



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mrs Karen Doyle: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

June 2024

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

Teacher:	Mrs Karen Doyle
TRA reference:	021561
Date of determination:	6 June 2024
Former employer:	Laurence Jackson School, North Yorkshire

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 4 to 6 June 2024 at Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT, to consider the case of Mrs Karen Doyle.

The panel members were Mr Ian Hylan (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Mona Sood (lay panellist) and Dr Louise Wallace (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Claire Watson of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Matilda Heselton of Browne Jacobson solicitors.

Mrs Karen Doyle was present and was represented by Mr Andrew Faux of the Reflective Practice.

The hearing took place in public, except for parts of the hearing heard in private, and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 18 April 2024.

It was alleged that Mrs Karen Doyle was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst employed as an assistant headteacher at the Laurence Jackson School ('the School') between 2019 and 2023;

1. She engaged in unprofessional behaviour in or around October – November 2022, in that she;
 - a. brought alcohol onto the School's premises on one or more occasions;
 - b. consumed alcohol whilst on the School's premises and/or during school hours on one or more occasions;
2. Her conduct as may be found proven at allegation 1a and/or 1b above, placed one or more pupils at risk of harm.

Mrs Doyle admitted the facts of the allegations and admitted that those facts amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Preliminary applications

Private hearing

At the outset of the hearing, the teacher's representative made an application for parts of the hearing relating to private health information, both that of the teacher and third parties, [REDACTED] to be heard in private.

The panel determined to exercise its discretion under paragraph 11(3)(b) of the Teachers' Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012 ('the Regulations') and the second bullet point of paragraph 5.85 of the Teacher Misconduct: Disciplinary Procedures for the Teaching Profession, May 2020 ('the Procedures') that the public should be excluded from parts of the hearing.

The panel took into account the general rule that hearings should be held in public and that this is generally desirable to maintain public confidence in the administration of these proceedings and also to maintain confidence in the teaching profession. The panel noted that there were concerns about confidential matters relating to health being placed in the public domain. The panel balanced the reasons why the teacher requested that the public be excluded against the competing reasons for which a public hearing is required.

The panel noted that any departure from the general rule had to be no greater than the extent reasonably necessary and that interference for a limited period of the hearing is preferable to a permanent exclusion of the public. The panel therefore, considered whether there were any steps short of excluding the public that would serve the purpose of protecting the confidentiality of matters relating to the teacher's health and the health of other third parties.

On this occasion, the panel considered that the request for part of the hearing to be heard in private, was a reasonable one given concerns about confidential matters relating to the teacher's health and that of third parties, and other personal matters being placed in the public domain.

The panel therefore decided to exclude the public from parts of the hearing relating to the teacher's health, the health of third parties, [REDACTED].

The panel had regard to whether the teacher's request ran contrary to the public interest. The panel was required to announce its decisions in public as to whether the facts have been proven and whether those facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. In the event that the case continued any decision of the Secretary of State would also be in public.

The panel considered that in the circumstances of this case where the facts were so intertwined with private matters relating to the teacher's health that the public interest will be satisfied by these public announcements. Those public announcements will ensure that public confidence in these proceedings and in the standards of the profession are maintained.

The panel allowed the presence of a supporter for Mrs Doyle, including during the parts of the hearing which were heard in private.

Video evidence

The presenting officer applied for Witness A and Witness B to give evidence by video-link, due to the distance of travel to Coventry and their commitments [REDACTED]. The teacher's representative applied for Witness C to give evidence by video-link due to cost considerations.

The panel noted that pursuant to paragraph 5.33 of the Procedures, it may admit any evidence where it is fair to do so, which may reasonably be considered to be relevant to the case.

The panel therefore considered it had a discretion as to whether to allow the witnesses to give evidence by video-link given the distance the witnesses would have to travel to Coventry, the costs entailed and the witnesses' work commitments. In exercising that discretion, the panel balanced its obligation to ensure that Mrs Doyle was not put at an unfair disadvantage, as against the panel's duty in the public interest to investigate the

allegations in so far as possible consistent with fairness to Mrs Doyle. The panel also took into account that there may be subtleties of tone or body language that might be lost via the medium of video link.

