



Teaching  
Regulation  
Agency

# **Mr Oliver Wood: 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	6
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	10
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	14

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

**Teacher:** Mr Oliver Wood

**TRA reference:** 21598

**Date of determination:** 30 January 2025

**Former employer:** The Cornerstone Academy, Crewe

### **Introduction**

A professional conduct panel ('the panel') of the Teaching Regulation Agency ('the TRA') convened on 27 to 30 January 2025 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Oliver Wood.

The panel members were Mr Terry Hyde (Former teacher panellist – in the chair), Mrs Lauren Gray (lay panellist) and Mrs Hannah Foster (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Miss Lucy Churchill of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Alexander Barnfield of Capsticks LLP solicitors.

Mr Wood was present and was represented by Ms Gurpreet Rheel of Cornwall Street Barristers.

The hearing took place by way of a virtual hearing in public and was recorded.

## Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 13 September 2024.

It was alleged that Mr Wood was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that, while employed as a teacher at The Youth Engagement Schools Trust ('the Trust'):

1. On or around 28 November 2022, he pushed a table into Pupil A;
2. On 1 April 2023, in connection with his conduct towards Pupil A at 1 above, he accepted a Conditional Police Caution for the offence of "assaulted victim by beating him".

At the outset of the hearing, the teacher's representative confirmed Mr Wood admitted allegations 1 and 2 and adopted a neutral position in respect of whether his admitted conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

## Preliminary applications

### Application to admit additional documents

The panel considered a preliminary application from the teacher's representative for the admission of additional documents.

The teacher's documents were:

- the teacher's witness statement dated 24 January 2025; and
- a consolidated bundle of character references totalling 9 pages (including some previously disclosed character references which were already in the bundle of documents).

Save to the extent set out above, the documents subject to the application had not been served in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.37 Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession May 2020 (the '2020 Procedures'). Therefore, the panel was required to decide whether the documents should be admitted under paragraph 5.34 of the 2020 Procedures.

The panel heard representations from the teacher's representative in respect of the application. The presenting officer adopted a neutral position in respect of the application.

The panel considered the additional documents were relevant and it was fair to admit them. Accordingly, the documents were added to the bundle.

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

The teacher's representative made an application for parts of the hearing dealing with the following matters to be dealt with in private:

- any personal and/or health issues; and
- the audio recording of Mr Wood's police interview (as it included references to Pupil A's name, and sensitive information relating to their private life).

The presenting officer did not oppose the application.

The panel granted the application. The panel considered it was not contrary to the public interest or the interests of justice for part of the hearing, which was the subject of the application, to be heard in private.

The panel considered that the areas covered in the application legitimately related to aspects of Mr Wood's and Pupil A's private life and there was no contrary public interest in those areas being discussed in public. The hearing was still being held in public and these were discrete and limited areas which would not undermine the public's ability to otherwise understand the case. The panel therefore granted the application.

## **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 4 to 6
- Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 7 to 30
- Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 31 to 37
- Section 4: TRA documents – pages 38 to 389
- Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 390 to 404.

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- the teacher's witness statement dated 24 January 2025; and
- a consolidated bundle of character references totalling 9 pages.

The panel members confirmed that they had listened to the police interview audio recording, viewed the CCTV footage of the incident, and read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the hearing and the additional documents that the panel decided to admit.

## **Witnesses**

The panel heard oral evidence from Witness A, [REDACTED] at Cornerstone Academy ('the School') called by the TRA.

The panel heard oral evidence from the teacher.

## **Decision and reasons**

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

On 1 September 2020, Mr Wood was employed by the Trust, based at the School, as a primary class teacher.

On 28 November 2022, Mr Wood allegedly pushed a table into a [REDACTED] pupil in class.

On 10 March 2023, the Trust referred the matter to the TRA.

On 1 April 2023, Mr Wood accepted a conditional police caution for the offence of "assaulted victim by beating".

## **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. On or around 28 November 2022, you pushed a table into Pupil A;**

The panel noted that Mr Wood admitted the allegation but still considered the evidence placed before it.

