



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mrs Karen Dennett: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

January 2024

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Professional conduct panel decision and recommendations

Teacher:	Mrs Karen Dennett
TRA reference:	18719
Date of determination:	9 February 2024
Former employer:	Sherington Primary School, London

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ('the panel') of the Teaching Regulation Agency ('the TRA') convened on 22 to 26 January 2024 and on 9 February 2024 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mrs Karen Dennett.

The panel members were Ms Gill Lyon (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Amanda Godfrey (former teacher panellist) and Mrs Beverley Montgomery (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Abigail Hubert of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Fallon Alexis of QEB Hollis Whiteman.

Mrs Dennett was present and was represented by Mr Jonathan Storey of Cornwall Street Barristers.

The hearing took place by way of a virtual hearing in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 3 November 2023.

It was alleged that Mrs Dennett was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst headteacher at Sherington Primary School ('the School'):

1. On an unknown date between April 2013 and 18 January 2019 she created a written record of risk assessment for Witness D and provided a copy of this written risk assessment to Witness B during her disciplinary investigation, when in fact no contemporaneous risk assessment relating to his employment had taken place;
2. Between 2014 and 2018 she engaged [REDACTED], Witness D, to work as the [REDACTED] and she:
 - a) Did not ensure that Witness D's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) details were recorded on the School's Single Central Record;
 - b) Did not inform Witness A, the new [REDACTED] at the School of Witness D's previous dismissal from [REDACTED] School for safeguarding concerns;
 - c) Did not ensure that the School undertook a risk assessment in relation to Witness D's engagement in the light of previous safeguarding concerns.
3. By her conduct set out above she failed to take appropriate steps to safeguard pupils' well-being
4. By her conduct set out above she was dishonest.

Mrs Dennett admitted allegations 1, 2(a), 2(b) and 2(c), as set out in the statement of agreed facts signed by Mrs Dennett on the 13 April 2022. Mrs Dennett admitted allegation 3 at the hearing. Mrs Dennett denied allegation 4, as set out in the response to notice of referral, signed by Mrs Dennett on 20 September 2021.

Preliminary applications

The panel noted that since the date of the referral to the TRA in this case, new 'Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession' were published in May 2020 (the "2020 Procedures"). The panel understands that the earlier provisions contained within the 'Teacher misconduct: disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession' updated in April 2018 (the "2018 Procedures") apply to this case, given that those provisions applied when the referral was made. Although the panel has the power to direct that the 2020 Procedures should apply in the interests of justice or the public

interest, the panel had received no representations that this should be the case. For the avoidance of doubt, therefore, the panel confirms that it has applied the 2018 Procedures in this case.

Day one

Application for part of the hearing to be heard in private

The panel considered an application from Mrs Dennett that any part of the hearing that related to [REDACTED] should be heard in private.

The panel heard submissions from the teacher's representative on the application before reaching its decision. The presenting officer did not have an objection to the application.

The panel granted the application. The panel considered it was not contrary to the public interest for the part of the hearing, which was the subject of the application, to be heard in private.

The panel considered that the areas covered in the application legitimately related to aspects of Mrs Dennett's private life and there was no contrary public interest in those areas being discussed in public. The hearing was still being held in public and these were discrete and limited areas which would not undermine the public's ability to otherwise understand the case. The panel therefore granted the application.

Application to amend allegations

The presenting officer and teacher's representative made a joint application to amend allegation 2(b) to remove the wording "*and/or relevant staff members*".

The panel was advised that it had the power to amend allegations in accordance with paragraph 4.56 of the 2018 Procedures.

The panel noted that the allegation had been understood by the parties to be as drafted with the proposed amendment. Further, the statement of agreed facts had been signed in line with the proposed amendment. As such, the panel considered that the proposed amendment would not change the nature and scope of the allegation and did not amount to a material change.

The legal adviser drew the panel's attention to the case of *Dr Bashir Ahmedsowida v General Medical Council [2021] EWHC 3466 (Admin), 2021 WL 06064095* which held that the lateness of amendments did not necessarily mean they were unjust, as acknowledged in the previous case of *Professional Standards Authority v Health and Care Professions Council and Doree [2017] EWCA Civ 319 at [56]*.

Accordingly, the panel granted this application and considered the amended allegations, which are set out above.

Day three

Application to admit an additional document

On the third day of the hearing, during Witness D's witness evidence, reference was made to a letter from the DBS which stated page one of two. Page two of the letter was not contained in the bundle or the teacher's bundle. The panel considered an application from the presenting officer for the admission of the additional document.

The document subject to the application had not been served in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.20 of the 2018 Procedures. Therefore, the panel was required to decide whether the documents should be admitted under paragraph 4.25 of the 2018 Procedures.

The panel heard representations from the presenting officer and teacher's representative in respect of the application. The teacher's representative did not have an objection to the application.

The panel considered that the additional document was relevant from the perspective of ensuring that it had sight of the complete document. Accordingly, the document was added to the bundle.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

- Section 1: Chronology, list of key people and anonymised pupil list – pages 1 and 2
- Section 2: Notice of referral, statement of agreed facts, notice of proceedings and response – pages 3 to 17
- Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 18 to 46
- Section 4: TRA documents – pages 47 to 396
- Teacher's bundle provided separately – pages 1 to 87
- Supplemental bundle provided separately- pages 1 to 428

The panel also agreed to accept the following:

- Page 2 of a letter from the Disclosure and Barring Service dated 16 March 2013 – page 72a

Witnesses

The panel heard oral evidence from the following witnesses called by the TRA:

- Witness A – [REDACTED] at the School
- Witness B – [REDACTED] at the School
- Witness C – [REDACTED] at the School

The panel heard from oral evidence from the following witnesses called by the teacher's representative:

- Mrs Karen Dennett
- Witness D
- Witness E

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

In September 2000, Mrs Dennett was seconded to work at the School. After a term as acting deputy she was employed as a deputy headteacher at the School in January 2001. She was later appointed as headteacher of the School in September 2014.

