



Teaching  
Regulation  
Agency

# **Mr Richard Watson: Professional conduct panel outcome**

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

**May 2024**

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

<b>Teacher:</b>	Mr Richard Watson
<b>Teacher ref number:</b>	1785482
<b>Teacher date of birth:</b>	1 December 1986
<b>TRA reference:</b>	21235
<b>Date of determination:</b>	10 May 2024
<b>Former employer:</b>	Branton St Wilfrid's CofE Primary School, Doncaster

### **Introduction**

A professional conduct panel ('the panel') of the Teaching Regulation Agency ('the TRA') convened on 9 to 10 May 2024 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Richard Watson.

The panel members were Ms Geraldine Baird (lay panellist – in the chair), Mr Robert Dowey (teacher panellist) and Mr Paul Anderson (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Nicholas West of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Lee Bridges instructed by Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Richard Watson was not present and was not represented.

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 28 February 2024.

It was alleged that Mr Watson was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst working as a teacher at Branton St Wilfrid's CofE Primary School:

1. On or around 8 November 2021, in relation to his NPQSL Final Assessment Submission Form ("the Form"), he:
  - a) signed the Form purporting this to be the signature of Colleague 1;
  - b) wrote comments on the Form purporting these to have been written by Colleague 1;
  - c) signed the Form purporting this to be the signature of Colleague 2;
  - d) at page 5 of the Form provided a description of a project that he had purported to have undertaken that he did not.
2. On or around 8 November 2021, he submitted the Form referred to at paragraph 1 to Learners First in order to obtain the NPQSL qualification.
3. On or around November to December 2021, he stated to Colleague 2 that Colleague 1 had signed his NPQSL Final Assessment Submission Form, when that was not the case.
4. His alleged conduct above at paragraphs 1 and/or 2 and/or 3 was:
  - a) dishonest;
  - b) lacked integrity.

Mr Watson made no admission of fact.

## Preliminary applications

### Application to proceed in the absence of the teacher

Mr Watson was not present at the hearing nor was he represented. The presenting officer made an application to proceed in the absence of Mr Watson.

The panel accepted the legal advice provided in relation to this application and took account of the various factors referred to it, as derived from the guidance set down in the

case of *R v Jones [2003] 1 AC 1* (as considered and applied in subsequent cases, particularly *GMC v Adeogba*).

The panel was satisfied that the Notice of Proceedings had been sent to Mr Watson in accordance with the Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession May 2020 (the '2020 Procedures').

The panel noted that Mr Watson had informed the TRA that he would not be able to attend the hearing "[REDACTED]". However, the panel noted that Mr Watson had not sought a further adjournment to the hearing and the panel did not consider that a further adjournment would procure his attendance at a hearing. There was no up-to-date medical evidence before the panel that Mr Watson was unfit to attend the hearing. The panel therefore concluded that Mr Watson's absence was voluntary and that he was aware that the matter would proceed in his absence.

The panel considered that it was in the public interest for the hearing to take place. It also considered the effect on the witnesses of any delay.

Having decided that it was appropriate to proceed, the panel agreed to seek to ensure that the proceedings were as fair as possible in the circumstances, bearing in mind that Mr Watson was neither present nor represented.

#### Application to admit additional documents

The panel considered a preliminary application from the presenting officer for the admission of additional documents.

The presenting officer's documents were a service bundle totalling 22 pages.

The documents subject to the application had not been served in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.37 of the 2020 Procedures. Therefore, the panel was required to decide whether the documents should be admitted under paragraph 5.34 of the 2020 Procedures.

The panel heard representations from the presenting officer in respect of the application.

The panel considered the additional documents were relevant. Accordingly, the documents were added to the bundle.

#### Application for part of the hearing to be heard in private

The panel considered an application from the presenting officer on Mr Watson's behalf for him to be granted anonymity and/or for part of the hearing to be heard in private. In an email sent prior to the commencement of the hearing, Mr Watson referred to "[REDACTED]" in respect of his request for anonymity and the panel noted that he was provided with an opportunity to provide further information to support this application.

