



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Adam Akram: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

April 2023

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Preliminary applications	4
Summary of evidence	4
Documents	4
Witnesses	5
Decision and reasons	5
Findings of fact	5
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 Adam Akram
Teacher ref number:	3655533
Teacher date of birth:	3 February 1992
TRA reference:	20880
Date of determination:	21 April 2023
Former employer:	The King's Academy, Middlesbrough

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened by virtual means to consider the case of Mr Adam Akram.

The panel members were Mr Clive Sentance (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Nicola Hartley (lay panellist) and Professor Zubair Hanslot (lay panellist).

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

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Amalea Bourne of Browne Jacobson LLP solicitors.

Mr Akram was 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 26 January 2023.

It was alleged that Mr Akram was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst employed as a teacher of maths at The King's Academy ("the School") between 1 September 2019 and 8 June 2022;

1. From around February 2022, he engaged in and/or developed an inappropriate relationship with Pupil A, including by;
 - a) engaging in correspondence with Pupil A using personal devices;
 - b) permitting Pupil A to sit in his car;
 - c) engaging in a sexual relationship with Pupil A.

Mr Akram admitted both the facts of the allegations and that he is guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Preliminary applications

The presenting officer applied to admit Mr Akram's response to the notice of hearing dated 22 February 2023. Mr Akram was provided with the document, as being a document upon which the TRA seeks to rely, on 14 April 2023. Mr Akram had no objection to the admission of the document. The panel decided that it was fair to admit the document, since it was a document initially completed by Mr Akram. The document was relevant as it confirms that Mr Akram admitted the allegations in response to the notice of hearing.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Anonymised persons list – page 4

Section 2: Notice of hearing– pages 5 to 12

Section 3: Statement of Agreed Facts – pages 13 to 191

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 192 to 271

Section 5: Correspondence with teacher – pages 273 to 277

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

Mr Akram's response to the notice of hearing– pages 278 to 281

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

No witnesses were called by the presenting officer. Mr Akram gave no oral evidence at the findings of fact stage.

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 Akram taught mathematics at the School between 1 September 2019 and 8 June 2022. Mr Akram taught maths to Pupil A when she was in years 10 and 11. Pupil A left the School on [REDACTED]. Pupil A was [REDACTED] at the time of the allegations from February 2022, and also [REDACTED] at the time that the concerns came to light in May 2022. On or around 17 May 2022, the School was made aware of a concern regarding Mr Akram and his conduct towards Pupil A. Mr Akram resigned from the school on 8 June 2022.

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 employed as a teacher of maths at The King's Academy ("the School") between 1 September 2019 and 8 June 2022;

1. From around February 2022, you engaged in and/or developed an inappropriate relationship with Pupil A, including by;

a. engaging in correspondence with Pupil A using personal devices;

In a statement of agreed facts signed by Mr Akram on 6 January 2023 ("the Statement of Agreed Facts"), Mr Akram admitted this allegation. Mr Akram accepted that by February 2022, he had exchanged personal telephone numbers with Pupil A; that he engaged in conversation with Pupil A by messaging her using a personal device during the period February to May 2022; and that he spoke with Pupil A during the same period.

During the School's investigation, the notes of a fact finding meeting with Mr Akram stated that Mr Akram said that he had another job delivering for a local pizza shop. He said that he would often see students of the School on these evenings, and that this was when he started speaking with Pupil A. He stated that they messaged and called each other, but that all evidence of such communication had been deleted.

The panel has seen a note of a meeting with Pupil A contained within an email of 19 May 2022. Pupil A confirmed that she and Mr Akram were having a sexual relationship although they were just friends at first. An email from a [REDACTED] of 27 May 2022 confirms she had spoken with Pupil A the previous evening and Pupil A had said that she and Mr Akram were in a relationship and this started in February 2022 when Pupil A was 17. The panel noted that Pupil A has not been called to give evidence, nor has she provided any statement for the purpose of these proceedings. The panel considered the evidence to be admissible, since it was not the sole or decisive evidence in relation to the allegations. The panel appreciated the need to exercise caution in relation to the weight to be attached to it given that such evidence was untested. The panel noted the consistency between Pupil A's evidence and the accounts of Mr Akram.