Witness D, [REDACTED], undertook maintenance work for the School for the first time on 4 February 2009 and thereafter on an ad hoc basis. The initial engagement of Witness D was prior to Mrs Dennett's appointment to headteacher.

Between July 2015 and April 2018, Witness D subsequently provided cover for the [REDACTED] on an ad-hoc basis. Between May 2018 to September 2018 Witness D provided full-time cover during the planned absence of the [REDACTED]. In September 2018 this became part-time cover to aid the [REDACTED] return to work.

On the 5 December 2018, an anonymous LADO letter was received regarding Witness D's dismissal from another [REDACTED] school. The following month an investigation interview with Mrs Dennett was undertaken. On 28 January 2019, an investigation report was completed by Witness B.

On the 23 May 2019, a disciplinary hearing with Mrs Dennett took place and Mrs Dennett was dismissed from the School. Mrs Dennett subsequently appealed her dismissal and,

on the 19 July 2019, an appeal dismissal hearing took place. On the 30 July 2019, a letter was sent to Mrs Dennett confirming that the appeal was not upheld.

On the 19 September 2019, the matter was referred to the TRA.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel first noted that within the statement of agreed facts signed by Mrs Dennett on 13 April 2022, Mrs Dennett admitted allegations 1, 2(a), 2(b) and 2(c) in their entirety. Notwithstanding the statement of agreed facts, the panel made a determination on the evidence available to it.

The panel also noted at the outset that there was hearsay evidence in the hearing bundles. The panel was advised that hearsay evidence is admissible in civil proceedings but that it should be recognised as hearsay and the panel should determine the weight to be placed on it.

The panel also considered the extensive character references provided by Mrs Dennett, which the panel deemed may be relevant both in terms of Mrs Dennett's credibility and propensity to commit the conduct alleged. The panel noted that many of the individuals providing the references had been made aware of the allegations but spoke highly of Mrs Dennett as a person as well as in her professional role.

1. On an unknown date between April 2013 and 18 January 2019 you created a written record of risk assessment for Witness D and provided a copy of this written risk assessment to Witness B during her disciplinary investigation, when in fact no contemporaneous risk assessment relating to his employment had taken place;

The panel had sight of the risk assessment. The panel noted that the document did not appear to be typical of a risk assessment that you would usually see completed. The panel further noted Mrs Dennett's signature and date in each section next to what appeared to be actions that Mrs Dennett had taken at that time in relation to Witness D's engagement at the School.

The panel considered the written and oral evidence of Mrs Dennett.

Mrs Dennett stated that she created a written record of risk assessment for Witness D and provided a copy of this to Witness B ahead of the investigation meeting that was held on 28 January 2019. Mrs Dennett had confirmed that she had signed the document multiple times at some point in December 2018 and not at each of the dates stipulated next to the signatures in the document.

Mrs Dennett stated that she was told that there was no record of Witness D carrying out work at the School, so she produced as much evidence as she could before her account was closed over the Christmas period. Mrs Dennett explained that she had found a risk assessment form on a memory stick and put together the risk assessment as her account of any action she had taken, when taking on Witness D as an [REDACTED]. Mrs Dennett said that she created the risk assessment “*in a panic, in an effort to clarify the chronology of events*”. It was an attempt to prove her innocence as she believed that the Royal Borough of Greenwich (“RBG”) were “*out to get*” her.

Mrs Dennett further stated that she shared the risk assessment with Witness B, thinking that Witness B would see the ongoing wider events in context and realise it was a “*set up*” following the perceived attempts to discredit her. She stated that she never presented it as a contemporaneous document but described it as a record of what she had done at the relevant time.

Mrs Dennett stated that she made it verbally clear in every meeting that she had written this risk assessment after the event and stated that she never presented the document as being created contemporaneously.

Mrs Dennett explained that at the time she put the risk assessment together she thought she was [REDACTED]. She stated that she was [REDACTED] and should not have attended the initial meeting on 13 December 2018. She stated [REDACTED]. Witness E submitted that after Mrs Dennett was suspended, she was [REDACTED] and, in his view, she was [REDACTED]. The panel considered it was clear from the evidence available to it that Mrs Dennett’s [REDACTED] when she created the risk assessment document.

The panel also considered the oral and written evidence of Witness B, who stated that Mrs Dennett provided the local education authority’s human resources department with a bundle of papers on approximately 17 January 2019, ahead of the investigation meeting which was scheduled for the 28 January 2019. She stated that within this bundle was a risk assessment.

Witness B submitted that on the face of it the document appeared to be a piece of evidence that Mrs Dennett sought to rely upon to demonstrate that she had followed a safer recruitment process when she hired Witness D.

Witness B stated that Mrs Dennett presented the risk assessment as a contemporaneous document, as though she had completed it with Individual G [REDACTED] and Individual F [REDACTED]. Witness B submitted that she had concerns regarding its authenticity as only Mrs Dennett had signed the document, even though it was dated April 2013 and was on the School’s old headed paper. Witness B stated that she had telephone calls with Individual G where she confirmed that she did not recall being part of a meeting to assess the risk of employing Witness D.