The panel viewed the CCTV video that captured the incident visually and noted that Pupil A pushed the table into Mr Wood's right leg, and Mr Wood forcefully used his right thigh to push the table back towards Pupil A, and the table hit Pupil A in the chest causing him

to lean forward. The panel considered that the CCTV evidence demonstrated that Mr Wood had used force when moving the table towards Pupil A.

The panel listened to the audio recording of the police interview with Mr Wood dated 19 January 2023. Mr Wood stated that Pupil A pushed the table into the top of his right leg and that he remembered pushing the table, but with the intention of straightening it up. He stated that he unintentionally caught Pupil A with the table, and that this was not deliberate. Mr Wood stated that he did not mean to push the table so hard and referred to it as “*human error*”, stating that he stood back once he had done it as he was shocked at himself.

The panel considered Mr Wood’s written and oral evidence. Mr Wood stated of the incident, “*my immediate response was to push it back into place. I was not angry or annoyed – I was used to such incidents with Pupil A. It was like a knee jerk reaction; I simply didn’t expect the table to catch him when I moved it.... I am certain that I never intended for the table to catch Pupil A.*”

The panel noted that Mr Wood was unable to recall his thoughts at the time of pushing the table, and why he had departed from his training, but maintained during his evidence that he did not intentionally push the table into Pupil A.

The panel considered the incident report of Individual B, who witnessed the incident on 28 November 2022. The panel attached limited weight to this evidence because it was hearsay, in that Individual B had not given evidence before the panel, and Mr Wood challenged Individual B’s account in several respects during the School’s investigation and the hearing. The panel was not able to corroborate Individual B’s account with any other documentary evidence in the bundle. The panel noted the School had not retained all the evidence collated as part of its own investigation, in particular evidence which Mr Wood stated challenged Individual B’s account, and therefore this evidence was not available to the panel.

The panel considered the written and oral evidence of Witness A. The panel noted Witness A stated that he had no concerns about Mr Wood prior to the incident, he valued Mr Wood’s commitment to teaching and stated that the incident “*was 100% out of character*”.

The panel noted Mr Wood consistently maintained during the School and Police investigation and during these proceedings that he had not intentionally set out to hit or harm Pupil A.

The panel considered the evidence and concluded on balance of probability that Mr Wood had acted recklessly when pushing the table and, as a fact, it had hit Pupil A, which was apparent from the CCTV footage.

The panel therefore found allegation 1 proven.

- 2. On 1 April 2023, in connection with your conduct towards Pupil A at 1 above, you accepted a conditional police caution for the offence of “assaulted victim by beating him”.**

The panel noted that Mr Wood admitted the allegation but still considered all the evidence placed before it.

The panel considered the conditional caution issued by Cheshire Constabulary dated 1 April 2023 and noted that Mr Wood had signed and accepted this caution. The panel noted that Mr Wood confirmed in his oral evidence that he had accepted the caution.

The panel considered Mr Wood’s written and oral evidence which was consistent with him accepting that he had committed the offence referred to in the caution.

The panel therefore found allegation 2 proven

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

Having found 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.

The panel was directed by the teacher’s representative to the case of *Khan v Bar Standards Board [2018] EWHC 2184* and the following comments made by Justice Warby in the case:

*“that misbehaviour must attain a certain level of gravity before it can qualify as professional misconduct ... Courts must be astute to differentiate the isolated, albeit negligent, lapse from acceptable conduct from the serious kind of culpability which attracts the opprobrium of a finding of professional misconduct ... The authorities make plain that a person is not to be regarded as guilty of professional misconduct if they engage in behaviour that is trivial, or inconsequential, or a mere temporary lapse, or something that is otherwise excusable or forgivable...Only serious misbehaviour can qualify.”*

The panel considered the points raised by the teacher’s representative on this issue. While the panel accepted that the incident was a one-off isolated event and out of character for Mr Wood, it concluded that the evidence showed Mr Wood behaved in a reckless manner which resulted in physical and emotional harm to a young vulnerable pupil. For these reasons the panel considered that the behaviour was not trivial or inconsequential.



