

THE TEACHING AGENCY

Decision of a Professional Conduct Panel and the Secretary of State

Teacher: Mr Paul Ranson
Teacher ref no: 96/63820
Teacher date of birth: 25/08/1975
TA Case ref no: 4247
Date of Determination: 9th November 2012

A. Introduction

A Professional Conduct Panel (“the Panel”) of the Teaching Agency convened on 9th November 2012 at 53-55 Butts Road, Earlsdon Park, Coventry, CV1 3BH to consider the case of Mr Paul Ranson.

The Panel members were Mrs Fiona Tankard (Teacher Panellist – in the Chair), Mr William Brown (Lay Panellist) and Mr Stewart McKane (Teacher Panellist).

The Legal Adviser to the Panel was Mr Nick Leale of Blake Laphorn Solicitors.

The Presenting Officer for the Teaching Agency was Ms Mary Page of Kingsley Napley Solicitors.

Mr Paul Ranson was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

B. Allegations

The Panel considered the allegations set out in the Notice of Proceedings dated 6th September 2012.

It was alleged that Mr Paul Ranson was guilty of conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute and having been convicted of a relevant offences, namely:

- (a) On 20 March 2012 he was cautioned by police for being in possession of a class B drug (cannabis resin) on 20 March 2002;
- (b) On 8 June 2005 he was cautioned by police for being in possession of a controlled drug of class C on 12 April 2005;
- (c) On 8 June 2005 he was cautioned by police for being in possession of a controlled drug of class B (amphetamine) on 12 April 2005.

and

- (a) On 18 March 2010 he was convicted of possessing a controlled drug of class C with intent to supply on 19 May 2009;
- (b) On 12 November 2010 he was convicted of driving a motor vehicle with excess alcohol on 3 November 2010;
- (c) On 20 June 2011 he was convicted of driving whilst disqualified on 6 June 2011;
- (d) On 20 June 2012 he was convicted of using a vehicle whilst uninsured on 6 June 2011.

C. Summary of Evidence

Documents

In advance of the hearing, the Panel received a bundle of documents which included:

New pages 38-53

Section 1 – Anonymised pupil list – no papers

Section 2 – Notice of Proceedings and Response – pages 1-11

Section 3 – Teaching Agency Statements – no papers

Section 4 – Teaching Agency documents – pages 12-53

Section 5 - Teacher Documents – no papers

The Panel Members confirmed that they had read all of the documents in advance of the hearing.

The Panel made their decisions on the basis of the papers (including Mr Ranson's letter to the Teaching Agency dated 29th June 2012) and the submissions of the Presenting Officer.

D. Decision and Reasons

The panel announced their decisions and reasons as follows:

We have now carefully considered the case before us and have reached a decision.

We confirm that we have read all the documents provided in the bundle in advance of the hearing.

This case concerns Mr Ranson's numerous convictions for various driving offences (including driving with excess alcohol and driving whilst disqualified) and possession/possession with intent to supply of controlled drugs.

Findings of fact

Our findings of fact are as follows:

We find all of the cautions and convictions to be proved. A combination of Mr Ranson's PNC print-out and the relevant certificates/memoranda of the convictions prove beyond all doubt that the cautions and convictions are made out.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence/ conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute

We are satisfied that the cautions amount to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. Mr Ranson's possession of class B and C drugs was repeated over a significant period of time. Such behaviour, particularly when repeated, fails to demonstrate the role model behaviour expected of a teacher.

Furthermore we are satisfied that all of the convictions found proved amount to convictions of relevant offences. Possession of drugs with intent to supply is a very serious criminal offence that is entirely incompatible with being a member of the teaching profession and on its own wholly fails to uphold public trust and confidence in the teaching profession. Similarly, the driving offences demonstrate a pattern of offending that includes a third conviction for driving with excess alcohol and criminal offending of a nature that has escalated to highly irresponsible acts of not just driving with excess alcohol but also driving while banned from driving. The most recent driving with excess alcohol offence follows earlier proceedings before the General Teaching Council at the conclusion of which Mr Ranson was advised to complete a drink drive awareness course. The convictions are clearly relevant to the issue of Mr Ranson's ongoing suitability to teach.

Panel's Recommendation to the Secretary of State

In this case we recommend the imposition of a Prohibition Order by the Secretary of State.

In deciding upon this recommendation we have taken into account Mr Ranson's good history as a teacher (other than the previous findings by the GTC in 2008 concerning one of his previous drink drive convictions) and in particular his letter to the Teaching Agency dated 29th June 2012.

We form the view that a Prohibition Order is a proportionate measure in the circumstances. It is required in the public interest in order to maintain public confidence in the profession and in order to declare and uphold proper standards of conduct. He has been cautioned for and convicted of a number of criminal offences over a long period of time. The escalating pattern of behaviour from possession of drugs to possession of drugs with intent to supply and from driving with excess alcohol to a third conviction for driving with excess alcohol and driving whilst disqualified demonstrates repeated serious offending and serious lack of judgment. Such repeated behaviour also shows evidence of deep-seated attitudinal problems which leads to potentially harmful behaviour. Such repeated behaviour falls well below the standards of conduct expected of a teacher and removes Mr Ranson's ongoing suitability to teach. He has entirely failed to demonstrate the role model behaviour of a teacher.

A prohibition order is required in this case to maintain public confidence in the profession and to declare and uphold proper standards of conduct. Mr Ranson's repeated criminal behaviour was deliberate and not committed under duress in any way.

We have taken account of Mr Ranson's mitigation as put forward in his letter of 29th June 2012, in particular his financial and domestic situation. We have taken into account the evidence of his attempts to access treatment for his ongoing health problems.

Such convictions and cautions are incompatible with being a teacher, particularly given the standing that such a professional holds within the community.

We recommend that Mr Ranson be able to apply for the Prohibition Order to be set aside after a minimum period of five years and hope that in the intervening period he will seek to successfully address his medical and personal problems.

Secretary of State's Decision and Reasons

I have given careful consideration to this case.

Mr Ranson has a pattern of behaviour that has resulted in a number of convictions and cautions for offences relating to drink driving, driving whilst disqualified and drug related offences.

It is evident from the pattern of behaviour that Mr Ranson's behaviours represent a serious falling away from the standards that the public expects from a teacher.

The seriousness of the offences and their repetition combine to evidence deep-seated attitudinal problems.

I support the recommendation of the panel therefore that Mr Ranson should be the subject of a prohibition order.

In terms of the review period, I have noted the panel's comments and also noted the period of time over which these offences have been committed.

I therefore also support the recommendation that there should be a minimum review period of five years.

This means that Mr Paul Ranson 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 16 November 2017, 5 years from the date of this order at the earliest**. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the Prohibition Order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Paul Ranson remains barred from teaching indefinitely.

This Order takes effect from the date on which it is served on the Teacher.

Mr Paul Ranson 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.

NAME OF DECISION MAKER: Alan Meyrick
Date: 9 November 2012