



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Robert Roalfe: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

March 2023

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

Teacher:	Mr Robert Roalfe
Teacher ref number:	8952157
Teacher date of birth:	10 September 1962
TRA reference:	18253
Date of determination:	15 March 2023
Former employer:	Penn Fields Special School, Wolverhampton

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 13 to 15 March 2023 by virtual means to consider the case Mr Robert Roalfe.

The panel members were Mr Clive Sentance (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Rosemary Joyce (teacher panellist) and Mr Ian McKim (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Luisa Gibbons of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Matilda Heselton of Brown Jacobson LLP solicitors.

Mr Roalfe was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 21 December 2022 as amended by the Panel. The notice of proceedings set out the allegations as follows:

It was alleged that Mr Roalfe was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst he was employed at the Penn Fields Special School (“the School”) between 1 September 2004 and 31 December 2019:

1. He provided false and/or misleading information, in that he:
 - a. claimed that he had attained a Master’s Degree, when in fact he had not, on one or more occasions including:
 - i. on the School’s single central record;
 - ii. in his NPQH application;
 - b. on or around 18 October 2018, whilst applying for the role of headteacher of the School he;
 - i. claimed that he had previously held the role of ‘assistant headteacher’ at one or more schools, when in fact he had not;
 - ii. claimed that he had held the role of ‘deputy headteacher’ at the School for 10 years when in fact he had held this role for a shorter period of time;
 - c. in or around the academic year 2018/19, described his position as ‘acting headteacher’ on or more occasions when in fact he did not hold that position, including:
 - i. in one or more letters to staff;
 - ii. in one or more emails;
 - iii. to Ofsted;
2. His conduct as may be found proven at 1 and/or 2 above lacked integrity and/or was dishonest.

Mr Roalfe denied the allegations and denied that he is guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Pursuant to an application to amend the allegations, the panel amended the allegations to read:

It was alleged that Mr Roalfe was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst he was employed at

the Penn Fields Special School (“the School”) between 1 September 2003 and 31 December 2019:

1. He provided false and/or misleading information, in that he:
 - a. claimed that he had attained a Master’s Degree, when in fact he had not, on one or more occasions including:
 - i. on the School’s single central record;
 - ii. in his National Professional Qualification for Headship documentation;
 - b. on or around 18 October 2018, whilst applying for the role of headteacher of the School he;
 - i. claimed that he had previously held the role of ‘assistant headteacher’ at one or more schools, when in fact he had not;
 - ii. claimed that he had held the role of ‘deputy headteacher’ at the School for 10 years when in fact he had held this role for a shorter period of time;
 - c. in or around the academic year 2018/19, described his position as ‘acting headteacher’ on one or more occasions when in fact he did not hold that position, including:
 - i. in one or more letters to staff;
 - ii. in one or more emails;
 - iii. to Ofsted;
2. His conduct as may be found proven at 1 above lacked integrity and/or was dishonest.

Preliminary applications

Proceeding in Absence and Admission of Documents

The presenting officer made an application to proceed in Mr Roalfe’s absence and an application to admit documents at the same time, since some of the documents that it was proposed to be admitted were relevant to the panel’s consideration of the proceeding in absence application.

The presenting officer applied to admit a paginated bundle of 51 pages consisting of correspondence with Mr Roalfe regarding his participation in the proceedings and the proposed hearing bundle. The panel sought to clarify the position regarding provision of the bundle and service of the notice of proceedings, and the presenting officer provided an additional paginated bundle of 27 pages. The panel accepted both bundles since they contained documentation relevant to the panel’s consideration as to whether the notice of proceedings had been served effectively.

The presenting officer also applied to admit supplementary evidence in a bundle paginated from page 242 to 269. Those documents were not served in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.20 of the Teacher Misconduct: Disciplinary Procedures for the Teaching Profession, (the “Procedures”), and as such the panel was required to decide whether to exercise its discretion to admit those documents under paragraph 4.25 of the Procedures. Under paragraph 4.18 of the Procedures, the panel may admit any evidence, where it is fair to do so, which may reasonably be considered to be relevant to the case. The additional documents consisted of:

- 1) Mr Roalfe’s 25 page response to the allegations made against him in various letters he had received from the TRA;
- 2) A one page email exchange of 7 to 8 October between the presenting officer and the local authority regarding screenshots of the School’s single central record; and
- 3) A one page email from Springfield House School regarding Mr Roalfe’s previous employment at that school.

