



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Ms Clare Bladen: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

March 2022

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Preliminary applications	5
Summary of evidence	5
Documents	5
Witnesses	6
Decision and reasons	6
Findings of fact	6
Findings as to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute	11
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	13
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	15

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

Teacher: Ms Clare Bladen
TRA reference: 19652
Date of determination: 30 March 2022
Former employer: Gateway Primary School, Oxfordshire

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 28 March 2022 at Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT, to consider the case of Ms Bladen.

The panel members were Mrs Caroline Tilley (lay panellist – in the chair), Mr John Armstrong (lay panellist) and Mr Gamel Byles (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Miss Sarah Price of Blake Morgan LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Sherelle Appleby of Browne Jacobson LLP solicitors.

Ms Bladen was present and was represented by Mr Andrew Faux of The Reflective Practice.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegation(s) set out in the notice of proceedings dated 10 November 2021.

It was alleged that Ms Bladen was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst employed as a Headteacher at Gateway Primary School between 1 September 2019 and 13 October 2020;

1. She failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard Pupil A in that;
 - a. She logged an incident on CPOMS on or around 4 November 2019 concerning;
 - i. Pupil A informing "his dad has lots of guns";
 - ii. Pupil A stating that there were real bullets,
 - iii. Pupil A trying to shoot a pistol;
 - b. She failed to follow up this incident up until on or around 18 June 2020.
2. She failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard Pupil B in that;
 - a. She logged an incident on CPOMS on or around 19 September 2019 concerning;
 - i. Pupil B having cuts and scratches on both hands including a deep wound on their right forearm;
 - ii. Pupil B having "angry spots" on the bottom half of their legs which looked like bites;
 - b. She failed to follow this incident up until on or around 19 June 2020.
3. She failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard Pupil C in that;
 - a. On 22 November 2019 an incident was brought to her attention concerning an adult pulling Pupil C's hair and/or talking aggressively towards them;
 - b. She failed to follow this incident up.
4. She failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard pupils in that between 1 October 2019 to 18 March 2020;
 - a. She failed to log several incidents recorded on 'Pink Forms' on CPOMS;

- b. She failed to follow up these incidents.
- 5. She failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard pupils between September 2019 to 15 June 2020 in that she failed to safeguard pupils between September 2019 to 15 June 2020 in that she failed to ensure DDSLs within the School had full access to CPOMS.
- 6. Her conduct as may be found proven at allegations 1 to 5 above put pupils at risk of harm.

Ms Bladen signed a statement of agreed and disputed facts, dated 16 June 2021. Whilst Ms Bladen admitted the underlying facts of the allegations, she did not accept that she had failed to safeguard pupils. Ms Bladen limited her acceptance that her conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct to the two specific safeguarding concerns within allegation 4. Ms Bladen did not admit that her conduct may bring the profession into disrepute.

Preliminary applications

The panel considered an application from Mr Faux, on behalf of Ms Bladen, that parts of the hearing should be held in private. The TRA did not oppose this application. The panel accepted the legal advice. The panel decided that it was in the public interest for the hearing to be held in public but decided it would hear any evidence relating to [REDACTED].

The panel also considered an application from Mr Faux, on behalf of Ms Bladen to admit an additional document. The TRA did not oppose the application. The panel had already been provided with a copy of the additional document, which comprised of a statement from Individual A, dated 15 March 2022. The panel accepted the legal advice. The panel determined that it was fair and in the interests of justice to admit the additional document.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Notice of Proceedings and Response – pages 2 to 5

Section 2: Statement of Agreed and Disputed Facts – pages 7 to 11

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements – pages 13 to 25

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 27 to 126

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 128 to 141

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

Witness statement of Individual A, 15 March 2022 – pages 1 to 4 of additional bundle

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the hearing and the additional document that the panel decided to admit.

Witnesses

The panel heard oral evidence from the following witnesses:

- Witness A
- Witness B
- The panel also heard evidence from Ms Bladen.

