



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Christopher Ridgewell: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome

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

October 2023

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

Teacher:	Mr Christopher Ridgewell
Teacher ref number:	1970748
Teacher date of birth:	18 December 1995
TRA reference:	19632
Date of determination:	26 October 2023
Former employer:	The Sandon School, Chelmsford

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 26 October 2023 by virtual means, to consider the case of Mr Christopher Ridgewell.

The panel members were Mr Aidan Jenkins (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Caroline Downes (lay panellist) and Dr Lee Longden (former teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Miss Shanie Probert of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP solicitors.

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Ridgewell that the allegations be considered without a hearing. Mr Ridgewell provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted the conviction of a relevant offence. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer, Ms Kiera Riddy of Browne Jacobson LLP solicitors, or Mr Ridgewell.

The meeting took place in private and was not recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of meeting dated 9 August 2023.

It was alleged that Mr Ridgewell was guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence, in that:

1. On or around 30 November 2021, he was convicted at North Essex Magistrates Court of three (3) offences of making indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children on 10/04/15 – 12/12/20 contrary to the Protection of Children Act 1978 s.1(a);
2. On or around 30 November 2021, he was convicted at North Essex Magistrates Court of one (1) offence of possession of extreme photographic images – of intercourse/oral sex with dead/alive animal 12/11/20 contrary to the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 s.63(1)(7)(d); and
3. On or around 30 November 2021, he was convicted at North Essex Magistrates Court of two (2) offences of distributing indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children on 12/11/20 contrary to the Protection of Children Act 1978 s.1.

The panel noted that Mr Ridgewell had admitted the allegations and had further admitted that his behaviour amounted to the conviction of a relevant offence.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Notice of Referral and Response – pages 3 to 13

Section 2: Statement of Agreed Facts and Presenting Officer Representations – pages 15 to 20

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 22 to 34

Section 4: Teacher documents – pages 36 to 47

The panel also received the Notice of Meeting dated 9 August 2023, which was provided separately, as it was served on the teacher after the bundle had been prepared.

Statement of agreed facts

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr Ridgewell on 15 May 2023.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

The panel carefully considered the case and reached a decision.

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

Mr Ridgewell was employed as a teacher by The Sandon School (“the School”) from 1 September 2020. Prior to this, on 22 July 2020, Essex Police discovered that a Kik account had been used to upload indecent videos of children onto the internet. It was found that the internet connection was at Mr Ridgewell’s address and that Mr Ridgewell was responsible for the videos that were being uploaded.

Mr Ridgewell was suspended from the School on 13 November 2020. Essex Police referred Mr Ridgewell to the TRA on 16 November 2020. On 23 November 2020, Mr Ridgewell resigned from his position 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:

You have been convicted, at any time, of a relevant offence in that:

- 1. On or around 30 November 2021, you were convicted at North Essex Magistrates Court of three (3) offences of making indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children on 10/04/15 – 12/11/20 contrary to the Protection of Children Act 1978 s.1(a);**
- 2. On or around 30 November 2021, you were convicted at North Essex Magistrates Court of one (1) offence of possession of extreme pornographic images – of intercourse/oral sex with a dead/alive animal on 12/11/20 contrary to the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 s.63(1)(7)(d); and**
- 3. On or around 30 November 2021, you were convicted at North Essex Magistrates Court of two (2) offences of distributing indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children on 12/11/20 contrary to the Protection of Children Act 1978 s.1.**

The allegation was admitted by Mr Ridgewell in the statement of agreed facts that he signed on 15 June 2023.

The statement of agreed facts also confirmed the following facts: Mr Ridgewell had used Kik to upload indecent videos of children onto the internet, which was discovered by Essex Police on 22 July 2020. On 30 November 2021, Mr Ridgewell pled guilty and was convicted of: three (3) counts of making photographs or pseudo-photographs of children contrary to s.1(a) of the Protection of Children Act 1978, one (1) count of possessing extreme pornographic images of intercourse/oral sex with a dead/alive animal contrary to s.63(1)(7)(d) of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, and two (2) counts of distributing indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children contrary to s.1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978.

On 7 June 2022, Mr Ridgewell was sentenced at Chelmsford Crown Court to a 21-month imprisonment suspended for 24 months, and a sexual harm prevention order imposed for 10 years. Mr Ridgewell was also placed on the sex offenders' register for a period of 10 years, was sentenced with a rehabilitation activity requirement of 30 days, and was required to complete an "iHorizon Programme".