The panel recognised that Mr Roalfe’s account of events would be relevant to its consideration of whether to proceed in Mr Roalfe’s absence. The panel therefore decided to determine the application to admit Mr Roalfe’s response to the allegations before deciding whether to proceed in his absence.

The panel noted that, on 28 November 2020, Mr Roalfe’s representative had written to the TRA to inform it that Mr Roalfe no longer wished to engage with the TRA process, but that he requested that his response to the allegations be considered. The same email confirmed that Mr Roalfe’s representative was no longer instructed to represent him. The panel decided that it was fair to admit Mr Roalfe’s response to the allegations since he had requested this be considered. The panel noted that the representations referred to both matters that were and were not the subject of the current allegations. To the extent such matters were not relevant to the current allegations, they could be put from the panel’s minds. The panel decided therefore to admit Mr Roalfe’s response to the allegations.

The panel considered whether the hearing should continue in the absence of the teacher.

The panel was satisfied that TRA has complied with the service requirements of paragraph 19 a to c of the Teachers’ Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012, (the “Regulations”). The panel noted that Mr Roalfe’s former representative had on 20 March 2020 confirmed that he was content to receive any correspondence by email. The panel saw evidence that the notice of proceedings had been sent to Mr Roalfe’s email address on 21 December 2022. The panel also saw evidence that Mr Roalfe had been sent the documents relied upon by the TRA by email on 22 June 2022 (save for those that were the subject of the application to admit late documents and the notice of proceedings).

The panel was satisfied that the notice of proceedings complied with paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12 of the Procedures.

The panel took as its starting point the principle from *R v Jones* 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 is a severely constrained one. In considering the question of fairness, the panel recognised that fairness to the professional is of prime importance but that it also encompasses the fair, economic, expeditious and efficient disposal of allegations against the professional, as was explained in *GMC v Adeogba & Visvardis*.

In making its decision, the panel noted that the teacher may waive his right to participate in the hearing. The panel has firstly taken account of the various factors drawn to its attention from the case of *R v Jones*.

- i)* Mr Roalfe was previously represented by a solicitor in these proceedings. On 18 November 2020, that solicitor wrote to the TRA to inform it that Mr Roalfe no longer wished to engage with the TRA process, and explained that Mr Roalfe would not have representation going forwards. No response was received to the presenting officer's requests regarding the contents of the hearing bundle. The panel was satisfied that Mr Roalfe was aware of the hearing, given that the notice of proceedings was sent to his email address. No response was received to that notice of proceedings. Similarly, no response has been received to an email making Mr Roalfe aware of the presenting officer's intention to apply to proceed in Mr Roalfe's absence. The panel therefore considered that Mr Roalfe has waived his right to be present at the hearing in the knowledge of when and where the hearing was to take place.
- ii)* Given Mr Roalfe's express confirmation that he did not wish to participate in the proceedings, the panel did not consider that an adjournment would be likely to secure his attendance.
- iii)* Mr Roalfe was previously represented but his solicitor confirmed that he would not have representation going forwards. There was no suggestion that Mr Roalfe intended to secure legal representation.
- iv)* The panel had the benefit of Mr Roalfe's response to the allegations and would be able to ascertain the lines of defence. The panel noted that the two witnesses relied upon would be called to give evidence and the panel could test that evidence in questioning those witnesses, considering such points as were favourable to the teacher, as were reasonably available on the evidence. The panel would also be able to exercise vigilance in making its decision,

taking into account the degree of risk of the panel reaching the wrong decision as a result of not having heard Mr Roalfe's oral evidence.

- v) The panel noted that Mr Roalfe's response to the allegations stated that he did not have the [REDACTED] to go through all the allegations again, and that he had no further evidence to offer beyond that set out in his response.
- vi) The panel recognised that the allegations against the teacher are serious and that there is a real risk that if proven, the panel will be required to consider whether to recommend that the teacher ought to be prohibited from teaching.
- vii) The panel recognised that the efficient disposal of allegations against teachers is required to ensure the protection of pupils and to maintain confidence in the profession.
- viii) The panel also noted that there are two witnesses who were prepared and had made themselves available to give evidence, and that it would be inconvenient for them to be available at a later date. Delaying the case may impact upon the memories of those witnesses.

The panel considered that in light of:

- Mr Roalfe's waiver of his right to appear;
- the availability of such measures referred to above that address any unfairness insofar as is possible;
- the inconvenience that an adjournment would cause to the witnesses;
- the seriousness of the allegations; and
- the public interest in this hearing proceeding within a reasonable time

the hearing should proceed in Mr Roalfe's absence.

