



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Miss Helen Flinders: Professional conduct panel hearing outcome

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

April 2025

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

Teacher: Miss Helen Flinders

Teacher ref number: 9337953

Teacher date of birth: 27 May 1969

TRA reference: 21107

Date of determination: 25 April 2025

Former employer: St Joseph's School, Swindon

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ("the panel") of the Teaching Regulation Agency ("the TRA") convened on by way of a virtual hearing between 24 and 25 April 2025, to consider the case of Miss Helen Flinders ("Miss Flinders").

The panel members were Mr Duncan Tilley (lay panellist – in the chair), Mrs Victoria Jackson (teacher panellist) and Mr Terry Hyde (former teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Carly Hagedorn of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Tom Phillips of Counsel.

Miss Flinders was present and was represented by Ms Anna Chestnut of Counsel.

The hearing took place in public save that portions of the hearing were heard in private and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 20 January 2025.

It was alleged that Miss Flinders was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that, whilst working as a teacher at St Joseph's School:

1. Between around June 2000 and December 2000, she had a sexual relationship with Pupil A
2. Her conduct at paragraph 1 was sexually motivated and/or of a sexual nature.

Miss Flinders admitted that she had a sexual relationship with Pupil A but denied that the conduct commenced in June 2000. Miss Flinders' position was that the conduct commenced in July 2000. Miss Flinders admitted the facts of allegation 2.

Miss Flinders admitted that her conduct in allegation 1 and 2 amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

- Section 1: Chronology, list of key people and anonymised pupil list – pages 5 to 6
- Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 7 to 20
- Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements – pages 21 to 26
- Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 27 to 197

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- Section 5: Teacher documents:
 - Character Reference – Page 198
 - Bundle of 9 pages (consisting of the teacher's witness statement, mitigating factors statement and GP letter) – Pages 199 to 207.

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

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the document Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession 2020, (the “Procedures”).

Witnesses

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

Pupil A – [REDACTED]

Miss Flinders also gave oral evidence at the hearing.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Miss Flinders commenced employment as an art teacher at St Joseph’s School (“the School”) in September 1994.

Miss Flinders taught Pupil A [REDACTED].

In the summer of 2000, whilst Pupil A was in the School’s [REDACTED], Miss Flinders went for a drink with Pupil A after sports day. Later that day, Miss Flinders and Pupil A exchanged a first kiss at another teacher’s house.

Miss Flinders commenced a consensual sexual relationship with Pupil A during the school summer holiday period in 2000, where they had consensual sexual intercourse.

The sexual relationship was ended by Pupil A in around December 2000.

Miss Flinders ceased employment at the School in March 2002 and commenced employment at Churchfields school in September 2002.

In around January 2011, Pupil A started to date an individual (Person X) [REDACTED] who asked if there was any truth in the rumours that had previously been circulating at the School in around 2000, about whether Pupil A had been in a relationship with Miss Flinders. Pupil A disclosed to Person X that Pupil A and Miss Flinders were engaged in a sexual relationship.

At the time of this disclosure, a relative (‘Person Y’) of Person X was the [REDACTED]. Miss Flinders worked at Churchfields school as Head of Art at the time, so Person X disclosed the relationship between Pupil A and Miss Flinders to Person Y. Person Y

raised the matter with Churchfields school and a referral was made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (“LADO”) and the police began an investigation.

Miss Flinders was suspended in January 2011 pending the police investigation and resigned in March 2011.

A referral was later made to the TRA in March 2022.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

1. Between around June 2000 and December 2000, you had a sexual relationship with Pupil A

Miss Flinders admitted that she had a sexual relationship with Pupil A. Miss Flinders did not admit that the sexual relationship commenced in June 2000 and stated that it commenced in July 2000.

The panel noted that there were several facts in dispute, for example, the number of occasions that Miss Flinders and Pupil A had sexual intercourse and where it took place. The panel focused on the wording of the allegation.

The sexual relationship did not occur before Pupil A was in [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]

Miss Flinders stated in her witness statement dated 2 April 2025 that “During July 2000, I went for a drink with Pupil A after sports day. We then went to another teacher’s house. I asked Pupil A for a kiss goodbye. He kissed me and it was consensual.

A consensual sexual relationship began during the summer break of 2000. I met up with Pupil A approximately three or four times during the summer break of 2000 at his parents’ house...

My sexual relationship with Pupil A lasted around 5 and a half months from July - December 2000.”

Miss Flinders accepted in oral evidence that she had a sexual relationship with Pupil A during the summer of 2000 and during the school term time until December 2000. The panel acknowledged that Miss Flinders had never denied that she had a sexual relationship with Pupil A and was consistent on this point throughout her written and oral evidence.

Pupil A stated in his witness statement that "...nearer to the end of the academic year in around June 2000, we exchanged our first kiss. [REDACTED]. We then popped to the pub for a drink at the end of the day before returning to [REDACTED]... for a drink.... I told Helen Flinders that my dad was going to pick me up soon and I had to leave. In response, she asked for a kiss goodbye. The kiss was on her lips. It was just me and Helen Flinders present when we kissed."

