



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Ms Alison Atkins: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

June 2024

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Preliminary applications	4
Summary of evidence	5
Documents	5
Witnesses	5
Decision and reasons	6
Findings of fact	6
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	10
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	14

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

Teacher:	Ms Alison Atkins
Teacher ref number:	0953708
Teacher date of birth:	29 October 1966
TRA reference:	22328
Date of determination:	10 to 11 June 2024
Former employer:	Copperfield Academy, Gravesend

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ('the panel') of the Teaching Regulation Agency ('the TRA') convened on 10 to 11 June 2024 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Ms Alison Atkins.

The panel members were Mr Suhel Ahmed (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Susanne Staab (teacher panellist) and Ms Wendy Shannon (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Samantha Cass of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Mark Millin of Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Ms Atkins 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 allegation set out in the notice of hearing dated 26 March 2024.

It was alleged that Ms Atkins was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that:

1. On or around 12 May 2023, she consumed alcohol whilst on the School premises.

Ms Atkins made no admission of fact.

Preliminary applications

Application to proceed in the absence of the teacher

Ms Atkins was not present at the hearing nor was she represented. The presenting officer made an application to proceed in the absence of Ms Atkins.

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 hearing had been sent to Ms Atkins in accordance with the Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession May 2020 (the '2020 Procedures').

The panel concluded that Ms Atkins' absence was voluntary and that she was aware that the matter would proceed in her absence. The panel considered that, in the circumstances, an adjournment was highly unlikely to secure Ms Atkins attendance at a hearing which was held at a later date. The panel also noted that Ms Atkins had stated that she was not putting forward any challenge to the allegations.

The panel noted that Ms Atkins had not sought an adjournment to the hearing and the panel did not consider that an adjournment would procure her attendance at a hearing. There was no medical evidence before the panel that Ms Atkins was unfit to attend the hearing. 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 Ms Atkins was neither present nor represented.

Application for part of the hearing to be heard in private

Although there was no formal application made for matters relating to Ms Atkins' [REDACTED] to be heard in private, the panel considered this matter during the hearing, in Ms Atkins' absence, and in advance of the cross-examination of witnesses where questioning related to such matters.

The panel heard submissions from the presenting officer on the application before reaching its decision. The presenting officer did not have an objection to hearing these matters in private session.

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 Ms Atkins' 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 agreed to hear these matters in private session with the remainder of the hearing being heard in public.

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 4 to 5
- Section 2: Notice of hearing and response – pages 6 to 12
- Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 13 to 19
- Section 4: TRA documents – pages 20 to 114
- Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 115 to 119.

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

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.

In September 2021, Ms Atkins commenced employment at Copperfield Academy ('the School').

On 12 May 2023, Ms Atkins is alleged to have been seen drinking from a long neck bottle at lunchtime in her vehicle. The Individual A at the School met with Ms Atkins who confirmed the allegation and produced the empty wine bottle. Ms Atkins was suspended on medical grounds for the rest of the day.

The Individual A [REDACTED] referred the case to the LADO the same day.

On 15 May 2023, the Individual B [REDACTED] completed a risk assessment. Ms Atkins was suspended.

On 25 May 2023, Ms Atkins was interviewed and admitted again that she had consumed alcohol on the School premises.

On 13 June 2023 the investigation concluded that the matter should be referred to a disciplinary hearing.

On 21 July 2023, the matter was referred to the TRA.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

- 1. On or around 12 May 2023, you consumed alcohol whilst on the School premises.**

The panel considered the photograph of the wine bottle handed in by Ms Atkins which demonstrated that this equated to 187ml.

The panel noted that Ms Atkins consistently admitted to having drunk a bottle of wine on the School premises during the School day.

The panel considered the notes of the investigation interview with Ms Atkins, where she stated that it was lunchtime and she was feeling anxious, so she went to her car and had a small bottle of wine. She stated that she was then called into the office and went to her

car and showed them a can of coke, but she then decided to be honest so got out the bottle of wine she had been drinking.