The panel heard submissions from the presenting officer on the application before reaching its decision. The presenting officer objected to the application on the grounds that there was a presumption that the hearing should take place in public and that it was in the public interest that the proceedings should take place in public. The presenting officer suggested that this would not prevent the panel from exercising its discretion to enter private session if and when matters of Mr Watson's [REDACTED] or private life were being discussed.

The panel was advised that it did not have the power to anonymise Mr Watson's name in the decision and understood that, in accordance with Regulation 15(2) of the Teachers' Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012, this information is required to be published. The panel did not therefore make any determination in this regard.

The panel did not grant the application for the hearing to be heard in private as the panel considered it would be contrary to the public interest. The panel considered that any evidence relating to aspects of Mr Watson's [REDACTED] could be heard in private. The hearing was still being held in public and this would be a discrete and limited area of evidence which would not undermine the public's ability to otherwise understand the case.

## Summary of evidence

### Documents

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

- Section 1: Chronology and list of key people – pages 3 to 4
- Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 5 to 12
- Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 13 to 20
- Section 4: TRA documents – pages 21 to 90
- Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 91 to 130

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- Service bundle – pages 131 to 152

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

## Witnesses

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

- Witness A, [REDACTED]
- Witness B, [REDACTED]

## Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

On 29 April 2019, Mr Watson commenced employment at Branton St Wilfrid's CofE Primary School ('the School').

In May 2022, Witness B requested a copy of the NPQSL Final Assessment Submission Form from Learners First, the NPQSL provider.

On 17 May 2022, Witness A and Witness B met with Mr Watson regarding the signatures on the NPQSL Final Assessment Submission Form. Mr Watson had allegedly signed Witness A's and Witness B's signatures on the document.

On 23 May 2022, Mr Watson was suspended.

On 9 June 2022, an investigation meeting was held.

On 18 July 2022, a disciplinary hearing was held, and Mr Watson ceased employment at the School.

The matter was referred to the TRA on 8 November 2022.

## Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

- 1. On or around 8 November 2021, in relation to your NPQSL Final Assessment Submission Form ("the Form"), you:**
  - a) Signed the Form purporting this to be the signature of Colleague 1;**
  - b) Wrote comments on the Form purporting these to have been written by Colleague 1;**
  - c) Signed the Form purporting this to be the signature of Colleague 2;**

The panel had sight of the NPQSL Final Assessment Submission Form (“the Form”) and noted that this had been signed on behalf of the ‘Sponsor’, Witness B (“Colleague 1”) and the ‘[REDACTED]’, Witness A (“Colleague 2”). The panel accepted that there were signatures purporting to be that of Colleague 1 and Colleague 2 on the first page of the Form, and that the third page contained a lengthy paragraph about Mr Watson under the heading “Sponsor to write comments in this expandable box”.

The panel considered the investigatory interview notes dated 9 June 2022, and noted that Mr Watson confirmed that he signed the document in place of Colleague 1 and Colleague 2, and that he had copied their signatures as he “*might have had it on a letter*” with their signatures. During the meeting Mr Watson stated that the night before, he started typing up the Form and “*panicked*” and to alleviate the stress he was under, he signed both signatures of Colleague 1 and Colleague 2 onto the Form.

The investigatory interview notes also stated that Mr Watson confirmed he had written the information at the top of the third page of the Form.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B. The panel referred to the written statement that Witness B provided to Witness A in or around April 2022.

Witness B stated that Witness A asked her if she had seen a copy of Mr Watson’s NPQSL project, to which she informed her that she “*had not seen the project or met with Richard about this recently*”. She stated that Witness A told her that Mr Watson had claimed that she “*had signed off his NPQSL project*”, just before she had left the School in December 2021. Witness B submitted that she informed Witness A that she “*had not in fact done this*” and that she had “*no copy of the project report that had been submitted*”.

Witness B stated that Witness A said she had asked Mr Watson for “*a copy of the project*” but he had not produced it.

