



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Joel Walker: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome

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

January 2023

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Preliminary applications	5
Summary of evidence	5
Documents	5
Statement of agreed facts	6
Decision and reasons	6
Findings of fact	6
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	12
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	16

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

Teacher:	Mr Joel Walker (also known as David Walker)
Teacher ref number:	1255434
Teacher date of birth:	13 December 1989
TRA reference:	18732
Date of determination:	10 January 2023
Former employer:	Egerton Rothesay School, Hertfordshire

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened virtually on 10 January 2023 to consider the case of Mr Joel Walker.

The panel members were Mr Neil Hillman (teacher panellist – in the chair), Miss Asma Majid (lay panellist) and Mr Jeremy Phillips KC (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Delme Griffiths of Blake Morgan LLP solicitors.

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Walker that the allegations be considered without a hearing. Mr Walker provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer, Mr Walker or his representative.

The meeting took place in private.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of meeting dated 23 December 2022.

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

1. On one or more occasions between 1 September 2014 and 31 July 2017, whilst Pupil A was a pupil at the school, he shared personal information with Pupil A regarding his:
 - a. past romantic partners,
 - b. [REDACTED]
 - c. [REDACTED]
2. On one or more occasions between 1 April 2015 and 31 July 2017, whilst Pupil A was a pupil at the school:
 - a. he stated to Pupil A “your arse is looking really good” or words to the same effect, when she was wearing leggings,
 - b. on another occasion he stated to Pupil A “your arse looks incredible” or words to that effect, when she was wearing a dress for prize day,
 - c. he stated to Pupil A that he had a dream of a sexual nature involving Pupil A,
 - d. he told Pupil A she was attractive,
 - e. he invited Pupil A to meet him alone in a classroom,
 - f. he held a ruler up and asked Pupil A “do you want to know how big it is?” in reference to his groin,
 - g. as a response to a slightly revealing image of Pupil A that she uploaded to social media, he uploaded a photograph of himself with the caption "your pic the other day KILLED me";
 - h. as a response to being shown an image of Pupil A he enlarged the image onto Pupil A’s chest;
3. On one or more occasions between 1 September 2014 and 31 July 2017, whilst Pupil A was a pupil at the school,

- a. he hugged Pupil A,
 - b. he placed his hand on Pupil A's shoulder,
 - c. he placed his hand on Pupil A's back,
 - d. whilst she was ahead of him inside an inflatable assault course, he took hold of Pupil A's clothing causing her to fall on top of him;
4. On an unknown date in 2018, he took alcohol to Pupil B, who was under 18 years old and an ex-pupil of the school, whilst she was on a residential course in the town where he lives;
 5. His conduct in paragraphs 2 and/or 3 above, was sexually motivated;
 6. By his conduct in the foregoing paragraphs, he failed to observe a proper boundary appropriate to a teacher's professional position.

Mr Walker admitted all of the allegations.

Mr Walker further admitted that his actions, in relation to each of the allegations, amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Preliminary applications

There were no preliminary applications.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology and list of key people – pages 1 to 2

Section 2: Notice, response and statement of agreed facts – pages 3 to 19

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness evidence – pages 20 to 26

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 27 to 169

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 170 to 204

Statement of agreed facts

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr Walker on 12 December 2022.

Decision and reasons

The panel's decision and reasons are as follows:

In advance of the meeting, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Walker for the allegations to be considered without a hearing.

The panel had the ability to direct that the case be considered at a hearing if required in the interests of justice or in the public interest. The panel did not determine that such a direction was necessary or appropriate in this case.

The panel proceeded to consider the case carefully, having read all of the documents, and reached a decision. It accepted the legal advice provided.

Mr Walker was previously employed as a teacher at Egerton Rothesay School ("the School"). He commenced work at the School on 1 September 2014. Mr Walker taught PE and was also a form tutor.

In 2019, concerns were raised by a former pupil of the School regarding Mr Walker's behaviour towards her. The former pupil is referred to as Pupil A for the purposes of these proceedings. Mr Walker taught Pupil A during her time at the School, starting when she was in [REDACTED]. A complaint was originally made to Hertfordshire police, which in turn made a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

A separate concern was raised in relation to another pupil, Pupil B, who was also a former pupil at the School.

