



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Colin Laughton: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome

**Panel decision and reasons on behalf of the
Secretary of State for Education**

September 2021

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Professional conduct panel decision and recommendations, and decision on behalf of the Secretary of State

Teacher:	Mr Colin Laughton
Teacher ref number:	9538764
Teacher date of birth:	28 October 1971
TRA reference:	19383
Date of determination:	9 September 2021
Former employer:	Hebburn Comprehensive School, Tyne and Wear

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 9 September 2021, remotely, to consider the case of Mr Colin Laughton.

The panel members were Mr Kamal Hanif (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Hilary Jones (lay panellist) and Mr Graham Ralph (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Phil Taylor of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP solicitors.

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Laughton that the allegation(s) be considered without a hearing. Mr Laughton provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer Ms Rebecca Neeson, Mr Laughton, or his representative Mr Richard Matkin of the NASUWT.

The meeting took place in private, save for the announcement of the panel’s decision, which was announced in public and recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of meeting dated 2 September 2021.

It was alleged that Mr Colin Laughton was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst a teacher at the Hebburn Comprehensive School he:

1. Between approximately 1 May 2019 to 8 July 2019:
 - a) Awarded false marks for internally assessed components of one or more pupils' coursework where there was no evidence to justify the marks awarded;
 - b) Submitted false marks for one or more pupils;
 - i. Before the pupil(s) had completed the work; and/or
 - ii. Before he had seen the pupils' work; and/or
 - iii. When the work was not the pupil(s) own work;
 - c) Gave Pupil A 34 marks for her assessment coursework when she:
 - i. Had not completed the assessment;
 - ii. Should have received approximately 14 marks
 - d) Substituted part of Pupil B's controlled assessment coursework to the exam board in place of Pupil A's controlled assessment coursework;
2. By his conduct in one or more of the following paragraphs, he was dishonest:
 - a. Paragraph 1(a);
 - b. Paragraph 1(b);
 - c. Paragraph 1(c);
 - d. Paragraph 1(d).

Mr Laughton has admitted allegations 1 and 2 in their entirety, and has admitted that the facts of these allegations as admitted amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Preliminary applications

There were no preliminary applications.

Summary of evidence

Documents

In advance of the meeting, the panel received a bundle of documents which included:

Section 1: Chronology and List of Key People – pages 1 to 2

Section 2: Notice of Referral, response and Notice of Meeting – pages 3 to 27

Section 3: Statement of Agreed Facts and Presenting Officer Representations – pages 28 to 35

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 36 to 128

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 129 to 144

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the meeting.

Statement of agreed facts

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr Laughton on 1 September 2021.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

The panel carefully considered the case and reached a decision.

In advance of the meeting, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Laughton for the allegations to be considered without a hearing. The panel had the ability to direct that the case be considered at a hearing if required in the interests of justice or in the public interest. The panel did not determine that such a direction was necessary or appropriate in this case.

Mr Laughton was employed at the Hebburn Comprehensive School (the “School”) as Assistant Headteacher and Head of ICT until January 2020.

On 8 July 2019, the examination board Oxford Cambridge and RSA (“OCR”) wrote to the Headteacher of the School in respect of a suspected malpractice regarding examinations and assessments carried out at the School. On 10 July, Mr Laughton admitted switching the work of one candidate for that of another. On 17 July, Mr Laughton provided further details to how he submitted part of Pupil B's controlled assessment in place of Pupil A's in order for Pupil A to achieve a higher mark.

On 18 July 2019, Mr Laughton submitted a statement to OCR in relation to the allegations.

A management interview was held at the School on 6 September 2019. Mr Laughton attended the meeting. Following the meeting, Mr Laughton was suspended from the School pending further investigation.

On 19 November 2019, OCR informed the School of their intention to refer Mr Laughton to the OCR Malpractice Committee for considerations of what sanctions, if any, should be applied. An OCR malpractice meeting was held on 9 January 2020, and the minutes of that meeting were sent to Mr Laughton on 4 February 2020.