In circumstances, where Mr Akram's admission is consistent with evidence of conversations with Pupil A in which she admitted they had had a relationship, the panel considered it more likely than not that Mr Akram would have engaged in correspondence with Pupil A using personal devices.

The panel noted that the School's Employment Handbook of November 2021 stated that all teaching staff were expected to "always maintain a professional distance when relating to students and to those who have left the school within three years which means that staff should:... never communicate with students using a personal email address, telephone number or social media account..."

In an email of 2 August 2022, Mr Akram clarified that no social media was involved in his engagement with Pupil A using a personal device.

The Statement of Agreed Facts confirms that Mr Akram accepts that this handbook was provided to staff at the School at the start of each academic year. Mr Akram confirmed that he had received the handbook in September 2019, September 2020 and September 2021. Mr Akram accepted that the handbook sets clear expectations for appropriate professional boundaries between teachers and former pupils. Mr Akram accepted that these expectations included a minimum timeframe of three years until which time, teachers should not engage in contact with former pupils (without reporting any legitimate contact to the School). Mr Akram accepted that he did not report any legitimate contact with Pupil A.

The panel noted that the Statement of Agreed Facts referred to Mr Akram having received the handbook in September 2021, yet the handbook provided to the panel was dated November 2021. Mr Akram confirmed to the panel that he had been aware of the

requirement to maintain a professional distance with students who had left the school for a period of three years, at the time of the matters referred to in the allegations.

Given the requirements of the handbook, the panel considered that Mr Akram had engaged in and/or developed an inappropriate relationship with Pupil A by engaging in correspondence with Pupil A using personal devices. The panel noted there was evidence of Pupil A having [REDACTED]. He had been in a position of trust, and retained a position of power and influence in relation to her.

The panel found this allegation proven.

b. permitting Pupil A to sit in your car;

In the Statement of Agreed Facts, Mr Akram admitted this allegation. Mr Akram accepted that during the period February to May 2022, he allowed Pupil A to sit in his car on one or more occasions, including for periods of one hour or more; and that they were alone together in the car. Mr Akram admitted that he drove Pupil A in his car, including whilst he made fast food deliveries for a pizza shop on one or more occasions.

During the School's investigation, the notes of a fact finding meeting with Mr Akram held on 18 May 2022 stated that Mr Akram said that Pupil A would sit in his car whilst he was carrying out deliveries. He stated that he and Pupil A would talk, that he would sit in the front or the back of the car, and that sometimes they both sat in the back of the car.

The School's investigation report provides background of how the allegations came to light. On 17 May 2022, the [REDACTED] received a call from the [REDACTED] who stated that her [REDACTED] had informed her the previous evening that she had seen Pupil A, a former student of the School, getting into Mr Akram's car. The [REDACTED] stated that Mr Akram often spoke about Pupil A in school, and the [REDACTED] asked to remain anonymous and did not want her child being spoken with in school. The investigation report records that Pupil A had left the School in [REDACTED]. The panel noted that this witness who reported having seen Pupil A getting into Mr Akram's car was not called to give evidence, nor had any statement been provided for the purpose of these proceedings. The panel considered the evidence to be admissible, since it was not the sole or decisive evidence in relation to the allegations. The panel appreciated the need to exercise caution in relation to the weight to be attached to it given that such evidence was untested. The panel noted the consistency between the evidence and the accounts of Mr Akram.

The panel has seen a note of a meeting with Pupil A contained within an email of 19 May 2022. She stated that they had been doing deliveries together and chatting and 'stuff'. The panel noted that Pupil A has not been called to give evidence, nor has she provided any statement for the purpose of these proceedings. The panel considered the evidence to be admissible, since it was not the sole or decisive evidence in relation to the allegations. The panel appreciated the need to exercise caution in relation to the weight

to be attached to it given that such evidence was untested. The panel noted the consistency however, between Pupil A's evidence and the accounts of Mr Akram.