On 8 April 2019, Mr Walker was suspended from his role. The School commenced a disciplinary process in relation to the concerns identified. On 1 May 2019, a disciplinary meeting was held. On 9 May 2019, Mr Walker resigned from his position.

On 23 September 2019, Mr Walker was referred to the TRA by the School.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows.

The panel found all of the allegations against you proved, for these reasons.

- 1. On one or more occasions between 1 September 2014 and 31 July 2017, whilst Pupil A was a pupil at the school, he shared personal information with Pupil A regarding his:**
 - a. past romantic partners,**
 - b. [REDACTED]**
 - c. [REDACTED]**

The panel considered allegations 1(a) to (c) together.

The panel noted the evidence from Pupil A, set out in a signed statement dated 13 May 2021, in relation to these allegations, namely that:

"In year 11 Mr Walker began to speak to me about more personal issues, particularly in his personal and romantic life. He would speak to me about past partners and informed me that he had dated [REDACTED] in the past. Further into the year Mr Walker informed me [REDACTED]."

Mr Walker accepted that, on one or more occasions between 1 September 2014 and 31 July 2017, he did share information with Pupil A regarding:

- his past romantic partners;
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

In light of Mr Walker's admissions and Pupil A's evidence, the panel found allegations 1(a) to (c) proved.

- 2. On one or more occasions between 1 April 2015 and 31 July 2017, whilst Pupil A was a pupil at the school:**
 - a. you stated to Pupil A “your arse is looking really good” or words to the same effect,**
 - b. on another occasion you stated to Pupil A “your arse looks incredible” or words to that effect, when she was wearing a dress for prize day,**
 - c. you stated to Pupil A that you had a dream of a sexual nature involving Pupil A,**

- d. you told Pupil A she was attractive,**
- e. you invited Pupil A to meet you alone in a classroom,**
- f. you held a ruler up and asked Pupil A “do you want to know how big it is?” in reference to your groin,**
- g. as a response to a slightly revealing image of Pupil A that she uploaded to social media, you uploaded a photograph of yourself with the caption "your pic the other day KILLED me";**
- h. as a response to being shown an image of Pupil A you enlarged the image onto Pupil A’s chest;**

The panel considered allegations 2(a) to (h) together.

The panel noted the evidence provided by Pupil A. Her statement recorded that in year 11, Mr Walker began to make sexual comments towards and about her, often telling her that she looked very attractive. Pupil A provided particular examples with reference to the allegations and provided an extract from her diary in support of her account. Pupil A referred to a particular occasion, with reference to allegation 2(c), in which Mr Walker relayed to her a dream in which he told her she was naked.

Pupil A also stated:

"Mr Walker started becoming more secretive, and on several occasions invited me to his classroom to talk during lunch. Mr Walker's classroom was in a very quiet building with less people around. On one occasion, whilst we were in his classroom alone, Mr Walker took a ruler from his desk drawer and said words to the effect of “do you want to know how big it is?”. He came incredibly close to me, held the ruler near his groin area, and moved my hand so that one was on the 0 mark and the other was further along the ruler. I felt uncomfortable with this and thought it was a very odd thing to do."

On another occasion during year 11, Pupil A stated she showed Mr Walker photographs on her phone, in one of which she was sitting, wearing a top but no bra on underneath, which she did not think was obvious. However, she stated that Mr Walker took her phone from her and zoomed the image onto her chest, which made her feel uncomfortable.

The panel was also presented with a copy of the photograph Mr Walker uploaded to social media with reference to allegation 2(g).

In relation to each of the particulars set out in allegation 2, Mr Walker accepted that he acted in the manner alleged.

In light of Mr Walker's admissions, which were consistent with the other evidence before it, the panel found allegations 2(a) to (h) proved.

- 3. On one or more occasion between 1 September 2014 and 31 July 2017, whilst Pupil A was a pupil at the school,**
 - a. you hugged Pupil A,**
 - b. you placed your hand on Pupil A's shoulder,**
 - c. you placed your hand on Pupil A's back,**
 - d. whilst she was ahead of you inside an inflatable assault course, you took hold of Pupil A's clothing causing her to fall on top of you;**

The panel considered allegations 3(a) to (d) together, which were all admitted by Mr Walker.