The panel also decided to admit the two one-page emails referred to above. The panel decided that it was fair to admit these documents. Neither document was prejudicial to Mr Roalfe's case. Both documents were relevant in that they provided context to the evidence available.

Amendment of Allegations

The presenting officer applied to amend the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings. Pursuant to paragraph 4.56 of the Procedures, the panel has the power to,

in the interests of justice, amend an allegation or the particulars of an allegation, at any stage before making its decision about whether the facts of the case have been proved.

The panel noted that the presenting officer had, on 10 March 2023, notified Mr Roalfe of the amendments that were to be proposed. No response had been received to that email, although the panel noted that the notification of proposed amendments had only recently been sent to Mr Roalfe.

The panel exercised caution given that the hearing was proceeding in the absence of Mr Roalfe. The panel considered the proposed amendments and was of the view that it was in the interests of justice for the allegation to be properly formulated. The panel considered that the amendments proposed were of the nature of the correction of typographical errors and did not change the nature, scope or seriousness of the allegations. There was no prospect of Mr Roalfe's case being presented differently had the amendments been made at an earlier stage, and therefore no unfairness or prejudice caused to Mr Roalfe. The panel, therefore, decided to amend the particulars of the allegation as proposed.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology – page 6

Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 7 to 20

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements – pages 21 to 188

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 189 to 241

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

Late Evidence Bundle – pages 242 to 269

Proceeding in Absence bundle – pages 1 to 51

Additional bundle of correspondence relating to proceeding in absence – pages 1 to 27

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

Witnesses

The panel heard oral evidence from the Investigating Officer who had conducted the School's investigation into numerous allegations (Individual C) and Individual A of the School, both called by the presenting officer.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Mr Roalfe was employed as a teacher at the School from September 2003. In 2018, an investigation was commissioned into various allegations against Mr Roalfe. On 18 March 2019, the [REDACTED] referred Mr Roalfe to the TRA. On 31 March 2019, Mr Roalfe ceased working at the School.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you proved, for these reasons:

Whilst you were employed at the Penn Fields Special School ("the School") between 1 September 2003 and 31 December 2019:

- 1. You provided false and/or misleading information, in that you:**
 - a. claimed that you had attained a Master's Degree, when in fact you had not, on one or more occasions including:**
 - ii. in your National Professional Qualification for Headship documentation;**

The panel was provided with Mr Roalfe's professional development record provided for the purpose of attaining the National Professional Qualification for Headship ("NPQH"). Mr Roalfe completed a table that required him to provide evidence of his achievement and expertise in "managing workloads". Mr Roalfe's response stated "I have also completed my MEd over the past few years."

In the transcript of Mr Roalfe's interview as part of the School's investigation, Mr Roalfe stated that he did not have a Master of Education Degree although he had studied towards one. He stated that he could not remember writing it on his NPQH application but he had "anticipated getting it then".

Mr Roalfe's response to the allegations in these proceedings stated that he had started a master's degree and at the time he applied for his NPQH, he believed he had accrued enough credits to complete his master's degree, and had been told that his dissertation that he had completed with Birmingham University would be accepted. He stated that when he applied for his degree, this position seemed to have changed, and credits he had gained with the Open University had subsequently expired. He stated that he had "never gained a Masters, although I did at one time have reason to believe I had completed enough credits to gain one."

The panel considered that Mr Roalfe had provided false and/or misleading information when he stated in his NPQH documentation that he had completed his Master of Education Degree, and that it is clear that he did not have such a Degree.

The panel found this allegation proven.

b. on or around 18 October 2018, whilst applying for the role of headteacher of the School you;

ii. claimed that you had held the role of 'deputy headteacher' at the School for 10 years when in fact you had held this role for a shorter period of time;

Mr Roalfe's application for the role of headteacher stated that he had held the position of deputy headteacher since "09/08". The application form was completed on 18 October 2018.

Individual A gave evidence that Mr Roalfe had stated in his application that Mr Roalfe had been in post of deputy headteacher for ten years when, in fact, he had been in the post for seven years. She stated that Mr Roalfe had not been appointed acting deputy headteacher prior to this.

The panel saw Mr Roalfe's application for the position of deputy headteacher which he completed on 27 April 2011. The [REDACTED] provided a reference for Mr Roalfe's application in 2011 which stated that Mr Roalfe had been "Acting Deputy Headteacher since September 2009". The reference provided by the [REDACTED] was drawn to Individual E's attention. She stated that she had not been aware that Mr Roalfe was acting deputy head but she had no reason to believe the [REDACTED] would have failed to state the position accurately in the reference. The panel considered it could rely upon the reference provided by [REDACTED], although [REDACTED] had not been called to give evidence. [REDACTED] would have been aware of the importance of the accuracy of the reference given the obligations to ensure safer recruitment. The reference dated 12 May 2011 was a contemporaneous document and the panel attributed greater weight to it than later recollections of Individual A.