In circumstances, where Mr Akram's admission is consistent with evidence of conversations with Pupil A in which she referred to carrying out deliveries with Mr Akram and evidence of Pupil A having been seen getting into Mr Akram's car, the panel considered it more likely than not that Mr Akram had permitted Pupil A to sit in his car.

The panel noted that the School's Employment Handbook of November 2021 stated that all teaching staff were expected to "always maintain a professional distance when relating to students and to those who have left the school within three years which means that staff should: never meet with students outside of school..."

The Statement of Agreed Facts confirms that Mr Akram accepts that this handbook was provided to staff at the School at the start of each academic year. Mr Akram confirmed that he had received the handbook in September 2019, September 2020 and September 2021. Mr Akram accepted that the handbook sets clear expectations for appropriate professional boundaries between teachers and former pupils. Mr Akram accepted that these expectations included a minimum timeframe of three years until which time, teachers should not engage in contact with former pupils (without reporting any legitimate contact to the School). Mr Akram accepted that he did not report any legitimate contact with Pupil A.

The panel noted that the Statement of Agreed Facts referred to Mr Akram having received the handbook in September 2021, yet the handbook provided to the panel was dated November 2021. Mr Akram confirmed to the panel that he had been aware of the requirement to maintain a professional distance with students who had left the school for a period of three years, at the time of the matters referred to in the allegations.

Given the requirements of the handbook, the panel considered that Mr Akram had engaged in and/or developed an inappropriate relationship with Pupil A by permitting Pupil A to sit in his car. The panel noted there was evidence of Pupil A having vulnerabilities and remained a minor at the time. He had been in a position of trust, and retained a position of power and influence in relation to her.

The panel found this allegation proven.

c. engaging in a sexual relationship with Pupil A.

In the Statement of Agreed Facts, Mr Akram admitted this allegation. Mr Akram accepted that he engaged in a sexual relationship with Pupil A from around March 2022.

During the School's investigation, the notes of the fact finding meeting with Mr Akram held on 18 May 2022 stated that Mr Akram described having a friendship with Pupil A but that Pupil A might think there was more to it, that she was quite young and that she may think there was going to be something more intimate. The notes of an investigation

meeting held on 10 June 2022 record that Mr Akram had said that what he had stated about just being friends with Pupil A was untrue and they had had a sexual relationship since March 2022. He stated that they had not become friends whilst Pupil A was at School.

The panel has seen a note of a meeting with Pupil A contained within an email of 19 May 2022. Pupil A confirmed that she and Mr Akram were having a sexual relationship although they were just friends at first. She stated that he worked at a pizza shop, and she worked for another fast food outlet, and they had been doing deliveries together and chatting. Pupil A stated that she was not a victim and that she was fine. During the meeting, it is recorded that Pupil A's mother spoke with Pupil A about grooming, and Pupil A became defensive, and annoyed that her mother thought that, as "it wasn't like that".

An email from a [REDACTED] of 27 May 2022 confirms she had spoken with Pupil A the previous evening and Pupil A had said that she and Mr Akram were in a relationship and this started in February 2022 when Pupil A [REDACTED]. She stated that she knew Mr Akram from school as he was her teacher. She stated that their relationship had started off as friends and that it had developed from there. She confirmed that they were still in a relationship, that she was really happy and felt safe with him and that she had never been hurt.

The panel noted that Pupil A has not been called to give evidence, nor has she provided any statement for the purpose of these proceedings. The panel considered the evidence to be admissible, since it was not the sole or decisive evidence in relation to the allegations. The panel appreciated the need to exercise caution in relation to the weight to be attached to it given that such evidence was untested. The panel noted the consistency however, between Pupil A's evidence and the account of Mr Akram confirming the sexual relationship.

In circumstances, where Mr Akram's admission is consistent with evidence of conversations with Pupil A in which she confirmed they had a sexual relationship, the panel considered it more likely than not that Mr Akram had engaged in a sexual relationship with Pupil A.

