



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Pardeep Lahel: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome

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

November 2024

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

Teacher:	Mr Pardeep Lahel
Teacher ref number:	0155236
Teacher date of birth:	27 April 1979
TRA reference:	22672
Date of determination:	29 November 2024
Former employer:	Perryfields Academy, Oldbury

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 29 November 2024, by virtual means, to consider the case of Mr Pardeep Lahel.

The panel members were Mr Martyn Stephens (lay panellist – in the chair), Mrs Michelle Chappell (teacher panellist) and Ms Geraldine Baird (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Luisa Gibbons of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP solicitors.

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Lahel that the allegations be considered without a hearing. Mr Lahel provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer Ms Clare Hastie of Kingsley Napley LLP, Mr Lahel or his representative [REDACTED].

The meeting took place in private.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of meeting dated 5 September 2024.

It was alleged that Mr Lahel was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst working as the head of department – IT & business studies at Perryfields Academy (“the School”):

1. Between May and June 2023, in relation to the Pearson Business and Enterprise (BEN01) exam, he deliberately changed data submitted to the exam board in that he:
 - a. Created grades for around 11 students who did not have grades recorded;
 - b. Changed the grades recorded for around 69 students by increasing the grade;
2. Between May and June 2023, in relation to the OCR iMedia (R087/02) exam, he deliberately changed data submitted to the exam board in that he:
 - a. Created grades for around 51 students who did not have grades recorded;
 - b. Changed the grades recorded for around 22 students by increasing the grade;
3. Between May and June 2023, in relation to the OCR iMedia (R082/02) exam, he deliberately changed data submitted to the exam board in that he:
 - a. Created grades for around 57 students who did not have grades recorded;
 - b. Changed the grades recorded for around 22 students by increasing the grade;
4. Between May and June 2023, he submitted work to exam boards that did not belong to the named students;
5. His conduct at paragraph 1 and/or 2 and/or 3 and/or 4 was:
 - a. Dishonest, and/or
 - b. Lacked integrity.

Mr Lahel admitted all of the allegations and that he is guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Preliminary applications

There were no preliminary applications.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology and list of key people – pages 5 to 6

Section 2: Notice of Referral, response to Notice of Referral and Notice of Meeting – pages 7 to 27

Section 3: Statement of Agreed Facts and Presenting Officer representations – pages 28 to 31

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 32 to 177

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 178 to 184.

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

Statement of Agreed Facts

The panel considered a Statement of Agreed Facts which was signed by Mr Lahel on 23 May 2024.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

The panel carefully considered the case and reached a decision.

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

Mr Lahel was employed at Perryfields Academy (“the School”) from 1 January 2020 as the head of department for IT and business studies. On 8 June 2023, Mr Lahel met with [REDACTED] to discuss concerns in relation to students’ coursework. On the same day, Mr Lahel was suspended from his employment pending an investigation. On 21 July 2023, a disciplinary hearing was held and Mr Lahel did not attend. Mr Lahel’s employment with the School ceased on 21 July 2023. Mr Lahel was referred to the TRA on 16 October 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:

Whilst working as the head of department – IT & business studies at Perryfields Academy (“the School”):

- 1. Between May and June 2023, in relation to the Pearson Business and Enterprise (BEN01) exam, you deliberately changed data submitted to the exam board in that he:**
 - a. Created grades for around 11 students who did not have grades recorded;**

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts. He also admitted that on 8 June 2023, he met with [REDACTED] of the School to discuss concerns in relation to students' coursework. He admitted that during that meeting he had said that he did not want any of the students to “lose out” because of the teaching and learning. Mr Lahel also admitted that during an investigatory meeting on 26 June 2023, he stated that student results were really low and there was pressure on Year 10 and 11 to achieve better grades.

The panel has seen a note of the meeting with Mr Lahel on 8 June 2024. Mr Lahel was asked why he would not share the coursework sample list with the staff in his team. Mr Lahel initially responded that he had wanted it so he could talk with another member of staff about it first, since that staff member can worry about organising the sample. Mr Lahel was then informed that [REDACTED] had been made aware that some of the grades inputted for students were not the grades the student had actually achieved, and Mr Lahel was asked if he had falsified any grades. Mr Lahel initially stated that he did not want any of the students to have lost out. When asked again, he repeated that he did not want any of the students to have lost out because of the teaching and learning. He was asked if the grades he had entered were accurate and Mr Lahel responded that he did not want any of the children to have lost out or get a U grade. He was asked if he had changed any student grades and Mr Lahel responded “yes”. He was asked to explain what grades had been changed and Mr Lahel stated that if a student was getting a U he awarded them a Level 2 Pass. The notes stated that “I asked how many marks that would be and he said approximately 36”. He confirmed that he had only changed the grades of students who had achieved a U grade. He stated that he had done this for the Year 11 iMedia course. He was then asked about business studies and he stated that their teacher had been happy to give some students U grades, and he had not wanted them to have U grades so he changed those too. He stated that this was only the case

for Year 10 students, as he was happy with the grades their teacher had awarded to Year 11 students.