Witness B explained that she requested and obtained a copy of the Form from the provider. She stated that on receiving this, she met with Witness A and “*showed her the statement*” and explained that she “*had not written the sponsor paragraph*” and it was not signed off by herself but “*had a false signature*” against her name. Witness B stated that Witness A looked at the statement and said that “*her signature had also been falsified*”.

Witness B stated that on 17 May 2022, she had a meeting with Mr Watson and Witness A. She stated that in the meeting she showed Mr Watson the Form and said to him that she “*had not written the paragraph and it was a false signature*” next to her name. Witness B stated that Mr Watson was silent and then said, “*I’m really sorry*”. Witness B stated that she asked Mr Watson if he had “*written the sponsor comment*” and signed her name next to it, to which he said he had. She stated that Witness A asked Mr Watson

about her signature, to which *“he admitted this had been signed by him also”*.  
[REDACTED].

The panel considered the oral evidence and written witness statement of Witness A who stated that *“In around November/December 2021”*, she asked Mr Watson *“how he was getting on with his NPQSL project, to which he responded that he had completed it and it had been signed off”* by Witness B. Witness A explained that in February 2022, Mr Watson told her that *“he had passed his NPQSL”*, and so out of curiosity she asked for a copy of his Form.

Witness A submitted that after the Easter holidays, she had a conversation with Witness B to *“see if she had seen a copy”* of the Form. She stated that Witness B informed her *“she had not seen the project and had not met with Richard Watson about this”* and subsequently Witness B requested a copy of the Form from the provider, Learners First.

Witness A explained that on 27 April 2022, Witness B received a copy of the Form from Learners First. She stated that Witness B informed her that *“she had not written the sponsor statement”* and *“it was not her signature”*, and *“that the signature against her name was false”*. Witness A stated that she viewed the Form and noted that her signature *“had been falsified”*.

Witness A stated that on 17 May 2022, she and Witness B met with Mr Watson, showed him the Form and Witness B stated that she *“had not written the sponsor statement”* and that the signature next to her name was not hers. She stated that Mr Watson was silent and then said, *“I’m really sorry”*.

Witness A stated that she asked Mr Watson why her signature was on the document, to which he responded *“that it had been signed by him”*.

Witness A explained that Mr Watson stated he had been [REDACTED] and knew he had made a mistake. [REDACTED].

The panel also considered the written representations of Mr Watson which stated *“I did plagiarise someone’s NPQSL document, including the sponsor statement, and signed the forms off”*.

In light of the evidence summarised above, the panel was satisfied that Mr Watson had signed the Form purporting to be Colleague 1 and Colleague 2 and that he wrote comments on the Form purporting these to have been written by Colleague 1.

The panel found allegations 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c) proven.

**d) At page 5 of the Form provided a description of a project that you had purported to have undertaken that you did not.**

The panel considered the oral evidence and written witness statement of Witness A, who stated that during the investigation meeting, Mr Watson confirmed that the project detailed in his Form was false.

Witness A accepted in her oral evidence that there had been some discussions with Mr Watson regarding a project on the topic of vocabulary as they were looking at this as a priority within the School and he had delivered a staff meeting in respect of this project. Witness A confirmed that there were a number of inaccuracies regarding the project described in the Form which “*didn’t happen*”. This included repeated references to the “*power of reading*” which Witness A confirmed was “*never implemented in the School*”, a reference to using “*different media (such as drama and videos)*” which “*didn’t happen*”, an incorrect statement from the School’s 2019 Ofsted report, a reference to the “*South Yorkshire School Improvement Summary*” which “*didn’t take place*” and numerous references to data which were not a true reflection of the School’s position or progress.

The panel also considered the written representations of Mr Watson which stated “*I did plagiarise someone’s NPQSL document, including the sponsor statement, and signed the forms off*”. The panel was satisfied that, on page 5 of the Form, Mr Watson had provided a description of a project he purported to have undertaken, which he did not. The panel therefore found allegation 1(d) proven.