The panel has seen the certificate of conviction and accepted it as conclusive proof of the convictions and the facts necessarily implied by the convictions.

The panel found the allegations proven.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence

Having found the allegations proved, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of those proved allegations amounted to the conviction of a relevant offence.

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

Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by

- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- not undermining fundamental British values, including ... the rule of law, ...

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

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

The panel noted that the individual's actions were relevant to teaching, working with children and/or working in an education setting. Whilst the panel noted that Mr Ridgewell

stated that he had not committed the offending behaviour during his working hours at the School, and that his behaviour did not involve any pupils at the School, the offences committed were serious offences that involved young children aged 12 to 15 years old. The panel noted that Mr Ridgewell had also admitted to being sexually interested in young females aged 12 to 15 years old at the time of the offending behaviour and considered that this was very harmful to children in an education setting. Whilst the panel did not have sight of the School's policies and details of the School's safeguarding training practices, on balance, the panel was of the view that Mr Ridgewell's behaviour would be contrary to those policies and practices.

The panel considered that Mr Ridgewell's actions had a potential impact on the safety or security of pupils or members of the public.

The panel also took account of the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Mr Ridgewell's behaviour in committing the offence would be likely to affect public confidence in the teaching profession, if Mr Ridgewell was allowed to continue teaching.

The panel noted that Mr Ridgewell's behaviour ultimately led to a sentence of imprisonment, (albeit that it was suspended), which was indicative of the seriousness of the offences committed, and which the Advice states is likely to be considered "a relevant offence".

This was a case concerning offences relating to activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child. The Advice indicates that a conviction for any offence that relates to or involves such offences is likely to be considered "a relevant offence".

These were particularly serious offences. The panel had sight of the sentencing remarks of His Honour [REDACTED], which acknowledged that Mr Ridgewell had indicated that he had a sexual interest in girls aged between 12 and 15 years old and that he did derive sexual gratification from his behaviour. The panel also noted that Mr Ridgewell had been convicted of distributing indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children, which has increased the level of seriousness of the offence by a large degree.

The panel took into account that Mr Ridgewell had pled guilty to the offences with which he was charged. The panel also took into account the Judge's sentencing remarks, which stated that Mr Ridgewell had been open and honest, and did not try to explain or avoid responsibility for the charges against him. The sentencing remarks also referred to Mr Ridgewell having volunteered the information in respect of the distribution counts to Essex Police, which had led to those charges being laid.

The panel took into account a psychiatric report that was prepared following an assessment of Mr Ridgewell as part of the criminal proceedings. The report detailed how

Mr Ridgewell had been [REDACTED] from a young age, and that in the psychiatrist's opinion, Mr Ridgewell's intention to commit the offences was influenced to a large extent by him [REDACTED] as a consequence of this diagnosis. The psychiatrist also described [REDACTED]". The panel noted that they did not have the sufficient level of medical knowledge to question the credibility of the psychiatric report, however, they were particularly mindful of Mr Ridgewell's diagnosis and considered the impact that this would have had on his personal and professional life, and his [REDACTED].

The panel noted that in his psychiatric assessment, Mr Ridgewell stated that he initially started watching pornography relating to 14 year old girls when he was 14 years old and had done so "on and off" over a period of three (3) years, but he had then stopped as he felt it was wrong. However, Mr Ridgewell stated that he had started to re-offend in March 2020, by watching pornography involving girls aged 12 to 15 years old, as he was struggling with his secondary school teaching placement and he had felt lonely during the first lockdown.

The panel had sight of comments from Mr Ridgewell in which he stated that he had undertaken an online course provided by "Stop It Now!" since his conviction, and had been taking part in sessions in addition to probation, to reduce his likelihood of reoffending. The evidence of the course and sessions was not before the panel. However, the panel noted the Judge had concluded that the risk posed by Mr Ridgewell against the background of his [REDACTED] can be reduced by intervention, and that there was a reasonable prospect of rehabilitation at this stage in Mr Ridgewell's life.