In the notes of the School's investigation meeting with Mr Lahel, he confirmed that he inputted the unit marks on the exam board portal for the Pearson Business and Enterprise (BEN01), Year 10 course, and the OCR iMedia (R087/02) and (R082/2) Year 11 courses. He confirmed that he did not typically do so, and it was only the 2023 year that he had done so "as the [REDACTED] was too busy and [REDACTED] asked [him] to do it." He stated that there was an accurate record of the marks stored on OneDrive in a departmental spreadsheet. He confirmed that the marks inputted to the exam boards were not the same as those internal records. By way of explanation, Mr Lahel stated that since starting at the School there had been lots of pressure with results, impact on progress and students, and there were lots of U grades. He stated that the pressure had been on with regards to what to do, he "had to make a decision, it was a poor decision and decision [he] regret[s]." He stated that he could not estimate how many students' marks were changed and could only give that detail if he saw that data.

The School's investigation report contains appendix I which is described as "a comparison between the Exam Board submitted marks and the departmental spreadsheet". The panel noted that this document contained a list of printed coursework marks for the Pearson BEN01 course as well as handwritten marks which the panel understood from the above description as being those recorded in the departmental spreadsheet. Although the data set was not entirely clear to say with certainty that the grades had been created for exactly 11 students, the panel was satisfied that, in light of Mr Lahel's admissions and the evidence contained in Appendix 11, it was more likely than not that Mr Lahel had created grades for around that number of students who did not have grades recorded.

The panel found this allegation proven.

b. Changed the grades recorded for around 69 students by increasing the grade;

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts. He also admitted that during the meeting on 8 June 2023 with [REDACTED], he accepted that he had altered the grades for Year 10 business studies taught by another teacher in the School. Mr Lahel also admitted that during an investigatory meeting on 26 June 2023 that student results were really low and there was pressure on Year 10 and 11 to achieve better grades.

The panel has seen a note of the meeting with Mr Lahel on 8 June 2024. He confirmed that he had only changed the grades of students who had achieved a U grade. He was asked about business studies and he stated that their teacher had been happy to give some students U grades, and he had not wanted them to have U grades so he changed

those too. He stated that this was only the case for Year 10 students, as he was happy with the grades their teacher had awarded to Year 11 students.

In the notes of the School's investigation meeting with Mr Lahel, he stated that he could not recall exactly how many pupils were affected, that the results had been poor in that group and were not near the "target grade". He stated that on the business course, two students had a U Grade and he "entered better grade work for them".

The panel again considered appendix I of the School's investigation report. Although the data set was not entirely clear to say with certainty that the grades had been increased for exactly 69 students, the panel was satisfied that, in light of Mr Lahel's admissions and the evidence contained in Appendix I, it was more likely than not that Mr Lahel had changed the grades recorded for around 69 students by increasing the grade.

The panel found this allegation proven.

2. Between May and June 2023, in relation to the OCR iMedia (R087/02) exam, he deliberately changed data submitted to the exam board in that you:

a. Created grades for around 51 students who did not have grades recorded;

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts.

The panel has seen a note of the meeting with Mr Lahel on 8 June 2024. He confirmed that he had only changed the grades of students who had achieved a U grade. He stated that he had done this for the Year 11 iMedia course.

The School's investigation report contains appendix H which is described as "a comparison between the Exam Board submitted marks and the departmental spreadsheet". The panel noted that this document contained a list of printed coursework marks for the R087/02 OCR course as well as handwritten marks which the panel understood from the above description as being those recorded in the departmental spreadsheet. Although the data set was not entirely clear to say with certainty that the grades had been created for exactly 57 students, the panel was satisfied that, in light of Mr Lahel's admissions and the evidence contained in Appendix H it was more likely than not that Mr Lahel had created grades recorded for around that number of students.

