



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Thomas Page (also known as Mr Thomas Watson): Professional conduct panel outcome

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

January 2025

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Preliminary applications	4
Summary of evidence	5
Documents	5
Witnesses	6
Decision and reasons	6
Findings of fact	7
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	9
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	12

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

Teacher:	Mr Thomas Page (also known as Mr Thomas Watson)
Teacher ref number:	1052207
Teacher date of birth:	28 April 1987
TRA reference:	20143
Date of determination:	7 January 2025
Former employer:	Whitehill Primary School & Nursery, Gravesend, Kent

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 7 January 2025, by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Thomas Page.

The panel members were Mr Ian Hylan (Teacher Panellist – in the Chair), Mrs Melissa West (Teacher Panellist) and Ms Hannah Fellows (Lay Panellist).

The Legal Adviser to the panel was Mr Graham Miles of Blake Morgan LLP solicitors.

The Presenting Officer for the TRA was Mr Lee Bridges of Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Thomas Page was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 12 October 2023.

It was alleged that Mr Thomas Page had been convicted of a relevant offence in that:

1. On 1 August 2022, he was convicted of
 - (a) Attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child contrary to section 15A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003;
2. 3 counts of making indecent photographs or pseudo photographs of children contrary to section 1(1) (a) of the Protection of Children Act 1978.

In the absence of any response from Mr Page, the allegations were treated as not admitted.

Preliminary applications

As to whether the hearing should proceed in the absence of Mr Page

Mr Page was not present and not represented. After hearing submissions from the presenting officer and receiving legal advice, the panel determined that the hearing should proceed in the absence of Mr Page for the following reasons:

- The panel noted that an email was sent to Mr Page by Kingsley Napley on 12 August 2024, which was accompanied by a letter regarding the TRA's investigation. The email asked for confirmation that the email address was correct and that Mr Page was happy for the email address to be used in future correspondence. A response to the email was sent the same day in which the author confirmed the email address.
- Further emails were sent by Kingsley Napley on 12 August 2024, 21 August 2024, 17 September 2024 and 2 October 2024 in which Mr Page was asked to confirm his postal address. Mr Page responded by email dated 3 October 2024 in which he provided his postal address.
- The Notice of Hearing was sent to Mr Page on 24 September 2024 by special delivery to his postal address and by email. The records of attempted delivery by Royal Mail indicated that the Notice had not been delivered by post as Mr Page had not called for it. The panel also noted that, in addition to the Notice of Hearing being sent by email on 24 September 2024, a further email with the full hearing bundle was sent to Mr Page by password protected email on 3 October 2024 and via the document portal known as 'BOX'. Further emails were sent to Mr Page on

28 October 2024 and 21 November 2024. Mr Page was then reminded that he should access the electronic copy of the bundle sent to him by BOX.

- Taking all of the above information into account, the panel was satisfied that the Notice of Hearing had been sent to Mr Page in accordance with paragraphs 5.23 and 5.24 of Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession 2020.
- The panel was also satisfied by the correspondence and exchange of emails presented that Mr Page was aware of the hearing and had decided not to participate. The panel concluded that he had voluntarily waived his right to participate.
- There was no application by or on behalf of Mr Page for an adjournment and there was no indication that Mr Page would attend the hearing at a later date if the hearing were to be adjourned. Accordingly, the panel was not satisfied that any purpose would be served by an adjournment.
- There was also a public interest in regulatory proceedings concluding reasonably promptly.

Amendment of allegations

The panel amended the numbering of the allegations to ensure that the second limb linked to the overarching stem as shown below:

It was alleged that you have been convicted of a relevant offence in that:

1. On 1 August 2022, you were convicted of:
 - a) Attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child contrary to section 15A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003;
 - b) 3 counts of making indecent photographs or pseudo photographs of children contrary to section 1(1) (a) of the Protection of Children Act 1978.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology, anonymised pupil list and list of key people – pages 3 to 5

Section 2: Notice of hearing and response – pages 6 to 12

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 13 to 97

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- A service bundle – pages 1 to 40

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

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the document Teacher Misconduct: Disciplinary Procedures for the Teaching Profession 2020, (the “Procedures”).

Witnesses

There were no witnesses.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

The panel carefully considered this case and reached a decision.

Mr Thomas Page was employed as a teacher at Whitehill Primary School and Nursery from 1 September 2011.

