



Teaching  
Regulation  
Agency

# **Mr Ian Stockdale: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome**

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

**April 2023**

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

<b>Teacher:</b>	Mr Ian Stockdale
<b>Teacher ref number:</b>	9648339
<b>Teacher date of birth:</b>	8 October 1971
<b>TRA reference:</b>	20755
<b>Date of determination:</b>	27 April 2023
<b>Former employer:</b>	Wootton Academy Trust, Bedford

### **Introduction**

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 27 April 2023, via Microsoft Teams, to consider the case of Mr Ian Stockdale.

The panel members were Mr Diarmuid Bunting (lay panellist – in the chair), Ms Elizabeth Politt (teacher panellist) and Ms Jane Gotschel (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr James Danks of Blake Morgan LLP.

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Stockdale that the allegation be considered without a hearing. Mr Stockdale provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted having been convicted of a relevant offence. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer, Ms Clare Hastie, or Mr Stockdale.

The meeting took place in private.

## **Allegations**

The panel considered the allegation set out in the notice of meeting dated 9 February 2023.

It was alleged that Ian Stockdale was guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence, in that:

1. On 13 January 2022, he was convicted of the following offences;
  - a) Arrange/facilitate the commission of a child sex offence
  - b) Making indecent photographs of a child – category B
  - c) Making indecent photographs of a child – category C
  - d) Possess extreme pornographic image/images portraying an act of intercourse/oral sex with a dead/live animal.

Mr Stockdale admitted that he had been convicted of a relevant offence.

## **Preliminary applications**

There were no preliminary applications.

## **Summary of evidence**

### **Documents**

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

Section 1: Chronology and anonymised pupil list – pages 3 to 4

Section 2: Notice of referral and response – pages 5 to 12

Section 3: Statement of Agreed Facts – pages 14 to 16

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 17 to 58

In addition, the panel also had sight of the notice of meeting correspondence dated 9 February 2023.

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the meeting.

## Statement of agreed facts

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr Stockdale on 31 October 2022.

## Decision and reasons

The panel carefully considered the case and reached a decision.

In advance of the meeting, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Stockdale for the allegation to be considered without a hearing. The panel had the ability to direct that the case be considered at a hearing if required in the interests of justice or in the public interest. The panel did not determine that such a direction was necessary or appropriate in this case.

In July 2021, Mr Stockdale engaged in online communications with a female. During these conversations, Mr Stockdale discussed the sexual abuse of the female's daughter, aged 9.

The female was, in fact, an undercover police officer. Mr Stockdale was arrested in July 2021, and subsequently pleaded guilty to the criminal offences stated in the allegation. In March 2022, he was sentenced to four years imprisonment, and placed on the Sex Offenders Register indefinitely. He was also made the subject of a Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

## Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

**It was alleged that you were guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence, in that:**

- 1. On 13 January 2022, you were convicted of the following offences;**
  - a) Arrange/facilitate the commission of a child sex offence**
  - b) Making indecent photographs of a child – category B**
  - c) Making indecent photographs of a child – category C**
  - d) Possess extreme pornographic image/images portraying an act of intercourse/oral sex with a dead/live animal.**

The panel noted the Certificate of Conviction ('the Certificate'), dated 13 January 2022, within the bundle. The Certificate stated that Mr Stockdale had been convicted of the criminal offences stated in the particulars of the allegation.

The panel also noted the statement of agreed facts, within which Mr Stockdale accepted having been convicted of the stated criminal offences.

On the basis of the above, the panel was content that Mr Stockdale had been convicted of the criminal offences stated within the allegation.

## **Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence**

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Stockdale in relation to the facts it found proved involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that by reference to Part 2, Mr Stockdale 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

Mr Stockdale had been convicted of serious criminal offences, which involved harm being caused, or him intending to cause harm, to children. Such offences could clearly impact on the safety of pupils and members of the public.

The panel also took account of the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Mr Stockdale's behaviour in committing the offence could affect public confidence in the teaching profession, given the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community.

The panel noted that Mr Stockdale's behaviour ultimately led to a sentence of imprisonment, which was indicative of the seriousness of the offences committed.

This was a case involving offences of sexual activity, and also viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or pseudo photograph or image of a child, or permitting any such activity, including one off incidents, which the Advice states is likely to be considered a relevant offence.

The panel considered that a finding that these convictions were for relevant offences was necessary to reaffirm clear standards of conduct so as to maintain public confidence in the teaching profession.

## Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of Mr Stockdale's conviction of relevant offences, it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

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

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

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

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Stockdale, which involved him being convicted of criminal offences relating to the attempted facilitation of child sex offences, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the protection of pupils.

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

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

Notwithstanding the clear public interest considerations that were present, the panel considered carefully whether or not it would be proportionate to impose a prohibition order, taking into account the effect that this would have on Mr Stockdale.

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

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

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;
- a deep-seated attitude that leads to harmful behaviour;
- 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;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or pseudo photograph or image of a child, or permitting such activity, including one-off incidents;
- the commission of a serious criminal offence, including those that resulted in a conviction or caution, paying particular attention to offences that are 'relevant matters' for the purposes of The Police Act 1997 and criminal record disclosures.

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate, the panel went on to consider the mitigating factors. Mitigating factors may indicate that a prohibition order would not be appropriate or proportionate.

In the light of the panel's findings, there were no mitigating factors that it could take into account to indicate that a probation order was not appropriate.

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would not be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order. Recommending that the publication of adverse findings was sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Mr Stockdale 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 Stockdale. Mr Stockdale had been convicted of incredibly serious criminal offences, which had led to a lengthy sentence of imprisonment, and this situation clearly demonstrated that a recommendation to the Secretary of State should be made that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

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

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

- serious sexual misconduct, such as where the act was sexually motivated and resulted in or had the potential to result in, harm to a person or persons;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or pseudo photograph or image of a child.

The panel found that Mr Stockdale had made arrangements to carry out the sexual abuse of a child. The panel was unaware as to whether Mr Stockdale would actually follow through with these arrangements. Nevertheless, such discussion and arrangements being made was fundamentally incompatible with him remaining as a teacher. The panel also had the same view for the other three offences that Mr Stockdale had been convicted of.

The panel noted from the sentencing remarks that it had been suggested Mr Stockdale [REDACTED], and that this may have contributed to his criminal offending. In the panel's view, this indicated Mr Stockdale's lack of willingness to accept responsibility for his actions.

In the light of Mr Stockdale's conduct, and subsequent criminal conviction with a substantial custodial sentence being passed, the panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate.

As such, the panel decided that it would be proportionate in all the circumstances for the prohibition order to be recommended without provisions for a review period.

## **Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State**

I have given very careful consideration to this case and to the 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 a relevant conviction.

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

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Stockdale 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

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

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a conviction involving offences of sexual activity, and also viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or pseudo photograph or image of a child.

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 a relevant conviction, 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 Stockdale, 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, "In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Stockdale, which involved him being convicted of criminal offences relating to the attempted facilitation of child sex offences, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the protection of pupils." A prohibition order would therefore prevent such a risk from being present in the future.

I have also taken into account the panel's comments on insight and remorse, which the panel sets out as follows, "The panel noted from the sentencing remarks that it had been suggested Mr Stockdale [REDACTED], and that this may have contributed to his criminal offending. In the panel's view, this indicated Mr Stockdale's lack of willingness to accept responsibility for his actions." In my judgement, the lack of insight and remorse 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 also took account of the way

the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Mr Stockdale's behaviour in committing the offence could affect public confidence in the teaching profession, given the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community." I am particularly mindful of the finding of involving viewing indecent images of children 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 a relevant conviction, 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 Stockdale himself and the panel comment "In the light of the panel's findings, there were no mitigating factors that it could take into account to indicate that a probation order was not appropriate."

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel's comments, "The panel found that Mr Stockdale had made arrangements to carry out the sexual abuse of a child. The panel was unaware as to whether Mr Stockdale would actually follow through with these arrangements. Nevertheless, such discussion and arrangements being made was fundamentally incompatible with him remaining as a teacher. The panel also had the same view for the other three offences that Mr Stockdale had been convicted of."

I have also given considerable weight to the following "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 Stockdale. Mr Stockdale had been convicted of incredibly serious criminal offences, which had led to a lengthy sentence of imprisonment, and this situation clearly demonstrated that a recommendation to the Secretary of State should be made that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect."

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Stockdale 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 that no provision should be made for a review period.

I have considered the panel's comments "In the light of Mr Stockdale's conduct, and subsequent criminal conviction with a substantial custodial sentence being passed, the panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate."

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 the seriousness of the findings and the lack of insight and remorse.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Buxcey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey**

**Date: 3 May 2023**

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