The panel noted that there was no documentary evidence provided to demonstrate how the risk assessment was initially presented to Witness B by Mrs Dennett.

Witness B stated that during the investigation meeting with Mrs Dennett on 28 January 2019, she asked Mrs Dennett about the risk assessment to which she stated it was not an official risk assessment and that she had drafted it in a panic as an effort to clarify the chronology of events.

The panel considered it was clear that Mrs Dennett had created a risk assessment following the initial meeting in December 2018 and had provided a copy of this to Witness B, when in fact no contemporaneous risk assessment had taken place.

The panel therefore found allegation 1 proven.

2. Between 2014 and 2018 you engaged [REDACTED], Witness D, to work as the [REDACTED] and you:

a) Did not ensure that Witness D's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) details were recorded on the School's Single Central Record;

The panel considered the oral and written evidence of Mrs Dennett. Mrs Dennett acknowledged that as a minimum Witness D should have had an enhanced DBS certificate on file at the School.

Mrs Dennett submitted she assumed all relevant procedures were being followed by the [REDACTED] and other administrative staff. Mrs Dennett stated that she had assumed "*all the necessary checks were being carried out*". The panel noted that Mrs Dennett evidently believed that she had a team of people to assist her with these checks but she accepted that, in her role as headteacher, she oversees those individuals.

Mrs Dennett further acknowledged the administrative oversight in not recognising Witness D's DBS number was missing when she periodically signed off the record for the School's Single Central Record ("SCR").

Mrs Dennett expressed that although she must take ultimate responsibility as a headteacher, she considered this was also a collective failure of the School and RBG. The panel noted the ad hoc nature of Witness D's role, as submitted by Mrs Dennett as being part of the reason that the lack of DBS check for Witness D may not have been picked up on when reviewing the SCR record.

The panel further noted that the SCR had not only been internally reviewed by Mrs Dennett, the [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] but also by RBG through an external safeguarding audit and no-one had realised that Witness D's DBS details were not on the SCR. The panel considered that there were a catalogue of individuals who had allowed the issue of Witness D's DBS check to slip through the net.

The panel also considered the oral and written evidence of Witness C, who confirmed that as the [REDACTED] one of her duties is to complete the DBS application form and evidence checks, but the responsibility to ensure that the DBS was actually completed and safer recruitment procedures were followed, ultimately lies with the headteacher/chair of governors as stated in the RBG guidance.

The panel considered the oral and written evidence of Witness B, who stated that a DBS check was not requested for Witness D until 2018, after he had already been in the role of [REDACTED]. The panel noted the other evidence contained in the bundle which showed that the DBS request was made in late 2017 but was received in February 2018. Witness B also submitted that the responsibility to ensure that all DBS checks are carried out ultimately falls on the headteacher.

The panel also considered the oral and witness evidence of Witness D, who confirmed that he considered that his DBS check was held centrally by RBG and was not aware of the process involved with a DBS check.

The panel considered the Single Central Record Guidance contained in the bundle and noted that the guidance is intended for “*head teachers*”, “*governing bodies, proprietors and board of trustees*” and “*staff in school delegated with responsibility for maintaining the school’s SCR*”. The panel noted that the guidance made clear what staff should be recorded on the SCR. The panel acknowledged however, that this guidance is dated October 2016 and therefore, would not have covered the period when Witness D was engaged prior to this date.

Despite a number of individual failings to realise that Witness D’s DBS check was not contained on the SCR, the panel considered that the overarching responsibility of ensuring that Witness D’s DBS check was on the SCR fell to the headteacher and, therefore, Mrs Dennett.

The panel therefore found allegation 2(a) proven.

b) Did not inform Witness A, the [REDACTED] at the School of Witness D’s previous dismissal from [REDACTED] School for safeguarding concerns;

The panel had sight of a letter dated 27 January 2019 in which Mrs Dennett wrote to Witness A apologising that she had withheld the information relating to Witness D’s dismissal.

The panel next considered the oral and written evidence of Mrs Dennett.

Mrs Dennett explained that she asked at a full governors meeting in November 2016 if Witness D could cover the [REDACTED] during a period of planned absence. She stated that Individual F [REDACTED] and Individual H [REDACTED], both of whom were aware of Witness D’s dismissal, were also present at this meeting.

Mrs Dennett admitted that she did not inform Witness A, the [REDACTED] (from November 2014) of Witness D's previous dismissal from another school [REDACTED] for safeguarding concerns at this meeting in November 2016. She submitted that at the time she did not see it as a safeguarding concern, she believed that the letter from the DBS, which the panel had sight of, was evidence of Witness D's suitability to work with children and it did not raise any alarm bells that she would need to raise the issue with Witness A.

The panel noted that Mrs Dennett made clear that to her everybody knew of [REDACTED], Witness D's, dismissal from another school [REDACTED] as she had discussed it with a number of other individuals including [REDACTED], Individual G.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A, who confirmed that she was not made aware at any time of Witness D's previous dismissal from another [REDACTED] school, she was not even aware that Mrs Dennett herself knew of the dismissal. Witness A stated that when this information came to light, she was shocked. She stated that she would have expected this information to be disclosed to herself as [REDACTED] with responsibility for safeguarding prior to asking for governors' agreement for Witness D to provide temporary cover.