## **2. On or around 8 November 2021, you submitted the Form referred to at paragraph 1 to Learners First in order to obtain the NPQSL qualification.**

The panel considered the investigatory interview notes dated 9 June 2022, and noted that Mr Watson stated that the Form was submitted “*By November 2021*”. On the balance of probabilities, the panel was satisfied that Mr Watson submitted the Form to Learners First as he had obtained the NPQSL qualification.

The panel noted the written evidence of Individual C dated 7 June 2022 which stated “*we anticipate the DfE withdrawing the award of the NPQSL qualification from RW*” as evidence that Mr Watson had been awarded the NPQSL qualification and that he must therefore have submitted the Form.

Taking into account all of the evidence available, the panel found allegation 2 proven.

## **3. On or around November to December 2021, you stated to Colleague 2 that Colleague 1 had signed your NPQSL Final Assessment Submission Form, when that was not the case.**

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B. Witness B stated that Witness A told her that Mr Watson “*had claimed that I had signed off his NPQSL project, just before I had left the School in December*”.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A who stated that she explained to Witness B that Mr Watson had informed her that Witness B had signed the Form off before she left the School's employment. Witness A submitted that Witness B told her that "*she had not seen the project and had not met*" Mr Watson regarding the project. She stated that Witness B requested a copy of the Form from the provider, Learners First.

In Witness A's oral evidence, she confirmed that she had an informal conversation with Mr Watson which was more related to his wellbeing and she asked if he had submitted his Form as it was a busy time of the year. Witness A recalled Mr Watson confirming that it had been submitted and Witness B had signed it off. The panel was satisfied that, in/around November/December 2021 Mr Watson had stated to Colleague 2 that Colleague 1 had signed off the form when this was not the case. The panel found allegation 3 proven.

#### **4. Your alleged conduct above at paragraphs 1 and/or 2 and/or 3 was**

##### **a) Dishonest;**

The panel considered whether Mr Watson had acted dishonestly by his conduct in allegations 1, 2 and/or 3. In reaching its decision on this, the panel considered the case of *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockford*.

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

The panel noted that Mr Watson admitted that his actions were dishonest, and on examination of the evidence further concluded that there could be no doubt that Mr Watson knew that his actions were dishonest. The panel was satisfied that there was no evidence that Mr Watson ever considered that he believed he was doing the right thing.

The panel considered that the actions of Mr Watson as outlined at allegations 1, 2 and 3 had undoubtedly been dishonest according to the standards of ordinary decent people.

The panel found allegation 4(a) proven.

##### **b) Lacked integrity**

The panel considered whether Mr Watson had failed to act with integrity by his conduct in allegations 1, 2 and/or 3 above. The panel considered the case of *Wingate & Anor v The Solicitors Regulation Authority*.

The panel was mindful that professionals are not expected to be "*paragons of virtue*". However, on examination of the documents, the panel was satisfied that Mr Watson had forged two signatures onto the Form and had deceitfully stated that he had completed a project which he had not.

The panel was mindful of the legal advice it received in respect of *Wingate*, that “*the term “integrity” is a useful shorthand to express the higher standards which society expects from professional persons and which the professions expect from their own members*”. The panel considered other teachers that had properly completed the NPQSL qualification would consider Mr Watson’s conduct to lack the integrity that they would expect from other members of the profession.

Further to this, Mr Watson had told Colleague 2 that Colleague 1 had signed his Form, when she had not. The panel noted that Mr Watson’s conduct amounted to a clear failure to act within the higher standards expected of a teacher. The panel was therefore satisfied that Mr Watson’s conduct as outlined at allegations 1, 2 and 3, and as found proven, lacked integrity.

The panel found allegation 4(b) proven.

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

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

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

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Watson, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Watson 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
  - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
  - not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- 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 Watson amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The panel also considered whether Mr Watson’s conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice.

The panel found that the offence of serious dishonesty was relevant. The Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with such an offence exist, a panel is more likely to conclude that an individual's conduct would amount to unacceptable professional conduct.

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 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d), 2, 3, 4(a) and 4(b) 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 Mr Watson 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 findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public perception.