The panel was satisfied on the evidence that there had been sufficient explanation as to how work commitments and cost considerations would be a barrier to the witnesses attending in person.

Allowing Witness C's evidence to be given by video link ensured that Mrs Doyle was fully able to present her case, and fairness required that the presenting officer should be given the opportunity to ask questions of this witness.

The public interest was in favour of the allegations being investigated by the panel receiving the evidence of these witnesses. The panel realised there may be subtleties of tone or body language lost via the medium of video link but considered that such matters could, in any event, be taken into account when assessing the weight it attributed to the evidence admitted by video link.

Late documents

At the outset of the hearing, the panel was presented with a bundle of additional documents, including emails between Mrs Doyle and Witness A, between the period 19 September and 10 October 2022, and Mrs Doyle's completed response to the Notice of Proceedings. The presenting officer applied to admit these documents.

During the course of the hearing, it was noted that one of the documents contained in the bundle, a report dated October 2022, was incomplete. The teacher's representative applied to admit the complete report.

Those documents were not served in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.36 and 5.37 of the Procedures, and as such the panel was required to decide whether those documents should be admitted under paragraph 5.34 of the procedures at the discretion of the panel. The panel took into account the representations from the presenting officer and the teacher's representative. No objections were raised to the admission of any of the documents.

The panel was satisfied that the documents were relevant to the case. The emails with Witness A referred to Mrs Doyle's health and the Notice of Proceedings Response set out the teacher's response to the proceedings. The report dated October 2022, which was an occupational health report, again set out difficulties Mrs Doyle was having with her physical health and recommendations for a phased return to work, which was referred to in other documents within the bundle.

During the course of the hearing, the panel requested sight of a copy of a stress risk assessment referred to by Witness A. The panel decided to admit this document.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology – pages 6 to 7

Section 2: Notice of Proceedings, Response and Statement of Agreed Facts – pages 9 to 19

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements – pages 22 to 95

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 97 to 270

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 272 to 378

The panel also received 6 clips of CCTV footage of the School's premises.

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- Emails between Mrs Doyle and Witness A, between the period 19 September and 10 October 2022 – pages 379 to 385;
- The completed response to the Notice of Proceedings – pages 386 to 388;
- A report dated October 2022 – pages 389 to 391;
- Risk assessments – pages 392 to 401.

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle, and watched the CCTV footage, 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]

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

- Witness C, an expert witness

Mrs Doyle also gave live evidence.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Mrs Doyle had been employed at the School since 1996, at which time she was in the role of English teacher. Mrs Doyle was seconded to the role of acting assistant headteacher from 1 January 2019 and permanently appointed to the role from January 2020. On 7 November 2022, a member of staff reported concerns as the School was closing for the day that they had heard what sounded like a large number of empty cans or bottles being deposited in a bin at the front of the School. The concerns were investigated and Mrs Doyle was formally suspended on 16 November 2022, with her employment at the School ceasing on 5 January 2023.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

- 1. You engaged in unprofessional behaviour in or around October – November 2022, in that you;**
 - a. brought alcohol onto the School’s premises on one or more occasions;**

The allegation was admitted and was supported by evidence presented to the panel.

The panel had sight of CCTV, which showed Mrs Doyle placing a carrier bag in a bin outside of the School doors. The Statement of Agreed Facts set out that on 7 November 2022, a member of staff reported concerns as the School was closing in that they had heard what sounded like a large number of empty cans or bottles being deposited in a bin at the front of the School.

