



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Dr James Alsop: Professional conduct panel hearing outcome

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

March 2025

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

Teacher:	Dr James Alsop
TRA reference:	21760
Date of determination:	10 March 2025
Former employer:	Torquay Girls Grammar School, Devon ("TGGS") and Chelmsford County High School for Girls, Chelmsford ("CCHS")

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ("the panel") of the Teaching Regulation Agency ("the TRA") convened on 3 March 2025 to 6 March 2025 at Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT, and by way of a virtual hearing on 7 March 2025 and 10 March 2025, to consider the case of Dr Alsop.

The panel members were Mrs Jane Gotschel (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mrs Pamela Thompson (lay panellist) and Mr Richard Young (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Miss Elizabeth Gilbert of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Charles Drinnan of Two Harcourt Buildings instructed by Kingsley Napley LLP.

Dr Alsop was present and was represented by Mr Andrew Faux of the Reflective Practice.

The hearing took place in private and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the Notice of Hearing dated 11 December 2024.

It was alleged that Dr Alsop was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that:

1. Whilst working as a Teacher at Chelmsford County High School for Girls:
 - a) Between around February 2016 and December 2019, Mr Alsop engaged in an inappropriate relationship and/or failed to maintain professional boundaries with Person A, in that he:
 - i) Met Socially with Person A between classes and/or outside of school;
 - ii) Exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or personal nature;
 - iii) Exchanged messages which were excessive in number and/or frequency;
 - iv) Engaged in telephone calls which were in excessive in frequency and/or length;
 - v) Sent letter(s) of an inappropriate and/or personal nature;
 - vi) Sent cards and gifts;
 - vii) Were emotionally manipulative and/or abusive, [REDACTED] if Person A ceased contact.
 - b) Between around October 2018 and August 2019, Dr Alsop engaged in an inappropriate relationship and/or failed to maintain professional boundaries with Person B, in that he:
 - i) Developed a 'friendship' which went beyond an acceptable student/teacher relationship;
 - ii) Exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or personal nature.
 - c) Between around January 2017 and June 2019, Dr Alsop engaged in an inappropriate relationship and/or failed to maintain professional boundaries with Person C, in that he:
 - i) Developed a 'friendship' which went beyond an acceptable student/teacher relationship;
 - ii) Exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or personal nature.
2. Whilst working as a Teacher at Torquay Girls' Grammar School, between around October 2020 and February 2022, Dr Alsop exchanged direct messages of an inappropriate and/or informal nature with one or more pupils, which were:
 - a) of a considerable volume;
 - b) sent late at night and/or on weekends;

- c) unrelated to school;
 - d) over-familiar in nature, in that he permitted pupils to call him by a nickname.
3. Dr Alsop's conduct at paragraph 1 amounted to harassment and/or grooming.
4. Dr Alsop's conduct at paragraph 1 was sexually motivated.

Dr Alsop admitted allegations 1(b)-(c) and 2(a)-(d).

Dr Alsop admitted allegations 1(a)(ii)-(vi) insofar as they related to the timeframe after Person A left CCHS. Dr Alsop denied the allegations insofar as they related to the timeframe within which he taught Person A at CCHS.

Dr Alsop admitted allegation 1(a)(vii) in respect of his messages being emotionally manipulative and abusive. [REDACTED]

Dr Alsop denied allegation 3, save for his last two interactions with Person A which he admitted amounted to harassment.

Dr Alsop denied allegations 1(a)(i) and 4.

Dr Alsop admitted the facts of allegation 1 amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. Dr Alsop made no assertion as to whether the remaining allegations 2, 3 and 4 amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute and therefore this was not admitted.

Preliminary applications

The panel noted the previous decision at a case management hearing (the "CMH") which was conducted on the papers without the attendance of the parties on 14 February 2025. The CMH concerned two applications made by the presenting officer on behalf of the TRA for special measures for Person A, Person B and Person C, and for Person D to give evidence remotely. The panel directed to permit Person D to give evidence remotely, and for Person A, Person B and Person C to give evidence remotely so that they could not see Dr Alsop and Dr Alsop could not see them and they were permitted a supporter. Additionally, Dr Alsop would only be able to cross-examine Person A, Person B or Person C through a representative.

The panel considered the following preliminary applications:

Application for the teacher to have special measures

The panel considered an application from Dr Alsop's representative to provide special measures to the teacher.

The panel heard submissions from Dr Alsop's representative as to why Dr Alsop should be permitted a companion to attend the hearing, as Dr Alsop was a vulnerable witness under the definition in paragraph 5.102 of the Teacher Misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession 2020 (the "Procedures").

The presenting officer made no objection to the application.

The panel considered the evidence in the bundle which outlined the extent of Mr Alsop's [REDACTED] which included Dr Alsop's witness statement, [REDACTED] notes and letters [REDACTED]. The panel was satisfied that the quality of Dr Alsop's evidence would likely be adversely affected [REDACTED]. As such, the panel determined that Dr Alsop be treated as a vulnerable witness and be provided special consideration.

The panel noted it could adopt such measures as it considered appropriate in order to safeguard the interests of the teacher as a vulnerable witness pursuant to paragraph 5.103 of the Procedures, which could include the attendance of a supporter. The panel was satisfied that the attendance of a supporter was an appropriate measure to facilitate Dr Alsop's effective participation at the hearing [REDACTED].

The panel therefore accepted the application and directed that Dr Alsop be permitted to have a companion throughout the duration of the hearing.

Application to exclude the public from the hearing

The panel considered an application from Dr Alsop's representative to exclude the public from the hearing.

The panel heard submissions from Dr Alsop's representative as to why the public should be excluded from the hearing. Dr Alsop's representative submitted that matters concerning Dr Alsop's [REDACTED] was relevant to the factual matrix of the allegations, that this was sensitive personal data and so the whole hearing should be in private.

[REDACTED].

As aforementioned in the special measures application, Dr Alsop's representative stated that Dr Alsop was a vulnerable witness under the definition in paragraph 5.102 of the Procedures which supports the requirement for a private hearing, as this is a measure the panel can put in place to safeguard Dr Alsop.

The panel heard submissions from the presenting officer who objected to the application to exclude the public from all of the hearing, but made no objection to exclude the public from parts of the hearing when reference was to be made to Dr Alsop's [REDACTED]. The presenting officer submitted that he did not dispute that matters relating to Dr Alsop's [REDACTED] could be heard in private, however, not all matters to be heard would relate to Dr Alsop's [REDACTED]. The presenting officer noted that the TRA's case did not rely on anything related to Dr Alsop's [REDACTED] and anything that referenced this could be compartmentalised as the panel was experienced in managing part of the hearing in private.

The panel considered whether to exercise its discretion under paragraph 11 of the Teachers' Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012 (the "Regulations") and paragraph 5.85 of the Procedures to exclude the public from the hearing.

The panel took into account the general rule that hearings should be held in public and that this is generally desirable to maintain public confidence in the administration of these proceedings and also to maintain confidence in the teaching profession. The panel noted there were concerns about confidential matters relating to [REDACTED] being placed in the public domain. The panel balanced the reasons why Dr Alsop's representative had requested that the public be excluded against the competing reasons for which a public hearing is required.

The panel noted that any departure from the general rule had to be no greater than the extent reasonably necessary and that interference for a limited period of the hearing was preferable to a permanent exclusion of the public. The panel therefore considered whether there were any steps short of excluding the public from all of the hearing that would serve the purpose of protecting the confidentiality of matters relating to [REDACTED]

The panel had particular regard to Dr Alsop being vulnerable and considered that having the hearing in private would likely alleviate the risk of Dr Alsop being unable to provide oral evidence if he knew that no member of the public would be present.

On this occasion, the panel considered that it was reasonable for the public to be excluded from the hearing given the concerns about confidential matters relating to [REDACTED] being placed in the public domain and the interest in Dr Alsop participating effectively at the hearing to provide his oral evidence.

The panel acknowledged that a public hearing would increase the risk of Dr Alsop requiring an adjournment in order to participate effectively. In light of the risk of adjournment, and noting that Dr Alsop had engaged fully with the proceedings to date, the panel did not consider that there were any steps short of excluding the public that would serve the purpose of assisting Dr Alsop to provide his oral evidence. At no point had Dr Alsop sought to delay the proceedings. On balance, these were serious

allegations and the public interest in the hearing proceeding with Dr Alsop's participation within a reasonable time was in favour of the hearing continuing in private.

Whilst the panel agreed with the presenting officer that the panel was experienced in dealing with the practicalities of having part of the hearing in private, the panel found the request for the public to be excluded from all of the hearing was justified and was reasonably necessary to protect [REDACTED] and confidential information.

For the above reasons, the panel accepted the application for the public to be excluded from all of the hearing.

Application to amend an allegation

The panel considered an application by the presenting officer to amend the Notice of Hearing by amending the first limb of allegation 1 and allegation 2, and the particulars of allegation 1(a)(i). The proposed amendment to the first limb of allegation 1 was to amend "whilst working as a Teacher at Chelmsford High School for Girls" to "whilst working as a Teacher at Chelmsford High School for Girls and after". The proposed amendment to the first limb of allegation 2 was to amend "whilst working as a Teacher at Torquay Girls' Grammar School, between around October 2020 and February 2022" to "whilst working as a Teacher at Torquay Girls' Grammar School and subsequently, between around October 2020 and February 2022". The proposed amendment to allegation 1(a)(i) was to amend "Pupil A" to "Person A".

