



Teaching  
Regulation  
Agency

# **Mr Philip Coales: Professional conduct panel outcome**

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

**February 2025**

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

**Teacher:** Mr Philip Coales

**TRA reference:** 21416

**Date of determination:** 12 February 2025

**Former employer:** City of London Academy Highbury Grove, London

### **Introduction**

A professional conduct panel ('the panel') of the Teaching Regulation Agency ('the TRA') convened on 10 to 12 February 2025 at Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT, to consider the case of Mr Philip Coales.

The panel members were Mr Paul Burton (lay panellist – in the chair), Ms Jane Gotschel (teacher panellist) and Ms Diana Barry (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Natalie Kent of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Lee Bridges of Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Coales was present and was represented by Mr Colin Henderson of The Reflective Practice.

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

## Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 15 October 2024.

It was alleged that Mr Coales was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst working as an English Teacher at City of London Academy Highbury Grove:

1. Between January 2022 and July 2022, he:
  - a) Met up with Pupil A and/or Pupil B outside of the School grounds on one or more occasions; and/or
  - b) Purchased and/or permitted consumption of alcohol for Pupil A and/or Pupil B; and/or
  - c) Exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or sexual nature via email with Pupil A
2. On or around 15 July 2022, in relation to paragraph 1b) he:
  - a) Sent an email to Pupil A saying, “would prefer drinking beer in the park afterwards to be not widely mentioned”; and/or
  - b) Sent an email to Pupil B saying, “I’d rather visiting the park afterwards wasn’t widely discussed for fairly obvious reasons”
3. His actions at paragraph 1a) and/or 1b) and/or 1c) were sexually motivated and/or of a sexual nature.
4. His action(s) at paragraph 2:
  - a) Were dishonest; and/or
  - b) Lacked integrity

The panel noted that Mr Coales wholly admitted allegations 1(a), 1(b), 2(a), 2(b), 4(a) and 4(b). Mr Coales admitted allegation 1(c) in that he admitted that the emails exchanged were of an inappropriate nature but denied that they were of a sexual nature. Mr Coales denied allegation 3 in its entirety.

## 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: an anthology of poetry and writings from the School's creative writing club; a booklet which Mr Coales had produced for Student A to complete on their visit to [REDACTED] and a thank you card from [REDACTED] at the School sent in January 2023.

The documents subject to the application had not been served in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.37 of the 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, who explained that he did not consider that these documents would be controversial and the reason for the late admission was that Mr Coales had only discovered them within the past few days whilst preparing for the hearing.

The presenting officer had no objection to the admission of these documents and confirmed that he had been provided with a copy of these documents ahead of the hearing.

The panel considered the additional documents may be relevant and that it would be fair to all parties to admit the documents. Accordingly, the documents were added to the bundle.

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

A request was made by the teacher's representative for part of the hearing - relating to Mr Coales private life and health matters - to be heard in private.

The panel was also reminded of the need to ensure that any information which could be used to identify the students involved by "jigsaw identification" may also need to be discussed in private.

The panel agreed to accommodate this request as and when necessary, as the panel considered that the areas covered in the request legitimately related to aspects of Mr Coales' 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.

## 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 7
- Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 8 to 18
- Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 19 to 26
- Section 4: TRA documents – pages 27 to 198
- Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 199 to 281.

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- An anthology of poetry and writings entitled, “The Arm We Cried On Lost Its Shoulder – Highlights from Highbury Grove’s Creative Writing Club 2018-2019”;
- A booklet which Mr Coales had produced for Student A to complete on their visit to [REDACTED] and
- A thank you card from [REDACTED] at the School sent in January 2023.

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.

### Witnesses

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

- Witness A, [REDACTED]
- Witness B, [REDACTED]

The panel heard oral evidence from Witness C, Witness D, called by the teacher. Mr Coales also gave oral evidence before the panel.

## 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 2017, Mr Coales commenced employment at City of London Academy Highbury Grove ('the School').