In the minutes of the disciplinary meeting held by the School, it is noted that on checking the bins immediately after this report on 7 November 2022, a bag containing empty cans of fruit cider together with empty pre-mixed gin and tonic cans had been discovered in an Aldi carrier bag. Photographs of an Aldi carrier bag presented to the panel in the bundle showed the inside of the bag which contained approximately 8 empty cans of fruit cider together with mixed gin and tonic cans.

The statement of Witness A outlined that on 9 November 2022 they inspected Mrs Doyle’s office and found empty and unopened cans of fruit cider within Mrs Doyle’s belongings.

In live evidence and in her written statement, Mrs Doyle admitted to bringing alcohol onto the School’s premises on more than one occasion. Mrs Doyle explained that she shared her office with one other individual, and that it was kept locked at all times if they were

not present as it contained confidential data. Mrs Doyle insisted that pupils did not enter the office unless they were accompanied.

The panel had sight of the School's health and safety policy, which set out rules to be adhered to including not bringing alcohol on to school premises. The panel considered that Mrs Doyle's behaviour, in bringing alcohol onto the School, particularly with the intention to potentially consume it on the School premises, was unprofessional.

The allegation was therefore, found proved.

b. consumed alcohol whilst on the School's premises and/or during school hours on one or more occasions;

The allegation was admitted and was supported by evidence presented to the panel.

The panel had sight of photographs, taken from within Mrs Doyle's office, which showed cans of fruit cider. In live evidence, Mrs Doyle stated that on the first occasion she drank alcohol on the School's premises, this was one can of fruit cider. Mrs Doyle admitted that she had drunk up to four cans of fruit cider on 3 or 4 separate occasions on the School's premises, and one can of mixed gin and tonic, during school hours. The panel noted, from the photographs provided in the bundle, that the fruit cider cans were 330ml and the pre-mixed gin and tonic cans were 250ml. Mrs Doyle further stated that this was across a 3 week period, in the two weeks prior to the October half term in 2022 and in the week following the half term.

The panel considered that consuming alcohol on the School's premises and during school hours was unprofessional behaviour.

The allegation was therefore, found proved.

2. Your conduct as may be found proven at allegation 1a and/or 1b above, placed one or more pupils at risk of harm.

The allegation was admitted and was supported by evidence presented to the panel.

In live evidence, Mrs Doyle stressed that her office door was kept locked at all times when a member of staff was not present and pupils did not enter the office unaccompanied. However, the panel considered that there was a risk that pupils could have had access to the office and therefore to the alcohol.

Mrs Doyle accepted that drinking any amount of alcohol on the School's premises was "totally unacceptable". Mrs Doyle explained that she did not drink the alcohol before she taught any lessons, and on the occasions that she did drink this was in the afternoon such as after a particularly difficult meeting. Mrs Doyle did admit that she may have had other responsibilities after having consumed alcohol, such as monitoring pupils in social areas.

The panel had sight of the School's health and safety policy, which stated that "the effects of alcohol or drugs at work can create serious health and safety risks" and set out rules to be adhered to including not to come to work under the influence of alcohol and not bringing alcohol on to school premises.

The panel considered that drinking any alcohol on the School's premises during school hours placed one or more pupils at risk of harm. Although Mrs Doyle may not have had classroom duties, she had other duties within the School such as monitoring pupils in social areas, and enduring responsibility for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils. Potentially, there could have also been an incident within the School which required Mrs Doyle's professional response.

Although there was no evidence to suggest that Mrs Doyle was inebriated at work or that any harm was caused to pupils, the panel considered that drinking alcohol may have affected Mrs Doyle's ability to care for pupils and as such placed one or more pupils at risk of harm.

The allegation was therefore, found proved.

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 Doyle, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mrs Doyle 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.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mrs Doyle fell significantly short of the standard of behaviour expected of a teacher.

The panel had found that Mrs Doyle had brought to and consumed alcohol on the School premises on more than one occasion and in doing so, had placed one or more pupils at

risk of harm. The panel considered that, as a teacher and assistant headteacher of the School, Mrs Doyle had a responsibility to safeguard the pupils at the School and her actions and decisions could be impacted by her consumption of alcohol.