The panel found this allegation proven.

b. Changed the grades recorded for around 22 students by increasing the grade;

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts. During the meeting on 8 June 2023 with [REDACTED], he accepted that he had altered grades for Year 11 iMedia students taught by another teacher in the School. Mr Lahel also admitted that

during an investigatory meeting on 26 June 2023, he stated that student results were really low and there was pressure on Year 10 and 11 to achieve better grades.

The panel has seen a note of the meeting with Mr Lahel on 8 June 2024. He confirmed that he had only changed the grades of students who had achieved a U grade. He stated that he had done this for the Year 11 iMedia course.

In the notes of the School's investigation meeting with Mr Lahel, he stated that he could not recall exactly how many pupils were affected, that the results had been poor in that group and were not near the "target grade". He confirmed that for those with a U grade, he recorded a Level 2 pass and submitted alternative work for them.

The panel again considered appendix H of the School's investigation report. Although the data set was not entirely clear to say with certainty that the grades had been increased for exactly 22 students, the panel was satisfied that, in light of Mr Lahel's admissions and the evidence contained in Appendix H, it was more likely than not that Mr Lahel had increased the grades recorded for around that number of students.

The panel found this allegation proven.

3. Between May and June 2023, in relation to the OCR iMedia (R082/02) exam, he deliberately changed data submitted to the exam board in that you:

a. Created grades for around 57 students who did not have grades recorded;

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts.

The panel has seen the minutes of the meeting with Mr Lahel on 8 June 2024. He confirmed that he had only changed the grades of students who had achieved a U grade. He stated that he had done this for the Year 11 iMedia course.

The School's investigation report contains appendix H which is described as "a comparison between the Exam Board submitted marks and the departmental spreadsheet". The panel noted that this document contained a list of printed coursework marks for the R082/02 OCR course as well as handwritten marks which the panel understood from the above description as being those recorded in the departmental spreadsheet. Although the data set was not entirely clear to say with certainty that the grades had been created for exactly 57 students, the panel was satisfied that, in light of Mr Lahel's admissions and the evidence contained in Appendix H, it was more likely than not that Mr Lahel had created grades for around that number of students who did not have grades recorded.

The panel found this allegation proven.

b. Changed the grades recorded for around 22 students by increasing the grade;

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts. During the meeting on 8 June 2023 with [REDACTED], he accepted that he had altered grades for Year 11 iMedia students taught by another teacher in the School. Mr Lahel also admitted that during an investigatory meeting on 26 June 2023, he stated that student results were really low and there was pressure on Year 10 and 11 to achieve better grades.

The panel has seen a note of the meeting with Mr Lahel on 8 June 2024. He confirmed that he had only changed the grades of students who had achieved a U grade. He stated that he had done this for the Year 11 iMedia course.

In the notes of the School's investigation meeting with Mr Lahel, he stated that he could not recall exactly how many pupils were affected, that the results had been poor in that group and were not near the "target grade". He confirmed that for those with a U grade, he recorded a Level 2 pass and submitted alternative work for them.

The panel again considered Appendix H of the School's investigation report. The panel noted there appeared to be 22 students whose submitted mark exceeded that recorded on the departmental spreadsheet for those students. Although the data set was not entirely clear to say with certainty that the grades had been increased for exactly 22 students, the panel was satisfied that, in light of Mr Lahel's admissions and the evidence contained in Appendix H, it was more likely than not that Mr Lahel had increased the grades for around that number of students.

The panel found this allegation proven.

4. Between May and June 2023, you submitted work to exam boards that did not belong to the named students;

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts.

The panel has seen the minutes of the meeting with Mr Lahel on 8 June 2024. Mr Lahel was asked whether, "if he had changed a grade for a student to a higher grade and their work had been called for in the sample, if he had sent someone else's work across as theirs". The notes record that Mr Lahel responded that he had.

Having increased the grades for students, and providing grades that had not been recorded, had Mr Lahel submitted the work that did belong to those students, it would have been clear to the exam board that the work did not warrant the grade submitted. Submitting work that did not belong to the named students was the natural corollary of his earlier actions. In light of this, and Mr Lahel's admission both to the School and in these proceedings, the panel considered it more likely than not that Mr Lahel had acted as alleged.

The panel found this allegation proven.

5. Your conduct at paragraph 1 and/or 2 and/or 3 and/or 4 was:

a. Dishonest, and/or

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts, having been provided with the test for dishonesty set out in *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockfords* [2017].