Between January and July 2022, Mr Coales allegedly met up with Pupil A and/or Pupil B outside of School grounds; purchased and/or permitted consumption of alcohol for Pupil A and/or Pupil B; exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or sexual nature via email with Pupil A; and sent emails to Pupil A and Pupil B requesting that they do not disclose the alleged alcohol consumption to anyone.

On 29 July 2022, Witness B informed the safeguarding team that she had seen Mr Coales and Pupil A together at [REDACTED]

On 30 July 2022, the School contacted Pupil A's father regarding Witness B's disclosure. On 31 July 2022, Pupil A's father provided email correspondence between Pupil A and Mr Coales, which resulted in a LADO allegations meeting which was subsequently held on 4 August 2022.

On 30 November 2022, Mr Coales ceased employment at the School.

## 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. Between January 2022 and July 2022, you:**

- a) Met up with Pupil A and/or Pupil B outside of the School grounds on one or more occasions; and/or**
- b) Purchased and/or permitted consumption of alcohol for Pupil A and/or Pupil B; and/or**
- c) Exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or sexual nature via email with Pupil A**

The panel noted that Mr Coales wholly admitted allegation 1a and 1b and partially admitted allegation 1c, in that he accepted that the messages were of an inappropriate

nature but denied that they were of a sexual nature. Notwithstanding these admissions, the panel considered all of the evidence before it to come to its decision.

The panel had sight of email correspondence between Pupil A and Pupil B and Mr Coales. The panel noted that the email correspondence evidenced that Mr Coales had arranged to meet with Pupil A and Pupil B outside of School on the following occasions, noting the following comments in particular:

- a) On 8 April 2022 at 19:34, Mr Coales emailed Pupil A stating, "This store doesn't have [REDACTED] and I need one for next week, and so I might visit [REDACTED] tomorrow and will say hello if you are there!" During Mr Coales' oral evidence, the panel heard that the place of work of Pupil A was two miles from his home, and he visited the following day, on a Saturday morning.
- b) On 3 July 2022 at 23:54, Mr Coales emailed Pupil A and B stating: "I will head to the London Fields Lido at 4 in the hope I might see one or both of you. Maybe [Pupil A] and I can walk to collect [Pupil B]. Equally if you just want to disappear or go home that would be quite understandable, in which case I will enjoy going for a swim!"
- c) On 11 July 2022 at 22:59, Mr Coales emailed Pupil A stating, "Thursday eve is this: <https://www.spanners.club/event-details/two-way-dreaming-fugitive-film-club-6> where my \*not from Oxford but cleverer than most people I know\* friend is introducing the film, in case you feel like independently organising yourself to also be there. I've also got someone (\*from Oxford\* sorry but I promise many of the best people in my life aren't, and I still reckon I would be much better at [REDACTED] if I hadn't gone 2 there myself) who I think you could maybe talk to about one thing and who might be better at talking about it than me, but will check out with you in person."
- d) On 14 July 2022 at 18:54, Mr Coales emailed Pupil A stating, "Either I'll sit by you or we'll debrief in Wyck Gardens/Ruskin Park afterwards"
- e) On 21 July 2022 at 22:03, Mr Coales emailed Pupil A stating, "I'm heading here tomorrow [REDACTED] to do some reading/research. I'll look out for some alternative [REDACTED] suggestions for you, for just in case. Will be there just after lunch if you want to say hi and check it out yourself!"
- f) In response to an email from Pupil A asking if Mr Coales was available to "*talk poems sometime before Sunday*", Mr Coales emailed Pupil A on 27 July 2022 at 15:22 stating, "*Friday morning – Green Park station – 10:00 until 14:00?*" Within Mr Coales' oral evidence, he explained that on this occasion, he had then "*surprised*" Pupil A with tickets, which he had already bought, to the



[REDACTED] which they then attended, albeit Mr Coales stated that they were not together the whole time and viewed the exhibition separately.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B, who stated that on 29 July 2022 (which was during the school holidays), she sent an email to the School's safeguarding team as she had seen Mr Coales and Pupil A at the [REDACTED] together earlier that day and she considered this "odd", not least as when she had spoken to Mr Coales at the [REDACTED], he had not offered any explanation as to why he was there with a pupil.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A, who stated that on 29 July 2022, during the summer holidays, Witness B emailed the School's safeguarding email address stating that she had seen Mr Coales and Pupil A at the [REDACTED] on 29 July 2022.