The panel considered the circumstances in which Mrs Doyle's actions took place during October and November 2022. Mrs Doyle had previously been absent from work from May 2021 to July 2021 with [REDACTED].

[REDACTED].

The panel saw a report from Witness C, which stated that Mrs Doyle's usual coping strategies were not available to her in October 2022, and she felt 'overwhelmed' on her phased return. [REDACTED].

The panel had sight of occupational health reports from August 2022 and October 2022, recommending a phased return to work. However, the panel heard evidence from Mrs Doyle that the implementation of the phased return meant Mrs Doyle's working time was reduced but her responsibilities were not reduced proportionately.

[REDACTED]. Witness A was clear in her evidence that meetings in relation to the management of Mrs Doyle's physical welfare and her line management were to be dealt with as separate issues. [REDACTED].

The additional evidence accepted by the panel demonstrated repeated requests for adjustments from Mrs Doyle, which Mrs Doyle said in live evidence was not her usual practice. The panel considered that the email requests in September and October 2022 from Mrs Doyle demonstrated that she was struggling to meet her responsibilities at that time. The panel heard from Mrs Doyle, and saw in a report from a psychological therapist, that Mrs Doyle's approach when under pressure was "plowing [sic] through things with my head down" rather than ask for adjustments. As an example of this, the panel heard how Mrs Doyle had [REDACTED] online rather than in person, as she did not feel that she could request the time off work when already on a phased return.

Mrs Doyle expressed in live and written evidence that she felt a 'burden' requesting time off from work, given that she had two significant periods of absence and was aware of the impact that had on her colleagues.

The panel was provided with a copy of Mrs Doyle's timetable from 31 October 2022 onwards, and heard in live evidence that this had been discussed with Witness A to identify times for a phased return. A handwritten comment, which Mrs Doyle said in evidence was Witness A's handwriting, stated that Mrs Doyle "needs to include duties on days working". The panel considered that there was an expectation that Mrs Doyle would continue with her full leadership duties and responsibilities during working hours when on a phased return. The panel was also provided with emails between Mrs Doyle and Witness A, in which Mrs Doyle was liaising with colleagues in relation to implementing a reduced timetable and an email on 2 November 2022 from Witness A which stated

'conscious we haven't really discussed how you will reduce work given your reduced hours'. The panel heard from Mrs Doyle that it was often difficult to speak with Witness A due to her limited availability, including for instance a scheduled [REDACTED] and on a further occasion when Mrs Doyle had sought to speak with Witness A to express that she was severely struggling.

The panel considered that while a phased return had been agreed, in practice this was not effectively implemented and this impacted on Mrs Doyle's stress during this period of time.

Although the panel acknowledged that Mrs Doyle was going through a period of significant stress in October and November 2022, both work related and due to personal reasons, the panel considered that this did not excuse Mrs Doyle consuming alcohol on the School premises during school hours, which was unacceptable. The panel considered the behaviour to be more than trivial, as it potentially put pupils at risk of harm as Mrs Doyle had responsibility for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils during the times in which she deliberately consumed alcohol.

The panel also considered whether Mrs Doyle's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice.

The panel found that none of these offences was relevant.

The Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with such an offence exist, a panel is likely to conclude that an individual's conduct would amount to unacceptable professional conduct.

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

The panel went on to consider whether Mrs Doyle was guilty of conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others, the responsibilities and duties of teachers in relation to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils 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 Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice exist, a panel is likely to conclude that an individual's conduct would amount to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel found that none of these offences was relevant.

The panel considered that the public would view drinking alcohol at school during school hours to be inappropriate and unacceptable. However, the panel considered this case on

its individual merits, taking into account the circumstances involved. Mrs Doyle had consumed a limited amount of alcohol in the School and there was no evidence to suggest she was inebriated at work. The panel found that Mrs Doyle had consumed alcohol on school premises during a limited period of time and at periods of extreme stress. The panel considered that a member of the public, with full background knowledge of the circumstances in which Mrs Doyle found herself at the time, would not consider this behaviour to meet the threshold of bringing the teaching profession into disrepute.