The panel lastly considered the oral and written evidence of Witness B, who submitted that as investigating officer she established that Mrs Dennett did not inform Witness A of Witness D's previous dismissal from another [REDACTED] school.

The panel considered that based on the evidence available to it, it was clear Witness A was not aware of Witness D's previous dismissal from [REDACTED] School for safeguarding concerns.

The panel therefore found allegation 2(b) proven.

c) Did not ensure that the School undertook a risk assessment in relation to Witness D's engagement in the light of previous safeguarding concerns.

The panel first noted that it had sight of the risk assessment that Mrs Dennett had put together following the initial meeting in December 2018 as an attempt to show what steps she had taken in respect of risk at the time of employing [REDACTED]. The panel considered that in December 2018 Mrs Dennett would not have felt the need to collate all the information she had, in respect of what steps were taken regarding risk when engaging Witness D at the School, had a formal risk assessment been undertaken at the time.

The panel considered the oral and written evidence of Mrs Dennett.

Mrs Dennett submitted that the reason she had never completed a formal risk assessment is because she never perceived [REDACTED] as a 'risk'. She stated that she was aware of his dismissal from another [REDACTED] school but stated that it was

never made explicit that this was deemed a 'safeguarding' issue by that school. Mrs Dennett submitted that she had seen the letter from the DBS stating that he was safe to work with children.

Mrs Dennett stated that she took a number of steps to ensure that the proper procedure was followed, that his contact with pupils was minimised, that he did not use social media and that he was provided relevant policy documents. The panel therefore considered that it appears that some sort of dynamic risk assessment may have been completed however, this was not a formal risk assessment.

Witness B confirmed that to the best of her knowledge, no official risk assessment for Witness D existed and stated that it was established during the School's investigation that there was no individual personnel file for Witness D.

The panel found allegation 2(c) proven.

3. By your conduct set out above you failed to take appropriate steps to safeguard pupils' well-being

The panel noted that during the hearing Mrs Dennett admitted to this allegation. Notwithstanding Mrs Dennett's admission, the panel made a determination on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered that allegation 1 did not relate to the safeguarding of pupils' well-being and therefore, did not consider it relevant when making a determination on this allegation. The panel therefore went on to consider whether by Mrs Dennett's conduct at allegations 2(a), 2(b) and 2(c) she failed to take appropriate steps to safeguard pupil's wellbeing.

The panel noted the version of Keeping Children Safe in Education ("KCSIE") statutory guidance contained in the bundle related to a period after which Mrs Dennett was headteacher or employed by the School. However, the panel kept in mind the developing statutory guidance and the requirement of safer recruitment practices that would have been applicable during the relevant period.

The panel considered the oral and written evidence of Mrs Dennett. Mrs Dennett accepted that there were other steps that she could have taken to safeguard pupils. Mrs Dennett submitted that if the proper procedures had been followed then Witness D would have never been employed even on a temporary contact.

The panel noted that there appeared to be confusion over the interpretation of Witness D's role by Mrs Dennett and others at the time, in particular due to the ad hoc nature of the engagement. However, Mrs Dennett accepted that Witness D should have had a DBS check in place.

The panel further noted that Mrs Dennett may have been aware, [REDACTED], that Witness D had been told by the DBS that he was not prevented from working with children. However, a requirement for those working within a school to have a valid DBS check on the School's SCR is for safeguarding reasons and to protect pupils' well-being. Therefore, the panel considered that Mrs Dennett's failure to ensure that a valid DBS check for Witness D was contained on the SCR was a failing from a safeguarding perspective.

Mrs Dennett further stated that it would have been better for her in hindsight to have spoken to Witness A about Witness D's dismissal. The panel noted the oral evidence provided by Witness A that had she known of Witness D's dismissal she would not have agreed to engaging him. However, the panel did acknowledge that this statement was based on hindsight.

The panel considered that Witness A, as [REDACTED], should have been informed at, or before, the governing body meeting on 14 November 2016 of Witness D's dismissal from another [REDACTED] school, so that she could be fully informed when approving the proposed period of cover for the [REDACTED].

The panel had sight of the letter from the DBS confirming that Witness D was not prevented from working with children however, given his dismissal from a previous school for safeguarding concerns considered that it would have been appropriate for Mrs Dennett to have conducted a risk assessment at the time of engaging Witness D following his dismissal.

The panel noted Mrs Dennett's reflection where she accepted that she had not recognised the wider perspective of safeguarding in relation to Witness D's employment. Mrs Dennett further noted that she said she would never employ [REDACTED]. The panel noted the blurring of lines between Mrs Dennett's role as a headteacher and her role as a [REDACTED] which, may have impacted on Mrs Dennett's ability to appreciate the necessary and appropriate steps to be taken which could have subsequently impacted on the safeguarding of pupils.

The panel noted that when Mrs Dennett was asked whether she believed safeguarding was the golden thread through everything she did, she stated she absolutely believed so and admitted that she had failed in this duty.

Although Mrs Dennett stated that she would have never knowingly put children in her care at risk, the panel considered that in her failings to upload Witness D's DBS check to the SCR, to not disclose Witness D's dismissal from another [REDACTED] school to the [REDACTED] and by failing to conduct a risk assessment in relation to Witness D's engagement despite the previous safeguarding concerns, that Mrs Dennett did not take appropriate steps to safeguard pupils' wellbeing.

The panel therefore found allegation 3 proven.

