



National College for  
Teaching & Leadership

# **Miss Lauren Chandler: Professional conduct panel outcome**

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

**June 2015**

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

<b>Teacher:</b>	Miss Lauren Chandler
<b>Teacher ref no:</b>	1575652
<b>Teacher date of birth:</b>	14 February 1991
<b>NCTL case ref no:</b>	10688
<b>Date of determination:</b>	8 June 2015
<b>Former employer:</b>	Dover College, Dover, Kent

### **A. Introduction**

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (“the National College”) convened on 8 June 2015 at 53 to 55 Butts Road, Earlsdon Park, Coventry CV1 3BH to consider the case of Miss Lauren Chandler.

The panel members were Mrs Marion May (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Janet Draper (lay panellist) and Mr Stephen Oliver (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Nick Leale of Blake Morgan Solicitors.

The presenting officer for the National College was Mr Christopher Geering of Counsel.

Miss Lauren Chandler 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 5 March 2015.

It was alleged that Miss Lauren Chandler was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that:

Whilst employed at Dover College (the "College"), between October 2012 and June 2013, she failed to maintain proper professional boundaries with Pupil A in that:

1. She engaged in a relationship which was:
  - a. Inappropriate,
  - b. Sexual in nature;
2. She sent Pupil A a text message from her personal mobile phone on one or more occasions;
3. Failed to take appropriate action when she received a text message from Pupil A on one or more occasions;
4. The text message/messages which she sent and/or received were:
  - a. Inappropriate,
  - b. Flirtatious;
5. On or around 25 May to 2 June 2013, she:
  - a. Took Pupil A to her parents' house:
    - i. Without the knowledge and/or permission of the College,
    - ii. Without the knowledge and/or permission of Pupil A's parents,
  - b. Took Pupil A to a friend's house:
    - i. Without the knowledge and/or permission of the College,
    - ii. Without the knowledge and/or permission of Pupil A's parents,
  - c. Engaged in sexual activity with Pupil A;
6. Her conduct at 1, and/or 2 and/or 3, and/or 4, and/or 5a, and/or 5b, and/or 5c above was sexually motivated.

By way of her response to the Notice of Proceedings dated 17 March 2015, Miss Chandler denied all of the allegations.

## **C. Preliminary applications**

The presenting officer applied for the hearing to proceed in Miss Chandler's absence.

The panel allowed this application on the basis that:

- i) The Notice of Proceedings had been served in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedures; and
- ii) Miss Chandler had clearly voluntarily absented herself from the proceedings and there was no possibility of her attending or being represented should the hearing be further listed for a later date. She made clear both in her response to the Notice of Proceedings and a subsequent email to Nabarro Solicitors dated 10 May 2015 that she had no intention to attend the hearing, seek representation or put forward any documentation in support of her defence. The panel were satisfied that it was in the interests of justice for the hearing to proceed in Miss Chandler's absence.

The presenting officer also applied to amend the word 'flirtation' at particular of allegation 4b to the word 'flirtatious'. The panel allowed this amendment in the interests of justice. It was considered to be a purely cosmetic variation to the original relevant particular of allegation.

## **D. Summary of evidence**

### **Documents**

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

Section 1 – Chronology and anonymised pupil list – pages 2 to 4;

Section 2 – Notice of Proceedings and Response – pages 6 to 13;

Section 3 – NCTL witness statements – pages 15 to 27;

Section 4 – NCTL documents – pages 30 to 451;

Section 5 – Teacher documents – pages 453 to 467.

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents in advance of the hearing.

## Witnesses

The panel heard oral evidence from one witness, who was called by the presenting officer:

Witness A – former deputy headteacher of Dover College and designated safeguarding lead at the College.

## E. Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

This case concerns a teacher who it is alleged formed an inappropriate and sexual relationship with a 15 year old pupil at the College where she was a games coach, a teacher and a residential house tutor. The evidence in the case included records of numerous text/WhatsApp messages exchanged between the teacher and Pupil A as well as evidence that Pupil A had slept with the teacher and engaged in two way sexual touching of the vagina with her.