Pupil A's evidence was that:

"Mr Walker would also often put his hand on my shoulder or lower back. I believed this was a comforting or reassuring gesture and did not believe he was touching me in a sexual manner, though it felt unprofessional and unnecessary."

Pupil A added that Mr Walker hugged her during the course of a 'prize day' when he also made the comment set out in allegation 2(b). Her statement records:

"Mr Walker took me to his classroom and hugged me. I remember he hugged me particularly tight so that I was pressed up right against him. He began to put his hand on the back of my head and stroke my hair. He then whispered in my ear."

Pupil A exhibited an excerpt from her diary in which she recorded this incident at the time.

In relation to the incident referred to in allegation 3(d), Pupil A's account records:

"Mr Walker approached me and challenged me to the assault course. We began to race through the course, and while inside could not be seen by anyone outside. Mr Walker began to get quite physical with me, grabbing me, trying to throw me back and at one point pulling me back on top of himself on the floor. We were only in this position for a matter of seconds, however I noticed it was very odd."

In light of Mr Walker's admissions and Pupil A's evidence, the panel found allegations 3(a) to (d) proved.

4. On an unknown date in 2018, you took alcohol to Pupil B, who was under 18 years old and an ex-pupil of the school, whilst she was on a residential course in the town where you live;

Mr Walker accepted that, on an unknown date in 2018, he took alcohol to Pupil B. At the relevant time, Pupil B was on a residential course near to where Mr Walker lived.

In light of Mr Walker's admission, which was consistent with the other evidence before it, the panel found allegation 4 proved.

5. Your conduct in paragraphs 2 and/or 3 above, was sexually motivated;

Having found the facts of allegations 2 and 3 proved, the panel went on to determine whether Mr Walker's conduct in relation to those allegations was sexually motivated.

The only appropriate conclusion, given the nature and circumstances of his behaviour, was that Mr Walker was sexually motivated towards Pupil A, which he admitted. Considered as a whole and objectively, this was conduct of a sexual nature. The panel was satisfied that the reasonable inference to be drawn was that Mr Walker was, by his actions, motivated either by a desire to obtain sexual gratification from his behaviour or to pursue a sexual relationship with Pupil A, or both.

On that basis and in light of Mr Walker's admission, the panel found allegation 5 proved.

6. By your conduct in the foregoing paragraphs, you failed to observe a proper boundary appropriate to a teacher's professional position.

Mr Walker accepted that his conduct in relation to allegations 1 to 5 were such that he failed to observe a proper professional boundary appropriate to a teacher's professional position.

The panel agreed. Mr Walker had a professional obligation to maintain proper boundaries in relation to pupils. In each of the respects found proved, the panel was satisfied that he had breached his obligations in that regard. It therefore found allegation 6 proved.

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

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

Mr Walker admitted both aspects. Whilst the panel took these admissions into account, it made its own judgment as to whether the threshold was crossed in the circumstances of this case.

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

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Walker in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Walker 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
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher’s professional position
 - 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 also considered whether Mr Walker’s conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice.

The Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with such an offence exist, a panel is likely to conclude that an individual’s conduct would amount to unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel found that the offences of sexual activity and sexual communication with a child were relevant, in broad terms, insofar as Mr Walker had engaged in sexually motivated behaviour towards Pupil A. However, the panel did have in mind that Mr Walker had not committed a criminal offence.

Having carefully considered all of the evidence and having regard to the fact that Mr Walker had acted contrary to the Teachers’ Standards, the panel was satisfied that his conduct fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

His actions, in relation to each of the allegations, particularly considered together, was a matter of grave concern. The panel considered this to be an egregious breach of professional boundaries and his failings were deliberate, persistent and very serious. Not least, Mr Walker engaged in sexually motivated behaviour towards a pupil. By definition, his actions occurred within the education setting as well as extending, in certain respects, to his behaviour outside of school. There was also clear evidence as to the impact of Mr Walker’s behaviour upon Pupil A, who had clearly been affected by his actions. The

nature of the School and Pupil A's noted vulnerabilities were aggravating and concerning features of Mr Walker's conduct. Pupil A was enrolled in the School because she required specific support and had particular needs. In all the circumstances, Mr Walker had shown a reckless disregard for Pupil A's wellbeing and his own duties and responsibilities as a professional and role model in relation to his conduct concerning Pupil A and Pupil B.