Witness A stated that on 30 July 2022, Individual A called Pupil A's father, who confirmed that he was not aware of the meeting between Pupil A and Mr Coales and stated that Pupil A had said she was due to meet other students who were attending the [REDACTED] from 31 July 2022.

Witness A said that Individual A phoned Pupil A's father again on 30 July 2022, and Pupil A's [REDACTED] informed him that Pupil A had admitted to meeting Mr Coales on 29 July, and that she had met him previously outside of School hours.

Witness A stated that on 31 July 2022, Pupil A's father emailed Individual A some email correspondence between Pupil A and Mr Coales. He stated that the email communication showed multiple meetings out of School between them both.

Witness A explained that concerns around Pupil B arose following sight of the email correspondence between Pupil A and Mr Coales. He stated that having conducted interviews and from scrutiny of the emails, it was confirmed that Pupil B was present on 14 July 2022, at a film screening with Pupil A and Mr Coales.

Witness A stated that he reviewed email correspondence between Pupil B and Mr Coales (24 May 2022 – 6 August 2022), and the email correspondence between Pupil A and Mr Coales (30 December 2021 – 5 August 2022) and could see that there were occasions where Mr Coales had met up with the pupils.

Based on the contemporaneous emails between Pupil A and Mr Coales, as well as the oral evidence from Witness B and Mr Coales, the panel was satisfied that Mr Coales had met up with Pupil A and Pupil B outside of school grounds on several occasions. The panel therefore found allegation 1a proven.

The panel considered the written and oral evidence of Mr Coales in respect of allegation 1b. Mr Coales stated that he met Pupil A and Pupil B at a film screening as he thought

this was the sort of event that he could suggest that students might attend. He stated that he shared a beer, which he had purchased for them, thinking he would seem more relatable to them and to allow for a more relaxed discussion about the film following the event.

The panel also had before it contemporaneous emails which referenced the purchase and consumption of alcohol on this occasion (and which are discussed further in respect of allegation 2).

Based on the admission of Mr Coales and the contemporaneous emails, the panel was satisfied that Mr Coales had both purchased and permitted the consumption of alcohol by Pupil A and Pupil B.

The panel therefore found allegation 1b proven.

In respect of allegation 1c, the panel had before it a number of emails which had been sent by Mr Coales to Pupil A and noted in particular the following passages of emails:

- g) Within an email dated 9 June 2022, sent at 20:28, Mr Coales stated, *"I respect you and I love you"*.
- h) Within an email dated 11 July 2022, sent at 20:22, Mr Coales stated, "I think I've unfairly built you up in my head because of how impressed I am by you, how much joy you give me, and how hopeful you make me – so I think my reaction to hearing your problems is probably quite selfish. Like, I should react neutrally to anyone saying what you said. I'll try to rectify this by liking you less from tomorrow."
- i) Within an email dated 21 July 2022, sent at 22:03, Mr Coales stated, "I wasn't sure if I should put this bit in because maybe it is too personal, and I don't want you to care about that, but I did want to bring up that thinking model idea again, as basic as it is.)..... so... I don't think I ended the year with as much compassion and warmth as I ought to have! I don't think it is necessarily helpful to try to redo that now, but I did mean all the things I wrote and read earlier, about being available if you feel like you need over the summer (this is my phonenumber), and about creating space to listen to you next term, if and when you feel you want that. I can see why you'd feel cagier about that, after the pressure leading up to today, but I hope you get why I needed to do that, and that it doesn't mean you can't talk about that or other things with me, or that I need to pass on more things."
- j) Within an email dated 26 July 2022 at 11:43, Mr Coales stated in response to a request to verify a passport application, "I'm yours.... If you tell me what you need me to do!" and "If you can do this I'm happy to learn A Level Biology so I can test you on it in September."