4. By your conduct set out above you were dishonest.

Having found the facts of allegations 1, 2(a), 2(b) and 2(c) proven, the panel went on to consider whether by Mrs Dennett's conduct she was dishonest. The panel noted that Mrs Dennett denied this allegation.

The panel considered the oral and written evidence of Mrs Dennett, who stated that she does not believe that her actions were dishonest and that she would never deliberately deceive.

The panel considered whether Mrs Dennett had acted dishonestly considering each of the allegations in turn. In reaching its decision on this, the panel considered the case of *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockford* and considered all of the evidence before it.

Allegation 1

The panel firstly sought to ascertain the actual state of Mrs Dennett's knowledge or belief as to the facts.

Mrs Dennett stated that she produced a document to show the actions she took in relation to Witness D's employment. She further stated that she made it explicit in every meeting, that she wrote this document in December 2018 and not contemporaneously.

The panel noted that Mrs Dennett had already [REDACTED] before the initial meeting in December 2018. The panel noted that Mrs Dennett had requested a meeting to discuss some unrelated concerns she held. However, without notice the agenda was changed to cover the information received in the LADO letter which completely unrelated to the original planned meeting. Mrs Dennett stated that she left that meeting in a [REDACTED].

The panel considered the evidence given by Mrs Dennett that she was just trying to get everything together before her access to the School's system was closed as she had been told there was no record of Witness D's employment at the School. She wanted to show that she had not just snuck him through the back door.

The panel noted that Mrs Dennett was clearly in [REDACTED] when she put together the risk assessment. The panel further noted the short period of time between Mrs Dennett producing the risk assessment to Witness B and the investigation meeting where she confirmed that the document had not been made contemporaneously.

Mrs Dennett stated that the documents she produces are usually to a very high standard and show a [REDACTED]. The panel noted the evidence contained in the bundle which

demonstrated the quality of Mrs Dennett's work and did not consider the risk assessment was produced when Mrs Dennett was of [REDACTED].

Mrs Dennett stated that it was never her intention to be dishonest. The panel noted that although the appearance of the risk assessment may have been misleading Mrs Dennett had always been honest from the initial meeting that the document was not produced contemporaneously.

The panel noted that although the risk assessment was on old headed paper, the signatures on the document were Mrs Dennett's and she had not tried to portray that Individual G had signed the risk assessment at the time.

The panel considered that despite it being a profoundly absurd thing to have done, on the balance of probabilities Mrs Dennett was in a state of panic and was simply trying to demonstrate any information she held relating to [REDACTED] engagement and the steps she had taken in that regard. The panel considered on the balance of probabilities that Mrs Dennett's state of knowledge or belief as to the facts at the time was not dishonest.

Given the panel's finding as to Mrs Dennett's state of mind, the panel considered that her conduct at allegation 1 had not been dishonest according to the standards of ordinary decent people.

Allegation 2(a)

The panel first noted Mrs Dennett's evidence that it would have been better for her if Witness D's DBS check had been uploaded to the SCR and the panel considered there was no reason for this not to be the case.

The panel did not consider there was any compelling evidence provided to demonstrate that Mrs Dennett was dishonest in her intentions when failing to upload [REDACTED] DBS check to the SCR. Further, when the issue was raised at the point that Witness D was going to cover a longer period for the [REDACTED], the DBS check was then completed.

The panel considered that on the balance of probabilities that Mrs Dennett's state of knowledge or belief as to the facts was not dishonest.

Given the panel's finding as to Mrs Dennett's state of mind, the panel considered that her conduct at allegation 2(a) had not been dishonest according to the standards of ordinary decent people.

Allegation 2(b)

Although the panel noted that it was hard to see how the issue regarding Witness D's dismissal had not come up in conversation with Witness A the panel considered that Mrs

Dennett may have believed that the information was common knowledge. The panel noted that, although they had no documentary evidence to suggest that Mrs Dennett had told other people about Witness D's dismissal, she gave written and oral evidence to this effect.

The panel considered that Witness D simply may have become increasingly embedded in the School and many years had passed since his previous dismissal. Therefore, Mrs Dennett may have not considered the information relevant at the time of seeking approval for his engagement at the board meeting in November 2016.

The panel also noted that Mrs Dennett had no reason not to share the information regarding Witness D's dismissal, or the circumstances thereof, as he had a clear DBS check in place.

The panel noted the RBG policy which stated that where an individual had been dismissed from a school in RBG, they could not then be re-employed in another school in RBG. However, the panel considered that given that Mrs Dennett, Witness B and Witness A were not aware of this policy this would not have been a reason for Mrs Dennett to withhold the information from Witness A.

The panel therefore concluded that the balance of probabilities that Mrs Dennett's state of knowledge or belief as to the facts was not dishonest.

Given the panel's finding as to Mrs Dennett's state of mind, the panel considered that her conduct had not been dishonest according to the standards of ordinary decent people.

Allegation 2(c)

The panel firstly noted that if Mrs Dennett had believed that Witness D's DBS check was held centrally, she may not have believed that a risk assessment would have needed to have been completed.

The panel noted that Mrs Dennett never perceived [REDACTED] as a 'risk' and although the lines may have been blurred in relation to Mrs Dennett acting in her capacity as headteacher and [REDACTED], on the balance of probabilities, the panel considered that Mrs Dennett failure to carry out a formal risk assessment was not to be dishonest or to hide anything, rather she did not think it was necessary in the circumstances.