Pupil A stated that after this kiss, "Helen Flinders regularly came to my house over the Summer break [in] (July - August 2000). [REDACTED], and the relationship progressed to a point that we had sex in my house over the Summer. She would come and visit me at my house around once every couple of weeks.

Pupil A also stated that "the first time Helen Flinders and I had sex was in my parents' house. She came over, and had asked what I wanted to do, and whether I wanted to take our relationship to the next level. It therefore progressed into a consensual sexual relationship. During the Summer, my parents worked during the day and were out of the house, so they were not aware that our relationship had progressed to a sexual relationship."

The panel found Pupil A to be measured and consistent when providing evidence. When asked about how often he had sex with Miss Flinders, Pupil A said "you are going back 25 years. I would have thought it would have been once a week."

When considering all of the evidence, the panel found allegation 1 proved.

2. Your conduct at paragraph 1 was sexually motivated and/or of a sexual nature.

Miss Flinders admitted this allegation.

The panel noted that in the case of *Basson v GMC* (2018), it was observed that "the state of a person's mind is not something that can be proved by direct observation. It can only be proved by inference or deduction from the surrounding evidence".

It was also stated in this case that a sexual motive means the conduct was done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a future sexual relationship.

The panel considered that having sexual intercourse is, by its very nature, sexual. The panel noted that there was no other reason for Miss Flinders to have a sexual relationship with Pupil A other than if it were to be of a sexual nature. The panel was of the view a reasonable person would consider the conduct to be of a sexual nature.

Miss Flinders admitted to attending Pupil A's parents' house to have sex with Pupil A. The panel noted that the sexual encounters were planned, and the sexual relationship was sustained for approximately 6 months. The panel determined that Miss Flinders'

conduct was sexually motivated as she initiated the first kiss with Pupil A in the summer of 2000 when she asked him for a kiss after sports day and subsequently engaged in a sexual relationship with Pupil A.

The panel therefore found that Miss Flinders' conduct at allegation 1 was of a sexual nature and was sexually motivated. The panel found allegation 2 proved.

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

Having found all 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.

Miss Flinders' conduct took place prior to the date that the Teachers Standards came into force. Accordingly, the panel had regard to its knowledge and experience of teaching standards at the time of the conduct. Having done so, it considered that the teacher pupil boundary had been an important one then, and that Miss Flinders had breached this by her serious misconduct in having a sexual relationship with one of her pupils.

The panel noted that the offence Abuse of Position of Trust contrary to s3(1) of the Sexual Offences Act (Amendment) 2000 was not enacted until 8 January 2001 and the sexual relationship only ceased a matter of weeks before in December 2000. For that reason, no further action was taken by the police. The panel considered that this was a significant factor when considering the seriousness of Miss Flinders' conduct.

The panel noted that teachers were still expected to uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour within and outside of school in 2000. The panel noted that legislation was clearly due to come into force around the time of Miss Flinders' conduct, which made it an offence for any person over the age of 18 to have sexual intercourse with a person under that age if the person is in a position of trust in relation to the child. The panel noted that Miss Flinders was in a clear position of trust in relation to Pupil A, as his teacher.

The panel noted that whilst the term "safeguarding" was not widely used back in 2000, there was still a clear expectation for teachers to keep children safe and protect their well-being.

The panel considered that Miss Flinders' conduct fell significantly short of the standards of behaviour expected of the profession at the time, given the serious nature of her conduct which the panel considered to be a complete abuse of her position of trust to commence a sexual relationship with one of her pupils. The panel also noted that despite Pupil A and Miss Flinders stating that the sexual relationship was consensual, the panel considered the potential harmful impact that this relationship could have had on Pupil A's life.

The panel also considered whether Miss Flinders' 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 the offence of sexual activity was relevant.

The panel noted that Miss Flinders had admitted to attending Pupil A's parents' house to have sex with Pupil A. The sexual encounters were planned, and the sexual relationship was sustained for approximately 6 months. The panel considered that by the very nature of Miss Flinders' conduct, she breached the teacher pupil boundary, abused her position of trust and failed to protect the safety and well-being of Pupil A.

For these reasons, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Miss Flinders amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession at the time of her conduct.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Miss Flinders was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Miss Flinders' 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 Miss Flinders' 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 Miss Flinders was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the panel found that the offence of sexual activity was relevant.

The findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher.

The panel considered that Miss Flinders' conduct not only could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher but, in fact, would have certainly damaged the public's perception of a teacher if the public, parents and others in the community were aware of her serious misconduct which fundamentally breached the teacher pupil boundary which existed at the time of the conduct.

The panel also noted that despite Pupil A and Miss Flinders stating that the sexual relationship was consensual, the panel considered the potential harmful impact that this relationship could have had on Pupil A's life, his parents and the wider school community.

