



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Mrs Rehana Siraj-Allan Professional conduct panel outcome

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

November 2015

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

Teacher: Mrs Rehana Siraj-Allan

Teacher ref number: 8158777

Teacher date of birth: 27 June 1959

NCTL case reference: 11225

Date of determination: 18 November 2015

Former employer: Easton Church of England Primary School, Bristol

A. Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (“the National College”) convened between 16 and 18 November 2015 at 53 to 55 Butts Road, Earlsdon Park, Coventry CV1 3BH to consider the case of Mrs Rehana Siraj-Allan.

The panel members were Mrs Fiona Tankard (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mr Tony Heath (lay panellist) and Mr Peter Cooper (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Eszter Horvath-Papp of Eversheds LLP.

The presenting officer for the National College was Ms Rebekah Hummerstone of 2 Hare Court.

Mrs Siraj-Allan 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 28 July 2015.

It was alleged that Mrs Siraj-Allan was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that, whilst employed at Easton Church of England Primary School, Bristol (the “school”) as the headteacher:

1. In relation to the school’s Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Assessments/Standard Assessment Tests (“SATs”) which took place between 14 May 2012 and 18 May 2012, following the completion of the SATs, she:
 - a. failed to secure the SATs before dispatch to the Standards and Testing Agency,
 - b. reviewed the SATs,
 - c. Took one or more of the SATs home with her,
 - d. Completed a tally of the results of one or more sets of the SATs,
 - e. Asked and/or allowed members of the school staff to review the SATs,
 - f. Asked and/or allowed members of school staff to complete a tally of the results of one or more sets of the SATs,
 - g. Amended for one or more pupil(s) the:
 - i. SATs Reading test,
 - ii. SATs Maths Paper A test,
 - iii. SATs Maths Paper B test;
2. By her actions set out at allegation 1 above, she failed to comply with the Standards and Testing Agency’s guidance:
 - a. Key Stage 2 Test Administrators’ Guide (“TAG”) 2012,
 - b. Key Stage 2 Assessment Reporting Arrangements (“ARA”) 2012;
3. Her actions set out at allegation 1 above were dishonest in that she sought to bolster positively by misrepresentation the attainment levels of a pupil and/or pupils in Key Stage 2 testing.

In her response to the Notice of Proceedings dated 26 October 2015, Mrs Siraj-Allan stated, “I admit all the allegations except that I did not tamper with the papers in school or

elsewhere.” She also stated, “I accept that my behaviour constitutes unacceptable conduct.”

The presenting officer considered that Mrs Siraj-Allan’s admissions meant that allegations 1c, 1g and 3 were not admitted. In the circumstances, the panel proceeded with this hearing as a contested case.

C. Preliminary applications

Proceeding in absence

Mrs Siraj-Allan did not attend the hearing. As a result, the presenting officer made an application to proceed with the hearing in her absence.

The panel was satisfied that the NCTL had complied with the service requirements of paragraph 19 a to c of the Teachers’ Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012 (“the Regulations”). The panel was also satisfied that the Notice of Proceedings complied with paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12 of the Teacher Misconduct: Disciplinary Procedures for the Teaching Profession (“the Procedures”).

The panel determined to exercise its discretion under paragraph 4.29 of the Procedures to proceed with the hearing in the absence of the teacher.

The panel understood that its discretion to commence a hearing in the absence of the teacher had to be exercised with the utmost care and caution, and that its discretion was a severely constrained one.

In making its decision, the panel noted that the teacher may waive her right to participate in the hearing and it took account of the various factors drawn to its attention from the case of *R v Jones* [2003] 1 AC1. Mrs Siraj-Allan was clearly aware of the hearing, as she responded to the Notice of Proceedings on 26 October 2015 and she indicated that she did not intend to appear or be represented at the hearing. Further, Mrs Siraj-Allan stressed her request that the hearing be conducted in her absence and that closure be reached, in her email dated 30 August 2015 to the NCTL.

The panel therefore considered that Mrs Siraj-Allan waived her right to be present at the hearing clearly and unequivocally, in the knowledge of when and where the hearing was taking place.

The panel also had regard to the requirement that it was only in rare and exceptional circumstances that a decision should be taken in favour of the hearing’s taking place, even where it was requested by the teacher in question. In this case, there was no indication that an adjournment might result in Mrs Siraj-Allan’s attending a hearing.

The panel had regard to the extent of the disadvantage to the teacher in not being able to give her account of events, taking into account the nature of the evidence against her.