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

In considering whether Mr Walker's conduct was such that it may bring the profession into disrepute, 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 they behave.

For the reasons set out above, the findings of misconduct were serious and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on Mr Walker's status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public perception. The panel considered that a member of the public would be extremely troubled to learn that any teacher had behaved in this manner towards pupils.

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

In summary, having found the facts of allegations 1 to 6 proved, the panel further found that Mr Walker's conduct amounted to both unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

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

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

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely:

- the protection of pupils;
- the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; and
- declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Walker, which involved sexually motivated behaviour towards a pupil, there was an extremely strong public interest consideration in respect of the protection of pupils.

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

The panel also decided that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr Walker was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

The panel did not consider that there was a particularly strong public interest consideration in retaining Mr Walker in the profession. Although some positive information was presented with reference to his prior practice, including from former pupils, there were no references or testimonials submitted for the specific purpose of these proceedings from any individuals with knowledge of his admitted conduct. Further, Mr Walker had indicated he had no intention to return to education.

Nonetheless, the panel did take account of the evidence available about Mr Walker's background and career in education.

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 Mr Walker.

In carrying out the balancing exercise, the panel had regard to the public interest considerations both in favour of, and against, prohibition as well as the interests of Mr Walker.

The panel took further account of the Advice, which suggests that a prohibition order may be appropriate if certain behaviours of a teacher have been proved. In the list of such behaviours, those that are relevant in this case are:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;

- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- an abuse of any trust, knowledge, or influence gained through their professional position in order to advance a romantic or sexual relationship with a pupil or former pupil;
- sexual misconduct, e.g. involving actions that were sexually motivated or of a sexual nature and/or that use or exploit the trust, knowledge or influence derived from the individual's professional position;
- failure in their duty of care towards a child, including exposing a child to risk or failing to promote the safety and welfare of the children (as set out in Part 1 of KCSIE);
- violation of the rights of pupils; and
- deliberate behaviour that undermines pupils, the profession, the school or colleague.

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 the following mitigating factors were present in this case:

- Mr Walker had an otherwise good record. He had not been subject to any previous regulatory or disciplinary proceedings.
- There was positive evidence about Mr Walker's prior practice as a teacher. For example, there was evidence of positive engagement with pupils.
- Mr Walker had engaged with the TRA and, ultimately, made full admissions.
- Mr Walker had expressed considerable regret and remorse for his actions. Within his statement presented for these proceedings, Mr Walker fully accepted, for instance that he had made serious mistakes.

Weighed against this, the aggravating features in this case were that:

- Mr Walker's actions were deliberate and premeditated. He was not acting under duress.
- Mr Walker ought to have known what was required of him in terms of his duties and responsibilities.

- Mr Walker was in a position of responsibility and had an obligation to act as a role model. He failed in his duties in that regard.
- Mr Walker's actions amounted to a clear breach of the Teachers' Standards.
- In relation to Pupil A, Mr Walker's behaviour was sexually motivated.
- In relation to Pupil B, Mr Walker provided alcohol to a minor.
- There was limited evidence of insight on the part of Mr Walker.
- His conduct had a clear impact upon Pupil A, who had enrolled at the School because she had particular needs and required specific support.

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would not be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order.

Recommending that the publication of adverse findings was sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Mr Walker of prohibition.

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Walker. The fact that Mr Walker had engaged in sexually motivated behaviour towards a vulnerable pupil was a significant factor in forming that opinion. This was an egregious instance of professional boundaries being breached, on numerous occasions and in distinct respects over a prolonged period.

Mr Walker's actions were deliberate and had had clearly impacted upon Pupil A. The panel had concluded that several behaviours found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate. In particular, the panel felt that public confidence in the profession would be weakened if conduct of this nature was not treated with the utmost seriousness.

