



# ROY BLATCHFORD **THE** TEACHERS' STANDARDS **IN THE** CLASSROOM THIRD EDITION



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# STANDARDS

# IN THE CLASSROOM

# THIRD EDITION

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Roy Blatchford CBE** is Founding Director of the National Education Trust in the UK, an independent foundation which leads excellent practice and innovation in education.

Previously he served as one of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools (HMI) in England, with national responsibilities for school improvement and for the inspection of outstanding schools. Roy has extensive experience of writing inspection frameworks, nationally and internationally, and has inspected and reviewed over 1000 schools and colleges in Europe, USA, Middle East and India.

Roy was Principal of Walton High and Walton Learning Centre in Milton Keynes, opened in September 1999 and described by the inspectorate as 'a first class centre of learning - innovative and inspiring'. He was Founding Director (1996-1998) of Reading Is Fundamental, UK, a non-profit organisation developing children's reading and family literacy. From 1986-1996 he was headteacher of an Oxfordshire comprehensive school serving 1200+ 11-19 year old students. He spent his early teaching career in inner-London schools, youth and adult services.

For 30 years Roy has been an international trainer and speaker on English and literacy, school improvement, leadership and innovation. He was Visiting Professor in English, Rollins College, Florida. He has served as an adviser to various UK governments, including Deputy Chair of the DfE Teachers' Standards Review (2012) and of the Headteachers' Standards Review (2014).

Roy has worked with HM Prison Service, the NHS and the Arts Council in a number of voluntary capacities, and is a Visiting Fellow at Oxford Brookes University. He is co-founder of the Mumbai-based education foundation Adhyayan.

## About the author

He is the author/editor of over 150 books. Recent titles include *Sparkling Classrooms*, *The Restless School*, *A Guide to the Headteachers' Standards*, *The Journey to Excellence*. His BBC Radio programme *Government versus the Teachers*, commissioned to mark the 70th anniversary of the 1944 Education Act, was broadcast to acclaim in March 2014.

He was appointed **CBE** for services to education in the 2016 New Year Honours.

# PREFACE

## 10,000 HOURS – WHAT MAKES A GREAT TEACHER?

*Thomas More:* Why not be a teacher? You'd be a fine teacher, perhaps a great one.

*Richard Rich:* If I was, who would know it?

*Thomas More:* You, your pupils, your friends, God. Not a bad public, that.

*(A Man for All Seasons)*

What makes anyone accomplished at anything? Influential psychologist Anders Ericsson and polemicist Malcolm Gladwell tell us that 10,000 hours of *purposeful practice* are necessary to create real proficiency – and maybe the platform for stand-out excellence.

Think of The Silver Beatles playing the clubs of Hamburg; Lewis Hamilton, aged six, driving go-karts; the young Venus Williams on Palm Beach tennis courts; Bill Gates or Steve Jobs in their formative 'garage years' – each driven by different motives, investing hours and hours to perfect what later became their greatness.

Take a regular classroom teacher, teaching 1,000 lessons a year. That's 10,000 in a decade. At a careful estimate, over several decades I have taught about 30,000 sessions to learners of all ages. And in various guises, I have been an 'observer' in just on 10,000 classrooms during the past fifteen years.

What do I experience when I am in the presence of an accomplished teacher, irrespective of context and location: from Newcastle to New York, Geneva to Pune, Riyadh to Kuala Belait? Reflecting on vivid examples, I identify ten prevalent features in the cocktail, variously distilled.