Mr Roalfe's position in his response to the allegations was that he was including the time he spent as acting deputy head within the career history set out in his application form

and had intended to insert the date of September 2009 as the date on which he became deputy head. This still left a discrepancy of one year since his application form indicated he had held the position since September 2008. Mr Roalfe claimed to have made a mistake in some of the dates in his application and that he had typed “09/08” instead of “09/09” as the starting date for his role as deputy headteacher. He agreed that this meant he had been deputy headteacher for 9 years, rather than 10 years.

The panel was satisfied that it was more probable than not that the information Mr Roalfe had provided on his application form that he had held the position of deputy headteacher since September 2008 was false and/or misleading. The evidence indicated that he had not occupied that position until September 2009, and for the two years following that he was acting Deputy Head, rather than holding the substantive post.

The panel found this allegation proven.

c. in or around the academic year 2018/19, described your position as ‘acting headteacher’ on one or more occasions when in fact you did not hold that position, including:

i. in one or more letters to staff;

ii. in one or more emails;

The panel has seen two letters to staff members dated 22 October 2018 regarding absence monitoring. These were signed by Mr Roalfe as “Acting Headteacher”.

The panel also saw an email written by Mr Roalfe dated 24 October 2018 to Individual A regarding issues he had found whilst “stepping up to cover [the headteacher’s] absence from school.” [REDACTED]. This signature block of that email described Mr Roalfe as “Acting Headteacher”. Individual A’s response of the same date stated “your position is not Acting Head Teacher, you were asked to step up in [the headteacher’s] absence. I’m sure you are aware of the difference, but I am taking HR advice on this and will discuss it with you when I am able to.”

The panel was satisfied that Mr Roalfe had described his position as acting headteacher in letters to staff members and an email. The panel went on to consider whether Mr Roalfe, in fact, held that position.

Individual A gave evidence that following the [REDACTED] on 11 October 2018, a meeting was held with Mr Roalfe. Individual A and Individual B were in attendance at this meeting. Individual A stated that Individual B explained to Mr Roalfe that the [REDACTED] was not there, and asked him to deputise in her absence. Individual A stated that Individual B did most of the talking as “HR language” needed to be used. Individual A stated that there was no consideration that Mr Roalfe would be the acting headteacher. She stated that Mr Roalfe was the deputy headteacher whilst the

headteacher was out of the School, the same as on occasions such as when the headteacher was on a training course.

In oral evidence, Individual A stated that Mr Roalfe was never asked to “act up as headteacher”. She stated that she would dispute the use of the term “act up” and would prefer to use the terms “step up” or “stand in”. She went on to say that he was being asked to “step into the role in the headteacher’s absence.” Individual A confirmed she was not aware of any written confirmation being provided to Mr Roalfe regarding his role.

Mr Roalfe’s response to the allegations stated that he had met with Individual A and was told that he would need to “act up” until the headteacher’s return.

The panel considered whether Mr Roalfe may have become de facto acting headteacher by virtue of the headteacher’s absence by assuming the functions of the headteacher. Individual A was not clear who would have been ultimately accountable in the headteacher’s absence, and stated that she expected Mr Roalfe to keep the board of governors informed. There was insufficient evidence as to the terms of the [REDACTED] and whether she continued to exercise functions reserved to the headteacher to reach any conclusion on this issue.

The panel was satisfied that Mr Roalfe was never formally appointed to the role of acting headteacher. The panel therefore found the allegation proven to the extent that Mr Roalfe had described himself as acting headteacher when he had not been formally appointed to the role.

2. Your conduct as may be found proven at 1 above lacked integrity and/or was dishonest.

The panel did not find that Mr Roalfe had acted dishonestly when he signed letters and emails as acting headteacher. Mr Roalfe’s response to the allegations stated that he had received no written nor verbal guidance or support from [REDACTED]. He stated that he had inspected a school in a similar position a few weeks before, and the deputy headteacher was referred to as the acting headteacher by the school, governors, local authority and OFSTED. He stated that he therefore assumed that this title applied to a deputy headteacher who had been asked to “act up”. The panel noted that there was no evidence of Mr Roalfe having used the title after Individual A’s email sent on 24 October 2018 and the subsequent meeting on 25 October where it was explained to him that he was not the acting headteacher. In the circumstances, the panel considered there was sufficient confusion as to what it meant to “step up” that Mr Roalfe had been more likely mistaken, rather than having acted dishonestly.