## Findings of fact

Our findings of fact are as follows:

We have found the following particulars of the allegation against you proven, for these reasons:

**Between October 2012 and June 2013, you failed to maintain proper professional boundaries with Pupil A in that:**

### **1. You engaged in a relationship which was:**

#### **a. Inappropriate**

We are satisfied that the text messages exchanged and in particular their regularity and content (including photos exchanged) are demonstrative of an inappropriate relationship having been formed by Miss Chandler with Pupil A. This finding is further supported by evidence of Pupil A having stayed for several days with Miss Chandler at her parents' house. Furthermore there is evidence that Miss Chandler lied about the age and status of Pupil A to her parents and Pupil A lied to her parents about her own whereabouts during the relevant half term break. The panel are particularly assisted by the record of the message sent by Miss Chandler to Pupil A on 23 March 2013 (bundle page 334) which states "...I would be in trouble."

## **b. Sexual in nature**

We are satisfied that the relationship of Pupil A and Miss Chandler was sexual in nature as described by Pupil A. The language used in many of the text messages, and the photographs exchanged, indicate an intimate and clandestine relationship. We are satisfied that Pupil's A statements in relation to the sexual contact were credible, particularly as presented consistently over time to the police, the housemistress (Individual A), and Witness A. It is clear that the two way touching of vaginal areas was sexual in its nature.

### **2. You sent Pupil A a text message from your personal mobile phone on one or more occasions;**

We find that numerous text messages were sent by Miss Chandler to Pupil A from her personal mobile phone. The records of the text/WhatsApp messages confirm this. It was however accepted and common practice at the school that teachers and pupils exchanged text messages.

### **3. Failed to take appropriate action when you received a text message from Pupil A on one or more occasions;**

We find that Miss Chandler received many inappropriate text messages from Pupil A, in relation to which she failed to take appropriate action by reporting them; instead responding in kind (we refer to our decision and reasons in relation to particulars of allegation 4a and 4b).

### **4. The text message/messages which you sent and/or received were:**

#### **a. Inappropriate,**

#### **b. Flirtatious;**

As previously indicated at our decision and reasons at 1a above, and by reference to the records of the text/WhatsApp messages found within the evidence bundle, we find that the text messages exchanged were inappropriate and flirtatious. We particularly note, as examples, the following:

- i) The repeated use of 'heart' symbols eg at page 177, 178 etc;
- ii) Use of the words 'your so fucking beautiful' at page 181;
- iii) Use of the words 'I love you too babe' at page 120;
- iv) Use of the words 'Sleep well beautiful. Love you too...' at page 122;
- v) Use of the words 'Not long 'til I [sic] can join you' at page 179;
- vi) The exchange 'I want a hug'...'Me too I want you here' at page 210.

**5. On or around 25 May to 2 June 2013, you:**

**a. Took Pupil A to your parents' house:**

**i. Without the knowledge and/or permission of the College,**

**ii. Without the knowledge and/or permission of Pupil A's parents**

We are satisfied that Pupil A went to Miss Chandler's parents' house at the relevant time on the basis both of Pupil A's evidence at pages 405 to 408 of the bundle and the record of Miss Chandler's interview at page 410. Page 407 further confirms that Pupil A did not tell her parents that she was going to stay with Miss Chandler in England. Her parents', and the College's lack of knowledge of her whereabouts with Miss Chandler is further confirmed by:

- i) The police record of Pupil A's father's conversation with the school as recorded at the bottom of page 350 of the bundle, and;
- ii) Witness A's evidence that the school's records for the relevant period indicate that Pupil A was, according to that record, at home with her parents [redacted].

**c. Engaged in sexual activity with Pupil A;**

As previously stated at our decision and reasons at 1b above, we are satisfied that Miss Chandler engaged in sexual activity with Pupil A as described. We are further satisfied that such sexual activity took place at Miss Chandler's parents' house during half term as described by Pupil A on 10 June 2013 and recorded at pages 405 and 406 of the evidence bundle. Ultimately Miss Chandler does not offer any detailed challenge to the evidence of Pupil A in this regard and in our view Pupil A had no reason to falsify such allegations.