The panel was satisfied that there was sufficient indication of Mrs Siraj-Allan's likely line of arguments from the documents she submitted, to enable the panel to robustly test the evidence before it. The panel had the teacher's evidence addressing mitigation and would be able to take this into account at the relevant stage.

The panel noted that all witnesses relied upon would be called to give evidence and the panel could test that evidence in questioning those witnesses, considering such points as would be favourable to the teacher, and which were reasonably available on the evidence. The panel did not identify any significant gaps in the documentary evidence provided to it and should such gaps arise during the course of the hearing, the panel would be able to take such gaps into consideration in considering whether the hearing should be adjourned for such documents to become available and in considering whether the presenting officer has discharged the burden of proof. The panel would also be able to exercise vigilance in making its decision, taking into account the degree of risk of reaching the wrong decision as a result of not having heard the teacher's account.

The panel also noted that there were a number of witnesses attending the hearing, who were prepared to give evidence, and that it would be inconvenient for them to return again. Some witnesses had already been inconvenienced once before when a previous hearing had been adjourned to enable Mrs Siraj-Allan to attend.

The panel had regard to the seriousness of this case, and the potential consequences for the teacher and accepted that fairness to the teacher was of prime importance. However, it considered that in light of the teacher's waiver of her right to appear; by taking such measures referred to above to address any unfairness insofar as is possible; and taking account of the inconvenience an adjournment would cause to the witnesses; on balance the public interest in this hearing proceeding within a reasonable time was in favour of this hearing continuing in Mrs Siraj-Allan's absence.

Whether hearing was to proceed in private

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan requested in her response to the Notice of Proceedings for the hearing to take place in private. Her reasons were her concerns about the potential impact on her family of the outcome of the hearing.

The panel considered whether to exercise its discretion under paragraph 11 of the regulations and paragraph 4.57 of the procedures to exclude the public from all or part of the hearing. The panel decided not to exercise this discretion.

The panel reached this conclusion by balancing the reasons why the teacher requested that the public be excluded against the competing reasons for which a public hearing was required. The panel saw no reason to depart from the general rule that hearings should be held in public and considered that this was generally desirable to maintain public confidence in the administration of these proceedings and also to maintain confidence in the teaching profession.

The panel noted Mrs Siraj-Allan's concerns about the impact on her family. However, even if the hearing were to proceed in private, the panel's findings and any decision made by the Secretary of State would be announced in public. As a result, proceeding with a private hearing would not achieve Mrs Siraj-Allan's aim of protecting her family from any consequences of potentially adverse publicity about the outcome of this disciplinary process.

In light of this, the panel decided to continue the hearing in public.

Additional documents

The panel decided to admit to the bundle some further documentation, as set out in the following section.

D. Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology – pages 2 to 4

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

Section 3: NCTL witness statements – pages 15 to 47

Section 4: NCTL documents – pages 49 to 247

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 249 to 252

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- Updated Notice of Proceedings dated 28 July 2015 – pages 13A to 13H
- Email from Mrs Siraj-Allan dated 30 August 2015 – pages 13I to 13K
- Response to updated Notice of Proceedings dated 26 October 2015 – pages 13L to 13N
- Additional pages of Mrs Siraj-Allan's statement – pages 249A to 249B

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

Witnesses

The panel heard oral evidence from:

- Witness A – school governor
- Witness B – teacher and current assistant headteacher
- Witness C – school improvement advisor
- Witness D – Standards and Testing Agency representative

These witnesses were called by the presenting officer on behalf of the NCTL.

No witnesses were called on behalf of the teacher and Mrs Siraj-Allan herself did not attend to give oral evidence.

E. Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

The panel carefully considered the case before it and reached a decision.

The panel confirmed that it had read all the documents provided in the bundle in advance of the hearing.

Mrs Siraj-Allan was the headteacher at the school at the relevant time. Year 6 pupils undertook their SATs English reading test on 14 May 2012, their SATs Maths test A paper on 16 May 2012 and their SATs Maths test B paper on 17 May 2012. Mrs Siraj-Allan, along with a number of other teachers at the school, were alleged to have reviewed the test papers after they were collected and before they were sealed to be sent to the Standards Testing Agency (“STA”). The papers were alleged to have been left unsecured before being sent to the STA.