k) Within an email dated 30 July 2022 at 20:41, Mr Coales stated, "I actually think I should have been better at shaking you off, and that's not on you at all. I love ~~punctuation~~ too hanging out with you, but I might need to be better at protecting me – not against your magical powers, because I don't have much defence against those – [...] – I think when I see you outside of class, where there is a thing I want to help you with in some way (like, yesterday, signing a thing for you / reading your work or trying to motivate you to do it / checking in, or talking to you about things you are trying to deal with / trying to show you art or other things you could like but might not otherwise see / whatever), I should be more aware of not being self-indulgent (like the narrators in those books I just mentioned) and ending up hanging out with you for my own enjoyment (because I like you and because you make me feel good about my own life and the world), instead of doing whatever we've met for; especially when it's outside of school. I love punctuation, but as much as I want to give you whatever I can, and as 'good' as I am, and as much as I am and will continue to be yours, as a sounding board or advisor or teacher-species friend or whatever way you decide, I felt uncomfortable talking / thinking about talking about spending so much unstructured time with a student yesterday, and I think that is a bad sign. Maybe it is pointing me towards not having lunch and chatting with you in a central London park in future / not doing semi-social things just with you / not doing anything where I'd feel weird explaining it to [redacted] or your school Mum ([redacted], obvs) or your Dad's bike chain (... as much as I like me, I'm not sure how I'd feel hearing my [REDACTED] was hanging out with her, male, thirty (and nearly three months) year old, [REDACTED] in the holidays). This for me to delete and rewrite twice and work out in my own head, and not on you at all, and I ummed and ahed about whether or not it is unfair or just dumb or weird to send this to you, but I think I will, in keeping with the principle of trying to be honest and open with you. Maybe it's reassuring on some human level to know I have these thoughts, and that I both do want to show you care in a radical way; and want to be cautious, to prevent you from feeling uncomfortably too close to a teacher, now, or in the future, when you look back; aaand, also, wanting to protect you from creating dependency or setting a precedent for you to seek out closeness in relationships with other older figures, in later education, or other stages of life; people who might be, let's say, less reflective about the power dynamic and their responsibilities as the older person. Anyway: there is nothing for you to do or say to this, and nothing you have done wrong at all, but I should have done yesterday a bit differently, so, I'm sorry. And maybe next time I see you (especially if you've got some writing of some kind...) I will be a bit more careful about curating it, to reduce either of us feeling weird, even if you didn't feel weird until reading this stupid long email, which I hope you're not

reading at [redacted] house. I am very late myself now, to a very different event”.

The panel noted the written and oral evidence of Mr Coales, within which he stated that he tended to use fondness within his emails at times when he was seeking to “*rebuke*” or “*admonish*” Pupil A, or when he was “*withdrawing support*” from Pupil A. Mr Coales further accepted that his language was too “*flippant*”, “*over-indulgent*”, “*selfish*” and “*informal*” and that he had crossed the boundary of what could be considered acceptable.

The panel noted the oral evidence of Witness A, who had stated that whilst there was no written policy as to acceptable email times, there was a “*loose expectation*” that emails between teachers and students would be sent 7am-7pm on weekdays. Many of the emails before the panel appeared to have been sent considerably later than this, often after 9pm, which Mr Coales submitted was due to the long working days which he was undertaking, accepting in his oral evidence that many of his emails after this time were “*unguarded*”, “*frenetic*” and “*frantic*”.

In light of the documentary email evidence before it and the witness evidence which it had heard, the panel found that the emails sent to Pupil A were wholly inappropriate in nature in terms of their timing, intensity and content. The panel was particularly mindful that Mr Coales was an [REDACTED] who was clearly very intelligent. The panel therefore determined that he should and would have been well aware of the need for different registers and tones of language for different categories of people and of the impact of his words on a potentially vulnerable and impressionable [REDACTED] student, particularly when he was using phrases such as “*I love you*” and “*I love hanging out with you*” and “*how much joy you give me*”. The panel also noted the frequency and intensity with which Mr Coales was emailing Pupil A and how this had increased significantly in the few months leading up to the end of the school year.

The panel went on to consider whether the emails were of a sexual nature. The panel found that the language used within the emails was clearly wholly inappropriate and had been both flippant, playful and potentially flirtatious but on the balance of probabilities, did not consider that these emails met the threshold to be considered of a sexual nature.