Ms Atkins stated in her interview that she went home and drank lots [REDACTED].

Ms Atkins stated that she was drinking more than one bottle a night and the next day was becoming [REDACTED] in school. [REDACTED]. Ms Atkins stated that she had not been drinking in school but had been going off site at lunchtime to have an alcoholic drink.

The panel considered the oral and written evidence of Witness A [REDACTED], who stated that she attended the investigation meeting on 18 May 2023. She stated that, prior to the incident, she did not have any concerns about Ms Atkins.

The panel further considered the notes of the investigation meeting with Witness A [REDACTED]. Witness A [REDACTED] had stated that she was in the welfare office on 12 May 2023 at approximately 12:30pm; as she looked towards the car park, something caught her eye. She stated that she saw Ms Atkins in her car, and that she thought she saw her drink from a long-necked brown bottle, which looked like a beer.

Witness A [REDACTED] had stated in her interview that she asked Individual C [REDACTED] to come into the office and told her that she thought she had just seen Ms Atkins drinking a bottle of beer or alcohol. She stated that, after a few minutes, Individual C [REDACTED] agreed and said that she saw Ms Atkins drinking from a brown long-necked bottle. In Witness A's [REDACTED] oral evidence, she stated that the car window could have distorted the colour of the bottle which Ms Atkins later confirmed was a wine bottle. Witness A [REDACTED] stated in her oral evidence that she asked Individual C [REDACTED] to support her because what she had seen didn't look right and she wanted to make sure that she followed the correct procedures in raising this as a safeguarding concern to Witness B [REDACTED]. Witness A [REDACTED] confirmed that she viewed this as a safeguarding concern to both staff and pupils and therefore she and Individual C [REDACTED] agreed to raise this accordingly by completing a safeguarding form and raising this verbally to Witness B [REDACTED]. Witness A [REDACTED] was aware that Witness B [REDACTED] then raised this with the Individual B [REDACTED] of the School.

Witness A [REDACTED] stated in her interview that she let Witness B [REDACTED] know what she had seen, and that they went to Ms Atkins' car to have a look to see if they could see anything. Witness A [REDACTED] confirmed that they saw 2 bottles that had a percentage of alcohol label on the back of the overturned bottle, behind the seat. She stated that the window of the car distorted the colour of the bottles, but they were the same shape and size as what they had seen Ms Atkins drink from. Witness A [REDACTED] was very confident that these were the same bottles that she had seen Ms Atkins drink from.

In Witness A's [REDACTED] oral evidence, she confirmed that she and Ms Atkins professionally got on very well and she always found her to be very pleasant. Witness A [REDACTED] also stated that she had not been made aware of Ms Atkins having had any additional welfare needs and she had not given Ms Atkins any additional advice or support as compared to the support that was available to all teachers. Witness A [REDACTED] confirmed that she was therefore surprised by the incident involving Ms Atkins drinking on school premises.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B [REDACTED], who stated that, on 18 May 2023, he attended an investigation meeting in relation to the incident that occurred on 12 May 2023 involving Ms Atkins.

Witness B [REDACTED] confirmed that Ms Atkins was teaching on 12 May 2023 but could not comment on how she was behaving before the incident as he did not remember seeing her, nor had anyone raised any concerns.

The panel further considered the notes of the investigation meeting with Witness B [REDACTED] where he stated that Witness A [REDACTED] came to him concerned and said that she and Individual A [REDACTED] thought that they had seen Ms Atkins drinking from a long-necked brown bottle in her car in the School car park, in view of the pastoral office and in potential view of children in the Play Factor (lunchtime group).

Witness B [REDACTED] stated in his interview that he and Witness A [REDACTED] went to see if they could see anything in Ms Atkins' car, and they saw 2 bottles with alcohol labels behind the seat.

Witness B [REDACTED] stated during his interview that he and the Individual A [REDACTED] went to see Ms Atkins, and that she did not present as intoxicated. He stated that they took her to the SEN office and told her about the allegations against her. Witness B [REDACTED] stated that she denied the claims and offered to go to her car and get what she had been drinking. He stated that she came back and presented a Pepsi can and Tupperware box.