In the meantime, Mr Laughton's employment at Hebburn Comprehensive School ceased on 15 January 2020.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you proved, for these reasons:

Whilst a teacher at the Hebburn Comprehensive School you:

1. Between approximately 1 May 2019 to 8 July 2019:

a) Awarded false marks for internally assessed components of one or more pupils coursework where there was no evidence to justify the marks awarded;

This allegation was supported by evidence provided to the panel, notably the Statement of Agreed Facts signed by Mr Laughton on 1 September 2021 in which Mr Laughton clearly and unequivocally admitted awarding marks for work not yet submitted based on previous work and the anticipated quality of future work, which in some cases had not ultimately been submitted.

The panel did not consider there to be any evidence in the bundle which cast doubt on the veracity or reliability of Mr Laughton's admissions. On the balance of probabilities, the panel therefore found this allegation to be proved.

b) Submitted false marks for one or more pupils;

i. Before the pupil(s) had completed the work; and/or

ii. Before you had seen the pupils' work; and/or

iii. When the work was not the pupil(s) own work;

This allegation was supported by evidence provided to the panel, notably the Statement of Agreed Facts signed by Mr Laughton on 1 September 2021.

Records of a management meeting held on 6 September 2019 showed that Mr Laughton specifically admitted awarding a certain number of marks to at least one pupil where there was little or no evidence of relevant work being completed, and that this was done on the basis of work they had previously handed in. Mr Laughton also unequivocally admitted that he was aware of the requirement of the exam board to “only mark work that is in front of you” and which had been completed and submitted by the pupil.

Evidence in the hearing bundle also showed that Mr Laughton had: admitted, in a statement to OCR, substituting the work of one pupil for another; and re-iterated certain of his admissions in representations later made to the TRA.

The panel did not consider there to be any evidence in the bundle which cast doubt on the veracity or reliability of Mr Laughton’s admissions. On the balance of probabilities, the panel therefore found this allegation to be proved.

c) Gave Pupil A 34 marks for her assessment coursework when she:

i. Had not completed the assessment;

ii. Should have received approximately 14 marks

This allegation was supported by evidence provided to the panel, notably the Statement of Agreed Facts signed by Mr Laughton on 1 September 2021. This was also supported by statements later made by Mr Laughton to OCR and the TRA.

The panel did not consider there to be any evidence in the bundle which cast doubt on the veracity or reliability of Mr Laughton’s admissions. On the balance of probabilities, the panel therefore found this allegation to be proved.

d) Substituted part of Pupil B's controlled assessment coursework to the exam board in place of Pupil A's controlled assessment coursework;

This allegation was supported by evidence provided to the panel, notably the Statement of Agreed Facts signed by Mr Laughton on 1 September 2021.

The panel noted that Mr Laughton had admitted, in a statement to OCR, substituting the work of one pupil for another. He had explained that having received notification from OCR that Pupil A’s work was required to be submitted for moderation, he noticed that Pupil A had not completed the relevant coursework, and decided to submit the work of Pupil B instead. In a management interview which took place on 17 July 2019, Mr Laughton had provided context for his decision but stated “there is no one else to blame but me”.

In the panel's view, this was a clear and unequivocal admission, made relatively soon after the events in question. The panel did not consider there to be any evidence in the bundle which cast doubt on the veracity or reliability of Mr Laughton's admissions. The panel also noted that Mr Laughton's statements during investigations by various parties had been consistent.

On the balance of probabilities, the panel therefore found this allegation to be proved.

2. By your conduct in one or more of the following paragraphs, you were dishonest:

a. Paragraph 1(a);

b. Paragraph 1(b);

c. Paragraph 1(c);

d. Paragraph 1(d).

The panel noted that in the signed Statement of Agreed Facts, Mr Laughton had admitted that his conduct as set out in allegations 1a to 1d was dishonest.

The panel carefully considered the relevant test to be applied, as set out in the case of *Ivey v Genting Casinos*.

The panel examined the evidence made available to it, and in particular referred again to specific extracts from the signed Statement of Agreed Facts in which Mr Laughton admitted being aware of the standards and process expected of him, and that he had nevertheless awarded false marks and substituted one pupil's work for another, as found proven at allegations 1a to 1d.