Further, 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 Wood, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Wood 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; and
  - 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.
- 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 Wood amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

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

This was a case involving the offence of assault by beating, and the panel found that the offence of violence 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. The panel also noted that the Advice states that it is likely that a panel would consider the acceptance of a caution for an offence involving behaviours associated with any of the offence types in the list that begins on page 12, as an admission of behaviours that would amount to “unacceptable professional conduct”.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Mr Wood was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others and considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils’ lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave.

The findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public perception. The panel considered that there is an expectation in the profession to safeguard children, even in challenging environments, and the public would be alarmed by Mr Wood's behaviour which led to a young and vulnerable pupil being harmed.

The panel accepted the evidence relating to Mr Wood's working environment and his personal circumstances. However, the panel did not feel this diminished the seriousness of his behaviour or how it could potentially be perceived.

The panel therefore found that Mr Wood'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 Mr Wood's conduct amounted to both unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

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

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

In considering whether to recommend to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be made, the panel had to consider whether it would be an appropriate and proportionate measure, and whether it would be in the public interest to do so.

The panel was aware that prohibition orders should not be given in order to be punitive, or to show that blame has been apportioned, although they are likely to have punitive effect.

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely:

- the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public;
- the maintenance of public confidence in the profession;
- declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct; and
- that prohibition strikes the right balance between the rights of the teacher and the public interest, if they are in conflict.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Wood, which involved him acting recklessly on one occasion by pushing a table which hit a pupil, there was a strong public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public.

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

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

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 Wood. The panel was mindful of the need to strike the right balance between the rights of the teacher and the public interest.

In carrying out the balancing exercise, the panel had regard to the public interest considerations both in favour of, and against, prohibition as well as the interests of Mr Wood. 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;
- misconduct seriously affecting the well-being of pupils;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- 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).

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 evidence to suggest that Mr Wood's actions were not deliberate; he had a momentary lapse in judgment and did not intend to cause harm to Pupil A.

There was no evidence that Mr Wood was acting under extreme duress at the time of the incident. [REDACTED].

However, the panel considered that the evidence demonstrated Mr Wood's working environment was challenging, it involved working with children with social and emotional difficulties and as a recently qualified teacher he was expected to take on significant responsibility at the School, without sufficient senior leadership support.

The panel considered that the evidence established Mr Wood was under undue pressure to attend for work on the day of the incident when he felt unfit to attend, and because of this pressure, lack of support from the School, [REDACTED] he placed himself in a vulnerable position.

There was evidence that Mr Wood demonstrated an exceptionally valuable contribution to the profession in the short time he was teaching, and prior to his qualification as a Learning Mentor.

The panel noted the written and oral evidence of Mr Wood. The panel noted that Mr Wood had initially volunteered in a mainstream school as a Learning Mentor, he organised and ran revision sessions for pupils, accompanied pupils to college open days and purchased resources for pupils at his own expense. The panel considered that the evidence demonstrated Mr Wood was passionate about teaching and aspired to be a role model for pupils.

The panel noted the oral evidence of Witness A who stated that Mr Wood "*had made positive relationships with the pupils*" and had "*gone above and beyond*" when working at the School.

The panel further considered the character references provided by the following individuals on behalf of Mr Wood:

- Individual C, [REDACTED]
- Individual D, [REDACTED]
- Individual E, [REDACTED]
- Individual F, [REDACTED]
- Individual G, [REDACTED]

The panel further considered an email from Individual H, [REDACTED] of another Trust school, providing feedback on her observations of Mr Wood's teaching.

The panel noted the following comments in particular:

- "*throughout his time supporting pupils with a range of needs and requirements he has shown a very high professional standard, always putting the children first*"

- *“I know he worked hard after gaining the position in the school to ensure that all pupils’ needs were met, and more importantly, they were safe”*

Individual D

- *“At times, he would go above and beyond his job role to help support the school and the trust in a variety of ways”*

Individual E

- *“I would like to emphasise how impressed I was with Oliver’s approach with student E ... he not only demonstrated kindness towards student E, he had the emotional literacy to support, guide and enable student E to experience her distress and begin to learn new ways of coping. He modelled the aptitudes of an excellent teacher ...”*

Individual H

Mr Wood’s representative submitted that Mr Wood had reflected on his conduct and taken steps to avoid recurrence, [REDACTED].