The panel considered the evidence of Mr Lahel's intention. He referred to not having wanted students to have lost out. Even if his actions were well intentioned, as a teacher, he would have known that misrepresenting students' marks and their work to an exam board, was dishonest. Ordinary decent people would consider those actions to be dishonest.

The panel found this allegation proven.

b. Lacked integrity.

Mr Lahel admitted this allegation in the Statement of Agreed Facts, having been provided with the definition of professional integrity from *Wingate and Evans v SRA; SRA v Malins* [2018].

The panel considered that it would undermine trust in the profession and the integrity of examinations if teachers misrepresented the grades that students had achieved and the students' work. Teachers have a trusted role in society to ensure that examination results reflect the students' achievements. The panel therefore considered that Mr Lahel's actions lacked integrity.

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 Mr Lahel in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel noted that Mr Lahel had breached the requirement in the Preamble to act with honesty and integrity. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Lahel 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
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
 - 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 in their own attendance and punctuality.
- 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 Lahel was misconduct of a serious nature falling significantly short of the standard of behaviour expected of a teacher.

The panel also considered whether Mr Lahel'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 the offence of fraud or serious dishonesty was relevant given the scale of the misconduct.

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 Mr Lahel was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel went on to consider if Mr Lahel 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.

In considering the issue of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Mr Lahel's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice.

As referred to above, the panel found that the offence of fraud or serious dishonesty 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 conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel considered that Mr Lahel's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

The panel therefore found that Mr Lahel's actions constituted 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 is appropriate, the panel had to consider the public interest, the seriousness of the behaviour and any mitigation offered by Mr Lahel and whether a prohibition order is necessary and proportionate. Prohibition orders should not be given in order to be punitive, or to show that blame has been apportioned, although they are likely to have punitive effect.

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found all of them to be relevant in this case, namely, the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils; the protection of other members of the public; the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct; and whether prohibition strikes the right balance between the rights of the teacher and the public interest, if they are in conflict.

There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the impact on students of their marks coming under scrutiny including delay in receiving their grades, and their ability to transition to the next stage of their academic development or working careers.

The panel also considered that the public interest consideration of protection of other members of the public was also relevant since the public has to have confidence in the results awarded to pupils when considering their suitability for future academic courses, or employment.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Lahel were 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 Lahel was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

The panel had no evidence of Mr Lahel's ability as an educator but no doubt had been cast upon those abilities. Nevertheless, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations present in this case outweighed the interest of Mr Lahel continuing to teach.

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, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving vulnerable pupils);
- 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...;
- 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;
- knowingly manipulating a school's ... data to benefit and/or enhance a school's ... exam results.

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 and whether there were mitigating circumstances.

Mr Lahel's actions were deliberate.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Lahel was acting under extreme duress, eg a physical threat or significant intimidation. Mr Lahel stated that since starting at the School there had been lots of pressure with results, impact on progress and students, there were lots of “U” grades. No evidence was presented to the panel that explained this further, save that Mr Lahel’s mitigation statement referred to his regret at not having familiarised himself with whistleblowing systems, having highlighted concerns via email but not having pursued them. Mr Lahel’s representative clarified that Mr Lahel was not seeking to apportion blame to any individual person, and instead was suggesting that he should have been more aware of the need to speak out about overall pressures he was under at an earlier stage, rather than taking the actions he had.

The panel accepted that Mr Lahel had no previous disciplinary action or complaints against him. However, there was no evidence that he had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. Nevertheless, Mr Lahel had had a career of 20 years and up to that point there had been no concerns raised with regards to his leadership or teaching, or his conduct of examinations. In his mitigation statement, Mr Lahel referred to examples of turning around student lives and their school journeys as including “breaking up vicious fights at school due to being familiar with local parents, coaching students who are involved in violence and drugs, running extra classes for my underachieving BAME students, running competitions and rewards for by BAME students to encourage school attendance and engagement and running parental ICT classes to help bridge the digital divide.”

Mr Lahel adduced no independent evidence attesting to his character or his ability as a teacher for the panel to consider.

When Mr Lahel was asked why he would not share the coursework sample list with the staff in his team, Mr Lahel initially provided an excuse. However, he subsequently admitted his actions in that first meeting and has made full admissions in the course of the present proceedings. He provided a statement for the School’s disciplinary hearing which stated that he accepted full responsibility for the allegations of exam malpractice and he understood the potentially serious consequences for the School and its pupils of his decisions. It referred to him having “huge remorse for [his] decisions” and that he offered a “ full and unequivocal apology to the pupils, the academy and the exam boards.” He stated that “the reason I raise the issue of pressure is to provide context rather than to evade responsibility.”