The panel noted that the School's Employment Handbook of November 2021 stated that all teaching staff were expected to "always maintain a professional distance when relating to students and to those who have left the school within three years which means that staff should: never meet with students outside of school;...keep physical contact to a minimum..."

The Statement of Agreed Facts confirms that Mr Akram accepts that this handbook was provided to staff at the School at the start of each academic year. Mr Akram confirmed that he had received the handbook in September 2019, September 2020 and September 2021. Mr Akram accepted that the handbook sets clear expectations for appropriate

professional boundaries between teachers and former pupils. Mr Akram accepted that these expectations included a minimum timeframe of three years until which time, teachers should not engage in contact with former pupils (without reporting any legitimate contact to the School). Mr Akram accepted that he did not report any legitimate contact with Pupil A.

The panel noted that the Statement of Agreed Facts referred to Mr Akram having received the handbook in September 2021, yet the handbook provided to the panel was dated November 2021. Mr Akram confirmed to the panel that he had been aware of the requirement to maintain a professional distance with students who had left the school for a period of three years, at the time of the matters referred to in the allegations.

Given the requirements of the handbook, the panel considered that Mr Akram had engaged in and/or developed an inappropriate relationship with Pupil A by engaging in a sexual relationship with her. The panel noted there was evidence of Pupil A having vulnerabilities and remained a minor at the time. He had been in a position of trust, and retained a position of power and influence in relation to her.

The panel found this allegation proven.

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

Having found all of the allegations 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 Akram, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Akram 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 was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Akram, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Keeping Children Safe In Education (“KCSIE”). The panel considered that Mr Akram was in breach of the requirement to ensure his approach was child-centered and to consider, at all times, what was in the best interests of the child. Mr Akram was obliged to be aware and adhere to systems in place to support safeguarding, yet he failed to act in accordance with the School’s handbook. The panel noted that KCSIE expressly states that children includes everyone under the age of 18.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Akram fell significantly short of the standard of behaviour expected of a teacher.

The panel also considered whether Mr Akram’s conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice. The panel found that the offence of sexual activity 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.

The panel noted that the conduct found proven took place outside the education setting. Mr Akram had been in a position of trust, and retained a position of power and influence in relation to Pupil A, [REDACTED]. Therefore, his behaviour may have led to Pupil A being exposed to, or influenced by, the behaviour in a harmful way.

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

The panel went on to consider whether Mr Akram’s conduct may bring the profession into disrepute. 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 Akram’s conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice. As referred to above, the panel found that the offence of sexual activity 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 conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual’s status as a teacher. The panel considered that Mr Akram’s conduct could potentially damage the public’s perception of a teacher.

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

Having found the facts of particular 1 a, b and c proved, the panel further found that Mr Akram'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 Akram 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 and wellbeing of pupils; the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious finding of an inappropriate sexual relationship with Pupil A, a pupil he had previously taught, who was under 18 at the time, and who had only left the sixth form of the School a few months beforehand.

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

Whilst there is evidence that Mr Akram had ability as an educator, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweigh any interest in retaining Mr Akram in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher, and he failed to recognise at the time the imbalance of power in engaging in a sexual relationship with a child who he had [REDACTED] taught.

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;

- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;

- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving vulnerable 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, for example, 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; and

- 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).

The panel noted that a teacher's behaviour that seeks to exploit their position of trust should be viewed very seriously in terms of its potential influence on pupils and be seen as a possible threat to the public interest. There was no evidence of Mr Akram having coerced Pupil A into the relationship. Nevertheless, Mr Akram was in a position of trust in relation to a former pupil, and retained a position of power and influence in relation to her.

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.

There was no evidence that Mr Akram's actions were not deliberate.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Akram was acting under extreme duress, eg a physical threat or significant intimidation. However, Mr Akram has reflected on the circumstances of his behaviour, and recognised that that at the time various circumstances meant that he was [REDACTED].