Decision and reasons

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

Ms Bladen had been employed at the School from 1 September 2019 to 13 October 2020. On 18 June 2020, Witness A identified that an incident regarding Pupil A had been logged on to the recording system, 'Child Protection Online Management System' (CPOMS), but no further action had been taken. On 19 June 2020, Witness B reported to the School's governors that several incidents logged on to CPOMS had not been followed up. Ms Bladen was suspended from the School on 22 June 2020 whilst an investigation was undertaken. Following a disciplinary hearing on 13 October 2020, Ms Bladen was dismissed from her post at the School.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel heard evidence from two witnesses called on behalf of the TRA. [REDACTED]. The panel considered both Witness A and Witness B to be credible and reliable witnesses.

The panel also heard evidence from Ms Bladen, who attended the hearing in person to assist the panel. The panel felt that Ms Bladen was candid when giving evidence and was keen to assist the panel.

The panel heard and accepted the legal advice.

The panel found the following particulars of the allegation(s) against Ms Bladen proved, for these reasons:

1. You failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard Pupil A in that;

a. You logged an incident on CPOMS on or around 4 November 2019 concerning;

i. Pupil A informing "his dad has lots of guns";

ii. Pupil A stating that there were real bullets,

iii. Pupil A trying to shoot a pistol;

b. You failed to follow up this incident up until on or around 18 June 2020.

Witness A told the panel that when she was finally able to access CPOMS in June 2020, she discovered that Ms Bladen had logged this incident, but had failed to follow it up. Witness A confronted Ms Bladen about the issue. As a result, Ms Bladen then telephoned the parents and logged the outcome on CPOMS.

The panel accepted Ms Bladen's evidence that she spoke to Pupil A on the day in question and recorded the child's disclosure on CPOMS. However, the panel was concerned that Ms Bladen's only action at that time was to speak to the child when the issue was raised and her view was that this had been sufficient. The panel disagreed. The panel noted that Pupil A was a young child and it was concerned that the issue involved the possibility of a "gun" or "pistol" at the child's home. Whilst Ms Bladen stated that she had made one attempt to speak to the pupil's parents, she was unable to contact them at that time.

The panel was told that when Ms Bladen was confronted by Witness A on 18 June 2020, Ms Bladen then called Pupil A's parents and according to Ms Bladen *"it was quickly established that there had been a paint gun in the garage but it was no longer there"*.

The panel considered that the only additional reassurance was sought seven months later. The panel's view was that this was irrelevant at that point because it was the lack of appropriate action at the time the incident was reported which was the actual cause for concern.

The panel felt this was a safeguarding concern that should have required closer scrutiny at the time in order to safeguard Pupil A.

The panel assessed the weight and reliability of all the evidence before it. On the balance of probabilities, it concluded that Ms Bladen had not taken appropriate action to safeguard Pupil A.

Allegation 1 is found proved in its entirety.

3. You failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard Pupil C in that;

a. On 22 November 2019 an incident was brought to your attention concerning an adult pulling Pupil C's hair and/or talking aggressively towards them;

b. You failed to follow this incident up.

The panel accepted Ms Bladen's evidence that on Friday 22 November 2019, an incident involving a pupil of the School was brought to her attention that had taken place at the end of the school day and away from the school premises. The incident reported was described as an aggressive act towards a child by an adult, which had caused the parent reporting it concern. Ms Bladen told the panel that she had been given the first name of the pupil, [REDACTED]. She stated she was unable to take further steps to confirm the identity of the child based on the information available to her at that time.

Ms Bladen stated that, based on her previous experience, she believed that, had she made a referral to the local safeguarding hub at that point, no action would have been taken without more specific details of the identity of the pupil. Ms Bladen's evidence was that she made a decision to further investigate the following Monday.

The panel noted that on the following Monday, a separate parent had reported the same incident to the School and Witness A had also been able to identify the pupil as Pupil C.

Ms Bladen explained that she had been unable to attend the School first thing on the Monday morning, but when she did attend later that day she agreed that Witness A should make a referral to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This was completed by Witness A.

Whilst the panel noted that Ms Bladen had been unable to verify the identity of the child in question on 22 November 2019, it considered that, at the very least, the local safeguarding team ought to have been consulted on the same day. The panel was mindful of the nature of the incident, which involved an adult being aggressive towards the pupil.

The panel heard that there were [REDACTED] and Ms Bladen did not wish to cause distress to the wrong family. The panel did not accept Ms Bladen's professional judgment in assessing that a referral to MASH was unwarranted on the

Friday afternoon. The panel's view was that the MASH should have had the opportunity to determine what action, if any, was necessary, not Ms Bladen.