His mitigation statement for the present proceedings stated that if he was to administer controlled assessments again, he would need to ensure that all rules were followed to ensure that qualifications being delivered are fair and to ensure that the qualification is not undermined. The panel considered Mr Lahel could have provided a greater level of detail as to what he would do differently. Mr Lahel referred to having let himself down and the students he has taught. He also referred to being saddened that he has not been

able to continue being an advocate for students with a similar background to him, enabling them to get the best out of their school journey. The panel was concerned that Mr Lahel had not appreciated the full impact of his actions and, in particular, that they undermined public confidence in the assessment process.

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 Lahel 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 Lahel. The scale of the dishonesty was a significant factor in forming that opinion. Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

The panel went on to consider whether or not it would be appropriate for it to decide to recommend a review period of the order. The panel was mindful that the Advice states that a prohibition order applies for life, but there may be circumstances, in any given case, that may make it appropriate to allow a teacher to apply to have the prohibition order reviewed after a specified period of time that may not be less than two years.

The Advice indicates that there are cases involving certain conduct where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate. These cases include fraud or serious dishonesty. The panel found that Mr Lahel was responsible for dishonesty affecting a significant number of pupils in that particular cohort.

The panel recognised that this misconduct occurred in the context of one particular academic year, and there had been no prior suggestion of any similar issues. The panel noted Mr Lahel had expressed remorse, but there remained some concern as to whether he fully appreciated the consequences of his actions on others. The panel could not be entirely satisfied that there was no risk of repetition and considered that the public would be concerned by this.

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 provision for a review period after five years.

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/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

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

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Lahel 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
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
 - 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 in their own attendance and punctuality.
- 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 Lahel fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a teacher acting in a way which was dishonest and lacked integrity.

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 and conduct that may 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 Lahel, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would protect children and safeguard pupils. The panel has observed that:

“There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the impact on students of their marks coming under scrutiny including delay in receiving their grades, and their ability to transition to the next stage of their academic development or working careers.”

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 recognised that this misconduct occurred in the context of one particular academic year, and there had been no prior suggestion of any similar issues. The panel noted Mr Lahel had expressed remorse, but there remained some concern as to whether he fully appreciated the consequences of his actions on others. The panel could not be entirely satisfied that there was no risk of repetition and considered that the public would be concerned by this.”

In my judgement, the lack of evidence of full insight means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour and this puts at risk the future wellbeing of pupils. I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observes that:

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

I am particularly mindful of the finding of dishonesty in this case and the impact that such a finding may have 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 Lahel himself. The panel comments that:

“The panel accepted that Mr Lahel had no previous disciplinary action or complaints against him. However, there was no evidence that he had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. Nevertheless, Mr Lahel had had a career of 20 years and up to that point there had been no concerns raised with regards to his leadership or teaching, or his conduct of examinations. In his mitigation statement, Mr Lahel referred to examples of turning around student lives and their school journeys as including “breaking up vicious fights at school due to being familiar with local parents, coaching students who are involved in violence and drugs, running extra classes for my underachieving BAME students, running competitions and rewards for by BAME students to encourage school attendance and engagement and running parental ICT classes to help bridge the digital divide.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Lahel 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 weight on the panel’s comments concerning the lack of full insight exhibited by Mr Lahel, and the risk this presents of a repetition of the misconduct found.

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

In doing so the panel has referred to the Advice and comments that:

“The Advice indicates that there are cases involving certain conduct where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate. These cases include fraud or serious

dishonesty. The panel found that Mr Lahel was responsible for dishonesty affecting a significant number of pupils in that particular cohort.”

I have considered whether a five-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. In this case, factors mean that I disagree with the panel’s recommendation. While the misconduct that it found was undoubtedly serious, it is my judgment that the remorse demonstrated by Mr Lahel and his previous good history working as a teacher indicates that it should be possible for him to develop the necessary insight into his behaviour and recommence his teaching career in a shorter timeframe.

I consider therefore that a three-year review period is required and proportionate to satisfy the maintenance of public confidence in the profession.

This means that Mr Pardeep Lahel 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 8 December 2027, three 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 Lahel remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Mr Lahel 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 'M. Cavey', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Decision maker: Marc Cavey

Date: 4 December 2024

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