The panel therefore found allegation 1c proven, albeit in relation to the emails being inappropriate rather than of a sexual nature.

## **2. On or around 15 July 2022, in relation to paragraph 1b) you:**

- a) Sent an email to Pupil A saying, “would prefer drinking beer in the park afterwards to be not widely mentioned”; and/or**
- b) Sent an email to Pupil B saying, “I’d rather visiting the park afterwards wasn’t widely discussed for fairly obvious reasons”**

The panel noted that Mr Coales admitted allegation 2. Notwithstanding, the panel considered the evidence before it and came to a determination.

The panel had sight of email correspondence between Pupil A and Pupil B and Mr Coales. The panel noted the following comments in particular:

- To Pupil A on 15 July 2022: “Hope you found the film interesting/would prefer drinking beer in the park afterwards to be not widely mentioned...”
- To Pupil B on 15 July 2022: “I’d rather visiting the park afterwards wasn’t widely discussed for fairly obvious reasons”

The panel therefore found allegation 2 proven.

**3. Your actions at paragraph 1a) and/or 1b) and/or 1c were sexually motivated and/or of a sexual nature.**

The panel noted that Mr Coales denied that his conduct was of a sexual nature or was sexually motivated. The panel had not found that the emails which Mr Coales had exchanged with Pupil A were of a “sexual nature” in allegation 1c but notwithstanding this, went on to consider whether the course of conduct as set out within allegations 1a, 1b and 1c was sexually motivated and/or of a sexual nature.

The panel’s attention was drawn to section 78 *Sexual Offences Act 2003* and to the cases of *Sait v The General Medical Council [2018]*, *Basson v General Medical Council [2018]* and *The General Medical Council v Haris [2020] EWHC 2518*.

The panel considered whether the conduct was sexually motivated. It noted that in *Basson* it was stated that, “A sexual motive means that the conduct was done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a sexual relationship”.

The panel was also mindful of the Court of Appeal’s conclusion in *General Medical Council v Haris [2021] EWCA Civ 763*. The court found in that case that, “In the absence of a plausible innocent explanation for what he did, the facts spoke for themselves.”

The panel did not feel that the behaviour was inherently sexual and did not consider that Mr Coales was seeking sexual gratification from his conduct with Pupil A. However, taking into account all of the circumstances, the panel did consider that Mr Coales’ conduct in specifically seeking to spend time alone with Pupil A and through the series of emails which he had sent to her could be potentially in pursuit of a sexual and/or romantic relationship.

The panel considered whether there was a “*plausible innocent explanation*” for Mr Coales’ behaviour. Within his witness evidence, Mr Coales had set out that Pupil A was by far the “*most engaged*” student [REDACTED] and was the “most likely to engage

*with enrichment activities*”. He also explained that he saw himself in Pupil A, as she had *“really good academic potential, they were interested in the world and wanted to change the world.”*

The panel accepted Mr Coales’ explanation that this is why he had acted in the way he had with Pupil A at the outset.

However, the panel considered that through his behaviour in seeking to meet with Pupil A outside of school and through the frequency, intensity and inappropriate nature of the emails which he had exchanged with Pupil A that his motivations changed throughout the course of conduct. The panel noted that Mr Coales had himself accepted within an email to Pupil A that he had been *“hanging out with [Pupil A] for my own enjoyment (because I like [her] and because [she made] me feel good about my own life and the world)”*. The panel considered that Mr Coales motivations had moved beyond being purely professional and were not therefore truly altruistic. The panel further considered that, to an extent at least, Mr Coales had become infatuated by Pupil A and in particular by the idea of *“fixing”* her by singling her out, giving her special treatment with gifts and additional help and lavishing much more attention on her than others.

The panel did not consider that Mr Coales had provided a credible, professional justification for the language used within his emails to Pupil A and noted that even when he had realised that he and Pupil A had grown too close, he still went on to email her stating that he didn’t have much defence to Pupil A’s *“magical powers”*.