The panel noted it had 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 was required to consider any representations by the presenting officer and by the teacher. The panel had regard to the presenting officer's submissions, that the amendment to the first limb of allegation 1 and allegation 2 was required as Dr Alsop was not working as a teacher in the named school throughout the duration of the timeframe noted in the allegation. Additionally, the amendment to allegation 1(a)(i) was required to correct the anonymised name provided to the individual identified in the allegation. Dr Alsop's representative made no objection to the presenting officer's application.

The panel considered that the amendment proposed to allegation 1(a)(i) was a correction of a typographical error. The panel noted that the evidence in the bundle covered the timespan proposed, and Dr Alsop was prepared to deal with the allegations over that time period. The panel determined that there was no prospect of Dr Alsop's case being presented differently had the amendment been made at an earlier stage, and therefore no unfairness or prejudice was caused. The panel therefore decided to amend the allegations as proposed.

Proceeding in absence of the teacher

Dr Alsop attended the start of the hearing [REDACTED]. Dr Alsop's representative subsequently made an application to proceed in the absence of Dr Alsop.

Dr Alsop's representative submitted that Dr Alsop would return to the hearing [REDACTED].

No objection was made by the presenting officer to the application.

The panel considered whether the hearing should continue in the absence of Dr Alsop [REDACTED].

The panel was satisfied that the TRA had complied with the service requirements of paragraph 19(1)(a) to (c) of the Regulations. The panel was also satisfied that the Notice of Proceedings complied with paragraphs 5.23 and 5.24 of the Procedures.

The panel determined to exercise its discretion under paragraph 5.47 of the Procedures to proceed with the hearing in the absence of the teacher.

The panel took as its starting point the principle from *R v Jones* [2003] that its discretion to continue in the absence of the teacher had to be exercised with the utmost care and caution, and that its discretion was a severely constrained one. In considering the question of fairness, the panel recognised that fairness to the professional was of prime importance but that it also encompassed the fair, economic, expeditious and efficient disposal of allegations against the professional, as was explained in *GMC v Adeogba & Visvardis* [2016].

In making its decision, the panel noted that the teacher could waive his right to participate in the hearing. The panel first took account of the various factors drawn to its attention from the case of *R v Jones* [2003].

As Dr Alsop had already attended part of the hearing and intended to return [REDACTED] the panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop was aware of the proceedings. The panel therefore considered that Dr Alsop waived his right to be present at part of the hearing in the knowledge of when and where the hearing was taking place.

The panel heard from Dr Alsop's representative that he waived his right to attend the hearing as he did not seek to hear further [REDACTED]. The panel understood that Dr Alsop's representative had spoken with Dr Alsop regarding this position and noted that Dr Alsop had and would continue to provide him with full instructions in his absence.

The panel also heard from Dr Alsop's representative that he had explicit instructions that Dr Alsop did not want to adjourn the hearing. The panel therefore considered that it was unlikely that an adjournment might result in the teacher attending [REDACTED].

The panel noted that, given Dr Alsop had already given his representative full instructions, had provided a detailed witness statement and intended to return to give his oral evidence, the degree of risk of the panel reaching the wrong decision and the extent of the disadvantage to Dr Alsop was limited as he had already, and would further in his oral evidence, give his account of the events.

The panel recognised that the allegations against Dr Alsop were serious and that there was a real risk that, if proven, the panel would be required to consider whether to recommend that Dr Alsop be prohibited from teaching.

The panel recognised that the efficient disposal of allegations against teachers is required to ensure the protection of pupils and to maintain confidence in the profession. The conduct alleged was said to have taken place whilst Dr Alsop was employed at CCHS and TGGS. As such, CCHS and TGGS had an interest in the hearing taking place in order to move forwards.

The panel also noted that Person B, Person C, Person D, Person E, Person F and Person G were yet to provide their oral evidence, and that it would be inconvenient for them to return again.

The panel decided to proceed with the hearing in the absence of Dr Alsop. The panel considered that in light of Dr Alsop's waiver of his right to appear, and taking account of the inconvenience an adjournment would cause to the witnesses, on balance, these were serious allegations and the public interest in this hearing proceeding within a reasonable time was in favour of this hearing continuing.

For the above reasons, the panel accepted the application for part of the hearing to proceed in the absence of Dr Alsop.

Application to admit video evidence

The panel considered an application from Dr Alsop's representative to permit Person F to give evidence by video link.

The presenting officer did not object to the application.

The panel noted that, pursuant to paragraph 5.33 of the Procedures, the panel may admit any evidence where it is fair to do so, which may reasonably be considered to be relevant to the case.

The panel therefore considered it had a discretion as to whether to allow Person F to give evidence by video link. The panel noted that Person F could not attend Coventry to give

evidence given the distance he would have to travel in light of his work and family commitments and the journey would be “particularly onerous” as outlined in Person F’s written statement.

The panel considered its duty in the public interest to investigate the allegations in so far as possible consistent with fairness to Dr Alsop. The panel also took into account that there may be subtleties of tone or body language that might be lost via the medium of video link.

The panel was satisfied that allowing his evidence to be given by video link ensured that Dr Alsop was fully able to present his case, and fairness required that the presenting officer should be given the opportunity to ask questions of this witness.

The panel therefore accepted the application for Person F to give evidence via video link.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology and list of key people – pages 8 to 11

Section 2: Notice of Hearing and response – pages 12 to 34

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements – pages 35 to 62

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 63 to 1044

Section 5: Teacher’s representations – pages 1045 to 1258

The panel members confirmed they had read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the hearing. In the consideration of this case, the panel also had regard to the Procedures.

Witnesses

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

- Person A: ex-pupil at CCHS;
- Person B: ex-pupil at CCHS;
- Person C: ex-pupil at CCHS; and
- Person D: [REDACTED]

Dr Alsop also gave oral evidence and called the following witnesses:

- Person E: [REDACTED]
- Person F: [REDACTED]
- Person G: [REDACTED]

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Dr Alsop's first teaching role was as an English teacher at CCHS from September 2014 to July 2017.

Dr Alsop then worked as an English teacher at [REDACTED] ("School A") from September 2017 to April 2019.

Dr Alsop took up a role in the student recruitment office [REDACTED] in the academic year 2019/2020.

Thereafter, Dr Alsop commenced employment as an English teacher at TGGs on 13 April 2020.

On 2 February 2022, Person A notified TGGs of a safeguarding concern relating to Dr Alsop.

Dr Alsop was suspended from TGGs on 7 February 2022 pending an investigation into the allegation received from Person A.

TGGs raised further allegations against Dr Alsop relating to an audit of his Microsoft Teams account.

Dr Alsop resigned from his employment at TGGs on 21 December 2020.

TGGs referred Dr Alsop to the TRA on 8 February 2023.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you proved, for these reasons:

1. Whilst working as a Teacher at Chelmsford County High School for Girls and after:

a) Between around February 2016 and December 2019, you engaged in an inappropriate relationship and/or failed to maintain professional boundaries with Person A, in that you:

- (ii) Exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or personal nature;**
- (iii) Exchanged messages which were excessive in number and/or frequency;**

Dr Alsop admitted allegations 1(a)(ii) and 1(a)(iii), insofar as they related to the timeframe after Person A left CCHS. Dr Alsop denied the allegations insofar as they related to the timeframe within which he taught Person A at CCHS.

Dr Alsop clarified in his written statement that he left his role at CCHS in July 2017, where he taught Person A [REDACTED]. Person A stated in her written statement that she and Dr Alsop “emailed excessively, almost daily, through [their] school email addresses” whilst she was at CCHS and communicated through Twitter as Person A was [REDACTED] which he followed through his personal account. This was corroborated by Person C who recalled in their oral evidence that Person A disclosed to them that Dr Alsop and Person A had been “emailing every other day throughout the summer holidays”. Person C noted that this disclosure “alarmed” them as they could “not imagine what a teacher would possibly have to communicate with a student every other day for six weeks”.

The panel did not have evidence of emails between Dr Alsop and Person A to substantiate the position put forward by Person A and Person C regarding the frequency of emails during their time at CCHS.

The panel had in evidence some exchanges between Dr Alsop and Person A on Twitter, [REDACTED] in 2016. The panel noted the content of these tweets were casual in nature, however they were predominantly based on academic matters. [REDACTED]

The panel determined it had not been proven that messages between Dr Alsop and Person A during the period when they were both at CCHS were inappropriate or unprofessional as they did not appear to be personal in nature or excessive in frequency based on the exchanges that had been provided as evidence.

Person A stated in her written statement that she and Dr Alsop became “even better friends” which progressed at an “incredibly quick rate” after she left CCHS in July 2017 as they would message on Twitter on a daily basis. Person A stated in her oral evidence that she did not obtain Dr Alsop’s personal mobile phone number until after they both left CCHS and therefore any messages exchanged prior to this time were confined to Twitter and their school email addresses.