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

Having found the facts of allegations 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d), 2, 3, 4(a) and 4(b) proved, the panel further found that Mr Watson's conduct amounted to both unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

## **Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State**

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

In considering whether to recommend to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order 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 the following to be relevant in this case, namely: the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct within the teaching profession and that prohibition strikes the right balance between the rights of the teacher and the public interest, if they are in conflict.

In light of the panel's findings against Mr Watson, which involved signing the Form and purporting these signatures to be the signatures of Colleague 1 and Colleague 2; writing comments on the Form and purporting these to be the comments of Colleague 1; providing a description of a project on the Form that he had purported to have undertaken but did not, submitting the Form to Learners First to obtain the NPQSL qualification and stating to Colleague 2 that Colleague 1 had signed his Form when this was not the case, there was a strong public interest consideration in declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

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

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

The panel considered whether there was a strong public interest consideration in retaining Mr Watson in the profession, since no doubt had been cast upon his abilities as an educator.

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

- dishonesty or a lack of integrity, including the deliberate concealment of their actions or purposeful destruction of evidence, especially where these behaviours have been repeated or had serious consequences, or involved the coercion of another person to act in a way contrary to their own interests;
- collusion or concealment including:
  - any activity that involves knowingly substantiating another person's statements where they are known to be false;
  - failure to challenge inappropriate actions, defending inappropriate actions or concealing inappropriate actions;
  - encouraging others to break rules;
  - lying to prevent the identification of wrongdoing; and
- deliberate action in serious contravention of requirements for the conduct of an examination or assessment leading to an externally awarded qualification or national assessment (or deliberate collusion in or deliberate concealment of such action) particularly where the action had, or realistically had the potential to have, a significant impact on the outcome of the examination assessment.

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.

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

The panel considered the mitigating evidence within Mr Watson's written response to the allegations.

Mr Watson expressed that he was not in his usual state of mind, and that this contributed significantly towards his actions. [REDACTED].

[REDACTED].

[REDACTED]. He stated that due to the impact that his personal life had had on him, he made "*an absolutely ill-fated decision and plagiarised somebody else's work*".

Mr Watson expressed that he is "*exceptionally regretful*" of his actions and the impact that they have had.

Mr Watson explained that throughout his career in schools he has always conducted himself in "*a thoroughly professional manner*". He stated that he has always maintained a consistently professional manner, whereby he has set exceptionally high standards of himself and others around him and "*modelled exceptionally professional behaviour*

*towards children*". Mr Watson stated that in the past 13 years this was evident, aside from this one isolated incident [REDACTED]. The panel also took into account Mr Watson's evidence that he consistently received a "*high achievement*" rating in his end of year reviews and demonstrated wider professional responsibilities across the school.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Watson was acting under extreme duress. However, the panel did take account of the difficult personal circumstances Mr Watson was experiencing at the material times, as outlined above.

The panel was provided with evidence to attest to Mr Watson's history and ability as a teacher. In particular, the panel noted the following:

- Individual A, who is a former colleague of Mr Watson's and worked with him for 3 years.
  - *"He has been a consistently enthusiastic and passionate teacher who adores what he does and engages children in their learning very easily."*
  - *"It has been really sad to see the change in his character this academic year. He has not been the person he has previously been; however, he has managed to inspire, motivate and teach a difficult class [REDACTED]."*
- Review meeting notes dated 21 July 2017, by Individual B, [REDACTED] at Oasis Academy Henderson Avenue:
  - *"Rick has a positive demeanour and constantly praises children throughout lessons."*
  - *"Rick encourages the children to be resilient and not give up on tasks."*
- Statement regarding Whitby residential, in October 2017, whilst Mr Watson was at Oasis Academy Henderson Avenue:
  - *"During the above school visit (3 days), Richard made a fully positive contribution to the extra-curricular provision of the school. At all times, he was an effective role model."*
  - *"At all times, consideration of the health, safety and well-being of the children was shown Richard."*

The panel concluded that Mr Watson had expressed remorse but had failed to show significant insight into his actions. The panel was particularly concerned with Mr Watson's statement that he believed that the School had "*not acted in a fully professional manner*", and that "*the [REDACTED] was fully aware of the submission for the NPQSL in November and passing in February, but only asked for a copy when I was offered a promotion at a different school*". The panel considered that Mr Watson should have taken

full responsibility for his actions, especially given that the NPQSL qualification relates to senior leadership development and achievement.