It was later established by the STA that the papers had been tampered with, with many of the pupils apparently achieving a higher result than anticipated. It was alleged that Mrs Siraj-Allan had taken the English papers home and had tampered with them. It was further alleged that the same person had tampered with the Maths papers, and therefore it must have been Mrs Siraj-Allan. Mrs Siraj-Allan accepted that she left the papers unsecured and that she had allowed her staff to review them. However, she denied tampering with the results or taking the papers home with her.

Findings of fact

Our findings of fact are as follows. The panel has found the following particulars of the allegations against Mrs Siraj-Allan proven, for the following reasons:

- 1. In relation to the school’s Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Assessments/Standard Assessment Tests (“SATs”) which took place**

between 14 May 2012 and 18 May 2012 following the completion of the SATs, she:

a. failed to secure the SATs before dispatch to the Standards and Testing Agency,

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan admitted allegation 1a in her response to the Notice of Proceedings on 11 January 2015. This admission was confirmed in her response to the updated Notice of Proceedings of 26 October 2015, in which she admitted all the allegations except tampering with the papers at home or elsewhere.

In addition, the panel was satisfied from the evidence before it that the SATs papers had been left unsecured before they were sent to the STA. This was evident from Witness A's investigations and Witness B's witness evidence.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

b. reviewed the SATs,

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan admitted allegation 1b in her response to the Notice of Proceedings on 11 January 2015. This admission was confirmed in her response to the updated Notice of Proceedings of 26 October 2015, in which she admitted all the allegations except tampering with the papers at home or elsewhere.

In addition, the panel was satisfied from the evidence before it that Mrs Siraj-Allan had reviewed the SATs. She acknowledged in her representations (see page 13J) that she made a tally chart of the scores as she wanted to be prepared for the local authority meeting in June 2012.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

c. Took one or more of the SATs home with her,

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan did not admit allegation 1c. Having carefully considered the time-lines of the day in question and the electronic evidence, on the balance of probabilities, the panel concluded that Mrs Siraj-Allan did take the English reading SATs home with her. The panel was satisfied that the electronic tally chart prepared by Mrs Siraj-Allan (see page 150) had been created and modified late in the evening on 14 May 2012, as shown in the file properties of the document. The file lists the marks in a tally format, ie. "1+1+2+..." etc. The panel did not consider credible Mrs Siraj-Allan's explanation that she simply typed up her handwritten tally from earlier in the day. The panel considered that there was no reason to type up the individual scores in this way, and she must have prepared the electronic tally document whilst the papers were in her possession. Therefore, the panel was satisfied that Mrs Siraj-Allan took the English SATs home with her.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

d. Completed a tally of the results of one or more sets of the SATs,

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan admitted allegation 1d in her response to the Notice of Proceedings on 11 January 2015. This admission was confirmed in her response to the updated Notice of Proceedings of 26 October 2015, in which she admitted all the allegations except tampering with the papers at home or elsewhere. In addition, she acknowledged in her representations (see page 13J) that she made a tally chart of the scores as she wanted to be prepared for the local authority meeting in June 2012. Further, Witness B confirmed in his evidence that Mrs Siraj-Allan had prepared a tally.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

e. Asked and/or allowed members of the school staff to review the SATs,

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan admitted allegation 1e in her response to the Notice of Proceedings on 11 January 2015. This admission was confirmed in her response to the updated Notice of Proceedings of 26 October 2015, in which she admitted all the allegations except tampering with the papers at home or elsewhere.

In addition, the panel considered the other evidence before it. The panel reached the view that within this school it was a widely accepted practice for staff to review the SATs papers after they were collected at the end of exams and before they were sent for marking. That this was a part of the culture of the school, which was confirmed in the oral evidence of Witness B and Witness A. The panel was of the view that such a culture would not have developed without the active involvement, and indeed encouragement, of the headteacher. The panel was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Mrs Siraj-Allan had asked or allowed Witness B, Individual A and Individual B to review the SATs papers.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

f. Asked and/or allowed members of school staff to complete a tally of the results of one or more sets of the SATs,

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan admitted allegation 1f in her response to the Notice of Proceedings on 11 January 2015. This admission was confirmed in her response to the updated Notice of Proceedings of 26 October 2015, in which she confirmed that she admitted all the allegations except tampering with the papers at home or elsewhere.

In addition, the panel was satisfied from the evidence before it that Mrs Siraj-Allan did ask or allow members of the school staff to complete a tally of the results of the SATs. In particular, the panel heard oral evidence from Witness B that Mrs Siraj-Allan had asked him to review both sets of Maths papers to see how the pupils had done. He said he

completed the tallying exercise in Mrs Siraj-Allan's room and each time it took about an hour.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

g. Amended for one or more pupil(s) the:

i. SATs Reading test,

ii. SATs Maths Paper A test,

iii. SATs Maths Paper B test;

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan did not admit allegation 1g.