The panel carefully examined the question of dishonesty in relation to Mr Laughton as a professional. The panel bore in mind that dishonesty may not be the only explanation for such conduct and that there can be other explanations, such as a mistake or carelessness.

However, in the panel's view, it was clear that there was no mistake or carelessness on Mr Laughton's part. The panel noted that Mr Laughton's conduct had taken place over a period of time and had consisted of a number of deliberate acts. On the evidence before it, the panel considered that Mr Laughton had proactively thought about what he was doing, in that he had knowingly submitted marks in advance of pupils completing and submitting work. Records of management meetings showed that Mr Laughton was aware of what he should and could have done to correct the false marks, but that he had not done this. The panel also noted that, after allegations had been made by OCR, Mr Laughton admitted to other actions and knew that what he did was wrong.

The panel was mindful that dishonesty is a particularly serious allegation and therefore examined closely the strength and quality of the evidence which had been placed before it, taking into account the serious consequences which could follow if found proved. Here, the panel noted that the School and OCR had undertaken thorough investigations, and that Mr Laughton had admitted to the conduct.

In his Mitigation Statement which appeared at pages 143 and 144 of the hearing bundle, Mr Laughton had stated that he had not intended to be dishonest. However, applying the standards of the ordinary honest person, the panel concluded that on the balance of probabilities the teacher's conduct as found proven at allegations 1a to 1d was dishonest.

Findings as to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute

Having found all of the allegations proved, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of those proved allegations amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

In doing so, the panel had regard to the document 'Teacher Misconduct: The Prohibition of Teachers', which is referred to as "the Advice".

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Laughton in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Laughton was in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour ... by:
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel also referred to section 6 of Part 1 of the Teachers' Standards (headed "Make accurate and productive use of assessment"), and in particular that teachers "know and understand how to assess the relevant subject and curriculum areas, including statutory assessment requirements" and "make use of formative and summative assessment to secure pupils' progress".

The panel further noted the Preamble to the Teachers' Standards, which includes the statement that "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 ...”

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Laughton fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession. It found that the behaviour found proven did not reflect high standards of ethics and behaviour and had undermined the policies and standards of both the School and OCR. In the panel’s view, recording inaccurate marks had risked damaging pupils in the long term as they would not be provided with an accurate reflection of their performance. The panel considered that these actions were disrespectful to pupils and were inconsistent with the need to treat pupils with dignity.

The panel also considered whether Mr Laughton’s conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 10 and 11 of the Advice.

The panel found that the offence of “fraud or serious dishonesty” was relevant. The Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with such an offence exist, a panel is likely to conclude that an individual’s conduct would amount to unacceptable professional conduct. The panel considered that some such behaviours existed in this case. The panel had found allegation 2 proved in its entirety, and therefore that Mr Laughton’s behaviour was dishonest. In addition, Mr Laughton had stated in a management interview which took place on 17 July 2019 that his behaviour in substituting the work of one pupil for another “was fraudulent”.

The panel noted that in Mr Laughton’s Mitigation Statement, he referred to a four-year prohibition being imposed by OCR. The panel took this into account as reflecting the seriousness of Mr Laughton’s dishonest behaviour.

In addition, Mr Laughton was an experienced teacher who had worked at the School for more than 23 years and who would have been well aware of the conduct expected of him. In the panel’s view, a fundamental part of being a teacher is to record marks accurately, and Mr Laughton had failed to do so on a number of occasions.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Mr Laughton was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others and considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils’ and parents’ lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way they behave.

The findings of misconduct were serious and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual’s status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public perception of the teaching profession as a whole.

The panel also took into account that Mr Laughton's actions related to the examination system, and that information from this system is made use of by universities, employers and professional bodies. The panel noted that the examination board's checks and balances had clearly worked in this case. However, in the panel's view, Mr Laughton's actions had nevertheless abused the system thereby putting all students at risk in terms of moderation of marks, and could have undermined the integrity and reputation of the examination system in the eyes of the public.