The panel also did not consider that Mr Roalfe had acted with a lack of integrity when he signed letters and emails as acting headteacher. His actions may have been ill-judged and lacked sensitivity but did not fall short of the ethical standards of the profession.

The panel went on to consider whether Mr Roalfe had acted dishonestly when he provided false information that he had attained a master's degree in his NPQH application. The panel considered that Mr Roalfe would have known when he completed the NPQH documentation that he had not been awarded a master's degree. The panel therefore considered Mr Roalfe to have been seeking to embellish his credentials in an application that would directly support his career development. The panel considered that ordinary decent people would consider such actions to be dishonest.

The panel found that Mr Roalfe had been dishonest in respect of the conduct found proven at allegation 1.a.ii.

The panel went on to consider whether Mr Roalfe had acted dishonestly when he claimed that he had held the role of deputy headteacher at the School for ten years when he had held this role for a shorter period of time. The panel considered whether it may have been understandable that Mr Roalfe included the time he spent as acting deputy head when stating the period during which he occupied the post. However, the panel observed there appeared to be a pattern of polishing up Mr Roalfe's application for the position of headteacher. It was apparent to the panel that this was one of several pieces of false information contained on the application form. Mr Roalfe had stated that he had been assistant headteacher at Springfield House from August 1998 until August 2004. This differs from both the information he supplied on his application to the School in 2003, and his application for the position of deputy head in 2011. In 2003, he stated that he had been a teacher until August 2002 at Springfield House and became assistant headteacher there in September 2002. In 2011, he stated that he had been a senior teacher from September 1995 until August 2002 and an assistant headteacher from September 2002 until August 2003. This form also accurately stated that he had been an ICT teacher at the School between September 2003 and August 2006 and assistant headteacher from September 2006 until August 2009. Mr Roalfe could not have been assistant headteacher at Springfield House until August 2004 as stated in his headteacher application since Mr Roalfe commenced his employment at the School as an ICT teacher in September 2003. Mr Roalfe also stated on the headteacher application form that he had joined the School as an assistant headteacher from September 2004, when the [REDACTED] reference referred to him having been appointed to this post in September 2006. The panel considered that it could only deduce Mr Roalfe's state of mind when he overstated the time period that he spent as deputy headteacher from the surrounding evidence. It appeared to the panel that there were a number of inaccuracies contained in the headteacher application form, all of which had the effect of enhancing or embellishing his claimed experience. The panel therefore considered that it was more likely than not that Mr Roalfe had deliberately embellished his experience to further his career development, rather than having made a series of unfortunate errors, and that this would be considered dishonest by the objective standards of ordinary decent people. The panel therefore found that Mr Roalfe had been dishonest in respect of the conduct found proven at allegation 1.b.ii.

The panel went on to consider whether Mr Roalfe had lacked integrity when he embellished his NPQH documentation and when he provided false information on his application for the headteacher's position. The panel considered that the ethical standards of the profession require that teachers are honest in their applications to further their careers. Further, the principles of safer recruitment are established to ensure that those appointed to positions have the correct credentials given the position of responsibility held to safeguard children. Embellishing an application form and documentation to obtain the NPQH qualification could have given Mr Roalfe an unfair advantage over others competing for a position. The panel therefore considered Mr Roalfe to have lacked integrity in respect of his conduct found proven at allegation 1.a.ii and 1.b.ii.

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you not proved, for these reasons:

1. You provided false and/or misleading information, in that you:

a. claimed that you had attained a Master's Degree, when in fact you had not, on one or more occasions including:

i. on the School's single central record;

Individual C adduced a screenshot of the School's single central record said to have been provided by Individual D that shows Mr Roalfe having a Master of Education Degree. Individual C adduced a second screenshot, provided by Individual D, showing the Master of Education Degree had been removed. The screenshots were barely legible. Individual C confirmed that the native files had not been retrieved nor had metadata been examined to ascertain when changes to the single central record had been made, since this matter formed only a very small part of the allegations that were under investigation at that time.

The panel was provided with an email exchange between the presenting officer and the local authority. The presenting officer's email stated that she understood the school was unable to provide clearer copies of the screenshots and asked if Individual D would speak with her to discuss the screenshots. The local authority responded to state that Individual D had advised that it was not her who had supplied the original document.

Individual D had provided a witness statement for the purpose of the School's investigation. This had been redacted for the purpose of these current proceedings, but made no mention of the screenshots or of the single central record having contained a reference to Mr Roalfe having a Master of Education Degree.