The panel considered the evidence of Mr Wood and in particular his written evidence where he stated that his heart is heavy with regret and a profound sense of remorse for his actions, even if it was an unintentional knee-jerk reaction. He stated that he wanted to emphasise that there are no excuses for his behaviour, and that he fully accepted responsibility for his actions.

Mr Wood stated that the weight of his mistake and the impact it had on the child’s well-being and trust weighed heavily on him. He stated that he was sorry to the child, their family and all those affected.

The panel considered that Mr Wood’s evidence showed that since the incident he had thought deeply about it and had reflected on what he would do differently if a similar situation arose.

The panel concluded that Mr Wood had a momentary lapse in his judgement and that his conduct was at the less serious end of the spectrum. The panel also concluded that Pupil A suffered no longstanding or serious harm from Mr Wood’s error in judgment.

The panel considered that Mr Wood’s oral evidence showed meaningful remorse for his actions, clearly identified where his behaviour was inappropriate, that he did not deliberately set out to hurt Pupil A and that he had steps in place to avoid recurrence of the conduct. The panel was satisfied that it was unlikely such an error in judgment would happen again.

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, 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 possible 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 and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Oliver Wood should not be the subject of a prohibition order. The panel has recommended that the findings of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Wood 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; and
  - 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.
- 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 Wood involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE).

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

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of unacceptable professional conduct or conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Wood, 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:

“In the light of the panel’s findings against Mr Wood, which involved him acting recklessly on one occasion by pushing a table which hit a pupil, there was a strong public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public.”

A prohibition order would therefore prevent such a risk from being present in the future.

I have also taken into account the panel’s comments on insight and remorse, which the panel has set out as follows:

“The panel considered that Mr Wood’s oral evidence showed meaningful remorse for his actions, clearly identified where his behaviour was inappropriate, that he did not deliberately set out to hurt Pupil A and that he had steps in place to avoid recurrence of the conduct. The panel was satisfied that it was unlikely such an error in judgment would happen again.”

In my judgement, the insight and remorse shown by Mr Wood mean that the risk of Mr Wood repeating this behaviour is low. 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 has observed:

“The panel considered that there is an expectation in the profession to safeguard children, even in challenging environments, and the public would be alarmed by Mr Wood’s behaviour which led to a young and vulnerable pupil being harmed.”

I am particularly mindful of the finding of accepting a conditional police caution for the offence of “assaulted victim by beating him” in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

I have had to consider that the public has a high expectation of professional standards of all teachers and that the public might regard a failure to impose a prohibition order as a failure to uphold those high standards. In weighing these considerations, I have had to consider the matter from the point of view of an “ordinary intelligent and well-informed citizen.”

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of unacceptable professional conduct or conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr Wood himself. The panel has commented:

“There was evidence that Mr Wood demonstrated an exceptionally valuable contribution to the profession in the short time he was teaching, and prior to his qualification as a Learning Mentor.”

“The panel noted the oral evidence of Witness A who stated that Mr Wood “*had made positive relationships with the pupils*” and had “*gone above and beyond*” when working at the School.”

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the insight and remorse shown by Mr Wood. I have also placed considerable weight on the mitigating factors identified by the panel including:



“The panel considered that the evidence established Mr Wood was under undue pressure to attend for work on the day of the incident when he felt unfit to attend, and because of this pressure, lack of support from the School, [REDACTED] he placed himself in a vulnerable position.”

I have also taken account of the following comment by the panel:

“The panel concluded that Mr Wood had a momentary lapse in his judgement and that his conduct was at the less serious end of the spectrum. The panel also concluded that Pupil A suffered no longstanding or serious harm from Mr Wood’s error in judgment.”

I have agreed with the panel that the nature and severity of Mr Wood’s behaviour was at the less serious end of the spectrum and that the mitigating factors indicate that a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. I have, therefore, 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.



**Decision maker: David Oatley**

**Date: 3 February 2025**

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