The panel therefore concluded that the balance of probabilities that Mrs Dennett's state of knowledge or belief as to the facts was not dishonest.

Given the panel's finding as to Mrs Dennett's state of mind, the panel considered that her conduct had not been dishonest according to the standards of ordinary decent people.

Summary

On the balance of probabilities, the panel was not satisfied that Mrs Dennett's conduct at allegations 1, 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) was dishonest. The panel therefore found allegation 4 not proven.

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

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

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

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mrs Dennett, in relation to allegations 2(a), (2b), 2(c) and 3, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mrs Dennett 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
- 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 Mrs Dennett at allegations 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) and 3 amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

Whilst the panel considered that Mrs Dennett's conduct at allegation 1 was questionable, it did not consider it was serious enough to amount to misconduct which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession. The panel noted that although allegation 1 was found proven, it did not amount to a safeguarding concern and the evidence did not securely demonstrate an intent by Mrs Dennett to be dishonest.

The panel noted the importance of a teacher, in particular a headteacher, to follow the statutory guidance in KCSIE, any other policies and procedures that are in place and to have the utmost regard for the importance of safeguarding.

The panel noted that Mrs Dennett stated she was aware from her oral and written evidence of the importance of safeguarding. However, the panel considered that Mrs Dennett's actions at allegations 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) and 3 related to safeguarding omissions. The panel noted the risks associated with not completing DBS checks, risk assessments or disclosing relevant information to school governors when engaging staff and the impact that this could have had on pupils.

The panel also considered whether Mrs Dennett's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice.

The panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

The panel received legal advice as to the possibility of findings being cumulated in accordance with guidance given in the judgment of *Schodlok v General Medical Council [2015]*. However, as the panel concluded that each of the allegations 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) and 3 based on the particulars found proved in respect of each allegation, amounted to unacceptable professional conduct, the panel did not need to determine whether it would be appropriate to cumulate any of those allegations.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Mrs Dennett was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others and considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils' lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave.

The panel noted the anonymised letter to LADO which stated that the individual was worried about the safety of their child and other children at the School as they were concerned that Witness D did not have a valid DBS check in place. The panel considered that if parents, or other members of the public, believed that there could be individuals at a school without a valid DBS check this would be extremely concerning and would have a detrimental impact on how the public view the profession.

Further the panel considered that if the public knew that, despite Witness D's dismissal from another [REDACTED] school for safeguarding concerns, no risk assessment was carried out this could be damaging. Further, the panel considered it likely that a member of the public would expect a teacher to disclose a dismissal of similar nature to that of Witness D to the [REDACTED] before making any decisions in relation to such employment or engagement by a school.

The panel further noted that they consider the public may expect a teacher, when employing a [REDACTED], to be even more careful and conscious of the correct checks and procedures to be followed.

Whilst the panel considered Mrs Dennett's conduct at allegation 1 to be misleading, Mrs Dennett had confirmed that her intention was not to mislead and, the panel found that, on the balance of probabilities, she had not been dishonest in the production of the risk assessment. Therefore, it did not consider that this action alone would damage the public's perception of the teaching profession.

The findings of misconduct in relation to allegations 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) and 3 are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public perception.

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

Having found the facts of allegations 1, 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) and 3 proved, the panel further found that Mrs Dennett's conduct at allegations 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) and 3 amounted to both unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

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

In considering whether to recommend to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be made, the panel had to consider whether it would be an appropriate and proportionate measure, and whether it would be in the public interest to do so.

The panel was aware that 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, declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct and that prohibition strikes the right balance between the rights of the teacher and the public interest, if they are in conflict.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mrs Dennett, which involved writing and providing a risk assessment to Witness B when in fact no contemporaneous risk assessment had taken place; failing to ensure that Witness D's DBS details were recorded on the School's SCR; failing to inform Witness A of Witness D's previous

dismissal from [REDACTED] School for safeguarding concerns; failing to ensure a risk assessment was undertaken and failing to take appropriate steps to safeguard pupils well-being, the panel considered there was a public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.

However, in respect of the safeguarding failure to ensure Witness D's DBS details were recorded on the School's SCR, the panel noted that this was also not picked up by a number of other parties including [REDACTED] or during an external safeguarding audit.

The panel further noted that although there were serious failings procedurally in Mrs Dennett's handing of Witness D's DBS check, Mrs Dennett's evidence was that she knew Witness D had a clear DBS check and had sight of the letter from the DBS confirming his suitability to work with children.

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

The panel noted that there was a public interest consideration in retaining the teacher in the profession, since no doubt had been cast upon her abilities as an educator and/or she is able to make a valuable contribution to the profession in the future. The panel noted Mrs Dennett's witness evidence which stated that in September 2000 Mrs Dennett was temporarily seconded into the School which, was then, a failing school. After being appointed to deputy head in January 2001, she worked hard alongside [REDACTED], Individual G to secure a 'Satisfactory' Ofsted report in the same month. Mrs Dennett also worked on the behaviour policy that would ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and staff and later assisted with developing the curriculum at the School which was judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2011.

The panel also considered the newspaper clippings in the bundle which referenced the School's improved results and noted Mrs Dennett's evidence which stated that results at the School climbed from the bottom 10% in the country to the top 10% by 2019. The panel also noted the extensive character references provided, many of which noted Mrs Dennett's abilities as an educator and the potential loss to the profession should she be prohibited from teaching.

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 Mrs Dennett. The panel was mindful of the need to strike the right balance between the rights of the teacher and the public interest.