Therefore, the panel found that the seriousness of the offending behaviour that led to the conviction was relevant to Mr Ridgewell's fitness to be a teacher. 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 a conviction of a relevant offence, 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 Ridgewell 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 and the protection of other members of the public, 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 findings of making and distributing indecent images of children, and taking into account Mr Ridgewell's sexual vulnerabilities and interest in young females aged 12 to 15 years old. The panel particularly felt there would be a strong consideration in this instance given that Mr Ridgewell would likely be surrounded by pupils of a similar age were he to continue teaching.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Ridgewell were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession. In particular, the panel noted that Mr Ridgewell is on the sex offenders' register and is also subject to a sexual harm prevention order, and that this could only possibly result in a negative impact on public confidence in 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 Ridgewell was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

The panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweigh any interest in retaining Mr Ridgewell in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.

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;

- 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 disclosure;

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

- sexual misconduct, for example, involving actions that were sexually motivated or of a sexual nature ...;

any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, or permitting such activity, including one-off incidents;

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)

... other deliberate behaviour that undermines pupils, the profession, the school or colleagues;

actions or behaviours ... that undermine the rule of law, ...; and

a deep-seated attitude that leads to harmful behaviour.

Even though 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/or whether there were mitigating circumstances.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Ridgewell's actions were not deliberate. There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Ridgewell was acting under extreme duress, e.g. a physical threat or significant intimidation.

There is no evidence as to whether Mr Ridgewell has a history of any previous convictions nor is there any evidence of his disciplinary record prior to this matter. The panel also noted that in the short time he was teaching, there was no evidence of Mr Ridgewell having demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or of having contributed significantly to the education sector. It is apparent from the certificate of conviction in the bundle that Mr Ridgewell had engaged in the offending behaviour on more than one occasion.

No statements were adduced for the purpose of this professional conduct panel meeting attesting to Mr Ridgewell's character or teaching ability.

The panel considered Mr Ridgewell's representations provided in advance of the meeting. Mr Ridgewell stated that he had attended "Stop It Now!" training following his conviction and that he had also attended one-to-one and group sessions to reduce his likelihood of reoffending. Mr Ridgewell also stated that he had worked hard with his probation officer and had attended therapy sessions to help with [REDACTED]. The panel noted that in the psychiatrist's opinion, Mr Ridgewell's likelihood of reoffending would be low following this type of intervention, and that the Judge appeared to agree with this.

The panel noted that they did not have the sufficient medical expertise and knowledge of Mr Ridgewell's disability to question the accuracy of the report, and therefore did not doubt the credibility of the psychiatrist's evidence. However, the panel also noted that no

evidence had been provided to demonstrate the courses and/or sessions attended by Mr Ridgewell and therefore felt they had insufficient knowledge of Mr Ridgewell's rehabilitation to consider the impact this had on him, which was particularly concerning given the seriousness of the offending behaviour.

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 a 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 Ridgewell 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 Ridgewell. The seriousness of the offending behaviour and Mr Ridgewell's admitted sexual interest in young females aged 12 to 15 years old were significant factors in forming that opinion. 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. These cases include any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child. The panel found that Mr Ridgewell was responsible for such activity, specifically in making and distributing indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children.

The panel took into account representations provided by Mr Ridgewell in advance of the meeting, and considered his level of insight. In particular, Mr Ridgewell stated that he is guilty for what he has done and that he thinks about what he has done "with disgust". The panel also considered the contents of the psychiatric report, in which it was recorded that Mr Ridgewell stated he had felt "terrible and disgusted" by his actions. Mr Ridgewell also stated that he did not abuse his position as a teacher and he did not believe that he should be prohibited from teaching adults in the future. Whilst the panel felt that Mr Ridgewell had enough insight to know that his actions were wrong, they did not feel as

though Mr Ridgewell had demonstrated a sufficient level of insight into the impact of his behaviour on children, the education profession or the public as a whole.

The panel took into account the psychiatrist's report, which detailed how Mr Ridgewell had been in a [REDACTED] at the time of the offending as he was struggling to adjust his lifestyle to cope [REDACTED]. The panel also noted that Mr Ridgewell stated he had been struggling with teaching in a classroom setting during his employment. The report also detailed how Mr Ridgewell had been seeking support for these issues, and that he also stated that he had thought he had grown out of his sexual attraction to young girls. However, the panel remained very concerned that Mr Ridgewell had previously admitted having a sexual interest in girls aged 12 to 15 on more than one occasion and that if Mr Ridgewell was permitted to teach children in the future, he would be surrounded by young girls this age. The panel was also concerned that if Mr Ridgewell was to experience personal difficulties [REDACTED] in the future, then this may result in Mr Ridgewell engaging in conduct likely to result in reoffending. The panel also took into account Mr Ridgewell's email to the presenting officer, in which he stated he understood that it would be the right decision to prohibit him from teaching children.