The panel therefore found that Mr Laughton's actions constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Having found the facts of particulars 1 and 2 proved, the panel further found that Mr Laughton's conduct amounted to both unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

In considering whether to recommend to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be made, the panel had to consider whether it would be an appropriate and proportionate measure, and whether it would be in the public interest to do so. Prohibition orders should not be given in order to be punitive, or to show that blame has been apportioned, although they are likely to have punitive effect.

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found the following to be relevant in this case, namely: declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct; and the maintenance of public confidence in the profession.

In light of the panel's finding against Mr Laughton, which involved engaging in deliberate and dishonest conduct, contrary to the policies and standards of his School and the exam board, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct as the conduct found against Mr Laughton was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Laughton were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.

The panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations set out above would outweigh any interest in retaining Mr Laughton in the profession. He undoubtedly had an

ability as an educator, had been a teacher at the School for a lengthy period, and possesses skills which are valuable to the profession. However, the panel had found that Mr Laughton's conduct had fallen significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

In view of the clear public interest considerations that were present, the panel considered carefully whether or not it would be proportionate to impose a prohibition order, taking into account the effect that this would have on Mr Laughton. In his Mitigation Statement he explained that he has suffered "huge consequences" as a result of his actions, [redacted]. Mr Laughton also explained that he is currently subject to a four-year prohibition from OCR which, even if he were teaching, would prevent him from being involved in exams and coursework.

In carrying out the balancing exercise, the panel had regard to the public interest considerations both in favour of and against prohibition, as well as the interests of Mr Laughton. The panel took further account of the Advice, which suggests that a prohibition order may be appropriate if certain behaviours of a teacher have been proved. In the list of such behaviours, those that are relevant in this case are:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;
- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or well-being of pupils; and
- dishonesty.

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate, the panel went on to consider the mitigating factors. Mitigating factors may indicate that a prohibition order would not be appropriate or proportionate.

In the panel's view, there was evidence, including Mr Laughton's own admissions, that his actions were deliberate. There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Laughton was acting under duress in relation to the submission of marks.

However, Mr Laughton provided [redacted]. Although he took responsibility for his actions, Mr Laughton states [redacted].

There was no evidence presented in the hearing bundle to suggest that Mr Laughton did not have a previously good history during his career of more than 23 years at the School. The panel saw no evidence that Mr Laughton was previously subject to disciplinary proceedings or warnings.

The panel first considered whether it would be proportionate to conclude this case with no recommendation of prohibition, considering whether the publication of the findings made by the panel would be sufficient.

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would not be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order. Recommending that the publication of adverse findings was sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Mr Laughton of prohibition.

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Laughton. The significant factors in forming that opinion were: the nature and seriousness of Mr Laughton's proven actions which not only impacted the School and his pupils, but related to the examination system; and the element of dishonesty involved.

Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

The panel went on to consider whether or not it would be appropriate to recommend that a review period of the order should be considered. The panel was mindful that the Advice states that a prohibition order applies for life, but there may be circumstances, in any given case, that may make it appropriate to allow a teacher to apply to have the prohibition order reviewed after a specified period of time that may not be less than 2 years.

The Advice indicates that there are behaviours that, if proved, would militate against the recommendation of a review period. These behaviours include fraud or serious dishonesty. The panel had found that Mr Laughton was responsible for a number of incidences of fraud and dishonesty, but was of the view that this was a one-off series of incidents rather than something more systematic.

The panel considered the written statements made by Mr Laughton. It considered relevant the fact that once his misconduct had been discovered, Mr Laughton had admitted his actions and had made consistent statements to the School and TRA, cooperating with relevant investigations. He had indicated regret for his actions and had shown insight by acknowledging what he could have done to prevent matters becoming so serious.

Although no third party references of good character were provided in the hearing bundle, the panel noted that in Mr Laughton's appeal to OCR he had commented that certain of his actions "disgust" him "professionally and personally"; the panel considered this to be an indication of remorse. The panel also accepted that Mr Laughton had sought appropriate medical support following his dismissal from the School and had reflected on his actions.

Having also taken into account Mr Laughton's [redacted], the panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such,

decided that it would be proportionate in all the circumstances for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period.