The panel assessed the weight and reliability of all the evidence. On the balance of probabilities, it concluded that Ms Bladen did not take appropriate action to safeguard Pupil C.

Allegation 3 is found proved in its entirety.

4. You failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard pupils in that between 1 October 2019 to 18 March 2020;

a. You failed to log several incidents recorded on 'Pink Forms' on CPOMS;

b. You failed to follow up these incidents.

Ms Bladen accepted in her evidence that in general, the safeguarding concerns reported on pink forms should be uploaded to CPOMS and then the paperwork filed in a locked cabinet. Ms Bladen told the panel that in March 2020, at the time of the national lockdown due to COVID-19, she collected some paperwork that had not been actioned and took it home to sort out. Within those papers, there were eight pink forms. Ms Bladen explained that she had not actioned the concerns on those forms, as planned, and had returned them to the School in June 2020. These forms were subsequently discovered by Witness A and it was not clear what action, if any, had been taken. Ms Bladen stated to the panel that she had not been keeping on top of her paperwork at that time, and accepted that the forms should have been logged on CPOMS.

Ms Bladen accepted that the safeguarding concerns set out on two of the eight pink forms provided to the panel should have been followed up, but were not. Ms Bladen stated that her judgment was that the other forms did not require any follow-up beyond being recorded on CPOMS. The panel accepted Ms Bladen's assessment that no further action on the other six forms would have been necessary, save for uploading them to CPOMS. The panel's view was that this constituted poor record management.

The evidence provided to the panel had highlighted the importance of recording safeguarding concerns on CPOMS, to facilitate a holistic overview of concerns relating to specific pupils. Whilst the panel accepted that Ms Bladen does not face allegations of poor record keeping, it identified that effective record keeping was a necessary consideration to aid its determination. The panel accepted Ms Bladen's evidence that there had been no effective CPOMS training when she started at the School. However, the panel considered that it was Ms Bladen's responsibility to ensure a proper system of recording and accessing safeguarding concerns was put in place. The panel's view was that a failure to do so undermined the School's ability to properly safeguard pupils.

The panel assessed the weight and reliability of all the evidence. On the balance of probabilities, it concluded that Ms Bladen did not take appropriate action to safeguard pupils.

Allegation 4 is found proved in its entirety.

5. You failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard pupils between September 2019 to 15 June 2020 in that you failed to safeguard pupils between September 2019 to 15 June 2020 in that you failed to ensure DDSLs within the School had full access to CPOMS.

Ms Bladen accepted that it was her responsibility to ensure that the [REDACTED] were using CPOMS correctly and that she failed to do this. Ms Bladen stated that there were some technical reasons for CPOMS not being properly introduced to the [REDACTED] and despite her best efforts, those issues were not resolved until June 2020. Despite this, Ms Bladen did not accept that her conduct amounted to a failure to safeguard pupils.

The panel was mindful that in her evidence, Witness B stated that Ms Bladen did not share safeguarding concerns in general. This had been the beginning of Witness B worries about Ms Bladen's management of safeguarding. The panel considered that there was some evidence of proper safeguarding practice in the School, but considered that the [REDACTED] were unable to discharge their safeguarding roles properly without access to CPOMS.

The panel assessed the weight and reliability of all the evidence. On the balance of probabilities, it concluded that Ms Bladen did not take appropriate action to safeguard pupils in that she did not ensure the [REDACTED] had full access to CPOMS.

Allegation 5 is found proved.

6. Your conduct as may be found proven at allegations 1-5 above put pupils at risk of harm.

The panel considered that there was some evidence of effective safeguarding in the School. However, in light of the panel's findings in respect of allegations 1, 3 and 4, the panel considered that pupils were placed at risk of harm. The panel did not have any evidence that any actual harm had been caused and on balance, the risk was at the lower end of the scale. The panel was mindful that the concerns set out in allegations 1, 3 and 4 had the potential to be serious and therefore would have required further actions in order to safeguard the pupils concerned.

The panel assessed the weight and reliability of all the evidence. On the balance of probabilities, it concluded that Ms Bladen's conduct as found proven at allegations 1, 3 and 4 placed pupils at risk of harm.

Allegation 6 is found proved.