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 Mrs

Dennett. 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 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;

Whilst the panel considered that these behaviours were relevant, it was mindful of the evidence available to it in the bundle and the wider context of the allegations. In particular, the panel noted that whilst such departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' standards was serious it considered that the allegations should be seen in the context of the time that the allegations occurred when the policies and procedures available were much less defined.

Further, the panel also noted that Mrs Dennett was aware that Witness D had a clear DBS check and the catalogue of individuals involved that also failed to notice that Witness D's DBS check was not on the SCR. Although the panel concluded that the ultimate responsibility for this check laid with Mrs Dennett as the headteacher, it felt that she did not have the appropriate support or challenge from those that were meant to support and challenge her in her role as headteacher.

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

The panel concluded that although Mrs Dennett had deliberately created the risk assessment, this was done when Mrs Dennett had a momentary lapse of thinking due to her [REDACTED] at that time.

The panel considered that Mrs Dennett's other actions were not deliberate. The panel were of the view that Mrs Dennett had placed a reliance on her colleagues and advisors in respect of the DBS check and had no reason not to put Witness D's DBS check on the SCR given that it was clear. Further, the panel considered that Witness D simply may have become increasingly embedded in the School and given that many years had passed since his dismissal, Mrs Dennett may have not considered the information relevant to Witness A at that time. The panel lastly noted that Mrs Dennett had not perceived [REDACTED] to be a risk so may not have considered it necessary to undertake a risk assessment.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mrs Dennett was acting under extreme duress. However, the panel took account of [REDACTED] at the time some of the incidents took

place, as outlined below. Further, the panel noted that without notice the agenda at the initial meeting in December 2018 was changed to cover the information received in the anonymised LADO letter. The panel noted that Mrs Dennett stated that she left that meeting in a [REDACTED] and considered that this may have impacted on her thinking at that time.

The panel considered that Mrs Dennett did have a previously outstanding history, including a 27-year career with an unblemished record and the panel accepted that the incidents were out of character. The panel considered not only the impact that Mrs Dennett had on the School (see above) but also the impact she had on other teachers within the profession. The panel noted the “thank you” notes from other teachers contained in the bundle and the support that Mrs Dennett had provided to those individuals during their career. The panel also found the oral evidence from Mrs Dennett compelling in demonstrating her passion for the teaching profession.

The panel also considered the mitigating circumstances that arose within Mrs Dennett’s witness statement and oral evidence. Mrs Dennett explained that, due to the [REDACTED].

Mrs Dennett submitted that after the initial meeting in December 2018 she [REDACTED].

The panel considered Mrs Dennett’s written reflections as part of her witness statement. The panel considered that it was pertinent that when asked what she would do in the future Mrs Dennett stated that she would not employ [REDACTED] and would ensure that she would review all areas of safeguarding including when a new chair of governors came into position with the safeguarding team which would include the School’s Business Manager.

Mrs Dennett submitted that she should have considered the wider perspective of her decision at the time, including the views of others and the conflict of interest that existed and potentially compromised her judgement. Mrs Dennett also stated that she would develop a more efficient method of checking that DBS numbers were accurately recorded.

Mrs Dennett stated that she did not focus enough on the administrative/ operational detail and believed everything to be as sound as staff reported, and that if she knew at the time there was more she could have done she would have. Mrs Dennett submitted that she should have been more familiar with the requirements of KCSIE and its implications for safer recruitment. Mrs Dennett further stated, *“I have spent most of my adult life trying to make a positive impact on the lives of children and I can only learn and move forwards from this experience with greater knowledge and a deeper understanding of my role”*.

Mrs Dennett expressed that she has been on a long journey [REDACTED]. Mrs Dennett explained that she developed her own website in lockdown and has used her learning to help others.

Mrs Dennett explained that she has grown as a person and that she is much calmer, reflective and has a healthier and more balanced outlook. She submitted that she can only move forwards and hope that she can help make a difference to the lives of others, and especially to the lives of children.

Mrs Dennett further submitted that she has reflected and has been freed to develop in a more creative way, and that she is publishing a children's book and is hoping to visit children's libraries with the book.

Mrs Dennett explained that she has also worked as a tutor for primary aged children, throughout the pandemic, mostly in schools in a highly deprived area. She stated that she has continued to make a positive impact on the lives of children. Mrs Dennett submitted that also she worked in a special school through the summer holidays in 2021 and led a play scheme to give parents support during a challenging period of their lives. Mrs Dennett noted in her written evidence that she had been asked to run the scheme the following year.

The panel considered that Mrs Dennett was aware of how she would handle matters in the future and had clear insight and remorse for what she had done wrong.

The panel was provided with evidence to attest to Mrs Dennett's history and ability as a teacher. The panel noted the quantity of character references that had been provided and found it particularly compelling that some of the individuals were no longer local to the area but had still gone to the effort to produce a reference.

Mrs Dennett provided written character references from the following individuals:

- Individual I, [REDACTED];
- Individual J, [REDACTED];
- Individual K, [REDACTED];
- Individual L, [REDACTED];
- Individual M, [REDACTED];
- Individual N, [REDACTED];
- Individual O, [REDACTED];
- Individual P, [REDACTED];

- Individual Q, [REDACTED];
- Individual R, [REDACTED];
- Individual S, [REDACTED];
- Individual T, [REDACTED];
- Individual U, [REDACTED]; and
- Individual V, [REDACTED].