The panel took into account that Mr Laughton was already subject to a four-year exam board prohibition which began in 2020. In order to provide an opportunity for Mr Laughton to further reflect on his actions and undertake training to update his knowledge and skills before seeking to return to teaching, should he wish to do so, the panel decided to recommend the minimum 2-year review period.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

I have given very careful consideration to this case and to the recommendation of the panel in respect of both sanction and review period.

In considering this case, I have also given very careful attention to the Advice that the Secretary of State has published concerning the prohibition of teachers.

In this case, the panel has found all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Colin Laughton should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of two years.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Laughton is in breach of the following standards:

Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour ... by:

treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position.

Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was also, "satisfied that the conduct of Mr Laughton fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession."

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding of dishonesty on the part of a teacher over a period of time.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Laughton, and the impact that will have on him, is proportionate and in the public interest.

The panel observed, "In light of the panel's finding against Mr Laughton, which involved engaging in deliberate and dishonest conduct, contrary to the policies and standards of his School and the exam board, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct as the conduct found against Mr Laughton was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated."

I have also considered the extent to which a prohibition order would protect children. In the panel's view, "recording inaccurate marks had risked damaging pupils in the long term as they would not be provided with an accurate reflection of their performance. The panel considered that these actions were disrespectful to pupils and were inconsistent with the need to treat pupils with dignity." A prohibition order would therefore prevent such a risk from being present in the future.

I have also taken into account the panel's comments on insight and remorse, which the panel sets out as follows, Mr Laughton "had indicated regret for his actions and had shown insight by acknowledging what he could have done to prevent matters becoming so serious." The panel also noted that "in Mr Laughton's appeal to OCR he had commented that certain of his actions "disgust" him "professionally and personally"; the panel considered this to be an indication of remorse."

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe, "The findings of misconduct were serious and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public perception of the teaching profession as a whole."

I am particularly mindful of the finding of dishonesty in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

I have had to consider that the public has a high expectation of professional standards of all teachers and that the public might regard a failure to impose a prohibition order as a failure to uphold those high standards. In weighing these considerations, I have had to

consider the matter from the point of view of an “ordinary intelligent and well-informed citizen.”

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of unacceptable professional conduct, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr Laughton himself and the panel comment, “There was no evidence presented in the hearing bundle to suggest that Mr Laughton did not have a previously good history during his career of more than 23 years at the School. The panel saw no evidence that Mr Laughton was previously subject to disciplinary proceedings or warnings.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Laughton from teaching and would clearly deprive the public of his contribution to the profession for the period that it is in force.

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel “that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Laughton. The significant factors in forming that opinion were: the nature and seriousness of Mr Laughton’s proven actions which not only impacted the School and his pupils, but related to the examination system; and the element of dishonesty involved.”

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Laughton has made to the profession. In my view, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession. A published decision, in light of the circumstances in this case, that is not backed up by more than an indication of remorse or insight, does not in my view satisfy the public interest requirement concerning public confidence in the profession.

For these reasons, I have concluded that a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest in order to achieve the intended aims of a prohibition order.

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended a two year review period.

I have considered the panel’s comments “The panel had found that Mr Laughton was responsible for a number of incidences of fraud and dishonesty, but was of the view that this was a one-off series of incidents rather than something more systematic.”

I have also considered that the panel “considered relevant the fact that once his misconduct had been discovered, Mr Laughton had admitted his actions and had made consistent statements to the School and TRA, cooperating with relevant investigations. He had indicated regret for his actions and had shown insight by acknowledging what he could have done to prevent matters becoming so serious.”

I have considered whether a two year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. Although an allegation of dishonesty was found proven in this case, I am satisfied that a two year review period is sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession as Mr Laughton provided an indication of insight and remorse and accepts responsibility for his actions.

I consider therefore that a two year review period is required to satisfy the maintenance of public confidence in the profession.

This means that Mr Colin Laughton is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. He may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 17 September 2023, 2 years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Laughton remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

This order takes effect from the date on which it is served on the teacher.

Mr Laughton has a right of appeal to the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court within 28 days from the date he is given notice of this order.



Decision maker: John Knowles

Date: 13 September 2021

This decision is taken by the decision maker named above on behalf of the Secretary of State.