



Teaching  
Regulation  
Agency

# **Ms Hilary French: Professional conduct panel hearing outcome**

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

**March 2025**

## Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Preliminary applications	4
Summary of evidence	6
Documents	6
Decision and reasons	7
Findings of fact	7
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**

<b>Teacher:</b>	Ms Hilary French
<b>Teacher ref number:</b>	7760082
<b>Teacher date of birth:</b>	23 December 1955
<b>TRA reference:</b>	17713
<b>Date of determination:</b>	7 March 2025
<b>Former employer:</b>	Girls Day School Trust, Newcastle

### **Introduction**

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 7 March 2025 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Ms Hilary French.

The panel members were Ms Jackie Hutchings (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mr Peter Ward (lay panellist) and Miss Janette McCormick (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Kim Findlow of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP Solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Callum Heywood of Browne Jacobson LLP.

Ms French was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

## **Allegations**

The panel considered the allegation set out in the notice of hearing dated 16 October 2024.

It was alleged that Ms French was guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence, in that:

1. On or around 19 May 2023, Ms French was convicted at Newcastle Upon Tyne Crown Court of 3 counts of Fraud by Abuse of Position under Section 4 of the Fraud Act 2006

In the absence of Ms French, the allegation was taken to have been not admitted.

## **Preliminary applications**

The panel considered the following applications from the Presenting Officer:

### **To proceed in the absence of Ms French**

The panel was satisfied that the TRA has complied with the service requirements of paragraph 19 a to c of the Teachers' Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012.

The panel considered that a notice of hearing was sent out on 16 October 2024 in this case which specified that the professional conduct hearing would take place on 30 January 2025. On the day that the hearing was due to commence, it could not proceed as a result of the recusal of a panel member. Under para 4.31 of the Procedures, before the first day of a hearing the TRA had the power to postpone the hearing until such time and date as it thought fit. Similarly, under para 4.32 of the Procedures, where a hearing had commenced, the panel could adjourn the hearing until such time and date as the panel thought fit. The panel considered that since the hearing had not commenced, the TRA could postpone the hearing until such time and date as it thought fit. The TRA had sent correspondence to Ms French on 7 February 2025 and 20 February 2025 to notify her that the hearing would proceed on 7 March 2025.

The panel was therefore satisfied that the notice of hearing complied with paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12 of the Teacher Misconduct: Disciplinary Procedures 2018.

The panel has taken as its starting point the principle from R v Jones [2003] 1 AC 1 that its discretion to commence a hearing in the absence of the teacher has to be exercised with the utmost care and caution, and that its discretion is a severely constrained one. In considering the question of fairness, the panel recognised that fairness to the professional is of prime importance but that it also encompasses the fair, economic,

expeditious and efficient disposal of allegations against the professional, as was explained in GMC v Adeogba & Visvardis 2016] EWCA Civ 162.

In making its decision, the panel noted that the teacher may waive his right to participate in the hearing. The panel has firstly taken account of the various factors drawn to its attention from the case of R v Jones [2003] 1 AC1:

The panel determined that it was plain from the documents available that Ms French had no intention in attending the hearing. In particular her letter dated 11 August 2024 indicated “*I have no desire to teach again and do not require TRA validation or endorsement*”. In addition, the TRA submitted, and the panel accepted that the TRA had sent correspondence to Ms French on 7 February 2025 and 20 February 2025 to notify her that the hearing would proceed on 7 March 2025 and that she had continued not to participate in line with the letter dated 24 August 2024. The panel considered this showed Ms French’s clear intention not to participate in proceedings.

There was no evidence to suggest that an adjournment might result in Ms French attending voluntarily in particular given her letter dated 11 August 2024.

Ms French expressed at no time any wish to adjourn to obtain legal representation or otherwise.

The panel recognised that the allegations against the teacher are serious and that there is a real risk that if proven, the panel would be required to consider whether to recommend that the teacher ought to be prohibited from being a teacher.

The panel recognised that the efficient disposal of allegations against teachers is required to ensure the protection of pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession.

The panel noted that there are no witnesses to be called, and therefore the effect of delay on the memories of witnesses is not a factor to be taken into consideration in this case.

The panel therefore considered that Ms French has waived her right to be present at the hearing. The panel considered that in light of Ms French’s waiver of her right to appear, that on balance, these are serious allegations and the public interest in this hearing proceeding within a reasonable time was in favour of this hearing continuing in Ms French’s absence. Accordingly, the panel decided to proceed in Ms French’s absence.