Mr Akram did have a previously good history, although there was no evidence that he had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or that he contributed significantly to the education sector. Mr Akram explained that he had started as an unqualified teacher at his previous school, became qualified, attended governors' meetings, represented the school at a variety of courses, undertaken fundraising for charity events, received a teacher of the week award, and was given the opportunity to have a Teaching and Learning Responsibility role early on in his career. He also stated that he had been filmed for a television programme in 2017 regarding school improvements.

No statements attesting to Mr Akram's character were adduced for the purpose of this hearing. The panel has, however, seen references provided at the time Mr Akram applied for his position at the School. This included a reference from the [REDACTED] at another school, who had known Mr Akram for 12 years, confirming Mr Akram's suitability to work with children, and that no allegation had been made in relation to his behaviour towards children. The referee rated Mr Akram as good or outstanding in respect of each of the requirements of the post. [REDACTED] at the same previous school, who had known Mr Akram for 4.5 years, also confirmed Mr Akram's suitability to work with children and also rated Mr Akram as good or outstanding in respect of each of the requirements of the post. [REDACTED] of the previous school who had known Mr Akram for 4.5 years also provided a reference. This also confirmed Mr Akram's suitability to work with children, and that no allegation had been made in relation to his behaviour towards children. This referee also rated Mr Akram as good in respect of each of the requirements of the post upon which the referee was able to comment. The panel, therefore, accepted that the incident was out of character and that there was no pattern of concerns in relation to his relationship with pupils.

Mr Akram admitted the nature of his relationship with Pupil A soon after concerns were first raised, and he has admitted all of the allegations before this panel. He has co-operated with the proceedings, provided a written statement in advance of the hearing and attended the hearing thereby demonstrating his respect for the process. Mr Akram has stated that he has sought [REDACTED], demonstrating his commitment to change and stay on a path of reflection. He has acknowledged the error of judgement that he made and has expressed remorse that his actions have brought the teaching profession into disrepute. He has recognised that his actions were inappropriate and that there was an imbalance of power in the relationship that he developed with Pupil A given that he had been in a position of authority. The panel noted, however, that Mr Akram has not yet recognised any impact that his actions may have had on Pupil A and that he described his relationship with her as an affair.

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 Akram 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 Akram. This reflected the seriousness of Mr Akram's actions in engaging in a sexual relationship with a former pupil. 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 2 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. One of these cases includes serious sexual misconduct, eg 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 his professional position to influence or exploit a person or persons. The panel found that Mr Akram was responsible for engaging in a sexual relationship with a former pupil with whom he had been in a position of trust, and that he retained a position of power and influence in relation to her.

Nevertheless, the panel did not consider that Mr Akram displayed any deep seated attitudinal issues. He co-operated with these proceedings, admitting the allegations and attending the hearing. He has expressed his regret for this actions and demonstrated insight into the circumstances that led to his behaviour, making clear that such events in no way justified or defended his actions. He has informed the panel of steps he has taken to manage such issues in the future. He has recognised the imbalance of power that existed in his relationship with Pupil A although has not yet recognised the impact or potential impact that his actions may have had on her. Given the evidence of Mr Akram's experience as a mathematics teacher over a number of years, there remains a possibility of Mr Akram making a valuable contribution to the profession, providing that he continues his path of reflection and can demonstrate that there is no risk of repetition.

After much deliberation, examining the circumstances in this particular case, the panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which Mr Akram might be able to demonstrate his fitness to return to the profession. In those circumstances, a review period would be appropriate and, as such, the panel decided that it would be proportionate for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period after 5 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 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 Adam Akram should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of five years.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Akram 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 panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Akram, involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE).

The panel finds that the conduct of Mr Akram fell significantly short of the standards expected of a teacher.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding of an inappropriate sexual relationship with Pupil A.