The panel noted the outcome of the STA's investigation (see page 245) and the oral evidence by Witness D. The panel was persuaded that the English, Maths Paper A and Maths Paper B answer papers had all been tampered with.

In addition, the panel reviewed a sample of the original SATs papers. The panel was satisfied that many of the English reading test papers had been tampered with, as many of the amended answers across different pupils' papers had a similar style of amendment. Further, the panel compared some of the Maths papers against the amended English papers. The panel was satisfied that there were similar styles of amendments across the different subject papers, and therefore the same person is highly likely to have tampered with all three sets of papers.

The panel then turned its mind to the question of who might have carried out the tampering. The panel was of the view that it was unlikely that the tampering with the English test papers had been carried out at the school on the day of the assessment. This was because Mrs Siraj-Allan's office was in use for much of the afternoon, and the window of opportunity between the end of the assessment and the beginning of the afternoon meeting would have been small. It would have taken some time to go through all the papers and amend them, and it would have been difficult to carry this out without detection at this busy school. Witness C's oral evidence confirmed that Mrs Siraj-Allan was only away from her office for a short time because she was there at the beginning and also at the end of his meeting at the school. Mrs Siraj-Allan had provided several conflicting accounts of her movements on 14th May 2012 and the panel found Witness C's account entirely credible.

The panel was therefore satisfied that the only viable window of opportunity for the tampering to take place would have been in the evening while the papers were with Mrs Siraj-Allan at her home.

In addition, the panel was of the view that Mrs Siraj-Allan was under severe pressure at the time, as there was a risk of the school being forced to become an academy, which

she and others involved in the school were strongly resisting. She had every motivation to ensure that the attainment level of her pupils showed improvement, in order to avoid this risk. The panel heard evidence that Mrs Siraj-Allan had made a huge difference to the school and its results when she first arrived, but she was now under intense scrutiny because the results were perceived to have reached a plateau at the time of the allegations. This view was supported by Witness C's oral evidence.

Further, the panel found Witness A's oral evidence credible and persuasive when she described her surprise that Mrs Siraj-Allan was acting out of character when she was under suspicion of having tampered with the papers. She did not express surprise or outrage at the findings of the investigation, as Witness A would have expected.

In light of all these circumstances, the panel is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Mrs Siraj-Allan had amended a number of pupils' answers on their SATs.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

2. By her actions set out at allegation 1 above, she failed to comply with the Standards and Testing Agency's guidance:

a. Key Stage 2 Test Administrators' Guide ("TAG") 2012,

b. Key Stage 2 Assessment Reporting Arrangements ("ARA") 2012;

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan admitted allegations 2a and 2b in her response to the Notice of Proceedings on 11 January 2015. This admission was confirmed in her response to the updated Notice of Proceedings of 26 October 2015, in which she admitted all the allegations except tampering with the papers at home or elsewhere.

In addition, the panel noted that page 19 of the TAG (see page 183) set out the requirements of "what to do at the end of the tests". This made it clear that the test scripts must not be looked at or reviewed in any way, and that they must be kept in a secure place until collected.

Similarly, the panel noted that the ARA set out in section 8.5 the procedures to follow after each test (see pages 226-227). In particular, the ARA required that the pupils' test scripts must be returned immediately to the headteacher and the test scripts must not be looked at or reviewed in any way. The headteacher must ensure the test scripts are stored securely in the packaging provided and keep them in a secure place until collected.

As noted earlier, Mrs Siraj-Allan admitted failing to secure the papers, reviewing the papers and allowing others to do so, and the panel found allegations 1a, 1b, 1d, 1e and 1f proven.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

3. Her actions set out at allegation 1 above were dishonest in that she sought to bolster positively by misrepresentation the attainment levels of a pupil and/or pupils in Key Stage 2 testing.

The panel noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan did not admit allegation 3.

The panel first noted that it had found the facts comprising allegation 1 all proven. The panel then turned its mind to the two stage test to assess dishonesty.

Firstly, the panel considered the objective test, ie whether Mrs Siraj-Allan's actions were dishonest by the standards of reasonable and honest teachers. The panel was satisfied that reasonable and honest teachers would consider that tampering with pupils' test scores with a view to improving their results was dishonest.