Dr Alsop stated in his written statement that he had a “platonic relationship” with Person A between October 2017 and March 2019 whilst she was at university. Dr Alsop stated that this relationship was at the request of Person A as she wrote him a letter in 2017, with which the panel were provided as evidence in one of his exhibits, which stated that she hoped they “keep in touch when [they] are both cut free from the strings of CCHS”. Dr Alsop did not consider there to be anything “improper, unprofessional, or inappropriate about this kind of engagement and it was not uncommon for teachers to engage with former students like this”.

The panel considered messages between Dr Alsop and Person A which spanned across approximately 150 pages of Person A’s exhibit to her witness statement. The panel noted the messages were across various platforms including Twitter, text message and WhatsApp, predominantly from 2018 to 2019. Whilst Dr Alsop’s messages with Person A were frequent and personal in nature, discussing feelings and exchanging compliments, the panel determined this to be appropriate given the context of Dr Alsop and Person A having a reciprocal friendship which they were entitled to have as consenting adults.

The panel noted that Dr Alsop stated in his oral evidence that he received no guidance from CCHS as to when it was appropriate to be in contact with a former student, if at all. Dr Alsop stated that different teachers had a different view on this and therefore it was a “grey area” and “unclear”. The panel acknowledged that it had not seen any guidance provided in evidence on this matter.

Notwithstanding the above, the panel noted that the context of Dr Alsop’s messages to Person A changed around March 2019 whereby Person A sought to end their friendship but Dr Alsop was persistent in maintaining contact which was not reciprocated. The panel considered the following messages in this regard:

- On 30 March 2019, Person A messaged Dr Alsop and stated she “can’t have a relationship with someone where ‘need’ is such a significant component”.
- Dr Alsop continued to message Person A excessively without a response following her message on 30 March 2019. For example, on 14 April 2019, Dr Alsop sent Person A thirteen messages in a row which stated amongst other things “I miss you”, “I won’t stop loving you with all my heart”, “please speak to me” and “please tell me what I can do to make this right”. Dr Alsop accepted that his messages were “unsolicited”;
- Person A responded to Dr Alsop on Twitter on 15 April 2019 at 21:42 and stated that she “appreciated [his] apologies” but asked for Dr Alsop to “please respect [her] boundaries” and what she needed “more than anything” was “space”; and
- Dr Alsop emailed Person A in November 2019 and stated “I’d like closure for us both” and “if you decide you never want to speak to me again I’ll understand”.

The panel noted it was at the point that Person A no longer reciprocated the relationship that the messages became inappropriate, as prior to this time they had a friendship, and whilst at CCHS the basis of Dr Alsop's and Person A's relationship was academic and within the scope of a teacher's role. The panel determined Dr Alsop's messages to Person A from March 2019 onwards to be excessive and inappropriate in circumstances where Person A no longer sought to be in contact with him.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(a)(ii) and 1(a)(iii) proved.

v) Sent letter(s) of an inappropriate and/or personal nature;

Dr Alsop admitted the allegation, insofar as it related to the timeframe after Person A left CCHS. Dr Alsop denied the allegation insofar as it related to the timeframe within which he taught Person A at CCHS.

Person A stated in her written and oral evidence that she received a letter from Dr Alsop whilst she was studying at [REDACTED] in May 2019 which was five pages long and handwritten by Dr Alsop. The panel considered pictures of this letter which were included as an exhibit to Person A's written statement. The panel had regard to the following statements made in this letter which were personal in nature:

- "I still want you in my life";
- "I hope that you can let me back into your life";
- [REDACTED]
- "I got things so horribly wrong".

Dr Alsop admitted sending the five page letter in his written and oral evidence and explained in his oral evidence that his "logic" for sending the letter to Person A was because they were not on good terms and it was very likely that they would bump into each other around [REDACTED] as he had recently moved there. Dr Alsop elaborated that he was "fearful" of this situation arising and therefore felt it necessary to write to Person A to "clear the air".

Person E stated that she knew Dr Alsop had sent the letter to Person A around the time it was sent because Dr Alsop told her. She did not see a copy of the letter as it was handwritten and Dr Alsop did not have a copy to share after it was sent out. However, Person E stated that Dr Alsop had told her that he was "grovelling in it", saying sorry "as much as he could", "took responsibility for the argument" and said that he loved Person A. Person E recalled that she told Dr Alsop "hopefully that is closure".

The panel was satisfied from the corroborating evidence noted above that Dr Alsop sent a five page handwritten letter to Person A [REDACTED] in May 2019. The panel saw no evidence of any further letters sent by Dr Alsop to Person A. The panel determined that this letter was very personal in nature as Dr Alsop commented on [REDACTED] his

feelings towards his relationship with Person A. The panel was satisfied that, in the context of their relationship at that time, the letter was inappropriate as Person A had requested no further contact, yet he sent the letter anyway and sought to get back into her life.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(a)(v) proved.

vii) Were emotionally manipulative and/or abusive, including [REDACTED] if Person A ceased contact.

Dr Alsop denied allegation 1(a)(vii) insofar as it related to [REDACTED]. However, Dr Alsop admitted the allegation in respect of his messages being emotionally manipulative and abusive generally.

Dr Alsop stated in oral evidence that his only recollection of sending a message related to [REDACTED] was his message to Person A on 14 March 2019 at 00:04 [REDACTED]. Person A stated in her oral evidence that Dr Alsop would send messages such [REDACTED] as a “throw away joke” but this was not something mentioned in a “serious capacity” and was always a “light-hearted remark [REDACTED]. The panel were not persuaded [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]. The panel noted it did not have the full record of messages between Dr Alsop and Person A’s mother, and neither did Person A’s mother attend the hearing as a witness. As such, the panel was unable to question Person A’s mother and therefore placed no weight on this evidence.

Person A further stated in her oral evidence that Dr Alsop would tell her that he could not sleep when the relationship between them was “not right” and he made it clear that he relied on her to be there for him for support as she had a “general sense that his life was not going well”. Person A further explained that Dr Alsop would “lash out” when she showed uncertainty about how things were going between them. Dr Alsop accepted this position in his oral evidence and stated that the relationship was “co-dependent” as he relied on Person A for emotional support.

Person A stated that she was unable to reply to Dr Alsop’s messages as much during her second year of university in September 2018 as she was “very busy” and in response Dr Alsop became “increasingly possessive”, “jealous”, “obsessive”, “manipulative” and “emotionally abusive”. Person A stated that she began to feel “uneasy”, “uncomfortable and upset” by Dr Alsop’s messages. The panel considered the following messages referred to by Person A as examples of these types of messages in an exhibit to her written statement:

- On 12 March 2019, Dr Alsop stated that he thought of Person A “Every.Single.Day” and “when things are not okay” between them he “fall[s] apart” and does not know what to do.

- On 12 March 2019, Dr Alsop stated he “missed” Person A, that she was his “best student”, “[his] friend”, “[his] partner in punny crime” and “[his] Person A”.
- On 14 March 2019, Dr Alsop stated “I know I’m the worlds biggest idiot and poisonous and stupid”.
- On 27 March 2019, Dr Alsop said to Person A that she “wanted this friendship”, she “sought [him] out”, she “wanted to keep” him, she “let [him] love [her]” and “now [he] feel like a fool” and “disposable”. Person A stated in her written statement that she felt “truly suffocated and scared” by their relationship at this stage and she “felt so horrible [REDACTED]”.

Dr Alsop stated in his oral evidence that he did not appreciate it at the time of sending the messages that he was being emotionally manipulative or abusive, but “now with sight of the messages in 2025” he agreed with this perspective. Dr Alsop accepted that his messages could be described as guilt tripping or gaslighting as he was, albeit unintentionally, placing responsibility on to Person A for his emotional wellbeing. Dr Alsop also stated in his oral evidence that he understood messaging Person A several times without a response, across multiple platforms, was “obsessive”.

Dr Alsop also accepted in his oral evidence that he left a comment on Person A’s Twitter in December 2019 to correct a grammatical error which he stated was “spiteful” as he was no longer in contact with Person A following the breakdown of their relationship.

[REDACTED]

Notwithstanding the above position, the panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop consistently sent Person A messages from March 2019 which were possessive, self-deprecating and sought to shift responsibility of his emotional wellbeing on to Person A. The panel noted the messages were emotionally manipulative in the context of Person A no longer wanting a relationship with him. In particular, the panel noted the comment to correct a grammatical error in December 2019 was intentionally abusive. The panel found that such conduct was entirely inappropriate and unprofessional in light of Person A being his former pupil.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(a)(vii) proved.

(b) Between around October 2018 and August 2019, you engaged in an inappropriate relationship and/or failed to maintain professional boundaries with Person B, in that you:

- Developed a ‘friendship’ which went beyond an acceptable student/teacher relationship;**
- Exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or personal nature.**

Dr Alsop admitted allegations 1(b)(i) and 1(b)(ii).

The panel noted that Person B attended CCHS as a pupil until the end of her year 11 [REDACTED]. Dr Alsop was Person B's English teacher when she was in year 10 [REDACTED].

