that must be met by teachers, including mandatory notification obligations, holding a current Working with Children Check, and regulatory requirements that relate to teacher registration. These requirements ensure that both the Board and the profession can be assured that teachers meet the legal requirements of registration.

Although these obligations are administrative processes relating to registration, it is important that teachers understand that failure to carry out what may seem to be an administrative process may contribute to unprofessional conduct. These requirements include:

- a) Responding to requests for information from the Registrar or the Board.
 - I** **R**
- b) Being aware that young people can be victims of psychological, physical or sexual abuse, including grooming. These actions are unacceptable and can happen inside or outside of the school community. Teachers have the responsibility to be mindful of these unacceptable possibilities, and understand and comply with all mandatory notification requirements.
 - R** **I** **R**
- c) Complying with state or federal laws, including child safety, work health and safety, and professional practice requirements.
 - I** **R**
- d) Ensuring all requirements for registration, including demonstrating professional learning and professional practice have been met.
 - I** **R**
- e) Taking responsibility for the teaching activities that take place in their learning environment, including understanding and adhering to the APST.
 - I** **R**
- f) Addressing the physical, emotional, and psychological requirements of being a teacher, in order to care for both their own wellbeing and that of their learners by acknowledging illness, disability, incapacity and risk-associated activity outcomes can apply to anyone.
 - I** **R**

- R** Respect
- I** Integrity
- R** Responsibility

Resources

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
www.aitsl.edu.au/standards

Child Safe Organisation, National Principles
childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles

Protective practices for staff in their
interactions with children and young people
www.education.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/260477/protective-practices-staff-interactions-children-young-people.pdf

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration
www.education.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration

The Royal Commission into Institution
Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Teachers Registration Board Code of Ethics
www.trb.sa.edu.au/Professional-Conduct/professional-standards/code-of-ethics





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