It was alleged that Mr Page was arrested on 6 May 2021 for attempting to engage in sexual communication with someone he believed to be a 13-year-old girl, but who was actually an undercover police officer. Following his arrest, his phone was seized. It was alleged that analysis of this phone revealed that Mr Page was part of a chat group through which indecent images of children had been downloaded to his phone.

It was alleged that Mr Page appeared in the Crown Court at Maidstone on 1 August 2022, when he pleaded guilty to attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child and three counts of making indecent images of a child. On 14 December 2023, he was sentenced for those offences.

In determining the allegations in this case, the panel considered the certificate of conviction from the Crown Court at Maidstone. The panel accepted the legal advice that, provided the panel was satisfied that the certificate of conviction related to Mr Page, it should be treated as conclusive proof of the commission of the offences concerned. The panel also considered the transcript of the sentencing hearing in the Crown Court.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

It was alleged that you have been convicted of a relevant offence in that:

- 1. On 1 August 2022, you were convicted of:**
 - a) Attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child contrary to section 15A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003;**
 - b) 3 counts of making indecent photographs or pseudo photographs of children contrary to section 1(1) (a) of the Protection of Children Act 1978.**

The panel was presented with a certificate of conviction from the Crown Court at Maidstone. This stated that Mr Thomas Watson was convicted on 1 August 2022 of the following offences:

- attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child;
- making indecent photographs of a child (35 category A images);
- making indecent photographs of a child (17 category B images);
- making indecent photographs of a child (77 category C images).

The certificate also confirmed that the sentence imposed by the Court on 14 December 2023 was an effective total of eight months imprisonment suspended for two years with a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement of 30 days, 150 hours of unpaid work and participation in the Horizon accredited programme for sex offenders. He was also required to sign onto the Sex Offenders Register for 10 years and made the subject of a Sexual Harm Prevention Order for the same period.

The panel was satisfied that the certificate of conviction related to Mr Thomas Page, despite being in the name of Thomas Watson. Correspondence from the Court Clerk at Maidstone Combined Court stated that the case had been sent to the Crown Court by the Magistrates' Court on 2 July 2022 with the defendant's surname as 'Page', but the subsequent indictment referred to the defendant by the surname 'Watson'. In an email dated 3 October 2024, Mr Page said he had changed his surname to Watson. Attached to this email was a notice of transfer of fine from Maidstone Crown Court. This document referred to the sentence on 14 December 2023, an address at which Mr Page is known and his date of birth. In addition, the certificate of conviction corresponded with his date of birth, as did the PNC print-out which also confirmed the surname 'Watson' as an alias.

The panel, therefore, treated the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of commission of the alleged offences by Mr Thomas Page, otherwise known as Thomas Watson. Accordingly, the panel found allegations 1(a) and (b) proved.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence

Having found that Mr Page was convicted of the alleged offences, the panel went on to consider whether the convictions were for relevant offences.

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 Page, in relation to the facts it found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards. The panel considered that by reference to Part 2, Mr Page 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
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel noted that the individual’s actions were relevant to teaching, working with children and working in an education setting.

The panel noted that the behaviour involved in committing the offence could have had an impact on the safety and/or security of pupils and members of the public.

The panel also took account of the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Mr Page’s behaviour in committing the offences could affect public confidence in the teaching profession, given the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community.

The panel noted that Mr Page's behaviour ultimately led to a sentence of imprisonment, (albeit that it was suspended), which was indicative of the seriousness of the offences committed.

This was a case concerning offences involving attempted sexual communication with a child and activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or pseudo photograph or image of a child, which the Advice states are likely to be considered relevant offences.

The panel took into account any evidence of mitigating circumstances. It was noted in the sentencing hearing that as regards allegation 1(a), Mr Page initially thought that he was communicating with a person aged 18. However, when it was subsequently disclosed that she was 13, he continued to communicate with her, including inviting her to move to another platform. He used graphic sexualised language throughout his communications with a person whom he believed to be a 13 year-old girl. [REDACTED]

However, the panel found that the seriousness of the offending behaviour that led to the convictions was relevant to Mr Page's ongoing suitability to teach. The panel considered that a finding that these convictions were for relevant offences was necessary to reaffirm clear standards of conduct so as to maintain public confidence in the teaching profession.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of conviction of a relevant offence, 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. 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, the protection of other members of the public, the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious findings of attempted sexual communication with a child and making indecent photographs of children.

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

In addition to the public interest considerations set out above, the panel went on to consider whether there was a public interest in retaining Mr Page in the profession. However, the panel was not presented with any evidence regarding his ability as an educator or his contribution to 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 Mr Page.