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 Akram, 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 panel considered that Mr Akram was in breach of the requirement to ensure his approach was child-centered and to consider, at all times, what was in the best interests of the child. Mr Akram was obliged to be aware and adhere to systems in place to support safeguarding, yet he failed to act in accordance with the School's handbook. The panel noted that KCSIE expressly states that children includes everyone under the age of 18. 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, "He has expressed his regret for this actions and demonstrated insight into the circumstances that led to his behaviour, making clear that such events in no way justified or defended his actions." The panel has also commented that Mr Akram "acknowledged the error of judgement that he made and has expressed remorse that his actions have brought the teaching profession into disrepute. He has recognised that his actions were inappropriate and that there was an imbalance of power in the relationship that he developed with Pupil A given that he had been in a position of authority. The panel noted, however, that Mr Akram has not yet recognised any impact that his actions may have had on Pupil A and that he described his relationship with her as an affair." In my judgement, the lack of what I deem to be 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 considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Akram were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession." I am particularly mindful of the finding that Mr Akram engaged in a sexual relationship with a former pupil, and that such a finding could harm 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 Akram himself, the panel comment “Mr Akram did have a previously good history, although there was no evidence that he had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or that he contributed significantly to the education sector.” The panel also observed that, “No statements attesting to Mr Akram’s character were adduced for the purpose of this hearing”. I have however noted the panels comments in relation to references provided at the time Mr Akram applied for his position at the school, and that “The panel, therefore, accepted that the incident was out of character and that there was no pattern of concerns in relation to his relationship with pupils.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Akram 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, to the contribution that Mr Akram 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 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 five year review period.

I have considered the panel’s comments, “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 panel has also said, “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. One of these cases includes serious sexual misconduct, eg 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 his professional position to influence or exploit a person or persons. The panel found that Mr Akram was responsible for engaging in a sexual relationship with a former pupil with whom he had been in a position of trust, and that he retained a position of power and influence in relation to her.”

The panel also observed, “Nevertheless, the panel did not consider that Mr Akram displayed any deep seated attitudinal issues. He co-operated with these proceedings, admitting the allegations and attending the hearing. He has expressed his regret for this actions and demonstrated insight into the circumstances that led to his behaviour, making clear that such events in no way justified or defended his actions. He has informed the panel of steps he has taken to manage such issues in the future. He has recognised the imbalance of power that existed in his relationship with Pupil A although has not yet recognised the impact or potential impact that his actions may have had on her. Given the evidence of Mr Akram’s experience as a mathematics teacher over a number of years, there remains a possibility of Mr Akram making a valuable contribution to the profession, providing that he continues his path of reflection and can demonstrate that there is no risk of repetition.”

The panel concluded that, “After much deliberation, examining the circumstances in this particular case, the panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which Mr Akram might be able to demonstrate his fitness to return to the profession. In those circumstances, a review period would be appropriate and, as such, the panel decided that it would be proportionate for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period after 5 years.” However, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s observations that, “Mr Akram had been in a position of trust, and retained a position of power and influence in relation to Pupil A, who had vulnerabilities and was aged 17. Therefore, his behaviour may have led to Pupil A being exposed to, or influenced by, the behaviour in a harmful way.” I have also placed considerable weight on the panels comments in relation to the facts found involved breaches of KCSIE, and that, “The panel noted that KCSIE expressly states that children includes everyone under the age of 18.”

Mr Akram has sought professional help, completed counselling sessions and engaged in private therapy sessions, however the panel recognised that, “Mr Akram has not yet recognised any impact that his actions may have had on Pupil A”, and “described his relationship with her as an affair.”

I have considered whether a five year review period would reflect 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 review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are that the facts found involved breaches of KCSIE, the misconduct relates to a sexual relationship with a child and that the panel considered that Mr Akram has not yet recognised any impact that his actions may have had on Pupil A, which in my opinion highlights a lack of full insight after receiving professional help, completing counselling sessions and engaging in private therapy sessions. I have also given less weight to the possibility of Mr Akram making a valuable contribution to the profession given his experience as a mathematics teacher.

In my opinion the panel has not given sufficient weight to their own finding that Mr Akram regarded the relationship as an affair. In addition, I believe the panel has given insufficient weight to their own finding that Mr Akram has not yet recognised the impact on the Pupil, this indicates a situation where the panel have not attached sufficient seriousness to the impact of his behaviour on the reputation of the profession.

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 Adam Akram 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 Akram 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 Akram 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: 26 April 2023

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