### **Amendment of the allegation**

An application was made by the presenting officer to amend the notice of hearing by amending the date of conviction as follows:

*“On or around 17 July 2023, you were convicted at Newcastle Upon Tyne Crown Court of 3 counts of Fraud by Abuse of Position under Section 4 of the Fraud Act 2006”*

to

*“On or around 19 May 2023, you were convicted at Newcastle Upon Tyne Crown Court of 3 counts of Fraud by Abuse of Position under Section 4 of the Fraud Act 2006”*

The panel has the power to, in the interests of justice, amend an allegation or the particulars of an allegation, at any stage before making its decision about whether the facts of the case have been proved.

Before making an amendment, the panel is required to consider any representations by the presenting officer and by the teacher, The presenting officer was afforded that opportunity and Ms French waived her right to make representations by not attending the hearing.

The panel considered the amendment proposed, being a amendment to the conviction date and considered that this did not change the nature, scope or seriousness of the allegations. There was no prospect of Ms French’s case being presented differently had the amendment been made at an earlier stage. Ms French had a copy of the hearing documentation in advance of the hearing which contained the certificate of conviction so she would be aware of the criminal offence that she was convicted of and that forms the substance of the case brought by the TRA. In addition, Ms French has not made any submissions in relation to the conviction, and therefore no unfairness or prejudice is caused to the teacher. The panel therefore decided to amend the allegation as proposed.

## **Summary of evidence**

### **Documents**

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

Section 1: Notice of hearing and response – pages 4 to 22

Section 2: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 25 to 235

Section 3: Teacher documents – pages 237 to 258

In addition, the panel received the following:

- Notice of hearing bundle
- Evidence in relation to service of notice of hearing for 7 March 2025

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

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the document Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession 2018, (the “Procedures”).

## Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Ms French was employed at Girls Day School Trust, Newcastle (“the School”) since 1 January 2006 as a teacher specifically as the head teacher. An internal audit was undertaken of Newcastle High School for Girls on the 6th and 7th of March 2018. The audit identified a number of potential concerns, in particular the purchase of John Lewis gift cards, which were later claimed through expenses by Mrs French. These gift cards were designated as being gifts for staff members who were leaving, gifts for guest speakers at school events and prizes for students. The purchases of these gift cards were deemed unusual. A full disciplinary investigation took place which cumulated in Ms French being invited to a disciplinary hearing to answer allegations in relation to “*John Lewis gift cards not used for intended purposes*” and “*claims relating to Sweaty Betty jacket, gift of sofa and trip to Bath*”. A police investigation also took place following the School reporting these matters to them and the case was considered at the Crown Court on 19 May 2023. A referral to the TRA was made on 23 November 2018.

## Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel found the following particulars of the allegation against Ms French proved, for these reasons:

- 1. On or around 19 May 2023, you were convicted at Newcastle Upon Tyne Crown Court of 3 counts of Fraud by Abuse of Position under Section 4 of the Fraud Act 2006.**

The panel saw the certificate of conviction confirming Ms French’s conviction of the alleged offence. The panel accepted the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of both the convictions and the facts necessarily implied by the convictions.

The panel noted that the Judge’s sentencing remarks state:

“You were a headmistress from 2006 after a very long and, as your counsel said-- rightly said, distinguished career as a teacher, and whilst in that job you committed these three offences of fraud, essentially dishonestly claiming expenses through gift cards, meals and via a false account of a theft. The prosecution have outlined in their opening note at paras.3–5 the details of that, which have been open to the court, but in particular

between April 2016 and February 2018 you submitted a series of expense claims for a total of 65 John Lewis gift cards, which you claimed were purchased either as leaving presents for school staff, rewards for students or thank-you gifts, and in fact you used them for your own personal benefit to a tune of £2,970. There was the weekend trip in 2017 where you claimed expenses for meals on the basis that you had met with old students, and then finally a claim for a coat which, effectively, you invented a theft in respect of this coat, and it turned out to be in the boot of your car”.

The panel was satisfied that the certificate of conviction relates to Ms French and also noted that Ms French did not appeal the convictions.

The panel therefore considered on the balance of probabilities that the TRA had proved the convictions occurred.

The sentencing remarks confirmed the offence to be a Category 5A case and the panel noted that Ms French received a custodial sentence of 6 months imprisonment running concurrently for each offence and each suspended for 12 months as well as a community sentence to undertake unpaid work for 150 hours within a 12-month period.

### **Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence**

Having found the allegation proved, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of this proved allegation amounted to a relevant offence.

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 first considered whether the conduct of Ms French in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Ms French 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
  - not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.