The panel also heard oral character evidence from:

- Witness E
- Witness D

The written and oral evidence contained positive comments about Mrs Dennett and her ability as a teacher. The panel noted the following in particular:

- *“Prior to Ms Dennett’s dismissal she led an outstanding school and her leadership was exemplary and of the highest quality.”*

Individual I, [REDACTED].

- *“Karen is someone who always wanted the best for her staff and pupils, developing creative and innovative approaches to curriculum planning, school evaluation and professional development”. “She is someone who understands the challenges and privilege of school leadership and cares deeply about the profession.”*

Individual J

- *“Karen has always been an excellent and inspiring teacher to her children.” “She would be a huge loss to the education sector if she continues to be denied the opportunity to keep teaching which is her primary love and choice of employment. She is an excellent knowledgeable teacher and in my professional opinion should be enabled to carry on teaching as her contributions will continue to be highly valued by high quality practitioners.”*

Witness E

- *“Karen has given her all to teaching over the past 30 years and has helped me and other individuals reach their goals and desires. Being the friendly, outgoing, and loving person Karen is, I feel that children of the future generation would be*

missing out on her outstanding teaching and attitude towards building children for the 21st century.”

Individual K

- *“I have always found her to be professional, thoughtful and honest.” “At a point where teachers are leaving the profession, it is vital to ensure we have experienced individuals such as Mrs Dennett to be in the classroom doing the job she trained to do.”*

Individual N

- *“Karen helped to develop and shape my teaching career through careful and thoughtful questioning, and encouraged me to be a more reflective practitioner.”*

Individual Q

The panel also noted that Mrs Dennett had engaged with these proceedings and, despite a number of delays that were out of her control, attended the hearing and provided compelling evidence to demonstrate her insight into her actions, the remorse she has for what happened and her continued passion for teaching.

Taking into account the above, the panel was satisfied that the risk of repetition was low.

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, the recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an appropriate response. Given that the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case.

On the basis that Mrs Dennett had shown insight into her misconduct, had demonstrated how it would be avoided in the future, and could contribute significantly to the education sector in the future, the panel was of the view that prohibiting Mrs Dennett would not produce any material change or serve any useful purpose in terms of regulating the profession.

The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that are not acceptable, and the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

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 sanction.

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 some of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. In this case, the panel has found some of the allegations not proven (including allegation 4), and found that some allegations do not amount to unacceptable professional conduct or conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute. I have therefore put those matters entirely from my mind.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mrs Karen Dennett should not be the subject of a prohibition order. The panel has recommended that the findings of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mrs Dennett, in relation to allegations 2(a), (2b), 2(c) and 3, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mrs Dennett 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
- 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 finds that the conduct of Mrs Dennett fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

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 or conduct likely to 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 Mrs Dennett, 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 Mrs Dennett, which involved writing and providing a risk assessment to Witness A when in fact no contemporaneous risk assessment had taken place; failing to ensure that Witness D's DBS details were recorded on the School's SCR; failing to inform Witness A of Witness D's previous dismissal from [REDACTED] School for safeguarding concerns; failing to ensure a risk assessment was undertaken and failing to take appropriate steps to safeguard pupils well-being, the panel considered there was a public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing 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 considered that Mrs Dennett was aware of how she would handle matters in the future and had clear insight and remorse for what she had done wrong." 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 noted that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mrs Dennett was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession." I am particularly mindful of the finding of safeguarding failings in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

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

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of unacceptable professional conduct or conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, 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 Mrs Dennett herself and the panel comment "The panel considered that Mrs Dennett did have a previously

outstanding history, including a 27-year career with an unblemished record and the panel accepted that the incidents were out of character. The panel considered not only the impact that Mrs Dennett had on the School (see above) but also the impact she had on other teachers within the profession. The panel noted the “thank you” notes from other teachers contained in the bundle and the support that Mrs Dennett had provided to those individuals during their career. The panel also found the oral evidence from Mrs Dennett compelling in demonstrating her passion for the teaching profession.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mrs Dennett from teaching. A prohibition order would also clearly deprive the public of her 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 concerning insight or remorse. The panel has said, “Mrs Dennett stated that she did not focus enough on the administrative/ operational detail and believed everything to be as sound as staff reported, and that if she knew at the time there was more she could have done she would have. Mrs Dennett submitted that she should have been more familiar with the requirements of KCSIE and its implications for safer recruitment. Mrs Dennett further stated, *“I have spent most of my adult life trying to make a positive impact on the lives of children and I can only learn and move forwards from this experience with greater knowledge and a deeper understanding of my role”*.

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel that “On the basis that Mrs Dennett had shown insight into her misconduct, had demonstrated how it would be avoided in the future, and could contribute significantly to the education sector in the future, the panel was of the view that prohibiting Mrs Dennett would not produce any material change or serve any useful purpose in terms of regulating the profession.”

I have also considered the positive character references and the panel said “The panel was provided with evidence to attest to Mrs Dennett’s history and ability as a teacher. The panel noted the quantity of character references that had been provided and found it particularly compelling that some of the individuals were no longer local to the area but had still gone to the effort to produce a reference.”

I have given significant weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mrs Dennett has made to the profession, the level of insight and remorse shown and the panel was satisfied that the risk of repetition was low.

For these reasons, I have concluded that a prohibition order is not proportionate or in the public interest. I consider that the publication of the findings made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that were not acceptable and that the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SABuxcey'.

Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey

Date: 15 February 2024

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