Therefore, the panel did not consider that Mrs Doyle's conduct could potentially damage the public perception.

The panel therefore did not find that Mrs Doyle's actions constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Having found the facts of allegations 1 and 2 proved, the panel further found that Mrs Doyle's conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

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

In considering whether to recommend to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order is appropriate, the panel had to consider the public interest, the seriousness of the behaviour and any mitigation offered by Mrs Doyle and whether a prohibition order is necessary and proportionate. Prohibition orders should not be given in order to be punitive, or to show that blame has been apportioned, although they are likely to have a 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 declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct. The panel also found the interest of retaining the teacher in the profession to be relevant.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mrs Doyle, which involved bringing alcohol onto the School premises and consuming alcohol on the School premises and during school hours, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the potential risk of harm to pupils.

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 Mrs Doyle was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

The panel decided that there was a strong public interest consideration in retaining the

teacher in the profession, since no doubt had been cast upon her abilities as an educator and she is able to make a valuable contribution to the profession.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states that the expectation of both the public and pupils is that members of the teaching profession maintain an exemplary level of integrity and ethical standards at all times.

The panel took further account of the Advice, which suggests that a panel will likely consider a teacher's behaviour to be incompatible with being a teacher if there is evidence of one or more of the factors that begin on page 15. In the list of such factors, those that were relevant in this case were:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;
- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils.

Although such factors were relevant, the panel considered that Mrs Doyle's conduct was at the lower end of seriousness. Mrs Doyle had consumed alcohol for a limited period of time during a period of significant personal and work stress. There was no evidence that Mrs Doyle had caused actual harm to pupils.

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate, taking account of the public interest and the seriousness of the behaviour and the likely harm to the public interest were the teacher be allowed to continue to teach, the panel went on to consider the mitigation offered by the teacher.

Mrs Doyle's actions were deliberate. It is noted that Mrs Doyle did not intend to bring alcohol onto the School premises on the first occasion, as she had bought alcohol for a third party to consume that evening, alongside her lunch and milk, and brought the entire carrier bag into School. However, Mrs Doyle had knowingly consumed a can of fruit cider on this occasion and had knowingly brought alcohol onto the school premises on at least one other occasion.

Mrs Doyle was not acting under extreme duress, such as physical threat or intimidation. However, the panel considered that Mrs Doyle was acting under considerable pressure. Mrs Doyle was experiencing exceptional adverse personal circumstances during the times when she had consumed alcohol on the School premises. [REDACTED], returning to work 2 or 3 days before the start of the Summer holidays in July 2022, and began a phased return to work on the advice of occupational health in September 2022. However, Mrs Doyle outlined in written and live evidence how she was struggling on her return to work and how a phased return had not effectively been implemented. Mrs Doyle explained how she felt a 'burden' asking for time off and how it was not in her nature to say that she was struggling or request extensions for deadlines, as she had done in her emails to Witness A. [REDACTED]. The panel considered that all of these issues contributed to a significant period of stress resulting in what Mrs Doyle described

subsequently as a 'crisis' at work.

Mrs Doyle did have a previously good history, and the panel saw no evidence that showed that Mrs Doyle was previously subject to disciplinary proceedings or warnings. Mrs Doyle had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both her personal and professional conduct and having contributed significantly to the education sector.

The panel noted that Mrs Doyle had been an Advanced Skills Teacher for over 15 years prior to her appointment as the head of English, having undertaken an intensive assessment, including observation by an Ofsted trained inspector, and in 2008 had been awarded a Redcar and Cleveland Pride award as Outstanding Teacher of the Year.

Although Mrs Doyle had consumed alcohol on more than one occasion, the panel accepted that these incidents were out of character, given Mrs Doyle's previous history of abstinence and coping mechanisms when dealing with periods of high stress.