The panel considered the Judge's sentencing remarks around the severity of the convictions, in particular:

"You were arrested and interviewed in 2018. You denied the matters on two occasions. You were charged and sent to this court in 2022, which I have remarked seems a very long time. You initially pleaded not guilty. You changed your plea at the further case management hearing for which you get credit, and I give you credit of 20 per cent. I've read the presentence report and you express your remorse there. You say you are unable to explain why you committed the offence and it seems to me from what I've read there were no financial difficulties. You speak of carelessness. I'm afraid I don't accept that"

"In terms of the Guidelines, it's a high culpability case because it's a breach of trust ... The other issue I have to consider is what's called harm B, which is the impact on the victim. The prosecution suggests it's a high impact or at least medium impact, the defence that it's lesser. It seems to me there is significant reputational damage. It's inevitable. There are the resources required to investigate it, which involved having to contact a large number of people who no doubt then had to be made aware of what had happened, and the lasting effect on any organisation, where there'll be mistrust now and there'll be no doubt processes in place because people can't be trusted to make an honest claim".

"I can't accept the defence submission that this is a lesser impact. Schools like this are judged by the quality of their staff, and to have a headteacher, particularly one that was so well regarded, behave like this is bound to have an effect, and it seems to me submissions to the suggestion this could have been done in another way are very misguided. It's quite clear the police had to be involved, and you know that perfectly well. It seems to me, in fact, the greatest impact is probably upon all those pupils who saw you as a role model, and I have no doubt were as surprised and shocked as anybody by your behaviour".

"I have read the numerous references that have been uploaded. There is no doubt you were held in the highest esteem by teachers, parents and pupils alike. It contains words like "honest", "ethical", "trustworthy", "integrity", "respect", and of course those are very much to your credit, and it's all the sadder that your career has ended in this way, but it undermines the impact it will have on all those people and how they regarded you. In my mind, the impact on the victims at least puts it towards the top of the bracket."

The panel noted that the individual's actions were relevant to teaching, working with children and working in an education setting. This is because the expenses claims were submitted to the school in her capacity as Headteacher at the School and in breach of school policies.

The panel considered that Ms French's actions did not have had a potential impact on the safety or security of pupils or members of the public as no evidence was presented by the TRA to this effect.

The panel also took account of the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Ms French'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 Ms French's behaviour ultimately led to a sentence of imprisonment, (albeit that it was suspended), which was indicative of the seriousness of the offences committed.

The panel also considered the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice.

This was a case concerning offences involving fraud or serious dishonesty, which the Advice states is likely to be considered a relevant offence.

Although the panel found that there was some evidence of Ms French's teaching and leadership proficiency, and whilst the panel noted that Ms French repaid the sums fraudulently obtained, there was no further evidence in relation to steps taken by Ms French to rehabilitate. The panel also found that the seriousness of the offending behaviour that led to the conviction was relevant to Ms French'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 a 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 maintenance of public confidence in the profession and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In the light of the panel's findings against Ms French which involved conviction of 3 counts of fraud by abuse of position, there was a strong public interest consideration in the maintenance of public confidence in the profession as the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that

found against Ms French were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession. Ms French was the headteacher and as such held a position of responsibility within the school. The panel found that Ms French, in that role, should have upheld teacher standards and acted as a role model for other teachers. Further, this fraud related to school funds and her actions would have diverted funds away from the school and children.

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 Ms French 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 Ms French in the profession. Whilst there is evidence that Ms French was a good educator, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweigh any interest in retaining Ms French in the profession, since her behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher, and she sought to exploit her position of trust.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states that the expectation of both the public and pupils, is that members of the teaching profession maintain an exemplary level of integrity and ethical standards at all times. The panel noted that a teacher's behaviour that seeks to exploit their position of trust should be viewed very seriously in terms of its potential influence on pupils and be seen as a possible threat to the public interest. This was called out specifically by the Crown Court Judge in the sentencing remarks "...It seems to me, in fact, the greatest impact is probably upon all those pupils who saw you as a role model, and I have no doubt were as surprised and shocked as anybody by your behaviour". The judge noted the damage caused to the school "It seems to me there is significant reputational damage" and of the seriousness of the offences "it's a high culpability case because it's a breach of trust".

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 Ms French.

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;

- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- actions or behaviours that promote extremist political or religious views or attitudes, or that undermine fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This would encompass deliberately allowing the exposure of pupils to such actions or behaviours, including through contact with any individuals who are widely known to express views that support such activity, for example by inviting any such individuals to speak in schools;
- 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 Ms French's actions were not deliberate.

There was no evidence to suggest that Ms French was acting under extreme duress.