Person B stated in her written statement that she "often" went to Dr Alsop to "talk about personal issues or problems" she was facing "around once a week" during the timeframe within which he taught her. However, Person B further stated that she "had no contact" with Dr Alsop when she left CCHS [REDACTED]. Person B stated that she had tried to follow Dr Alsop on twitter during the summer after she left CCHS, but Dr Alsop stated that he did not "want people who aren't in sixth form already to follow him".

Person B further stated in her written statement that Dr Alsop began messaging her on Twitter in the summer before she began sixth form [REDACTED] about a cookie recipe they had previously discussed. Following this, Dr Alsop and Person B would exchange general messages and developed a "friendship in some capacity" albeit Person B did not have access to these initial messages.

The panel considered the messages between Dr Alsop and Person B from October 2018 to August 2019 which were provided as 35 pages of evidence within an exhibit to Person B's written statement. The panel noted these messages were exchanged predominantly via Twitter but also via personal mobile phone numbers. The panel also acknowledged that the messages in evidence were only a selection of the messages between them and often did not include the full context of conversations. When questioned by the panel in oral evidence, Person B explained that she provided messages which she felt were "relevant" to Dr Alsop's inappropriate interactions with her and also because she did not have access to the full extent of the messages as Dr Alsop at some point had deleted his Twitter account which in turn deleted their messages. The panel was satisfied that it was able to determine the nature of the relationship from what was provided.

The panel had regard to the following messages sent between Dr Alsop and Person B in particular:

- On 13 October 2018 at 21:08, Dr Alsop commented on Person B's profile picture on Twitter and described this as "very cute";
- On 13 November 2018 at 19:13, Dr Alsop said to Person B "possibly a good idea to not tell your teachers we're in contact like this" and one minute later stated "some could easily think it's a bit weird";
- On 12 November 2018 at 20:21, Dr Alsop said "I could kiss you" to Person B;
- On 21 November 2018 at 21:46, Dr Alsop told Person B "I miss you";
- On 5 December 2018 at 18:16, Dr Alsop said that Person B was "beautiful and powerful and [he] is not worthy";

- On 5 December 2018 at 18:35, Dr Alsop stated “is it weird that I really want a hug from you? should your mum be calling me creepy?”; and
- On 7 June 2019 at 08:09, Dr Alsop stated that he thinks “the world” of Person B.

The panel considered the messages sent by Dr Alsop to Person B, and the friendship they developed, to be inappropriate and a breach of Dr Alsop’s professional boundaries. The panel noted that, whilst Person B was no longer a pupil at the school Dr Alsop taught at, she remained a pupil throughout the messages exchanged which were provided in evidence to the panel. As such, Dr Alsop should have maintained boundaries relevant to a teacher and a pupil relationship. However, the messages showed that Dr Alsop consistently complimented Person B and commented on his affection for her. The panel also noted that Dr Alsop implied himself that the messages exchanged between them were not appropriate as others would think it was “weird” and “creepy”.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(b)(i) and 1(b)(ii) proved.

(c) Between around January 2017 and June 2019, you engaged in an inappropriate relationship and/or failed to maintain professional boundaries with Person C, in that you:

ii) Exchanged messages of an inappropriate and/or personal nature.

Dr Alsop admitted the allegation.

The panel noted that Person C was a pupil at CCHS [REDACTED] and Dr Alsop was Person C’s English teacher [REDACTED].

The panel heard from Person C and Dr Alsop in oral evidence that they did not interact significantly whilst they were both at CCHS and Person C stated they did not have “much of a relationship” in their written statement. However, once Person C left CCHS they exchanged messages with Dr Alsop over Twitter. The panel noted the messages provided as evidence exhibited to Person C’s written statement which spanned across approximately 20 pages in evidence and covered exchanges from September 2017 to April 2019.

The panel noted the following messages in particular:

- On 25 June 2018, Dr Alsop wished them the best for their surgery. Person C stated in their oral evidence that this interaction “felt strange” and they “did not think it was appropriate to comment” [REDACTED];
- On 31 December 2018, Dr Alsop commented on a picture Person C had posted and noted they looked “happy, smiling” and that it was so beautiful “it hurts”;
- On 8 January 2019, Dr Alsop stated he was a “nobody” but that he was “glad” he could still be useful in respect of assisting with Person C’s university application;

- On 15 January 2019, Dr Alsop stated “what is another word for sparkling” as he was “trying to describe” Person C’s eyes; and
- On 15 April 2019, Dr Alsop emailed Person C after he was blocked from messaging them on Twitter to say “sorry” for letting them down.

Person C stated in their oral evidence that they thought Dr Alsop’s behaviour was “odd” and “inappropriate” as Dr Alsop was consistently “veering on the edge of over familiar” and “not adhering to the sorts of boundaries” they expected.

Person C also stated in their oral evidence that Person C thought it was “extremely out of place” for a teacher to say “self-deprecating” things such as this to a former pupil, as it invited them to “big up their ego” or “soothe them”.

The panel noted from the messages, as is accepted by Dr Alsop in his written statement, that the majority of their conversations “involved education in some way”. In light of this, and Person C’s position in regards to their feelings towards Dr Alsop, the panel determined that they did not have a “friendship” as such but exchanged messages within a former teacher and pupil capacity. Within that context, the panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop’s messages to Person C were inappropriate as they were of a personal nature, providing compliments and seeking validation, which was not within the nature of conversations expected between a teacher and former pupil.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(c)(ii) proved.

2. Whilst working as a Teacher at Torquay Girls’ Grammar School and subsequently, between around October 2020 and February 2022, you exchanged direct messages of an inappropriate and/or informal nature with one or more pupils, which were:

- a) of a considerable volume;**
- b) sent late at night and/or on weekends;**
- c) unrelated to school;**
- d) over-familiar in nature, in that you permitted pupils to call you by a nickname.**

Dr Alsop admitted the allegation.

The panel considered a number of messages sent between Dr Alsop and various pupils, Pupils A to E, on Microsoft Teams whilst at TGGs between October 2020 and February 2022 which was an exhibit to Person D’s written statement. The panel noted the following messages by way of example:

- On 22 January 2021 at 10:56, Dr Alsop messaged Pupil A [REDACTED]
- On 5 February 2021 at 12:27, Pupil A messaged Dr Alsop a video [REDACTED]

- On 23 November 2021 between 21:55 and 22:15, Dr Alsop engaged in a conversation with Pupil D and Pupil E [REDACTED] which was unrelated to teaching;
- On 24 November 2021, Dr Alsop sent Pupil E a picture [REDACTED]
- On 14 January 2022 at 16:06, Pupil D addressed Dr Alsop with the nickname [REDACTED] and similarly the same day Pupil E addressed Dr Alsop as [REDACTED]
- On 14 January 2022 at 16:41 and again on 1 February 2022 at 15:42, Dr Alsop jokingly stated to Pupil E and Pupil D respectively that they would have [REDACTED]
- On 15 January 2022, which was a Saturday, Dr Alsop exchanged messages throughout the day with Pupil D and Pupil E into the next day which was a Sunday.

The panel was satisfied the messages were considerable in volume spanning over 200 pages in evidence, sent at night and on weekends, unrelated to school, and over familiar in nature.

Dr Alsop stated in oral evidence that he was having “cheerful” and “over friendly” conversations with the pupils at TGGs which was part of his pastoral care, and part of being able to understand pupils a lot better. Where issues arose, Dr Alsop logged concerns on CPOMS. The panel considered CPOMS entries provided as an exhibit to Person D’s written statement which demonstrated multiple entries made by Dr Alsop in respect of the same pupils with whom he communicated often via Microsoft Teams. To that end, the panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop was diligent in respect of his safeguarding duties towards his pupils, including entries and following up on matters he deemed necessary.

Dr Alsop stated in his oral evidence that he did not believe it was “wrong of him” to have interacted in this way, particularly as Microsoft Teams was used more frequently in the context of home working during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Dr Alsop agreed it sent “mixed messages” and “diminishes his authority”.

The panel considered TGGs’s staff code of conduct which was exhibited to Person D’s witness statement. In particular, the panel had regard to section 5, section 7, section 11 and section 13 of that code of conduct which stated, among other things, that “all staff should avoid any conduct which would lead any responsible person to question their motivation and intentions, taking responsibility for their own actions and behaviour”. The panel noted from Person D’s written evidence that TGGs was concerned that Dr Alsop had not complied with these sections of the staff code of conduct following an audit of Dr Alsop’s Microsoft Teams messages with pupils.

Person D stated in her oral evidence that she would expect messages between a teacher and a pupil to be only in relation to academic work and other conversations should have been “shut down”.

The panel considered a document entitled ‘safeguarding reminders when using technology’ which outlined to teachers that messages between teachers and pupils should be kept “professional”. Person D noted in her written statement that this document was shared with staff on 23 March 2020, which was prior to Dr Alsop commencing his work at TGGS albeit his email was activated at this time and he should have received this in any case. Person D could not be certain whether Dr Alsop received this document, however she noted that this was a reminder and Dr Alsop should have been aware of this position in any case. This was also the case as Dr Alsop had attended Keeping Children Safe in Education training meaning he should understand his role as a teacher in safeguarding and maintaining student boundaries. This would include understanding that boundaries which apply in the classroom also apply to messaging via Microsoft Teams.