Mr Roalfe's response to the allegations stated *"if there is an MEd qualification attributed to me, I do not know when this was entered or who entered it... I fail to see what I would gain by adding this to the school's SCR?... I have no idea how a Master's was put against my name on the SCR – I have never made an entry on the SCR, but only copied*

and pasted information from one database to another. It was always the responsibility of others to make and check entries.”

There was evidence of various officers of the School having access to the single central record at various times, including Mr Roalfe. The screenshots were undated and the panel was unable to ascertain either the point at which the single central record had had reference to the Master of Education Degree inserted, nor the point at which that reference had been removed. Given the uncertainty around who had created the screenshots; the potential opportunity for various individuals to have made the entry on the record; and the lack of clarity as to the dates of the screenshots, the panel considered that there was insufficient evidence that it was more probable than not that Mr Roalfe had made the claim that he had a Master of Education Degree on the single central record.

The panel found this allegation not proven.

b. on or around 18 October 2018, whilst applying for the role of headteacher of the School you;

i. claimed that you had previously held the role of ‘assistant headteacher’ at one or more schools, when in fact you had not;

In Mr Roalfe’s application for the position of headteacher, he stated that he was an assistant headteacher at another school, Springfield House, between 1998 and 2004. Individual C stated that he had telephoned Springfield House and spoke to a [REDACTED] who advised that they had no record of Mr Roalfe serving as an assistant headteacher. Individual C also stated that the position of assistant headteacher had only been introduced in England and Wales in 2000, and Mr Roalfe could not have been in that position in 1998.

Individual E gave oral evidence that she knew someone at Springfield House who had said they had never has an assistant headteacher at their school. She could not recall the identify of the person who had said this.

The panel was also provided with an email from the [REDACTED] who confirmed there were no employment records available pre-2011. The email stated that she had asked a senior staff member who had been working at Springfield House for a long time who confirmed that Mr Roalfe had worked at Springfield House as a teacher, but was unsure whether he held the position of assistant headteacher.

The only evidence that Mr Roalfe had not held the position of assistant headteacher arose from conversations with unnamed individuals who did not know that the information they provided would be used for the purpose of these proceedings and the potential impact upon Mr Roalfe’s career. The panel had no means of assessing that the evidence was demonstrably reliable, or that there was some means of testing its reliability.

The panel noted that Mr Roalfe's application to the School for the position of temporary ICT teacher in 2003 appended a c.v. that stated he had been an assistant headteacher at Springfield House from September 2002. The panel considered that it was unlikely that Mr Roalfe would have put a colleague at Springfield House as a referee at the time of his application to the School if he had not held the post that he claimed.

Mr Roalfe's application for the position of headteacher also stated that he was appointed to the post of assistant headteacher at the School in 2004. Individual C stated that Mr Roalfe was not appointed as assistant headteacher at the School in 2004. The panel saw a letter appointing Mr Roalfe to the post of temporary, fixed-term teacher at the School with effect from 1 September 2003.

The panel has also seen a reference provided by the [REDACTED] on 12 May 2011 stating that Mr Roalfe had been appointed as assistant headteacher in September 2006. Individual E stated that she could not recall the School ever having an assistant headteacher. The reference provided by [REDACTED] was drawn to Individual E's attention and she stated that she had no reason to believe [REDACTED] would have failed to state the position accurately in the reference. The reference was a contemporaneous document and the panel gave greater weight to it than to Individual E's recollection. The panel considered it could rely upon the reference provided by [REDACTED], although [REDACTED] had not been called to give evidence. [REDACTED] would have been aware of the importance of the accuracy of reference given the obligations to ensure safer recruitment.

There was, therefore, evidence that Mr Roalfe had previously held the role of assistant headteacher at the School. There was also insufficient evidence for the panel to reach a conclusion that he had not held the role of assistant headteacher at the Springfield House School.

The panel found this allegation not proven.

c. in or around the academic year 2018/19, described your position as 'acting headteacher' on one or more occasions when in fact you did not hold that position, including:

i. to Ofsted;

The sole evidence in support of this allegation is an email from a [REDACTED] to Individual C stating that she had been unable to find an email from Mr Roalfe stating that he was working as acting headteacher. The email went on to state that she had looked through her records and could see that she had been informed on 11 October by Mr Roalfe that he was acting headteacher at the School. The author of this email was not called to give oral evidence, nor has she provided a witness statement. Whilst the author of the email had provided the information to Individual C, she had no means of knowing that it would be used for the purpose of these proceedings and the potential impact upon

Mr Roalfe's career. The panel had no means of assessing that the evidence was demonstrably reliable, or that there was some means of testing its reliability. The panel could not ask as to whether there was a possibility that Mr Roalfe had said he was "acting up" in the absence of the headteacher, rather than that he was "acting headteacher". The panel exercised caution given that this hearing proceeded in the absence of Mr Roalfe. The panel determined that it would not be fair to admit the evidence.