Overall, there was insufficient evidence of insight as to the impact on victims or of Mr Ridgewell's rehabilitation to persuade the panel that the risk of repetition was low. Furthermore, notwithstanding the mitigating issues relating to Mr Ridgewell's disability that are described in the psychiatric report, the panel felt that the serious nature of the offences are such that Mr Ridgewell is unsuitable to work with children.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate and, as such, 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 Christopher Ridgewell should be the subject of a prohibition order, with no provision for a review period.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Ridgewell is in breach of the following standards:

Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by

- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- not undermining fundamental British values, including ... the rule of law, ...

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

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 Ridgewell involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE), namely the 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 finds that the conduct of Mr Ridgewell fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding of a conviction for the relevant offences of making and distributing photographs or pseudo-photographs of children, and possessing extreme pornographic images.

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

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would protect children and safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, "Whilst the panel noted that Mr Ridgewell stated that he had not committed the offending behaviour during his working hours at the School, and that his behaviour did not involve any pupils at the School, the offences committed were serious offences that involved young children aged 12 to 15

years old. The panel noted that Mr Ridgewell had also admitted to being sexually interested in young females aged 12 to 15 years old at the time of the offending behaviour, and considered that this was very harmful to children in an education setting.” 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 Ridgewell stated that he is guilty for what he has done and that he thinks about what he has done “with disgust”. The panel also considered the contents of the psychiatric report, in which it was recorded that Mr Ridgewell stated he had felt “terrible and disgusted” by his actions. Mr Ridgewell also stated that he did not abuse his position as a teacher and he did not believe that he should be prohibited from teaching adults in the future. Whilst the panel felt that Mr Ridgewell had enough insight to know that his actions were wrong, they did not feel as though Mr Ridgewell had demonstrated a sufficient level of insight into the impact of his behaviour on children, the education profession or the public as a whole.” In my judgement, the lack of full insight means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour and this puts at risk the future wellbeing of pupils. I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe, “public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Ridgewell were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession. In particular, the panel noted that Mr Ridgewell is on the sex offenders’ register and is also subject to a sexual harm prevention order, and that this could only possibly result in a negative impact on public confidence in the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of a conviction for serious offences that involved children aged 12 to 15 years old 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 Ridgewell himself. The panel comment “There is no evidence as to whether Mr Ridgewell has a history of any previous convictions nor is there any evidence of his disciplinary record prior to this matter. The panel also noted that in the short time he was teaching, there was no evidence of Mr Ridgewell having demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his

personal and professional conduct or of having contributed significantly to the education sector.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Ridgewell 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 taken account of the panel’s comments on the psychiatrist’s report “which detailed how Mr Ridgewell had been in a [REDACTED] at the time of the offending as he was struggling to adjust his lifestyle to cope [REDACTED]. The panel also noted that Mr Ridgewell stated he had been struggling with teaching in a classroom setting during his employment. The report also detailed how Mr Ridgewell had been seeking support for these issues, and that he also stated that he had thought he had grown out of his sexual attraction to young girls. However, the panel remained very concerned that Mr Ridgewell had previously admitted having a sexual interest in girls aged 12 to 15 on more than one occasion and that if Mr Ridgewell was permitted to teach children in the future, he would be surrounded by young girls this age. The panel was also concerned that if Mr Ridgewell was to experience personal difficulties [REDACTED] in the future, then this may result in Mr Ridgewell engaging in conduct likely to result in reoffending.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the lack of insight or remorse. The panel has said, “Overall, there was insufficient evidence of insight as to the impact on victims or of Mr Ridgewell’s rehabilitation to persuade the panel that the risk of repetition was low. Furthermore, notwithstanding the mitigating issues relating to Mr Ridgewell’s disability that are described in the psychiatric report, the panel felt that the serious nature of the offences are such that Mr Ridgewell is unsuitable to work with children.”

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

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

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

I have considered the panel’s comments “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. These cases include any activity

involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child. The panel found that Mr Ridgewell was responsible for such activity, specifically in making and distributing indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children.”

I have considered whether 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 review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the serious nature of the offences of which Mr Ridgewell was convicted, the lack of full insight and the damage to the public’s perception of the teaching 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 Christopher Ridgewell 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 Ridgewell 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 Ridgewell 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 'D Oatley', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Decision maker: David Oatley

Date: 31 October 2023

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