The panel then considered the subjective limb of the test, ie whether Mrs Siraj-Allan knew or ought to have known that her actions, by those objective standards, were dishonest. The panel was satisfied that Mrs Siraj-Allan did know or ought to have known that her actions were dishonest. The panel was persuaded by Individual B's evidence that Mrs Siraj-Allan was under a lot of pressure at the time and the panel concluded that she would have been driven by a desire to demonstrate an improvement in her pupils' performance. She would have known that tampering with the papers was dishonest.

The panel further noted that Mrs Siraj-Allan told the STA in her email of 17 July 2012 (see page 162) that the "papers were collected up at the end of the test by me. I collated them ... and then my secretary and I prepared the scripts ready for dispatch. The sealed bags were stored in a locked room until collected. The tests were carried out to the letter, with me overseeing the whole process." The panel was of the view that these statements were clearly untrue, as Mrs Siraj-Allan herself has since admitted leaving the papers unsecured. The panel considered that she knew that the statements she was making to the STA were untrue and she was therefore being dishonest.

The panel therefore found this allegation proven.

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

Having found all of the allegations proven, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of those proven 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 ("the Advice").

The panel was satisfied that the facts found proven constituted unacceptable professional conduct in that such conduct was of a serious nature and fell significantly short of the standard of behaviour expected of a teacher. For the same reasons, the panel found that such conduct may bring the profession into disrepute.

In making this finding, the panel concluded that Mrs Siraj-Allan's conduct represented significant breaches of the Teachers' Standards. In particular:

1. Mrs Siraj-Allan failed to act with honesty and integrity, as she acted dishonestly. She put at risk the integrity of the SATs assessment process, endeavouring to put her pupils at an advantage as compared with other schools whose teachers had adhered to the instructions provided for the conduct of assessments.
2. In acting in this way, she failed to uphold the proper standard expected of a teacher and put at risk the reputation of the profession and the trust of the public in the profession. The assessment process is fundamental to measuring educational achievement in pupils. Both pupils and their parents must have confidence that assessments are being used in a completely honest, appropriate and transparent way by all teachers adhering to the required regulations for handling pupils' assessed work. Any departure from this reflects on the integrity of the process and not only damages the perception of the pupils and public but also the reputation of the profession.
3. Mrs Siraj-Allan failed to maintain a high standard of ethics and behaviour, did not have proper regard to the ethos, policies and practices of the school and had not acted within the statutory frameworks which set out a teacher's professional duties and responsibilities.

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 considered whether it would be an appropriate and proportionate measure, and whether it would be in the public interest to do so. The panel was mindful that prohibition orders should not be given in order to be punitive, or to show that blame has been apportioned, although they would be likely to have a punitive effect.

The panel considered the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and having done so found the following to be relevant in this case:

- the maintenance of public confidence in the profession, and
- declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In light of the panel's findings against Mrs Siraj-Allan, which involved dishonestly amending pupils' test papers and encouraging her staff to disregard the procedures

relating to dealing with assessment papers, the panel considered that there was a strong public interest consideration in ensuring that teachers, particularly those teachers in a position of high responsibility, deal with assessment papers in a proper, transparent and secure manner. Key stage assessments form a fundamental part of the education of children, and there was a significant public interest in declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct in relation to assessments. Similarly, the panel found there was strong public interest in maintaining public confidence in the fact that members of the profession take their obligations in respect of assessments seriously. The panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mrs Siraj-Allan were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.

Notwithstanding 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 Mrs Siraj-Allan. The panel noted her concerns about the impact on her family as well as on her personally, and that she had now left education and had no desire to return to her career (see page 13J).

Therefore, in carrying out the balancing exercise, the panel took account of the public interest considerations both in favour of and against prohibition as well as the interests of Mrs Siraj-Allan. The panel had further regard to the Advice, which suggested that a prohibition order might be appropriate if certain behaviours of a teacher were proven. In the list of such behaviours, those that were relevant in this case were:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards; and
- dishonesty especially where there were serious consequences, and/or it was repeated and/or covered up.

The panel noted that the Advice indicated that these factors indicated behaviour that would be considered to be incompatible with being a teacher. However, even though these behaviours pointed to the appropriateness of a prohibition order, the panel went on to consider whether or not there were sufficient mitigating factors to militate against a prohibition order being an appropriate and proportionate measure to impose, particularly taking into account the nature and severity of the behaviour in this case.

In Mrs Siraj-Allan's case, the panel noted that there was no evidence that her actions were not deliberate and there was no evidence that she was acting under duress.