The panel noted that each of the messages sent by Dr Alsop to the pupils at TGGS, taken individually, were not inappropriate. However, the panel considered the extent of messages unrelated to education, without much of an attempt to get back on track to academic matters, was not the type of conduct expected of a teacher even though they were sent on an educational platform. The panel clarified that it was entirely appropriate for a teacher to engage in jovial or more casual conversations from time to time, but that this was secondary to the teacher’s primary purpose of educating. In summary, the panel determined the informal nature of the message exchanges to be more what you would expect to see on social media rather than on an educational platform.

As such, the panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop breached the professional boundary expected of a teacher when communicating with his pupils.

The panel therefore found allegation 2(a), 2(b), 2(c) and 2(d) proved.

3. Your conduct at paragraph 1 amounted to harassment and/or grooming.

Dr Alsop denied the allegation, save for his last two interactions with Person A which he admitted amounted to harassment.

In respect of harassment, the panel was mindful of the guidance from the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, and the cases of *Bruce Dowson and others v the Chief Constable of Northumbria* [2010], *Jones v DPP* [2010], *Iqbal v Dean Manson Solicitors* [2011] and *Hayden v Dickenson* [2020].

In particular, the panel noted guidance from *Bruce Dowson and others v the Chief Constable of Northumbria* [2010] which stated that harassment is conduct which has occurred at least twice, is calculated in an objective sense to cause alarm and distress and is objectively judged to be oppressive and unreasonable which will depend on the

context of the conduct. Additionally, the panel noted from the case of *Hayden v Dickenson* [2020] that a course of conduct which causes alarm or distress does not automatically amount to harassment as the behaviour must reach a level of seriousness beyond upset that might arise occasionally in everybody's day-to-day dealings with other people.

The panel considered Dr Alsop's conduct in relation to Person B and Person C, as found proven at allegation 1(b)(i), 1(b)(ii) and 1(c)(ii). Both Person B and Person C confirmed in their oral evidence that they initiated contact with Dr Alsop after leaving CCHS. The panel also saw messages in evidence which showed many of the conversations between Dr Alsop and Person B and Person C were reciprocated. Whilst the panel noted examples of messages sent by Dr Alsop which crossed the boundary of appropriateness and professionalism between a teacher and a former pupil, the panel was not satisfied that these interactions reached a level of seriousness which could be characterised as calculated or oppressive, notwithstanding that Person B stated they felt "uncomfortable" and Person C stated they were "alarmed" in oral evidence in respect of Dr Alsop's messages. For these reasons, the panel was not satisfied on the evidence that Dr Alsop's conduct towards Person B or Person C as found proven amounted to harassment.

The panel considered Dr Alsop's conduct in relation to Person A, as found proven at allegations 1(a)(ii), 1(a)(iii), 1a(v) and 1a(vii). The panel noted their findings related only to the period within which the relationship between Dr Alsop and Person A broke down in early 2019, as prior to this time their interactions were reciprocal and their relationship was described by Person A in oral evidence as "platonic" and that they were "friends".

Person A stated in her oral evidence that she "tried to distance" herself from Dr Alsop and "decrease the intensity" of their friendship from September 2018 and so the frequency of their interactions reduced. The panel noted the following as an overview of the interactions between Person A and Dr Alsop from early 2019:

- Person A stated in her oral evidence that she wrote Dr Alsop a "lengthy message, essentially telling [Dr Alsop] [she] wanted no further contact with him on any platform" on 30 March 2019. The panel considered the message which was provided in evidence which stated, amongst other things, that she "can't have a relationship with someone where 'need' is such a significant component". Person A accepted in her oral evidence that she did not explicitly ask Dr Alsop to not contact her although the message had a "finality" to it and she expected to be left alone following this.
- Dr Alsop continued to message Person A without a response. For example, on 14 April 2019, Dr Alsop sent Person A thirteen messages in a row. Dr Alsop accepted that his messages were "unsolicited".

- Person A responded to Dr Alsop on Twitter on 15 April 2019 at 21:42 and stated that she “appreciated [his] apologies” but asked for Dr Alsop to “please respect [her] boundaries”.
- In May 2019, Dr Alsop sent a five page handwritten letter to Person A [REDACTED] which stated, amongst other things, “I hope that you can let me back into your life”. Person A stated in her oral evidence that she was “scared and upset” when she received this letter and this made her feel harassed “more than anything else”. Person A knew that Dr Alsop would “keep popping up in digital realms” to remind her that he was still there, but the letter made her “feel harassed and suffocated”. Dr Alsop stated in his oral evidence that the “logic” of providing this letter was because he had recently moved to the same area as Person A and he was “terrified” of bumping into her given the way their relationship had ended and he did not want to cause her “alarm”.
- Following receipt of the letter, messages provided as evidence to the panel showed that Person A’s mother messaged Dr Alsop to “intervene” on 29 May 2019 and requested that Dr Alsop stopped contacting Person A. Dr Alsop stated that he would “not contact” Person A again in response.
- Throughout the summer of 2019, Dr Alsop and Person A’s mother stayed in contact and regularly messaged each other. Dr Alsop stated in his oral evidence that this was “friendly” and “open”.
- In November 2019, Dr Alsop emailed Person A requesting to “meet for coffee” and noted it had been five months since he last contacted her.
- Dr Alsop and Person A subsequently met up in person in November 2019 as stated by each of them in their oral evidence. Person A could not recall in oral evidence her exact words but she noted she would have said something to the effect of “I would appreciate if you did not contact me” and Dr Alsop was accepting of that. Dr Alsop recalls in his oral evidence that Person A called him a “good egg” at this meeting in a jovial way and the conversation did not feel like closure.
- In December 2019, Dr Alsop’s stated in oral evidence his penultimate message to Person A was by replying to a tweet on Twitter account to correct a grammatical error. Person A stated in her oral evidence that she felt this indirect contact was to “intimidate her” and he must have “searched for hours” to find this tweet as this was from May earlier that year; to show the lengths he would go to invade her privacy. Dr Alsop recognised in his oral evidence that it was “spiteful” to do this.
- The panel noted from the oral evidence of each of Person A, Person C and Dr Alsop that Dr Alsop’s final interaction was in July 2021 by leaving a comment on a collaborative Google document. The panel noted this message was two years after the previous interaction and not within the scope of the allegation’s timeframe.

The panel considered that it was reasonable for Dr Alsop to engage in correspondence during the breakdown of his relationship with Person A to a certain extent with the intention of apologising. However, Dr Alsop's course of conduct throughout March to December 2019 was beyond the extent which was reasonable. The panel determined Dr Alsop's conduct was objectively oppressive given the persistent nature of his communications despite Person A and her mother's requests for him to cease contact with her.

The panel acknowledged that Person A did not explicitly request him to cease communication on every occasion, however the panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop ought to have known his continued interactions with Person A would cause her distress as she had expressed her concerns regarding their relationship. Dr Alsop also acknowledged in his oral evidence that his conduct "very negatively affected" Person A, as he was informed this by Person A's mother and by Person A directly around March 2019 but he was so wrapped up in his "own feelings" to consider this.

For the above reasons, the panel found that Dr Alsop's conduct at allegations 1(a)(ii), 1(a)(iii), 1a(v) and 1a(vii) amounted to harassment.

In respect of grooming, the panel was mindful of the definition of grooming outlined by the Metropolitan Police, which was referred to them by the presenting officer.

The panel also considered section 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the cases of R v H (2014) and R v Porter (Reece) (2017) on which it received legal advice.

In particular, the panel noted from the case of R v H (2014) the "essence" of grooming behaviour is described as conduct which "involves, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the facts, elements of manipulation and control, the offender treating the victim as an object for his own self-gratification".

The panel considered Dr Alsop's conduct as found proven at allegations 1(a)(ii), 1(a)(iii), 1a(v), 1a(vii), 1b(i), 1b(ii) and 1(c)(ii).

Person A stated in her oral and written evidence that she saw her relationship with Dr Alsop as a "platonic one" [REDACTED]. However, Person A elaborated further in her oral evidence that their relationship became "emotionally intense" and "felt romantic in nature" with how they interacted sometimes, for example Dr Alsop would remind Person A how much he loved her and how much she meant to him. Person A stated in her written statement that she believed her "special friendship" with Dr Alsop which developed from school was in fact grooming and Dr Alsop's behaviour was "predatory" given the power dynamic between them.

Dr Alsop stated in his written statement that there was "no planning" in respect of his relationships with former pupils and he "made no threats and no person was pressured or

led into doing anything that they did not want to do". Additionally, Dr Alsop stated there were no examples in evidence of sexting, of lewd photos, or invitations to meet privately.

Dr Alsop stated in his written statement that he recognised that examples of grooming "might be seen to resemble" his "intense and overfriendly, albeit platonic, communications". This was especially the case as Dr Alsop acknowledged in his written statement that there were "three imbalances of power: [he] was older, [he] was a man, and [he] was their former teacher".

Whilst the panel acknowledged that Dr Alsop sought an emotional connection with Person A, Person B and Person C by discussing personal matters, the panel noted that this could be reasonably explained by his inability to cope [REDACTED] rather than for any other reason.