The panel was presented with character references in the bundle from family, friends and former colleagues. [REDACTED], stated that Mrs Doyle "has been one of the most dedicated members of staff I have ever worked with", "going above and beyond for the school community", "had excellent classroom and behaviour management skills" and her "caring and compassionate nature is there for all to see". [REDACTED] went on to say "I feel that she still has so much more to give to the profession and if she were unable to continue teaching we would have lost an incredible teacher".

The panel considered that Mrs Doyle had shown a high level of insight into and had expressed remorse for her actions. From the outset, when confronted by the School over her behaviour, Mrs Doyle had accepted the allegations and that her behaviour was unacceptable. Mrs Doyle had proactively sought support for her [REDACTED], consumption of alcohol, having read extensive literature on the topic [REDACTED].

The panel questioned Mrs Doyle on the development of her coping mechanisms and her likely future ability to deal with stressful situations. Mrs Doyle [REDACTED] was able to articulate in oral evidence strategies she would use [REDACTED].

She also articulated how she had managed to deal with stressful situations post November 2022 and how she would implement strategies to manage her workload. The panel considered the risk of Mrs Doyle repeating her behaviour as outlined in the facts found proved to be extremely low.

The panel considered whether it would be proportionate to conclude this case with no recommendation of prohibition, and 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 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. 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 all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that the finding of unacceptable professional conduct should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Mrs Karen Doyle 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.

The panel finds that the conduct of Mrs Doyle fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a teacher engaging in behaviour that placed their pupils at risk of harm.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In assessing 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, 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 Doyle, 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 records that it "...considered the behaviour to be more than trivial, as it potentially put pupils at risk of harm as Mrs Doyle had responsibility for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils during the times in which she deliberately consumed alcohol." 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 Doyle had shown a high level of insight into and had expressed remorse for her actions. From the outset, when confronted by the School over her behaviour, Mrs Doyle had accepted the allegations and that her behaviour was unacceptable. Mrs Doyle had proactively sought support for her [REDACTED] consumption of alcohol, having read extensive literature on the topic [REDACTED]"

In my judgement, the degree of remorse and insight demonstrated by Mrs Doyle means that there is a limited risk of the repetition of this behaviour. I have 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 observes:

"Mrs Doyle had consumed a limited amount of alcohol in the School and there was no evidence to suggest she was inebriated at work. The panel found that Mrs Doyle had consumed alcohol on school premises during a limited period of time and at periods of extreme stress. The panel considered that a member of the public, with full background knowledge of the circumstances in which Mrs Doyle found herself at the time, would not consider this behaviour to meet the threshold of bringing the teaching profession into disrepute."

While I am mindful that the public would likely be dismayed to hear of a teacher consuming alcohol while at work, I judge the misconduct found by the panel to be at the lower end of the spectrum of possible seriousness and agree that Mrs Doyle's actions would be unlikely to have a serious negative impact on the reputation of the teaching 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

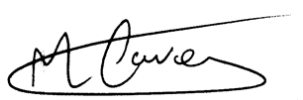
conduct, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mrs Doyle herself. The panel records having been presented with a number of references attesting to Mrs Doyle's good character, including one describing her as an "*incredible teacher*". I have also noted the panel's references to Mrs Doyle's record as a teacher over a significant span of time and her previous good record.

A prohibition order would prevent Mrs Doyle 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 the significant degree of insight and remorse demonstrated by Mrs Doyle. I have also noted its remarks regarding her contribution to education, the mitigations presented and the steps she has taken to ensure that the misconduct found will not be repeated in the future. Finally, I have taken into account the panel's comments regarding the relative seriousness of Mrs Doyle's misconduct which, while unacceptable, was at the lower end of the possible spectrum of seriousness.

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 'M. Cavey', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Decision maker: Marc Cavey

Date: 11 June 2024

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