1. **Knowledge.** No teacher can survive without the fount of knowledge which lies at the core of their everyday practice. Good teachers have an innate generosity to want to share what they know. For the skilled early years' practitioner that knowledge lies in a deep understanding of how young children grow, and how best to intervene or draw back when children are developing their independent learning habits. For the teacher of an IB French class studying Albert Camus, it is the teacher's facility to cross-reference Sartre, Gide or Heidegger to open up an appreciation of existentialism. *The skilled teacher has knowledge effortlessly rising out of them like sap from a tree – and keeps practising.*
2. **Craft.** In many walks of life a 'craftsman' is revered for her or his well-honed skills, whether cooking, sculpting or operating medically. The craft of the classroom involves its own special blend: skilled configuration of the classroom and management of pupils, time creatively orchestrated, 'less is more' lesson planning, judicious harnessing of resources, intelligent questioning and thoughtful feedback, that balance of critique and worthy praise, wise promotion of mastery, scholarship and enquiry. *The reflective practitioner commands the classroom, physically and intellectually.*
3. **Passion.** A love of being in a classroom with pupils is a prerequisite for accomplished teachers, joyfully sharing those personal and professional passions which first drew them to work in schools. To watch an enthusiastic, knowledgeable teacher embed through song and repetition an understanding of key letters and sounds in a Year 1 class is to witness enviable practice. Equally impressive is the Year 9 PE teacher, a skilled sportswoman in her own right, enabling 'sport for all and excellence for some' in a lesson on badminton forehand and backhand serves. *The passion for excellence, rooted in the teacher's own achievements, is palpable and often thrilling.*
4. **Values.** In a teacher's every utterance and body language, their values about education and schooling shine through. Values reflect our sense of right and wrong and what we believe to be important to us in life. Join a teacher who is reading *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* with their Year 6 class; see how adroitly they field the most challenging of questions and how they support those pupils struggling emotionally with the novel's content. Or be party to an A level history seminar wrestling with the difference between freedom fighters and terrorists, where the teacher harnesses his considerable knowledge of Gandhi, Mandela and Guevara to present objective evidence upon which students can make a judgement. *A teacher's unambiguous set of values, embodying integrity and clear conscience, underpin memorable classroom practice.*
5. **Fun.** Teaching is all about communicating to students that great double act: the fun and fundamentals of learning. Watch a gifted teacher of mathematics – with a basket of home-made, practical resources – play around with prime numbers in a Year 5 class, or that same teacher work with his non-specialist colleagues to enable them



to plan confidently a session for Year 4 pupils on the Fibonacci Sequence: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 . . . Dealing in fun enables students of any age to feel confident about making mistakes, learning from them and achieving that 'aha' moment of breakthrough comprehension. The fundamentals in any subject demand practice, memorisation, repetition. *The fun in learning is about teachers and students sharing humour and wit; fun is equally rooted in risk-taking and digression.*

6. **Creativity.** The imaginative, thinking out-of-the-box spirit lies deep in great teachers' hearts and minds. They positively embrace digression and those unplanned moments of epiphany for their students. Focus on a group of Year 8 students doing a fair test in science, when the teacher comes along and introduces a rogue substance to create intellectual confusion. Listen carefully to an EAL teacher with a group of Year 10 boys newly arrived from Serbia, harnessing Google Translate to explore the language of mathematical shapes. Creativity is an element equally at home in physics, geography or drama. *The creative teacher has a predictable unpredictability about their person.*
7. **Expectations.** Show me a fine teacher who does not have the highest expectations of those they teach, wherever and whomever they are teaching. When record-breakers in any walk of life achieve a new record, their starting point is an unshakeable belief that they *can* do it. The skilled teacher knows authoritatively his pupils and can cajole, enthuse, provoke, extend as she judges: we might employ the term 'differentiation' here. Observe a passionate teacher of English enable every Year 7 student to grasp the metaphors in Ted Hughes's 'The Thought Fox'; see that teacher do the same for every Year 11 student in her class, climbing inside the complex imagery in Sylvia Plath's 'The Bell Jar'. *What teachers expect is what they get in any classroom, in any subject and in any context.*
8. **Empathy.** The ability to 'climb inside the learner's skin' is a hallmark of those teachers who live long in their pupils' memories. Great biology teachers may well have an encyclopaedic knowledge of how an *E. coli* bacterium performs differently from a sub-atomic particle when observed in a laboratory. The GCSE students are perplexed, and remain so even after the second explanation – until the teacher thinks differently and tries a third explanation which approaches the problem from the learner's less experienced viewpoint. Breakthrough in understanding comes. Students of any age testify to the fact that experienced teachers can empathise with the learner's predicament, can 'connect' emotionally with them, can see that grey sometimes has its place alongside black and white. *Empathy is that vital capacity in a teacher to imagine and understand that the learner may well have a different frame of reference.*
9. **Resilience.** Building learners' resilience in a contemporary world of 'snow-plough' learning devices is not to be underestimated: 'What's a cosine?' asks the teacher. 'It's that button on the calculator,' comes the flawless answer. As vital

as leading lessons with fun is the teacher's commitment to lead with intrigue: taking pupils out of their comfort zones, making learning difficult and perplexing as the moment arises. What doesn't kill you intellectually certainly makes you stronger – ask any student of further maths. The wise and practised teacher also recognises that their own trade is a demanding one: knowing how to pace oneself daily, weekly, termly is an art and a science in itself. *Resilience is two track: one for the pupils' stamina in new learning and one for the teachers' self-preservation and ultimate flourishing. Live to teach another day.*