The panel took into account that the presenting officer confirmed that Ms French had no prior record held by the TRA and accepted that Ms French did have a previously good history had contributed to the education sector. The panel had due regard to all character evidence including:

Employment references provided in 2005 on application for the head teacher position at the school. This included the references of 5 individuals who indicated that they were comfortable in recommending Ms French for the role. However, the panel considered that no significant weight could be applied to these given they were provided before the events that occurred and were provided for a different purpose than considering whether a prohibition order is appropriate; and

Two pieces of correspondence from a previous parent of a child or children at the school which included the comment: "she was a wonderful teacher and should know that she is still appreciated for what she did for many girls".

The panel considered insight and remorse and found that there was little to no evidence that Ms French showed insight to her actions and did not take responsibility for her actions throughout the various processes, other than entering a guilty plea at a late stage at the Crown Court case management hearing.

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 Ms French 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 Ms French. Ms French's position of head teacher, the sustained period of her behaviour and the abuse of position were significant factors in forming that opinion. Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

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

None of the listed characteristics were engaged by the panel's findings.

The Advice also indicates that there are certain other types of cases where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate.

One of these include:

- fraud or serious dishonesty

The panel found that the convictions Ms French was subject to were specifically of fraud and they also consider that her actions demonstrated serious dishonesty in that she submitted expense claims for her own gain whilst inventing various reasons for why the expenses were needed.

The panel noted that these lists are not intended to be exhaustive, and panels should consider each case on its individual merits taking into account all the circumstances involved.

The panel considered insight and remorse and found that there was little to no evidence that Ms French showed insight to her actions and did not take responsibility for her actions throughout the various processes, other than entering a guilty plea at a late stage at the Crown Court case management hearing. Whilst it was noted that Ms French repaid the sums of money that were fraudulently obtained. This leads the panel to consider there could be a possible repetition of this behaviour if Ms French was not prohibited from teaching.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period after 5 years.

## **Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State**

I have given very careful consideration to this case and to the recommendation of the panel in respect of both sanction and review period.

In considering this case, I have also given very careful attention to the Advice that the Secretary of State has published concerning the prohibition of teachers.

In this case, the panel has found all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to a relevant conviction.

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

In particular, the panel has found that Ms French 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
  - not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include an experienced headteacher receiving a relevant conviction for three counts of Fraud.

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 Ms French, 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 recorded the following: “The panel considered that Ms French’s actions did not have had a potential impact on the safety or security of pupils or members of the public as no evidence was presented by the TRA to this effect.”

I have also taken into account the panel’s comments on insight and remorse, which it sets out as follows: “The panel considered insight and remorse and found that there was little to no evidence that Ms French showed insight to her actions and did not take responsibility for her actions throughout the various processes, other than entering a guilty plea at a late stage at the Crown Court case management hearing.” In my judgement, the lack of evidence that Ms French has developed full insight into and remorse for her behaviour means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour. 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 makes the following observation:

“The panel also took account of the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Ms French’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 in this case of an experienced head teacher committing fraud in order to use school funds for her own advantage and the negative 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 Ms French herself. The panel records the following: "The panel took into account that the presenting officer confirmed that Ms French had no prior record held by the TRA and accepted that Ms French did have a previously good history had contributed to the education sector." The panel also notes having seen some character evidence attesting to Ms French's abilities as a teacher.

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the serious nature of the misconduct found by the panel, which included a relevant conviction for Fraud which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (albeit suspended). I have also placed weight on the lack of evidence that Ms French has developed full insight into and remorse for her behaviour.

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

I have considered the panel's concluding remarks:

"The panel considered insight and remorse and found that there was little to no evidence that Ms French showed insight to her actions and did not take responsibility for her actions throughout the various processes, other than entering a guilty plea at a late stage at the Crown Court case management hearing. Whilst it was noted that Ms French repaid the sums of money that were fraudulently obtained. This leads the panel to consider there could be a possible repetition of this behaviour if Ms French was not prohibited from teaching.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the



circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period after 5 years.”

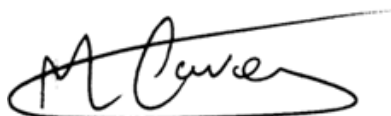
I have considered whether a five-year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that I agree with the panel that allowing such a review period is sufficient and proportionate to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the serious nature of the misconduct found, which constitutes a very significant breach of trust on Ms French’s part which can only serve to damage the standing of the profession, and the lack of evidence of either full insight or remorse.

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

**This means that Ms Hilary French is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children’s home in England.** She may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 17 March 2030, five years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If she does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Ms French remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Ms Hilary French has a right of appeal to the King’s Bench Division of the High Court within 28 days from the date she is given notice of this order.

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

**Decision maker: Marc Cavey**

**Date: 11 March 2025**

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