In carrying out the balancing exercise, the panel had regard to the public interest considerations both in favour of, and against, prohibition as well as the interests of Mr Page. 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;
- the commission of a serious criminal offence, including those that resulted in a conviction or caution, paying particular attention to offences that are 'relevant matters' for the purposes of the Police Act 1997 and criminal record disclosures;
- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- sexual misconduct, e.g. involving actions that were sexually motivated or of a sexual nature;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing, or publishing any indecent photograph or image, or indecent pseudo photograph or image, of a child, or permitting such activity, including one-off incidents;
- failure in their duty of care towards a child, including exposing a child to risk or failing to promote the safety and welfare of the children (as set out in Part 1 of KCSIE);
- violation of the rights of pupils;

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

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

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Page was acting under duress. [REDACTED]

Mr Page did have a previously good history. The panel also noted that Mr Page pleaded guilty to the offences at an early stage for which he was given credit in sentencing. He also engaged with his employer in the disciplinary process. However, the panel was not provided with any evidence that Mr Page had shown insight or remorse as to his actions and subsequent convictions. The panel also noted that Mr Page remains the subject of a suspended sentence of imprisonment until December 2025. He is also subject to Sexual Harm Prevention Order and a requirement to register on the Sex Offenders Register for 10 years from the date of his sentence.

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 Page 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 Page. The nature and seriousness of the offences were significant factors in forming that opinion. He knowingly attempted to engage in sexual activity with a person he believed to be a 13-year-old child. In addition, he separately engaged in making indecent images of children, some of which were within the most serious category. The panel noted that most of the images involved children under the age of eight. 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 certain types of case where, if relevant, the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period.

These include:

- any sexual misconduct involving a child;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, including one off incidents;

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended without provisions for a review period.

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 a relevant conviction.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Thomas Page (also known as Mr Thomas Watson) should be the subject of a prohibition order, with no provision for a review period.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Page 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
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...

- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Page involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education'.

The panel finds that the conduct of Mr Page fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a teacher receiving criminal convictions for attempting to engage in sexual communications with a child and making indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of young children.

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 a relevant conviction, 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 Page, 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 serious findings of attempted sexual communication with a child and making indecent photographs of children." 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 it sets out as follows: "Mr Page did have a previously good history. The panel also noted that Mr Page pleaded guilty to the offences at an early stage for which he was given credit in sentencing. He also engaged with his employer in the disciplinary process. However, the panel was not provided with any evidence that Mr Page had shown insight or remorse as to his actions and subsequent convictions." In my judgement, the lack of evidence that Mr Page has attained insight into and remorse for his behaviour 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 records the following: “The panel considered that Mr Page’s behaviour in committing the offences could affect public confidence in the teaching profession, given the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher being convicted of both engaging in sexual communications with a thirteen year-old child and making indecent images of young children in this case and the very damaging impact that such a finding is likely to 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 a relevant conviction, 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 Page himself. The panel records that it was not presented with any evidence regarding his ability as an educator or his contribution to the profession. It also notes some mitigating evidence regarding Mr Page’s personal circumstances at the time the misconduct was committed.

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the very serious nature of the misconduct found by the panel, which included engaging in sexual communications with a child and the making of indecent images of young children. I have also noted the lack of evidence that Mr Page has developed insight into and remorse for his actions.

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Page 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, 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 that no provision should be made for a review period.

In doing so, it has referred to the Advice which indicates that there are certain types of case where, if relevant, the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period. These include cases of sexual misconduct involving a child and/or cases involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, including one off incidents.

I have noted the panel's concluding comments:

"The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended without provisions for a review period."

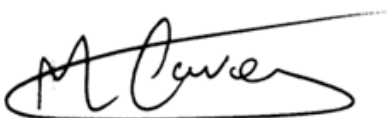
I have considered whether not allowing a review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that allowing a review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. Key among these are the very serious nature of the misconduct found, which in my judgment involved behaviour fundamentally incompatible with working as a teacher, as well as the lack of evidence of insight and/or remorse and the risk this creates of repetition.

I consider therefore that allowing for no review period is necessary to maintain public confidence and is proportionate and in the public interest.

This means that Mr Thomas Page (also known as Mr Thomas Watson) is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. Furthermore, in view of the seriousness of the allegation found proved against him, I have decided that Mr Page shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of his eligibility to teach.

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

Mr Page 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', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Decision maker: Marc Cavey

Date: 8 January 2025

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