However, just on the balance of probabilities, the panel did not consider that Mr Coales’ motivation in his conduct towards Pupil A went as far as to be capable of being considered sexual. This was particularly so noting the case law which cautions against equating inappropriate conduct with sexually motivated conduct. The panel queried whether, had Witness B not seen Mr Coales with Pupil A in public, the conduct may have progressed further into conduct which may have been considered to have been sexually motivated.

Taking into account all of the evidence before it and drawing on its professional judgement, the panel found that the conduct found proven against Mr Coales in respect of allegations 1a, 1b and 1c was not sexually motivated.

Therefore, the panel did not find allegation 3 proven.

#### **4. Your action(s) at paragraph 2:**

**a) Were dishonest; and/or**

**b) Lacked integrity**

The panel noted that Mr Coales admitted allegation 4.

The panel firstly considered whether Mr Coales had acted dishonestly.

In reaching its decision on this, the panel considered the case of *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockfords*.

The panel firstly sought to ascertain the actual state of Mr Coales' knowledge or belief as to the facts. The panel noted Mr Coales' explanation that he had asked the students not to share the fact that he had bought them alcohol (and they had consumed it in the park) because, whilst he hoped it would lead to a "*relaxed and enriching conversation*", when he played the scenario back in his head on his way home, he "*panicked*". The panel therefore concluded that Mr Coales knew that what he was asking was dishonest and also that his conduct was dishonest by the standards of the ordinary decent person. The panel determined that Mr Coales had told Pupil A and Pupil B not to mention his conduct as he understood that it was inappropriate, and he was aware of the repercussions and was attempting to conceal his actions.

When asked within his oral evidence why Mr Coales had not self-reported his conduct to his superiors or the safeguarding team, he explained that this was due to his "*pride*" as he felt he was "*doing the right thing by providing enrichment activities*". The panel therefore perceived that this was an acceptance by him that his conduct had been improper and dishonest.

The panel then considered whether Mr Coales had failed to act with integrity. The panel considered the case of *Wingate & Anor v The Solicitors Regulation Authority* and noted in particular that, "*the duty to act with integrity applies not only to what professional persons say, but also to what they do.*"

The panel considered whether Mr Coales had failed to act within the higher standards expected of a teacher by his conduct found proven at allegation 2.

Mr Coales had attempted to conceal his behaviour by asking Pupil A and Pupil B to not mention that they had met up outside of School and consumed alcohol which he had purchased for them. The panel noted that Mr Coales clearly knew his actions were wrong.

The panel was satisfied that Mr Coales' conduct lacked integrity.

The panel therefore found allegation 4 proven.

### **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 Coales, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Coales 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
  - ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils’ vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- 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 Coales amounted to a total failure to respect and uphold the safeguarding framework in which he, as a teacher, was required to operate. The panel was satisfied that this amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The panel also considered whether Mr Coales’ conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice. The panel did not consider that Mr Coales’ conduct met any of the listed offences.

Overall, the panel was satisfied that Mr Coales was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others and considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils’ lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave. The panel noted that Mr Coales did not appear to appreciate the influential role which he, as a teacher, had on Pupil A and the impact which his conduct in singling her out and providing preferential treatment could have had on her.



The panel considered that the general public would be shocked if conduct such as that found against Mr Coales, particularly in circumstances where he had met with pupils late at night in a public park and had purchased alcohol for them, was not treated with the utmost seriousness.

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 therefore found that Mr Coales' actions constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Having found the facts of allegations 1, 2 and 4 proved, the panel further found that Mr Coales' 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; 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 Coales, which involved a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries with pupils, the sending of inappropriate emails and inappropriately arranging to meet pupils outside of school, 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 Coales was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession, particularly given the very serious findings against Mr Coales in respect of meeting pupils outside of school late at night and purchasing and permitting them to drink alcohol in his presence.

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 Coales was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

However, the panel agreed that there was also a strong public interest consideration in retaining the teacher in the profession, since prior to the period to which these incidents related, no doubt had been cast upon his abilities as an educator, and indeed it was apparent that he had made and may be able to continue to make a valuable 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 Coales. 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 Coales. 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 education and/or well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving 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, or involved the coercion of another person to act in a way contrary to their own interests;

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 Coales' actions were not deliberate.