10. **X factor.** The cocktail is more or less prepared but the distillation is incomplete without the X factor. No two teachers are the same – they may embody in many ways the nine aspects outlined above. Yet the unashamed joy of the generous teacher is that their own commanding classroom practice is, in the end, a matter of individual taste, tact and style. Each teacher has their own X factor, their unique ingredient of the pedagogical potion. *Classroom excellence becomes their habit and their 'public' never forget the magic.*

# WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR, HOW IS IT ORGANISED AND HOW CAN IT BE USED?

*The Teachers' Standards in the Classroom* is aimed primarily at those training to teach, in whatever setting. Just as the Standards themselves are addressed to classrooms in primary, special and secondary schools, so is the intent of this book. Whether you are training to teach early years' children, lower secondary pupils or sixth-form students, the book should offer something by way of information, reflection, advice and inspiration.

Equally, it is intended that the content will be relevant to teachers who are already qualified and experienced, and who are seeking to refresh their own professional development in the light of what will for them be newly expressed standards and expectations.

Teaching is quite simply one of the best jobs in the world, for the many, many who enjoy it. For that small minority of teachers - and sadly you meet a few in staffrooms - who do not enjoy their work or have become tired of its challenges, teaching must be a sad existence, for them and, worryingly, for those they teach. It is a profession to be embraced with both hands, positive spirit, good health, a lively mind and an unequivocal commitment to young people.

Who is this book for, how is it organised and how can it be used?

The book follows a straightforward format.

There is an introduction and background section, which gives a context for the Teachers' Standards which first became effective from 1 September 2012. This section concludes with a discussion of the Preamble to the actual Standards, a statement of professional intent and aspiration for all teachers to embrace.

Chapters 1 to 8 consider in turn each of the eight key Standards – Part 1 of the Teachers' Standards document – as set out by the Department for Education (DfE), examining their content and purpose, and how trainee teachers might be expected to demonstrate, with evidence, that they are meeting the Standards. For those in training settings around the country, whether school or higher education based, the text seeks to complement the expert guidance afforded by tutors and their own supporting materials.

Chapter 9 focuses on Part 2 of the Standards, unambiguously titled 'Personal and Professional Conduct', and applicable to all who teach in the nation's schools, whatever their position or length of service within the teaching profession.

Chapter 10 is entitled 'Master Teacher'. Why? In establishing the Teachers' Standards, the DfE invited the group writing the Standards to create a further set of draft criteria describing what might be the qualities and distinguishing features of high performing teachers. This Master Teacher Standard is included here by way of 'extension material' for interested readers and may have particular resonance for experienced teachers within the profession.

Chapter 11 presents important detail from the Ofsted *School Inspection Handbook* (Ofsted, 2014a), and how Ofsted inspectors judge the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. Further, it examines how the Teachers' Standards and the Ofsted criteria compare.

Chapter 12 extends readers' understanding of the evidence which is to be found in the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Schools, highlighting key aspects of less and more effective classroom practices as observed nationally.

Chapter 13 gives trainee and other teachers the opportunity to reflect on their practice in a range of curriculum areas, coming to a view as to whether what they are doing meets, with clear evidence, a number of the Teachers' Standards. A selection of 'best practice' checklists are featured here.

Chapter 14 presents a wider perspective on successful schools. Fulfilled and confident teachers deserve to be well led by those who believe in an aspirational culture and to work in schools which are both restless to improve and consistently outward facing.

And there are four 'Interludes' which punctuate the book. Each of these is presented as a series of questions to ask yourself when entering classrooms across the 3-18 age range in search of good and excellent practice. They are rooted in the author's own

observations of more than 10,000 lessons in schools and settings around the world over the past decade. The more experienced you become in classrooms, the more you will discover that you are able to ask these questions intuitively.

Finally, a few house style points.