There being no evidence in support of this allegation, the panel found this allegation not proven.

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 Mr Roalfe in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that Mr Roalfe was in breach of the requirement set out in the preamble to act with honesty and integrity. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Roalfe 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...;

Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...; and

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Roalfe in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the principles of Safer Recruitment set out in Keeping Children Safe In Education ("KCSIE") that provide for employers to receive accurate factual information to support their recruitment decisions.

The panel also considered whether Mr Roalfe's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice. The panel considered whether fraud or serious dishonesty was relevant. 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. Whilst the panel considered Mr Roalfe's conduct to have been dishonest, in the sense that he

embellished his qualifications and experience, the panel did not consider his conduct to have been akin to having committed an offence of fraud or serious dishonesty.

Nevertheless, the panel did consider that Mr Roalfe's conduct fell significantly short of the standard of behaviour expected of a teacher. Mr Roalfe was seeking to progress his career to the highest leadership position in a school, yet failed to demonstrate the quality of honesty that underpins the trust placed in a teacher to safeguard children.

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

The panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others, the responsibilities and duties of teachers in relation to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils 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.

In considering the issue of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Mr Roalfe's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice. For the same reason as referred to above, the panel found that none of these offences was relevant.

The panel noted that the Advice is not intended to be exhaustive and there may be other behaviours that panels consider to be "conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute". As a teacher, Mr Roalfe was obliged to be honest in his documentation supporting his progression to a headship role. Providing information that embellished his credentials and were dishonest undermines the principles of safer recruitment and Mr Roalfe's position as a role model to pupils. The panel considered that Mr Roalfe's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

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

Having found the facts of particulars 1.a.ii, 1b.ii, 1.c.i, 1.c.ii and 2 (in respect of 1.a.ii and 1.b.ii) of the allegations proved, the panel further found that Mr Roalfe'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 is appropriate, the panel had to consider the public interest, the seriousness of the behaviour and any mitigation offered by Mr Roalfe and whether a prohibition order is necessary and proportionate. 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 of pupils; maintenance of public confidence in the profession; and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

There was an indirect relevance in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the importance of honesty in the recruitment process of those appointed to look after children.

The panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Roalfe 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 the conduct found against Mr Roalfe was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

The panel carefully considered whether prohibition would strike the right balance between the rights of Mr Roalfe and the public interest.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states that the expectation of both the public and pupils, is that members of the teaching profession maintain an exemplary level of integrity and ethical standards at all times.

The panel took further account of the Advice, which suggests that a panel will likely consider a teacher's behaviour to be incompatible with being a teacher if there is evidence of one or more of the factors that begin on page 15. In the list of such factors, those that were relevant in this case were:

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

dishonesty or a lack of integrity...

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate, taking account of the public interest and the seriousness of the behaviour and the likely harm to the public interest were the teacher be allowed to continue to teach, the panel went on to consider the mitigation offered by the teacher and whether there were mitigating circumstances.

The panel has found Mr Roalfe to have acted dishonestly and his actions were therefore deliberate in seeking to further his career aspirations.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Roalfe was acting under extreme duress, eg a physical threat or significant intimidation.

Mr Roalfe did have a previously good history. There was evidence that he had contributed to the education sector over and above performing his duties as a teacher, having reached a senior leadership position and acting as an OFSTED inspector.

Mr Roalfe has not adduced any statements attesting to his character or performance as a teacher for the purpose of these proceedings. The panel, however, took account of two references contained within the bundle that were provided at the time of Mr Roalfe's application for promotion to the deputy head position. The first of these was provided by [REDACTED] and is signed on 7 May 2011. This commented that Mr Roalfe had supported the school through an outstanding OFSTED inspection, having established a clear direction for school improvement. The reference referred to Mr Roalfe very capably leading assessment at the School and having received positive feedback from internal, external and OFSTED observations of his teaching. The second reference was provided in May 2011 by [REDACTED]. This referred to Mr Roalfe having proven to be an excellent member of the leadership team, having instigated many new initiatives and taken the leading role in the School being awarded numerous awards. The reference went on to state that Mr Roalfe had proved himself to be an excellent teacher and that this had been recognised in OFSTED inspections. The reference concluded that the high level of leadership and management skills of Mr Roalfe were beyond question, and that [REDACTED] had no hesitation in supporting his application for deputy headship of the School.