There was no evidence that Mr Coales was acting under extreme duress.

There was evidence that Mr Coales had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both personal and professional conduct; the panel had before it substantial evidence that Mr Coales had contributed significantly to the education sector. In particular Mr Coales had produced character statements from former colleagues which stated as follows:

- Individual B, [REDACTED] and Mr Coales' former [REDACTED] stated, *"Throughout my time in teaching I have known few, if any, people work so hard in order to give students the best experiences possible, whilst going above and beyond to ensure the wellbeing of children."* He further stated, *"Phil spent an enormous amount of time preparing and running a range of extra-curricular clubs/activities for students and significantly contributed to the school's enrichment offer.... I have never worked with someone who has come even close in terms of the amount of time Phil spent in providing exciting extra-curricular opportunities for students or looking after the well-being of students and I only ever had reason to admire his thoroughness and professionalism when dealing with anything he had any doubts about."*
- Individual C, [REDACTED] at the School, stated, *"As well as being a conscientious form tutor, mentor, Key Stage coordinator and classroom teacher, Phil led a range of extra-curricular activities to enrich the lives of the students in our community, involving their families where appropriate. This work was over and above his normal teaching load, yet unremunerated, and Phil was greatly appreciated for the extra effort he put in."*

The panel also had before it a thank you card from Individual D [REDACTED] at the School, which stated, *"I did not want to miss the opportunity to say an enormous THANK YOU for all the ways in which you made [the School] a richer experience for our students and for your contribution as an exceptional colleague – I know that this was felt by many.... The events of recent months do not and should not define you – all of the above and so much more contributes to that."*

The panel considered that it was apparent from Mr Coales' evidence that he had gone above and beyond what was expected from him to seek to provide students with enriching extra-curricular activities, including running debating societies, reading schemes, poetry recitals and through the formation of a student environmental action group. Within his witness statement, Mr Coales explained that in offering these enrichment experiences to his students, he felt that he was *"supporting the Teach First mission of reducing social inequality by bridging the gap between the experiences of students of different socio-economic statuses"*. Mr Coales had also been nominated for teaching awards, including for an outstanding commitment in 2020-21, and one parent had suggested that he ought to be nominated as *"Educator of the Year"* in the Islington Education Awards.

[REDACTED] The panel was mindful of the impact which this may have had on Mr Coales' judgment and noted that the misconduct appeared to have occurred during a relatively short three-month period of Mr Coales' career being April to July 2022.

Mr Coales stated that he deeply regretted the consequences for the students, their peers, their families, his colleagues, his friends and family and the wider school community. He stated that he would like to publicly apologise to them. Mr Coales stated that he would continue to regret his actions and their negative impacts and had explored his errors [REDACTED]. The panel considered that through Mr Coales' evidence, it was clear that he had genuine remorse for his misconduct and the impact that this had had on the pupils involved and the School generally.

The panel considered that Mr Coales had begun to develop a level of insight into his actions in that he appeared to accept that his misconduct had arisen out of his "*youthful arrogance*" that he "*knew best*" how to help Pupil A and thought he could "*fix*" her. The panel considered that Mr Coales accepted now that this was not his position or role and that there is a formal safeguarding framework within which he must operate and comply, to avoid breaching his position of trust and the boundaries between teachers and pupils. However, the panel was not entirely persuaded by Mr Coales that he had a comprehensive understanding as to why this framework was necessary. The panel noted that Mr Coales had an awareness that he might benefit from further training in this area.

The panel 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. Whilst the nature and severity of the behaviour was not insignificant, the panel considered the mitigating factors that were present, and in particular the outstanding contribution which Mr Coales had made to both the School in which he had been working at the time of the misconduct and the education sector generally. Noting the case of *Wallace v Secretary of State for Education* [2017] EWHC 109 (Admin), the panel considered that the risk of repetition of misconduct by Mr Coales was low and the panel did not consider that prohibiting Mr Coales for a period of at least two years would "*produce any material change or serve any useful purpose*".