However, the panel accepted the oral evidence of Witness A and Witness C that she had been highly thought of and had an unblemished history at a very tough school. In particular, Witness C commented that the view of her abilities were such that it was felt that she had a lot to offer fellow headteachers and she became a headteacher mentor for the local education authority. There had been no concerns about her integrity or

suitability as a mentor. Witness A also described her as a “leading light” and “genuine, hard working and committed” and said that “we were proud of her”.

In addition, the panel was convinced by Witness A’s oral evidence that Mrs Siraj-Allan was under pressure. When she first joined the school, the performance of pupils had improved, and there was an expectation that this would continue, but in fact the attainment had reached a plateau. The school had failed to meet floor targets in preceding years and there was pressure for it to convert to an academy status. The panel noted Mrs Siraj-Allan’s comment in her statement (see page 249B) that she was “no more stressed than anyone else” and her denial that her stress caused her to act out of character. However, Witness C’s evidence also confirmed that the school was under intense scrutiny at the time, and in Witness C’s view, this pressure could explain but not excuse Mrs Siraj-Allan’s behaviour. The panel was minded to agree with Witness C’s assessment.

In light of these considerations, the panel reached the view that prohibition would be both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mrs Siraj-Allan. Dishonestly tampering with pupils’ test papers had the potential to fundamentally undermine the public trust in the assessment process and this was a significant factor in the panel’s reaching its decision.

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

The Advice indicated that there were behaviours that, if proven, would militate against a review period being recommended. However, the panel did not consider that any of these factors (set out in section 7 of the Advice) applied to Mrs Siraj-Allan.

Nevertheless, the panel was of the view that her conduct was particularly serious given her position as the headteacher. She had clearly instilled an approach to post-assessment activities such that other teachers considered it normal not to follow the requirements of the TAG or ARA. Her position meant that she had great influence over more junior staff members and indeed she had a secondary role as a headteacher mentor. Her dishonest actions significantly undermined her position and her responsibilities.

In addition, the panel considered that Mrs Siraj-Allan had not demonstrated insight into her actions. Whilst she did express some regret over her actions, she had only admitted the allegations which were impossible to deny on the basis of the evidence, and even in her recent communications she sought to blame others. For instance, she stated in her email of 30 August 2015 to the NCTL that “I feel let down and humiliated by the school ... I feel betrayed by whoever is responsible for this”.

In the circumstances, the panel felt the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate and as such decided that it would be proportionate in all the circumstances for the prohibition order to be recommended without provision for a review period.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

The panel has found all of the allegations proven. Mrs Siraj-Allan failed to act with honesty and integrity; indeed the panel has found that she acted dishonestly. Mrs Siraj-Allan put at risk the integrity of the SATs assessment process. Mrs Siraj-Allan failed to uphold the proper standards expected of a teacher and she put at risk the reputation of the profession and the trust of the public in the profession. The assessment process is fundamental to measuring educational achievement in pupils. Both pupils and their parents must have confidence that assessments are being used in a completely honest, appropriate and transparent way by all teachers adhering to the required regulations for handling pupils' assessed work. Any departure from this reflects on the integrity of the process and not only damages the perception of the pupils and public but also the reputation of the profession.

I have taken into account the need to balance the interests of the teacher with the interests of the public. I have also taken into account the need to be proportionate.

I support the recommendation of the panel that Mrs Siraj-Allan should be prohibited.

This was a serious case and the finding of dishonesty is a serious matter.

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. I have noted the mitigation considered by the panel and also I have taken into account the guidance published by the Secretary of State.

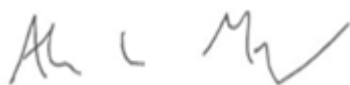
In particular I have noted that the panel considered that Mrs Siraj-Allan had not demonstrated insight into her actions. Whilst the panel noted that she did express some regret over her actions, she had only admitted the allegations which were impossible to deny on the basis of the evidence, and even in her recent communications she sought to blame others. For instance, the panel notes that she stated in her email of 30 August 2015 to the NCTL that "I feel let down and humiliated by the school ... I feel betrayed by whoever is responsible for this".

I support the recommendation regarding review.

This means that Mrs Siraj-Allan 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 allegations found proved against her, I have decided that Mrs Siraj-Allan 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.

Mrs Siraj-Allan 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 grey ink, appearing to read 'Alan Meyrick', with a checkmark at the end.

Decision maker: Alan Meyrick

Date: 20 November 2015

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