The panel found the following particulars of the allegation(s) against you not proved, for these reasons:

2. You failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard Pupil B in that;

a. You logged an incident on CPOMS on or around 19 September 2019 concerning;

i. Pupil B having cuts and scratches on both hands including a deep wound on their right forearm;

ii. Pupil B having "angry spots" on the bottom half of their legs which looked like bites;

b. You failed to follow this incident up until on or around 19 June 2020.

The panel accepted Ms Bladen's evidence that when she spoke to Pupil B, she ascertained that the pupil had been playing with a cat at home. The panel noted that Ms Bladen did speak to Pupil B's parent around the same time, and the parent confirmed that Pupil B had been playing with the cat and that was the cause of the scratches and that the spots were as a result of insect bites.

The panel was satisfied that Ms Bladen had taken appropriate steps to follow up the incident when she became aware of these concerns. In her evidence, Ms Bladen clarified that the angry spots appeared consistent with insect bites.

The panel assessed the weight and reliability of all the evidence. On the balance of probabilities, it concluded that Ms Bladen had taken appropriate action to safeguard Pupil B.

Allegation 2 is not proved.

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

Having found a number 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 Ms Bladen in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Ms Bladen was in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Although the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Ms Bladen involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards, it was also satisfied that this was not misconduct of a sufficiently serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

These were breaches at the less serious end of the scale. The panel noted that the breaches were compounded by suboptimal record keeping and arose due to ineffective implementation of a computerised system that had been introduced by the previous leadership team. The new leadership team had little collective understanding and no training in its operation.

The panel took into account the evidence of Ms Bladen regarding factors that impacted her conduct and performance at the relevant time. In particular, the panel noted that there had been a lack of effective support mechanisms available to Ms Bladen. The panel noted that Ms Bladen was a newly appointed Headteacher in a school that had just been graded as 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted immediately before she commenced her post.

The panel was also mindful that whilst there had been a risk of harm due to ineffective safeguarding actions on several occasions, there was no evidence of any actual harm caused to any pupil.

The panel also considered whether Ms Bladen's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice. The panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

Ms Bladen accepted that there were limited incidents of safeguarding failures that could be perceived as unacceptable professional conduct. However, the panel concluded that based on all the evidence before it, it was not satisfied that Ms Bladen's conduct was sufficiently serious to amount to 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' lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave.

The panel considered that the facts proved involved findings of misconduct, 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. The panel concluded that Ms Bladen had not taken steps to ensure that the School was using CPOMS effectively and had placed some pupils at risk of harm. The panel noted that Ms Bladen had reflected in hindsight that she should not have accepted the post as Headteacher at that time. [REDACTED]. Nonetheless, the panel took the view that she was a senior and experienced leader in safeguarding and was ultimately responsible for managing the senior leadership team and ensuring effective safeguarding practice at the School.

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

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of 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 a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely, the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and protection of other members of the public, the maintenance of public confidence in the profession, declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct and striking the right balance between the rights of the teacher and the public interest.

In light of the panel's findings against Ms Bladen which involved failures to take appropriate action to safeguard pupils, the panel bore in mind the strong public interest consideration in the protection of pupils, given the importance of proper safeguarding procedures. The panel did not consider there to have been wholesale failures in the

safeguarding procedures at the School; rather that some aspects were not operating as effectively as they should have been at that time.

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

The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present, as on the face of matters, the conduct found against Ms Bladen was on the edge of that which could reasonably be tolerated.

In view of these clear public interest considerations, 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 Ms Bladen.

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 Ms Bladen. 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 found proved. In the list of such behaviours, those that were relevant in this case were:

- Failure to act on evidence that indicated that a child's welfare may have been at risk e.g. failed to notify the designated safeguarding lead and/or make a referral to children's social care, the police or other relevant agencies when abuse, neglect and/or harmful cultural practices were identified.

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.

The panel considered that in respect of Pupil C, there had been a failure over the weekend to safeguard the pupil, but the concern was followed up on the Monday. The panel was not provided with any evidence of any ongoing risk or actual harm caused to the pupil. Similarly in respect of Pupil A, the panel was not provided with any evidence of any actual harm caused to the pupil. In respect of the two other instances of safeguarding not being followed up (having been properly reported on the pink forms) again, the panel did not receive any evidence that any harm had been attributed to those pupils.