The panel therefore 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 some 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.

In this case, the panel has found one of the allegations not proven. I have therefore put those matters entirely from my mind.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that the findings of unacceptable professional conduct and/or 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 Philip Coales 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
  - ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- 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 finds that the conduct of Mr Coales fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a teacher engaging in inappropriate communications with pupils as well as purchasing alcohol for pupils and permitting them to consume it in his presence.

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 Coales, 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 makes the following observation:

“In the light of the panel’s findings against Mr Coales, which involved a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries with pupils, the sending of inappropriate emails and inappropriately arranging to meet pupils outside of school, 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 it sets out as follows:

“Mr Coales stated that he deeply regretted the consequences for the students, their peers, their families, his colleagues, his friends and family and the wider school community. He stated that he would like to publicly apologise to them. Mr Coales stated that he would continue to regret his actions and their negative impacts and had explored his errors [REDACTED]. The panel considered that through Mr Coales’ evidence, it was clear that he had genuine remorse for his misconduct and the impact that this had had on the pupils involved and the School generally.

The panel considered that Mr Coales had begun to develop a level of insight into his actions in that he appeared to accept that his misconduct had arisen out of his “*youthful arrogance*” that he “*knew best*” how to help Pupil A and thought he could “*fix*” her. The panel considered that Mr Coales accepted now that this was not his position or role and that there is a formal safeguarding framework within which he must operate

and comply, to avoid breaching his position of trust and the boundaries between teachers and pupils. However, the panel was not entirely persuaded by Mr Coales that he had a comprehensive understanding as to why this framework was necessary. The panel noted that Mr Coales had an awareness that he might benefit from further training in this area.”

In my judgement, and noting the significant degree of remorse demonstrated, there appears to be a limited risk of the repetition of this behaviour. I have therefore given this element 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:

“Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Coales was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession, particularly given the very serious findings against Mr Coales in respect of meeting pupils outside of school late at night and purchasing and permitting them to drink alcohol in his presence.”

I am particularly mindful of the findings described by the Panel above in this case and the negative impact that such findings could 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 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 Coales himself. The panel comments that “There was evidence that Mr Coales had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both personal and professional conduct; the panel had before it substantial evidence that Mr Coales had contributed significantly to the education sector.” It also references character evidence attesting to Mr Coales’ commitment to his pupils and ensuring that they could access a rich diet of extra-curricular activities.

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Coales 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.

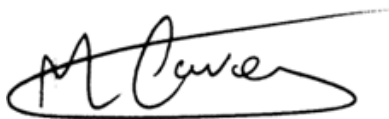
In regard to whether a prohibition order should be imposed, the panel has made the following comments:

“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. Whilst the nature and severity of the behaviour was not insignificant, the panel considered the mitigating factors that were present, and in particular the outstanding contribution which Mr Coales had made to both the School in which he had been working at the time of the misconduct and the education sector generally. Noting the case of *Wallace v Secretary of State for Education [2017] EWHC 109 (Admin)*, the panel considered that the risk of repetition of misconduct by Mr Coales was low and the panel did not consider that prohibiting Mr Coales for a period of at least two years would “*produce any material change or serve any useful purpose*”.

The panel therefore 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.”

In this case, and recognising that the misconduct found by the panel was indeed serious, I agree with the panel that that prohibiting Mr Coales from teaching would not be appropriate or proportionate. The factors I have taken into account in reaching that conclusion are the significant degree of remorse exhibited by Mr Coales, the panel's assessment that there is a low risk of repetition, the absence of a sexual motivation, and the significant contribution that he can make to the education sector in the future. I would, however, strongly urge him to continue to reflect on and develop his insight into the importance of maintaining proper professional boundaries with pupils, the need to adhere to safeguarding frameworks and his position as a teacher rather than a friend.

For these reasons, I have concluded that a prohibition order is not proportionate or in the public interest. I consider that the publication of the findings made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that were not acceptable and that the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Cavey', enclosed within a large, loopy oval stroke.

**Decision maker: Marc Cavey**



**Date: 21 February 2025**

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