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would not be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order. Recommending that the publication of adverse findings would be sufficient, would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Mr Watson 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 Watson. The fact that Mr Watson had maintained his dishonesty beyond the initial submission of the Form was a significant factor for the panel in forming that opinion. The panel considered it was relevant that Mr Watson had lied to a colleague that the Form had been signed off correctly in or around November to December 2021 and he had only admitted to his actions when later questioned by that colleague. 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 behaviours that, if proved, would militate against the recommendation of a review period. The panel found that none of these behaviours were relevant.

The Advice also indicates that there are behaviours that, if proved, would have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer review period. One of these behaviours includes serious dishonesty. The panel found that Mr Watson was responsible for signing the Form and purporting these signatures to be the signatures of Colleague 1 and Colleague 2; writing comments on the Form and purporting these to be the comments of Colleague 1; providing a description of a project on the Form that he had purported to have undertaken but did not, submitting the Form to Learners First to obtain the NPQSL qualification and stating to Colleague 2 that Colleague 1 had signed his Form when this was not the case.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period of 2 years. The panel took into account Mr Watson's previous good record as a teacher and particular personal circumstances at the material times and considered that there was a low risk of repetition of such behaviour.

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

I have given very careful consideration to this case and to the recommendation of the panel in respect of both sanction and review period.

In considering this case, I have also given very careful attention to the Advice that the Secretary of State has published concerning the prohibition of teachers.

In this case, the panel has found all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Richard Watson should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of 2 years.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Watson 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;
  - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others;
  - not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- 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 Mr Watson fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding that his conduct was dishonest and lacked integrity.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would

achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct 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 Mr Watson, 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 did not note any concerns regarding the protection of children and safeguarding of pupils, but “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.” 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 has set out as follows, “The panel concluded that Mr Watson had expressed remorse but had failed to show significant insight into his actions. The panel was particularly concerned with Mr Watson’s statement that he believed that the School had *“not acted in a fully professional manner”*, and that *“the [REDACTED] was fully aware of the submission for the NPQSL in November and passing in February, but only asked for a copy when I was offered a promotion at a different school”*. The panel considered that Mr Watson should have taken full responsibility for his actions, especially given that the NPQSL qualification relates to senior leadership development and achievement.” I have therefore given the lack of full insight 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 has observed, “The findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual’s status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public perception.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of dishonesty and a lack of integrity 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 and 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 Mr Watson himself. The panel has noted that no doubt had been cast on the abilities of Mr Watson as an educator and that it had been provided with evidence of his history and ability as a teacher. The panel also took account of the difficult personal circumstances that Mr Watson was experiencing at the time of the misconduct, which Mr Watson had set out in his written response to the allegations.

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel's finding that the public interest considerations should outweigh the interests of Mr Watson. The panel has commented, "The fact that Mr Watson had maintained his dishonesty beyond the initial submission of the Form was a significant factor for the panel in forming that opinion. The panel considered it was relevant that Mr Watson had lied to a colleague that the Form had been signed off correctly in or around November to December 2021 and he had only admitted to his actions when later questioned by that colleague."

I have also placed considerable weight on the panel's comments concerning the lack of full insight.

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Watson 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 a 2-year review period.

The panel has noted that the Advice indicates that serious dishonesty is one of the behaviours that has greater relevance and weighs in favour of a longer review period. However, the panel has noted that in the circumstances of this case a 2-year review period would be proportionate. In reaching this view the panel "took into account Mr Watson's previous good record as a teacher and particular personal circumstances at the material times and considered that there was a low risk of repetition of such behaviour."

I agree with the panel's recommendation and have decided that a 2-year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession.

**This means that Mr Richard Watson is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England.** He may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until **20 May 2026**, 2 years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Watson remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Mr Richard Watson 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: 14 May 2024**

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