Witness B [REDACTED] stated that he made it clear that this was insufficient evidence that the claims were false and that the Pepsi can did not fit the description of the bottle that Witness A [REDACTED] had seen. Witness B [REDACTED] stated that he told Ms Atkins that he would have to send her home, to which she told him she would be honest with him and go to her car and get what it was. He stated that she went to her car and produced a small bottle of wine. Witness B [REDACTED] stated that he thanked her and she became [REDACTED].

In Witness B's [REDACTED] oral evidence he confirmed that, following this incident and Ms Atkins' admission, she became [REDACTED]. Ms Atkins stated that she didn't want anyone else to pick her up and so she drove herself home. Witness B [REDACTED] gave

her several options for getting home because he was concerned at her level of distress and upset but he stated, in oral evidence, that Ms Atkins did not appear to be intoxicated. Ms Atkins did not want to accept any of the other options and therefore chose to drive herself home. Nevertheless, Witness B [REDACTED] asked her to let him know that she had got home safely because he was concerned about her level of distress but said that she was coherent and they agreed that Ms Atkins would text him when she got home.

Witness B [REDACTED] confirmed that, other than this incident, he was not aware of any major concerns regarding Ms Atkins' performance or conduct and that professionally he always got on very well with Ms Atkins and found her to be very pleasant. Witness B [REDACTED] was shocked to hear of the incident because he and Ms Atkins otherwise had a normal teacher relationship with no concerns. Witness B [REDACTED] also stated that it was not unusual for Ms Atkins to head to her car during her lunch break, for some teachers to find a quiet place during their breaks and that he would regard eating lunch in the car as a normal practice for some teachers at the School.

Witness B [REDACTED] stated in his oral evidence that, when Ms Atkins was questioned about the incident, she was reflective and [REDACTED] and took full ownership for her actions. Ms Atkins stated that, while there were issues in her personal life, she had come to recognise that [REDACTED]. Witness B [REDACTED] also stated that Ms Atkins was quite open about her concerns about the impact that this would have on her [REDACTED] in the circumstances because she was the main breadwinner.

The panel found allegation 1 proven.

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

Having found the allegation proven, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of the allegation 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 Ms Atkins, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Ms Atkins 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, and maintain high standards...
- 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 Ms Atkins amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The panel also considered whether Ms Atkins' 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 was particularly relevant although the panel did consider that serious offences relating to alcohol was listed in the Advice. In reaching its decision the panel considered Witness A's [REDACTED] oral evidence which was that when she went to the car with Witness B [REDACTED], Ms Atkins was no longer in her car and that she had presumably gone back to teach after having consumed the alcohol.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Ms Atkins 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 that, as a potential consequence of Ms Atkins' actions, pupils, parents and other staff members could have seen her drinking on the School premises.

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's perception.

The panel therefore found that Ms Atkins' actions constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Having found the facts of allegation 1 proved, the panel further found that Ms Atkins' 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 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 light of the panel's findings against Ms Atkins, which involved consuming alcohol whilst on the School premises, 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 Ms Atkins 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 Ms Atkins was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

Although the witnesses called by the TRA to give evidence for this hearing confirmed that Ms Atkins was well-liked and competent in her teaching abilities, the panel was not provided with any particular evidence of her having made a significant contribution to the profession. The panel was not able to establish any strong public interest consideration in retaining the teacher in the profession.

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 Ms Atkins. 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 Ms Atkins. 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;

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 to suggest that Ms Atkins' actions were not deliberate [REDACTED].

There was no evidence to suggest that Ms Atkins was acting under extreme duress and Ms Atkins herself stated that she did not wish to make any excuses [REDACTED].

Although the panel noted that the witnesses called by the TRA to give evidence for this hearing confirmed that Ms Atkins was well-liked and competent in her teaching abilities, the panel was not able to establish whether or not Ms Atkins had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both personal and professional conduct and had contributed significantly to the education sector.