Mr Roalfe has provided a written response to the allegations but did not wish to participate in the hearing. At the time of his response, the current allegations faced by Mr Roalfe formed only a small part of the totality of the allegations against him. In dealing with those allegations, Mr Roalfe presented the comments he had made during the School's disciplinary hearing. Mr Roalfe did not offer any additional insight he may have gained to the specific allegations considered in the present hearing, nor did he express any remorse regarding his actions. Having denied the allegations, Mr Roalfe presented his actions as having been mere errors, or excusable. He has not given any indication that he understood the importance of honesty and accuracy in respect of his application forms, or that he understood the consequences that false answers had in terms of both safer recruitment and the fairness of recruitment processes.

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 would be sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Mr Roalfe 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 Roalfe. Mr Roalfe was aware of his responsibility to be honest and accurate having signed his application form to confirm the information provided was true and correct. His failure to understand the importance of this was a significant factor in the panel's view. 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 for it to decide to recommend a review period of the order. 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 two years.

The Advice indicates that there are cases involving certain conduct where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period. This was not such a case.

The Advice indicates that there are cases involving certain conduct where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate. Although the panel had found Mr Roalfe to have acted dishonestly, this was not a case that the panel considered fell into the category of fraud or serious dishonesty, it being a matter of embellishing his position for professional advantage.

Given that this was not a case in which the Advice recommended a longer review period, the panel considered that a shorter period would be appropriate. Whilst the panel was concerned that Mr Roalfe had not yet demonstrated insight, the panel was conscious that Mr Roalfe had previously been addressing a greater number of allegations. The panel considered that following this hearing, Mr Roalfe would be able to reflect upon the specific findings in this case and have the opportunity to develop the requisite insight. The panel decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provision for a review period after two years.

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

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Robert Roalfe should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of two years.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Roalfe 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...;

Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...; and

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Roalfe involved breaches of the principles of Safer Recruitment set out in Keeping Children Safe In Education (“KCSIE”).

The panel finds that the conduct of Mr Roalfe fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding of dishonesty, in the sense that he embellished his qualifications and experience.

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 Roalfe, 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/safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, “the ethical standards of the profession require that teachers are honest in their applications to further their careers. Further, the principles of safer recruitment are established to ensure that those

appointed to positions have the correct credentials given the position of responsibility held to safeguard children.” 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, “Mr Roalfe presented the comments he had made during the School’s disciplinary hearing. Mr Roalfe did not offer any additional insight he may have gained to the specific allegations considered in the present hearing, nor did he express any remorse regarding his actions.” The panel has also commented, “Whilst the panel was concerned that Mr Roalfe had not yet demonstrated insight, the panel was conscious that Mr Roalfe had previously been addressing a greater number of allegations.” In my judgement, the lack of 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 considered that Mr Roalfe’s conduct could potentially damage the public’s perception of a teacher.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of dishonesty 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 Roalfe himself, the panel comment “Mr Roalfe did have a previously good history. There was evidence that he had contributed to the education sector over and above performing his duties as a teacher, having reached a senior leadership position and acting as an OFSTED inspector.” The panel also observed that, “Mr Roalfe has not adduced any statements attesting to his character or performance as a teacher for the purpose of these proceedings. The panel, however, took account of two references contained within the bundle that were provided at the time of Mr Roalfe’s application for promotion to the deputy head position.” A prohibition order would prevent Mr Roalfe from teaching and clearly deprive the public of his contribution to the profession for the period that it is in force.

I have however given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Roalfe 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 remorse or 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 a two year review period.

I have considered the panel's comments, "Although the panel had found Mr Roalfe to have acted dishonestly, this was not a case that the panel considered fell into the category of fraud or serious dishonesty, it being a matter of embellishing his position for professional advantage." The panel has also said, "The panel considered that following this hearing, Mr Roalfe would be able to reflect upon the specific findings in this case and have the opportunity to develop the requisite insight."

I have considered whether allowing a review period, or not allowing a review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that allowing a two year review period is sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the panels comments in relation to the dishonesty found not falling into the category of fraud or serious dishonesty and the panels view that Mr Roalfe would be able to reflect on his lack of insight.

This means that Mr Robert Roalfe is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. He may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 23 March 2025, two years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Roalfe remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Mr Roalfe 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.



Decision maker: John Knowles

Date: 20 March 2023

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