The panel also noted that Dr Alsop built a connection with Person A starting from when they were both at CCHS based on their shared love of literature which then developed into a reciprocal and platonic friendship in the years following this. As outlined in Dr Alsop's written statement, he saw himself as a "mentor" and Person A as a "Shakespearean academic protégé, never as the object of sexual or romantic affection".

The panel was not satisfied that the inappropriateness of the messages sent by Dr Alsop displayed sexual purpose or that he was obtaining any other form of self-gratification, this was especially the case as there was a more innocent explanation for his conduct which related to his love of literature [REDACTED].

The panel therefore found allegation 3, in respect of harassment, proved. However, the panel found allegation 3 in respect of grooming not proved.

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you not proved, for these reasons:

1. Whilst working as a Teacher at Chelmsford County High School for Girls and after:

a) Between around February 2016 and December 2019, you engaged in an inappropriate relationship and/or failed to maintain professional boundaries with Person A, in that you:

i) Met socially with Person A between classes and/or outside of school;

Dr Alsop denied the allegation.

In her written statement, Person A stated that Dr Alsop taught her at least two English lessons a week at CCHS [REDACTED]. Person A further noted that she would "regularly linger behind after class to chat with him, which he appeared to enjoy and encourage, and appropriately once a fortnight [they] would meet up between classes". Person A explained that these meetings were either at lunch or after school in an unused

classroom and always had an “academic agenda” but would “veer into friendly and familiar” as Dr Alsop would share his “work stress” [REDACTED]. One specific example provided by Person A was Dr Alsop’s discussion regarding his rejection from Cambridge University when he applied.

Dr Alsop stated in his written statement that he did not meet socially with Person A between classes or outside of school during the timeframe within which he taught Person A [REDACTED]. He stated his “interactions with [Person A] then were in [his] capacity as [Person A’s] English teacher” and that it was “a common part of school life that teachers would meet students between lessons in open places to discuss pastoral/academic matters”. Dr Alsop accepted that he would meet with Person A “in a classroom with the door wide open” and did this with many students, particularly those requiring extra support. Dr Alsop clarified in his oral evidence that the topics of their conversations would be of only academic or pastoral matters relating to Person A’s welfare, but not in relation to his own personal matters. In respect of his Cambridge rejection, he noted that he openly spoke about this to all pupils, including in an assembly on the topic of resilience.

Person A stated in her written statement that nothing “physically inappropriate” ever happened whilst she and Dr Alsop were both at CCHS.

The panel saw evidence that Person A and Dr Alsop had a closer teacher and pupil relationship in light of their shared love of the English subject and their ability to discuss some sensitive personal matters, the panel determined that Dr Alsop’s meetings with Person A whilst he was a teacher, and whilst she was a pupil at CCHS, were appropriate and professional. The panel noted it is common for a teacher to have one on one meetings with a pupil on the school premises to discuss matters relevant to their studies and/or pastoral care if required, in light of a teacher’s safeguarding duties.

Person A outlined in her written statement that she and Dr Alsop became “even better friends” after she left CCHS [REDACTED] and they met up during term breaks when Person A was home from university for a coffee or at a bar for a drink.

Person A’s position was corroborated by Dr Alsop’s written statement as he stated that he met Person A on “several occasions to catch up” when he worked at School A and Person A was at university, but “made sure that [their] meetings took place in public locations and with the full knowledge of her mother”. Dr Alsop noted that the meetings were “always reciprocal and friendly, and were often requested by Person A”.

The panel noted that Person A, Dr Alsop and Person E each corroborated the position that Person A and Dr Alsop met up in 2018 to watch a play at the Globe Theatre in London in their oral evidence. Person E noted in her oral evidence that it was the intention for the three of them to attend the play together, however she was unwell on the day and therefore the two of them met up without her.

The panel acknowledged that the meetings between Dr Alsop and Person A evolved in nature once both of them left CCHS. The panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop and Person A met socially during 2018 and 2019, as they met for coffees and attended the theatre as “friends”, as Person A describes in her oral evidence. The panel did not consider that it was inappropriate or unprofessional for Dr Alsop to meet up socially with Person A at this time as she was an adult, albeit his former pupil. The panel placed weight in particular on the lack of any evidence of guidance generally, or specifically provided from CCHS to Dr Alsop, about when it was appropriate to meet up with former pupils. The panel noted that it is within an adult’s prerogative to strike up a friendship with whomever they wished and meet up socially.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(a)(i) not proved.

iv) Engaged in telephone calls which were in excessive in frequency and/or length;

Dr Alsop admitted the allegation, insofar as it related to the timeframe after Person A left CCHS. Dr Alsop denied the allegation insofar as it related to the timeframe within which he taught Person A at CCHS.

The panel saw no evidence that Dr Alsop and Person A engaged in any phone calls prior to 2018, which was supported by Person A’s assertion in her oral evidence that they did not exchange mobile phone numbers until after they left CCHS.

Person A stated in her written statement that she and Dr Alsop were on the phone for hours at a time by January 2018 and they would say that they “loved and treasured each other”. However, Person A clarified that she saw their relationship as a “platonic one” [REDACTED].

Person A outlined in her oral evidence that she would speak with Dr Alsop on the phone at least “once a week” in her second year of university, which was from September 2018 to 2019. Person A elaborated that these phone calls would “often be quite late” at night and would last a minimum of one hour but did on an occasion last four hours.

Dr Alsop stated in his written statement that he had nine or ten phone calls with Person A between January 2018 and March 2019, and “several of these were at her behest”, including one on 8 November 2018 during which Person A claimed to be alone, upset, and in desperate need of support. Dr Alsop recalled this phone call to be the only one to have lasted anywhere approaching the “4 hours” that Person A claims, and its length was largely due to the fact that she was upset, alone, sounded as though she had been drinking and Dr Alsop wanted to ensure she arrived home safely.

The panel determined the exchange of phone calls between Person A and Dr Alsop were personal in nature and often lengthy, however these calls were made in the context of their relationship as friends and adults, not whilst Person A was a pupil. As such, the

panel did not consider the length or frequency of calls to be excessive in the context of a reciprocal friendship. The panel saw no evidence that stated any of Dr Alsop's calls to Person A were unsolicited or received following the breakdown of their relationship.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(a)(iv) not proved.

vi) Sent cards and gifts;

Dr Alsop admitted the allegation, insofar as it related to the timeframe after Person A left CCHS. Dr Alsop denied the allegation insofar as it related to the timeframe within which he taught Person A at CCHS.

Person A stated in her oral evidence that Dr Alsop would gift her with chocolates whilst at CCHS, albeit it was not uncommon for him to share chocolates with other pupils as well as he brought them to class. Person A also explained in oral evidence that Dr Alsop gifted her a book of plays that he had used whilst he was at University. Dr Alsop originally allowed Person A to borrow the book for the purpose of her studies, but at the end of her time at CCHS he stated that she could keep it. Person A clarified in her oral evidence that everyone in Dr Alsop's class received a card from him, but it was only her that was provided a gift such as the book of plays.

Dr Alsop accepted in oral evidence that he would provide his pupils with sweets or chocolates whilst he taught at CCHS and recalled allowing Person A to keep a book of plays which she originally borrowed for the purpose of her coursework. Dr Alsop considered this to be within his professional boundaries. The panel agreed with Dr Alsop's position and did not consider that his gifts of chocolates or books, which were provided in the context of a teacher and pupil relationship, were inappropriate.

Person C stated in their oral evidence that Person A received flowers from Dr Alsop whilst they were both at CCHS. The teacher's representative queried why this information was not set out in Person C's written statement and suggested that Person C's recollection was incorrect and they confused the gift of flowers, with a gift that was provided by Dr Alsop to Person A whilst she was at university, not when she was at school at CCHS. However, Person C stated in response that they remembered "very clearly" their reaction to Person A informing her that she had received flowers during sixth form, albeit she could not recall the exact timeframe but this was a "distinct part" of their memory. Person A did not inform the panel that she received a gift of flowers from Dr Alsop during her time at CCHS in her oral evidence or her written statement. When questioned by the panel, Dr Alsop also asserted that he "100%" did not provide Person A with a gift of flowers whilst at CCHS and that Person C was "mistaken". In the circumstances, the panel took the view to place weight on Person A and Dr Alsop's corroborating evidence, that the gift of flowers was received whilst Person A was at university rather than at CCHS. Whilst the panel noted Person C asserted they were certain of the circumstances, the panel saw no other supporting evidence to support this position.

Person A stated in her written statement that Dr Alsop provided her with gifts throughout her time at university, for example he sent her a pizza towards the end of 2017, he sent her some flowers in May 2018, and sent her a “care package” in November 2018 containing books and chocolates. The panel also considered photographs of the gifts Person A had received from Dr Alsop which were exhibited to Person A’s written statement which included flowers, a book, and a handwritten note signed from Dr Alsop to Person A stating that “there should always be time to read for pleasure”.