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

The panel went on to consider whether or not it would be appropriate to recommend that a review period of the order should be considered.

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

The Advice indicates that there are behaviours that, if proved, would militate against the recommendation of a review period.

These behaviours include:

- serious sexual misconduct, e.g. where the act was sexually motivated and resulted in, or had the potential to result in, harm to a person or persons, particularly where the individual has used their professional position to influence or exploit a person or persons; and
- any sexual misconduct involving a child.

Given the panel's findings, these behaviours were directly applicable in this case.

Having regard to the seriousness of the panel's findings and the protracted nature of Mr Walker's conduct in relation to a vulnerable pupil, in circumstances where there was minimal mitigation present, the panel decided that its findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate. It was not satisfied, from the evidence presented, that it could be said that Mr Walker had remediated his conduct to an extent that he presented no future risk.

As such, the panel decided that it would be proportionate, in the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended without provision for a review period. The public interest considerations that Mr Walker's actions give rise to were such that this was necessary, appropriate and proportionate. The panel concluded that Mr Walker had abused his position of trust and his actions are fundamentally incompatible with his being a teacher.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

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

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Walker should be the subject of a prohibition order, with no provision for a review period.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Walker 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
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
 - 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 findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include, as the panel has set out, "offences of sexual activity and sexual communication with a child were relevant, in broad terms, insofar as Mr Walker had engaged in sexually motivated behaviour towards Pupil A. However, the panel did have in mind that Mr Walker had not committed a criminal offence."

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Walker, 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 protect children and safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, "The panel considered this to be an egregious breach of professional boundaries and his failings were deliberate, persistent and very serious. Not least, Mr Walker engaged in sexually motivated behaviour towards a pupil. By definition, his actions occurred within the education setting as well as extending, in certain respects, to his behaviour outside of school. There was

also clear evidence as to the impact of Mr Walker's behaviour upon Pupil A, who had clearly been affected by his actions." 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, "There was limited evidence of insight on the part of Mr Walker." The panel also comment, more positively, "Mr Walker had expressed considerable regret and remorse for his actions. Within his statement presented for these proceedings, Mr Walker fully accepted, for instance that he had made serious mistakes."

In my judgement, although there is regret and remorse, the lack of full insight means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour and this puts at risk the future wellbeing of pupils. 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 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 they behave." I am particularly mindful of the finding of sexual misconduct in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

I have had to consider that the public has a high expectation of professional standards of all teachers and that the public might regard a failure to impose a prohibition order as a failure to uphold those high standards. In weighing these considerations, I have had to consider the matter from the point of view of an "ordinary intelligent and well-informed citizen."

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

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr Walker himself. The panel comment "Although some positive information was presented with reference to his prior practice, including from former pupils, there were no references or testimonials submitted for the specific purpose of these proceedings from any individuals with knowledge of his admitted conduct."

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel's comments, "The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Walker. The fact that Mr Walker had engaged in sexually motivated behaviour towards a vulnerable pupil was a significant factor in forming that opinion. This was an egregious instance of professional boundaries being breached, on numerous occasions and in distinct respects over a prolonged period.

Mr Walker's actions were deliberate and had had clearly impacted upon Pupil A. The panel had concluded that several behaviours found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate."

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

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended that no provision should be made for a review period.

I have considered the panel's comments, "Having regard to the seriousness of the panel's findings and the protracted nature of Mr Walker's conduct in relation to a vulnerable pupil, in circumstances where there was minimal mitigation present, the panel decided that its findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate. It was not satisfied, from the evidence presented, that it could be said that Mr Walker had remediated his conduct to an extent that he presented no future risk."

I have considered whether allowing for no review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is proportionate to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, the factors which allowing for no review are the protracted nature of the conduct, the vulnerability of the pupil and the lack of full insight.

I consider therefore that allowing for no review period is necessary to maintain public confidence and is proportionate and in the public interest.

This means that Mr Joel Walker 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 him, I have decided that Mr Joel Walker shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of his eligibility to teach.

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

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

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Alan Meyrick', followed by a vertical line.

Decision maker: Alan Meyrick

Date: 13 January 2023

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