There was no evidence that Ms Bladen's actions had been deliberate. [REDACTED]. The panel noted that Ms Bladen's reflections extended to her acceptance that she was [REDACTED] to take on this headship at that time, and should have withdrawn from the appointment. The panel judged these to be relevant factors to its deliberation.

The panel accepted that Ms Bladen had a previously good history and that these incidents were out of character. The panel took careful note of the statement submitted on behalf of Ms Bladen, from Individual A, dated 15 March 2022, who stated "my judgement was that she was burnt out by the stresses of the job [REDACTED]. It was my opinion that her next job should have been one with less responsibility".

The panel noted that Ms Bladen had recognised the seriousness of the allegations she faced and has reflected at length during her evidence about her actions. The panel considered that this demonstrated some insight and responsibility. The panel had in mind that Ms Bladen was newly appointed as Headteacher in a school that had recently been graded as 'Required Improvement' by Ofsted and noted the evidence before it regarding the lack of support from the senior management team and the governing body.

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, the recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and appropriate response. The panel's view was that the nature of Ms Bladen's behaviour was at the lower end of any scale of seriousness, and the panel reminded itself that it had not found that Ms Bladen's conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct.

Having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that are not acceptable, and the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

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 sanction.

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 some of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. In this case, the panel has found some of the allegations not proven, including allegation 2, a, i, ii, b. I have therefore put those matters entirely from my mind.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Ms Clare Bladen should not be the subject of a prohibition order. The panel has recommended that the findings of conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Ms Bladen is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel finds that the conduct of Miss Bladen fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct involved failures to take appropriate action to safeguard pupils.

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 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 Ms Bladen, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, "The panel assessed the weight and reliability of all the evidence. On the balance of probabilities, it concluded that Ms Bladen did not take appropriate action to safeguard pupils." 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, "Ms Bladen had recognised the seriousness of the allegations

she faced and has reflected at length during her evidence about her actions. The panel considered that this demonstrated some insight and responsibility.” I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe, “The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present, as on the face of matters, the conduct found against Ms Bladen was on the edge of that which could reasonably be tolerated.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of a failure to take action to safeguard pupils 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 conduct that brings the profession into disrepute, 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 Ms Bladen herself and the panel comment “The panel accepted that Ms Bladen had a previously good history and that these incidents were out of character. The panel took careful note of the statement submitted on behalf of Ms Bladen, from Individual A, dated 15 March 2022, who stated “my judgement was that she was burnt out by the stresses of the job [REDACTED]. It was my opinion that her next job should have been one with less responsibility”.

A prohibition order would prevent Ms Bladen from teaching. A prohibition order would also clearly deprive the public of her contribution to the profession for the period that it is in force.

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the mitigating circumstances in this case. The panel has said, “Ms Bladen had recognised the seriousness of the allegations she faced and has reflected at length during her evidence about her actions. The panel considered that this demonstrated some insight and responsibility. The panel had in mind that Ms Bladen was newly appointed as Headteacher in a school that had recently been graded as 'Required Improvement' by Ofsted and noted the evidence before it regarding the lack of support from the senior management team and the governing body.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel that “The evidence provided to the panel had highlighted the importance of recording safeguarding concerns on CPOMS, to facilitate a holistic overview of concerns relating to specific pupils. Whilst the panel accepted that Ms Bladen does not face allegations of poor record keeping, it identified that effective record keeping was a necessary consideration to aid its determination. The panel accepted Ms Bladen’s evidence that there had been no effective CPOMS training when she started at the School. However, the panel considered that it was Ms Bladen’s responsibility to ensure a proper system of recording and accessing safeguarding concerns was put in place. The panel’s view was that a failure to do so undermined the School’s ability to properly safeguard pupils”.

I have also considered that “The panel’s view was that the nature of Ms Bladen’s behaviour was at the lower end of any scale of seriousness, and the panel reminded itself that it had not found that Ms Bladen’s conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct.” Although it had found that the misconduct in this case amounted to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

For these reasons, I have concluded that a prohibition order is not proportionate or in the public interest. I consider that the publication of the findings made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that were not acceptable and that the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SABuxcey', with a horizontal line underneath.

Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey

Date: 6 April 2022

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