The panel noted that Person A’s position was generally corroborated by Dr Alsop’s position. Dr Alsop stated in his written statement that he sent Person A three gifts whilst she studied at university, and whilst he was a teacher at School A. Dr Alsop further explained in his written statement that the gifts included flowers to congratulate Person A for directing her first play as part of the Shakespeare Society, a Domino’s pizza after Person A had “complained on Twitter about not being able to afford food”, and a wellbeing package which included a book and a sachet of hot chocolate powder as he thought it “might offer some harmless escapism and remind her why she enjoyed her subject”.

Dr Alsop also stated in his written statement that he believed the gifts to be “appropriate” to their “platonic relationship” at the time. Dr Alsop further stated that Person A “eagerly accepted” the pizza and messaged him the following morning to say thank you. Person A explained in her oral evidence that she “had never requested” the gifts she received during her time at university and she “always felt slightly uncomfortable by it”.

The panel was satisfied that the gifts provided by Dr Alsop to Person A whilst she was at university were appropriate in the context of their ongoing reciprocated friendship. Additionally, the gifts Person A received from Dr Alsop whilst at CCHS were of the type typically exchanged within a school context and within a teacher’s professional boundaries.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(a)(vi) not proved.

c) Between around January 2017 and June 2019, you engaged in an inappropriate relationship and/or failed to maintain professional boundaries with Person C, in that you:

i) Developed a ‘friendship’ which went beyond an acceptable student/teacher relationship;

Dr Alsop admitted the allegation.

The panel heard from Person C and Dr Alsop in oral evidence that they did not interact significantly whilst they were both at CCHS and Person C stated they did not have “much of a relationship” in their written statement. However, once Person C left CCHS they exchanged messages with Dr Alsop over Twitter.

Person C stated in their oral evidence that they would not describe their relationship with Dr Alsop as “terribly close”.

The panel noted the messages provided as evidence exhibited to Person C’s written statement which spanned across approximately 20 pages in evidence and covered exchanges from September 2017 to April 2019. The panel noted the following messages in particular:

- On 24 September 2017, Dr Alsop stated “a gap year seems very much needed! What will you do?”; and
- On 8 January 2018, Dr Alsop stated “yes, will happily be your referee” in response to Person C’s request for assistance with their university application.

The panel noted the conversations between Dr Alsop and Person C were often regarding school or academic work. The panel also noted that Dr Alsop and Person C did not ever meet up socially.

In light of the above, the panel determined that Dr Alsop and Person C did not develop a ‘friendship’, given the purpose of their messages were mostly within the context of a pupil and teacher relationship and at no point did they socialise.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(b)(i) not proved.

4. Your conduct at paragraph 1 was sexually motivated.

Dr Alsop denied the allegation.

The panel was mindful of section 78 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the cases of *Sait v The General Medical Council* [2018], *Basson v General Medical Council* [2018] and *The General Medical Council v Haris* [2020].

In particular, the panel noted guidance from *Basson v General Medical Council* [2018] 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 also considered the case of *The General Medical Council v Haris* [2020], in which it was held that, “in the absence of a plausible innocent explanation for what he did, the facts spoke for themselves”.

The panel considered whether the conduct found proven at allegation 1 was sexually motivated and in doing so, referred to the same evidence as considered in respect of grooming.

Person A stated in her oral and written evidence that she saw her relationship with Dr Alsop as a “platonic one” [REDACTED]. However, Person A elaborated further in her oral evidence that their relationship became “emotionally intense” and “felt romantic in nature”

with how they interacted; sometimes, for example, they would hold hands in the bar and Dr Alsop would remind Person A how much he loved her and how much she meant to him. Person A gave Dr Alsop “the benefit of the doubt” that it was not sexual to him but she “worried” about how their relationship “might have turned out” [REDACTED].

The panel heard from Dr Alsop that his messages were not sent to Person A, Person B or Person C with an intention to develop a sexual relationship, but were intended to develop a friendship.

[REDACTED]. As such, Dr Alsop stated that he relied on the validation he received from his former pupils. He believed that his friendships with them would somehow “rescue [him] from the pit in which [he] found [himself]”. Dr Alsop found the “validation” from students was the “only alleviating factor” he had found [REDACTED].

The panel heard from Person E in oral evidence that she was aware that Dr Alsop told Person A that he loved her as Dr Alsop “openly said that” to her. Person E further noted that she “never saw anything romantic in his love for her” as Dr Alsop said “she is the kind of person” he would like his daughter to be. Person E clarified further in oral evidence that Dr Alsop often told friends that he loves them and this was not out of the ordinary.

The panel noted that it saw no evidence of any messages from Dr Alsop to Person A, Person B or Person C which were of a sexual nature. The panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop’s interactions with his former pupils were based on his wish for friendship and validation rather than any form of sexual relationship or sexual gratification. Whilst the panel saw some evidence to suggest Dr Alsop had a desire to cross a physical boundary, by holding hands and hugging, the panel considered this could reasonably form part of a non-sexual friendship and the panel did not see any evidence to justify that Dr Alsop intended to pursue a sexual relationship with any of Person A, Person B or Person C.

For the above reasons, the panel did not consider that it had been proven, on the balance of probabilities, that Dr Alsop had been sexually motivated in his conduct as found proven at allegation 1.

The panel therefore found allegation 4 not proved.

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 first considered whether the conduct of Dr Alsop, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Dr Alsop was in breach of the following standards in respect of allegation 1(a)(ii), 1(a)(iii), 1(a)(v), 1(a)(vii), 1(b), 1(c)(ii) and 3 to the extent proven:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position; and
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Dr Alsop was in breach of the following standards in respect of allegation 2:

- 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.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Dr Alsop in relation to the facts found proved at allegation 1(b), involved breaches of Keeping Children Safe In Education ("KCSIE"). The panel considered that Dr Alsop was in breach of the following provisions:

- Preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The panel also considered whether Dr Alsop's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice. 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 found that harassment was relevant to allegation 3.

The panel noted that allegations 1(a)(ii), 1(a)(iii), 1(a)(v), 1(a)(vii), 1(b), 1(c)(ii) and 3 took place outside the education setting. The panel determined that Dr Alsop's conduct led to pupils being exposed to his behaviour in a harmful way, as Person A, Person B and Person C stated in their oral evidence that they experienced distress as a result of Dr Alsop's conduct as he placed responsibility on them [REDACTED]. In particular in

respect of allegation 3, Dr Alsop harassed Person A because she no longer wanted a relationship with him.

Whilst Dr Alsop's conduct at allegation 2 fell short of the standards expected of a teacher, the panel determined this was not to a significant extent and was not of a serious nature. Dr Alsop's conduct at allegation 2 was a lapse of judgement as to how often he should engage in informal conversations with pupils via an education platform but was not likely to have exposed anyone to harm.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Dr Alsop in allegations 1(a)(ii), 1(a)(iii), 1(a)(v), 1(a)(vii), 1(b), 1(c)(ii) and 3 amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Dr Alsop's actions amounted to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, the panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. It considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils' lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave.

In considering the issue of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Dr Alsop's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice. As set out above in the panel's findings as to whether Dr Alsop was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found the offence of harassment was relevant.

As above, the panel did not determine that the conduct at allegation 2 was serious, or that it would have a negative impact on a teacher's status. The panel noted that members of the public would appreciate that the content of Dr Alsop's messages to pupils at TGGS were well intended albeit they became frequent and over familiar.

The panel determined the findings of misconduct in relation to allegations 1(a)(ii), 1(a)(iii), 1(a)(v), 1(a)(vii), 1(b), 1(c)(ii) and 3 are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher. The public would view the volume and content of messages to former pupils to be inappropriate. In particular, the public would likely find Dr Alsop's harassment of Person A to be concerning. As such, the panel considered that Dr Alsop's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

For these reasons, the panel found that Dr Alsop's actions constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

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

In considering whether to recommend to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be made, the panel had to consider whether it would be an appropriate and proportionate measure, and whether it would be in the public interest to do so. Prohibition orders should not be given in order to be punitive, or to show that blame has been apportioned, although they are likely to have punitive effect.

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

- the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils;
- the protection of other members of the public;
- the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; and
- declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In light of the panel's findings against Dr Alsop, which involved failing to maintain appropriate boundaries and the harassment of a former pupil, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Dr Alsop 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 Dr Alsop 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 Dr Alsop in the profession. The panel decided that there was a public interest consideration in retaining the teacher in the profession, since no doubt had been cast upon his abilities as an educator and he would be able to make a valuable contribution to the profession.

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.

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 Dr Alsop.

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 safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk; and
- 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.

Based on the evidence available, the panel found that Dr Alsop's actions were deliberate and there was no evidence to suggest that Dr Alsop was acting under extreme duress or significant intimidation.

[REDACTED]

Whilst Dr Alsop's conduct was serious, the panel was satisfied that Dr Alsop's [REDACTED] was a factor to be taken into consideration as mitigation in his continued correspondence with former pupils in the manner found proven and in respect of Person A when the relationship was no longer reciprocated.

[REDACTED]

The panel noted that Dr Alsop demonstrated a very high degree of insight into the wrongfulness of his actions as he admitted a number of the allegations in full or in part. Additionally, Dr Alsop did not seek to rely on [REDACTED] as a defence to his culpability which was indicative of the insight he showed into his conduct. The panel considered Dr Alsop's written statement which was intended to provide a "sincere apology" for his conduct. The panel noted this statement had been produced by Dr Alsop without legal assistance over many months and was a comprehensive reflection upon his conduct and the impact of it.