- As formally set out by the DfE, each of the Teachers' Standards has its own heading, followed by a number of bulleted subheadings. The bullets, which are an integral part of the Standards, are designed to *amplify the scope of each heading*. For ease of reference in this book, the bullets have been identified by letters, from A to E. Good teaching, by its very nature, is a distinctive cocktail of skills and techniques, so readers will inevitably find some subheadings across the Standards complementing and reinforcing one another.
- To help the reader interrogate the Standards and other parts of the book, analysis and advice are presented under three headings:
  - *Commentary* - offers pointers as to how teachers may interpret the Standards in their everyday practice.
  - *Reflections* - seek to develop the good habits of the 'reflective practitioner'; these could be used as starters for group discussion in a training context.
  - *Evidence* - for the trainee teacher, suggestions about providing evidence against the Standards to a tutor mentor, whether they are visiting the trainee in the classroom or viewing an online portfolio, or during a group session at the training institution.
- The term 'classroom' has been used throughout the book. It is used in the generic sense, to include workshops, laboratories, gymnasias, sports fields and outdoor settings, dance studios, music practice rooms and any space where teachers may find themselves leading young minds.
- The word 'pupils' is taken to include children, learners, students, whatever the reader's preferred term might be, given his or her individual teaching setting.
- When referring to an individual teacher or pupil, licence has sometimes been taken with accompanying singulars and plurals; for example, the grammatically incorrect 'they' is used rather than the potentially clumsy 'he/she'. This goes against my purist instincts, but is a stylistic imperfection which I hope the reader can live with in this context.

Roy Blatchford  
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# INTRODUCTION TO THE TEACHERS' STANDARDS

## Background

September 2012 saw the introduction of new Teachers' Standards which replaced the existing qualified teacher status (QTS) and Core Standards, and the Code of Practice for Registered Teachers in England from the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE). The new Standards set out the minimum requirements for teachers' professional practice and conduct. Teachers' performance is to be assessed against them as part of the appraisal arrangements for schools.

In drawing up the standards during 2011, the Independent Review of Teachers' Standards was given the remit to develop new standards of competence, ethics and behaviour which reflect the trust and professionalism society should expect from its teachers (DfE, 2011a). To that end, the new Standards begin with a Preamble, a founding statement of expectations:

*Teachers make the education of their pupils their first concern, and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct. Teachers act with honesty and integrity, have strong subject knowledge, keep their knowledge and skills as teachers up-to-date and are self-critical, forge positive professional relationships, and work with parents in the best interests of their pupils.*

(DfE, 2012a, p7)



## What happens in classrooms

On a personal note, I have had the great privilege during the past decade to observe over 10,000 classrooms, from Mumbai to New York, Barcelona to Birmingham, Jeddah to Jarrow. At their best, these are the vibrant classrooms which teachers create because they are spending many of their waking hours within them. They are the places where young minds flourish. These sparkling classrooms are places and atmospheres which remain long in the minds and spirits of the learners.

When I joined Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) in 2004, David Bell HMCI advised me to reflect on the wisdom of a previous chief inspector, Martin Roseveare: *You should remember that when you visit a school it is an everyday affair for you, but an unusual and important occasion for the school.* I remind myself of those words every day I sign in to a school's visitors' book.

In the academic year 2013-14 I observed over 700 lessons as part of the National Education Trust's school improvement services ([www.nationaleducationtrust.net](http://www.nationaleducationtrust.net)). Special, primary, secondary, state and independent, home and abroad – schools have welcomed me with warm hospitality and in the spirit of championing what is great, recognising what is good and suggesting a few even-better-ifs.

What did I learn during that year in classrooms?

- That childhood is safe in the nation's primary schools.
- That in socially challenging schools, the teachers have to run just for the pupils to stand still.
- That great lessons are all about richness of task, rooted in teachers' excellent subject knowledge and passion to share that knowledge with students.
- That pupils' prior knowledge of a subject is endlessly surprising.
- That, in the best classrooms, IT is used like a pair of scissors, no more no less.
- That in the best classrooms IT is a useful tool for teaching and learning when used appropriately.
- That skilled early years' practitioners have much to teach everyone else about the power of timely digression and intervention.
- That teachers spend hours marking, but too often pupils don't do justice to that marking.
- That doing more of the same is not going to transform standards of attainment – doing *differently* can.
- That teachers may cry when you tell them they have taught a great lesson.