**6. Your conduct at 1, and/or 2 and/or 3, and/or 4, and/or 5a, and/or 5c above was sexually motivated.**

We find that Miss Chandler's conduct as proved at factual particulars 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 was sexually motivated, although it is noted that significant parts of the relationship and communicative exchanges were simply inappropriate as opposed to sexually motivated, particularly at the start of the relationship.

We have found the following particulars of allegation not proved, for these reasons:

**5b. Took Pupil A to a friend's house:**

**i. Without the knowledge and/or permission of the College,**

**ii. Without the knowledge and/or permission of Pupil A's parents**



We find this particular of the allegation not proved on the basis that there is insufficient evidence presented of Miss Chandler taking Pupil A to her friend's house. Pupil A refers to this at page 408 of the evidence bundle but it is not referred to elsewhere in the evidence.

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

We find that Miss Chandler's conduct amounts to both unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Miss Chandler failed to observe proper professional boundaries and this led to Pupil A (who was a 15 year old child at the time) being exposed to inappropriate behaviour in a potentially harmful way. It is of particular concern that the relationship became sexual in its nature as this demonstrates behaviour consistent with criminal acts of sexual activity with a child. Criminal investigations did not proceed due to Pupil A's refusal, with the support of her parents, to take matters further.

Miss Chandler has failed to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct and has failed to uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour. She failed to protect Pupil A's well-being and failed to have proper regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school, for example in relation to text communications with a pupil. She failed to act within statutory frameworks despite the safeguarding material being available at the start of her employment. In addition, she received specific guidance with regard to professional boundaries in relationships with pupils and subsequent safeguarding training, which she failed to follow.

Miss Chandler's conduct fails to take account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils' lives and that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave. Such conduct is potentially damaging to the public's perception of teachers and therefore may bring the profession into disrepute.

## **Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State**

The panel recommends the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State in this case. The panel believes that this is a proportionate and appropriate measure that is required in order to protect pupils, maintain public confidence in the profession and declare and uphold proper standards of conduct.

Miss Chandler has shown a serious disregard for the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards. She has abused her position of trust by causing her relationship with Pupil A to develop beyond proper professional boundaries. She has committed serious sexual misconduct with a child. Her actions were deliberate and

repeated. In addition, she has not demonstrated any remorse or insight into her behaviour having not engaged with this process in any significant way.

However, Miss Chandler is young and had not, at the relevant time, undertaken professional teacher training. Furthermore, her role was a complex one comprising both teaching and being a house tutor in a boarding school. She has a previous good history from earlier employment. In the circumstances, we recommend that Miss Chandler be allowed to apply to have the prohibition order reviewed after a minimum period of 5 years.

## Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

I have given careful consideration to the findings and recommendations of the panel in this case. The panel have found a range of serious allegations proven and have judged that those facts amount to both unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Miss Chandler has abused her position of trust by causing her relationship with Pupil A to develop beyond proper professional boundaries. She has committed serious sexual misconduct with a child and her actions were both deliberate and repeated. She has not demonstrated any remorse or insight into her behaviour having not engaged with this process in any significant way.

I agree with the panel's recommendation that prohibition is an appropriate and proportionate sanction.

In view of Miss Chandler's age at the time of the incidents, and the complexity of her role, the panel have recommended a review period of 5 years. However, the Secretary of State's advice *Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers* is clear that where serious sexual misconduct is involved the panel should consider recommending a prohibition order with no provision for review. Miss Chandler's actions were sexually motivated and had the potential to result in harm to Pupil A.

In the circumstances I have decided that the prohibition order will be without the opportunity to apply to have it set aside.

**This means that Miss Lauren Chandler is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England.** Furthermore, in view of the seriousness of the allegation(s) found proved against her, I have decided that Miss Lauren Chandler shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of her eligibility to teach.

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

Miss Lauren Chandler has a right of appeal to the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court within 28 days from the date she is given notice of this order.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Heathcote', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

**NAME OF DECISION MAKER: Paul Heathcote**

**Date: 10 June 2015**

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