Dr Alsop regretted his actions as he stated in his written statement that he was “ashamed” of who he became, and stated he would have listened to Person A, Person B and Person C’s concerns and learned from them if “given [his] time again” and “would do anything to make amends for the upset” he caused.

Dr Alsop further stated he had “absolutely no right to the friendship of former students”. Insight and remorse was also shown by Dr Alsop in respect of the impact of his conduct on others as he stated in his written statement it was “obvious to [him] how [he] failed in [his] responsibilities as a teacher, and how [he] failed the individuals who have made these allegations against [him]”. Additionally, Dr Alsop stated he was “deeply sorry to everyone [he] hurt”. The panel noted this position was evident throughout the proceedings as it was clear in Dr Alsop’s oral evidence that he empathised with the individuals whom he caused to be upset and distressed.

In light of the significant insight and remorse shown for his actions and the impact on the individuals named in the allegations, [REDACTED] the panel determined that the risk of Dr Alsop repeating his conduct was low.

Dr Alsop did have a previously good history, having demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct and having contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel relied on the following evidence in this regard:

- Dr Alsop stated in his written statement that “many of [his] students have applied successfully to Oxbridge or Russell Group universities, and [he] feel[s] very privileged to have been able to support their applications as effectively as possible”;
- Dr Alsop stated in his written statement that he “challenged [himself] to experiment and observe colleagues in order to grow as an educator, and [he] ultimately developed an extensive toolkit of Assessment for Learning (AFL) and differentiation strategies”; and
- A document relating to Dr Alsop’s performance management at CCHS noted that Dr Alsop undertook many activities in support of pupils, for example he “assisted year 11 students with the leadership conference”. The document also highlighted Dr Alsop’s achievements as he achieved “0.84 value added for KS4” and overall he achieved the highest number of A* grades for English language within the department.

The panel had regard to the ten witness statements provided regarding Dr Alsop’s character; four from individuals with a personal relationship with Dr Alsop, three from ex-colleagues, two from parents of Dr Alsop’s ex-pupils and one from an individual in their professional capacity. The panel acknowledged that all ten of the character references clarified that they were prepared in the knowledge of the allegations against Dr Alsop.

The panel noted the following comments in particular from the ten witness statements:

- Person E [REDACTED] an individual with a personal relationship with Dr Alsop who accompanied him throughout the hearing as his companion, stated he “is a man of great integrity, with a real desire to encourage a love of literature in young people that stays with them into their adult life”;
- Person F [REDACTED], an individual with a personal relationship with Dr Alsop, stated “knowing [Dr Alsop] for as long as I have, I have seen the personality and aptitude that he has put into his education and career. [Dr Alsop] has revelled in the challenge of teaching classes and further education. [Dr Alsop] was always focussed on wanting to teach and making teaching fun, accessible and engaging, especially for his favoured subject of English literature”;
- Person G [REDACTED] an individual with a personal relationship with Dr Alsop, stated he “has always been a kind, caring, and decent man. He is friendly, personable, and has a good sense of humour”;
- Person H [REDACTED] an individual in their professional capacity, stated she was “convinced of his honesty and his integrity, and that his genuine care and compassion for his students make him an excellent teacher”;
- Person I [REDACTED] an ex-colleague of Dr Alsop stated “pupils, particularly in the sixth form, were keen to capitalise on his passion and knowledge, and would seek additional guidance on their work, as well as on their endeavours beyond the curriculum, such as poems or pieces of prose they had written”;
- Person J [REDACTED] an ex-colleague of Dr Alsop stated “the students he interacted with enjoyed his friendly, approachable demeanour, increasing their likelihood to ask questions and learn about higher education at Exeter which was the purpose of his role. His priority was always the students’ welfare”;
- Person K [REDACTED] an ex-colleague of Dr Alsop stated Dr Alsop was “very well liked by many students for his fun and engaging lessons. Staff also considered his teaching practices of a quality high enough to share with the whole faculty as an example of best practice. Several staff, including myself, found [Dr Alsop] to be a friendly and reliable colleague who was lovely to work with”;
- Person L [REDACTED] an individual with a personal relationship with Dr Alsop, stated Dr Alsop was a “kind, considerate and gentle person”;
- Person M [REDACTED] a parent of Dr Alsop’s former pupil, stated “Dr Alsop was a fantastic teacher and tutor to my daughter and I have no reason to suspect there was anything other than professional conduct between him and my daughter. He was a truly amazing teacher and instilled a love of learning into his students. His English teaching certainly made a big impact on [my daughter]”; and

- Person N [REDACTED] a parent of Dr Alsop's former pupil, stated she "got the impression of how dedicated he was to the wellbeing of [my daughter] as I, as well as all the other parents, received an individual email from him introducing himself, letting me know how [my daughter] had settled in, and assuring me that I could contact him if the need arose".

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. Having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel determined the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. Whilst the ordinary intelligent citizen might expect someone found guilty of harassing a former pupil to be prohibited, the panel was satisfied that the context of Dr Alsop's medical background, his previous good character, high level of insight and remorse, and lack of intention to cause the former pupil harm or distress was a significant factor in reducing the seriousness of Dr Alsop's conduct found proven.

As such, 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 also found some of the allegations not proven, and/or found that some allegations do not amount to unacceptable professional conduct or conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute. 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 Dr Alsop 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
 - building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position; and
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.

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

The panel finds that the conduct of Dr Alsop fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a teacher failing to maintain appropriate boundaries with a former pupil and engaging in behaviour which constituted harassment.

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 assessed 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 Dr Alsop, 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 records the following:

“In light of the panel's findings against Dr Alsop, which involved failing to maintain appropriate boundaries and the harassment of a former pupil, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.”

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:

"The panel noted that Dr Alsop demonstrated a very high degree of insight into the wrongfulness of his actions as he admitted a number of the allegations in full or in part. Additionally, Dr Alsop did not seek to rely on [REDACTED] as a defence to his culpability which was indicative of the insight he showed into his conduct. The panel considered Dr Alsop's written statement which was intended to provide a "sincere apology" for his conduct. The panel noted this statement had been produced by Dr Alsop without legal assistance over many months and was a comprehensive reflection upon his conduct and the impact of it.

Dr Alsop regretted his actions as he stated in his written statement that he was "ashamed" of who he became, and stated he would have listened to Person A, Person B and Person C's concerns and learned from them if "given [his] time again" and "would do anything to make amends for the upset" he caused.

Dr Alsop further stated he had "absolutely no right to the friendship of former students". Insight and remorse was also shown by Dr Alsop in respect of the impact of his conduct on others as he stated in his written statement it was "obvious to [him] how [he] failed in [his] responsibilities as a teacher, and how [he] failed the individuals who have made these allegations against [him]". Additionally, Dr Alsop stated he was "deeply sorry to everyone [he] hurt". The panel noted this position was evident throughout the proceedings as it was clear in Dr Alsop's oral evidence that he empathised with the individuals whom he caused to be upset and distressed.

In light of the significant insight and remorse shown for his actions and the impact on the individuals named in the allegations, [REDACTED] the panel determined that the risk of Dr Alsop repeating his conduct was low."

In my judgement, the evidence that Dr Alsop has developed a significant degree of both insight into remorse for his actions means that there is a limited risk of repetition. I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

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

"The panel determined the findings of misconduct in relation to allegations 1(a)(ii), 1(a)(iii), 1(a)(v), 1(a)(vii), 1(b), 1(c)(ii) and 3 are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher. The public would view the volume and content of messages to former pupils to be inappropriate. In particular, the public would likely find Dr Alsop's harassment of Person A to be concerning. As such, the panel considered that Dr Alsop's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher."

I agree with the panel's assessment and therefore consider that his behaviour is likely to have a negative impact on the reputation of the profession.

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

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

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Dr Alsop himself. The panel provides this assessment:

"Dr Alsop did have a previously good history, having demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct and having contributed significantly to the education sector."

The panel also cites a number of pieces of character evidence attesting to Dr Alsop's abilities as a teacher and commitment to his work as an educator.

A prohibition order would prevent Dr Alsop 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 concluding comments, as set out below:

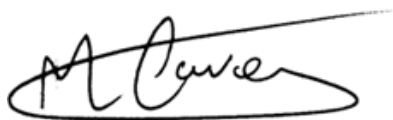
"The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, the recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an appropriate response. Having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel determined the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. Whilst the ordinary intelligent citizen might expect someone found guilty of harassing a former pupil to be prohibited, the panel was satisfied that the context of Dr Alsop's medical background, his previous good character, high level of insight and remorse, and lack of intention to cause the former pupil harm or distress was a significant factor in reducing the seriousness of Dr Alsop's conduct found proven.

As such, 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 particular, I have given weight to the panel’s comments regarding the high level of insight and remorse demonstrated by Dr Alsop, as well as the contribution he has made and could make in the future to the profession. I have also noted the panel’s assessment that his behaviour was, while serious, “at the less serious end of the possible spectrum”.

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: 12 March 2025

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