The panel considered Ms Atkins' mitigating circumstances in relation to her personal circumstances, [REDACTED] around the time of the incident and that Ms Atkins became aware of a [REDACTED].

The panel considered Ms Atkins' written statement, dated 9 November 2023, [REDACTED] The panel noted that Ms Atkins herself had admitted to drinking 4 miniature bottles of wine per day and to further instances of leaving site during the School day to drink. However, the panel did not have evidence of any previous instances of drinking on school premises and noted that the allegation related to one specific incident.

Ms Atkins stated that after being suspended [REDACTED] and found others that understood what she was going through. [REDACTED]. The panel noted that Ms Atkins stated in her own written documentation that she had attended [REDACTED] but did not have any character references or [REDACTED] as to her attendance at the meetings and/or to her suggested state of improved [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]. She stated that her now versus her 6 months ago is like night and day, and that [REDACTED], she has found her old self. The panel noted that there was no evidence [REDACTED] or medical opinion as to her improved health and wellbeing. Ms Atkins later stated in email correspondence with the TRA in April 2024 [REDACTED].

[REDACTED].

[REDACTED].

Ms Atkins stated that she has taken early retirement from teaching to concentrate on [REDACTED]. She stated that she would like to be able to return as a supply teacher at some time in the future.

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 Ms Atkins 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 Ms Atkins. Ms Atkins' lack of mitigation evidence and therefore the purported risk of repetition [REDACTED] during her teaching was a significant factor in forming that opinion. The panel did note that Ms Atkins had shown some insight and remorse and had been open in accepting responsibility for her actions in relation to this incident. However, the panel was unable to consider any documentary evidence or oral evidence from Ms Atkins as to her current ability to manage the risk of repetition. 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 none of these behaviours to be 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. The panel found none of these behaviours to be relevant.

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 2 year review period. The panel decided that this 2 year review period would give Ms Atkins the

opportunity to demonstrate her continued attendance and success through [REDACTED] relevant support services and to continue to develop her level of insight and remorse into her actions.

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 Ms Alison Atkins should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of 2 years.

In particular, the panel has found that Ms Atkins is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards...
- 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 Ms Atkins 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 Ms Atkins, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would protect children/safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, “The panel 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.” 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 set out as follows, “The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Ms Atkins. Ms Atkins’ lack of mitigation evidence and therefore the purported risk of repetition [REDACTED] during her teaching was a significant factor in forming that opinion. The panel did note that Ms Atkins had shown some insight and remorse and had been open in accepting responsibility for her actions in relation to this incident. However, the panel was unable to consider any documentary evidence or oral evidence from Ms Atkins as to her current ability to manage the risk of repetition.” 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 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 that, as a potential consequence of Ms Atkins’ actions, pupils, parents and other staff members could have seen her drinking on the School premises.”

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 Ms Atkins herself and the panel comment “Although the witnesses called by the TRA to give evidence for this hearing confirmed that Ms Atkins was well-liked and competent in her teaching abilities, the panel was not provided with any particular evidence of her having made a significant contribution to the profession. The panel was not able to establish any strong public interest consideration in retaining the teacher in the profession.”

A prohibition order would prevent Ms Atkins 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 “In light of the panel’s findings against Ms Atkins, which involved consuming alcohol whilst on the School premises, there was a strong public interest consideration in declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.”

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

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended a 2 year review period.

I have considered the panel’s comments “The panel decided that this 2 year review period would give Ms Atkins the opportunity to demonstrate her continued attendance and success through [REDACTED] relevant support services and to continue to develop her level of insight and remorse into her actions.”

I have decided that a 2 year review period is proportionate and in the public interest for this case and necessary to maintain public confidence.

This means that Ms Alison Atkins is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children’s home in England. She may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 22 June 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 she does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Ms Atkins remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SABuxcey', with a horizontal line underneath.

Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey

Date: 18 June 2024

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