For these reasons, the panel found that Miss Flinders' conduct 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 and 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 the light of the panel's findings which involved a finding that Miss Flinders had a sexual relationship with one of her pupils, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious findings of an inappropriate relationship with a pupil, which fundamentally breached the teacher pupil boundary.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Miss Flinders 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 Miss Flinders 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 Miss Flinders in the profession. Whilst there was limited evidence that Miss Flinders had some ability as an educator, the

panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweigh any interest in retaining Miss Flinders in the profession, since her behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher at the time, and she sought to exploit her position of trust.

The panel carefully considered 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 Miss Flinders.

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 ... (expected from a teacher at the time of her conduct);
- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- an abuse of any trust, knowledge, or influence gained through their professional position in order to advance a romantic or sexual relationship with a pupil or former pupil;
- sexual misconduct, e.g. involving actions that were sexually motivated or of a sexual nature and/or that use or exploit the trust, knowledge or influence derived from the individual's professional position.

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

There was evidence that Miss Flinders actions were deliberate. Miss Flinders had admitted to attending Pupil A's parents' house to have sex with Pupil A. The sexual encounters were planned, and the sexual relationship was sustained for approximately 6 months.

There was no evidence to suggest that Miss Flinders was acting under extreme duress, e.g. a physical threat or significant intimidation

There was no compelling evidence to suggest that Miss Flinders demonstrated exceptionally high standards in her personal and professional conduct or had contributed significantly to the education sector.

The panel acknowledged that Miss Flinders engaged with the TRA process, attended the hearing and has never denied her sexual relationship with Pupil A.

The panel had sight of a character reference from a former colleague dated 28 March 2025, who said:

“Helen was a very dedicated teacher and her GCSE Art results were the best the school had ever achieved. She celebrated the GCSE work attained by the pupils by creating an ‘Art Gallery’ environment within the school where staff, parents and the public and a representative of the OCR exam board were invited to attend over three evenings. The aim of the ‘Art Gallery’ was to raise pupil confidence, value their achievements and give pupils the opportunity to feel proud and grow in confidence.

The OCR exam board toured the country using Helen’s pupils GCSE work as exemplar material because of Helen’s accuracy with moderation standards.

I considered Helen Flinders to have been an exemplary Faculty leader, a very supportive professional team member and an outstanding teacher who treated pupils with respect and dignity.”

[REDACTED] Whilst sympathetic to these circumstances, the panel did not consider that these matters were significant enough to mitigate her serious misconduct in this case.

The panel noted that Miss Flinders showed some remorse. She stated in her witness statement dated 2 April 2025, “I wish to apologise to Pupil A for my behaviour at the time. I am truly sorry. I hope the process for him of reliving these events have not harmed him in any way. I hope he can move forward in a positive light.”

The panel noted that Pupil A had stated that the relationship was consensual, never felt taken advantage of and that he did “not hold any bad feelings toward her”. Despite this, the panel considered the potential harmful impact that this relationship could have had on Pupil A’s life, his parents and the wider school community. The panel noted that Miss Flinders lacked insight into her misconduct and did not recognise the potential harm it could have caused, not least to Pupil A.

The panel first considered whether it would be proportionate to conclude this case with no recommendation of prohibition, considering whether the publication of the findings made by the panel would be sufficient.

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would not be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order. Recommending that the publication of adverse findings would be sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Miss Flinders of prohibition.

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Miss Flinders. The fact that Miss Flinders engaged in a sexual relationship with one of her pupils was a significant factor in forming that opinion. Miss Flinders seriously breached the teacher pupil boundary, abused her position of trust and failed to protect the safety and well-being of Pupil A. Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

The panel went on to consider whether or not it would be appropriate for it to decide to recommend a review period of the order. The panel was mindful that the Advice states that a prohibition order applies for life, but there may be circumstances, in any given case, that may make it appropriate to allow a teacher to apply to have the prohibition order reviewed after a specified period of time that may not be less than 2 years.

The Advice indicates that there are certain types of case where, if relevant, the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period.

These include:

- serious sexual misconduct e.g. where the act was sexually motivated and resulted in, or had the potential to result in, harm to a person or persons, particularly where the individual has used their professional position to influence or exploit a person or persons;
- any sexual misconduct involving a child.

The panel considered that the above two categories were relevant as the panel found that Miss Flinders had engaged in a sexual relationship with one of her pupils and seriously breached the teacher pupil boundary, abused her position of trust and failed to protect the safety and well-being of Pupil A.

The panel noted that legislation was clearly due to come into force around the time of Miss Flinders' conduct, which made it an offence for any person over the age of 18 to have sexual intercourse with a person under that age if the person is in a position of trust in relation to the child. The panel noted that Miss Flinders was in a clear position of trust in relation to Pupil A, as his teacher.

Whilst there was some evidence that Miss Flinders felt remorse for her misconduct, the panel did not consider that Miss Flinders showed a great deal of insight into her conduct,

especially in circumstances where she has had 25 years to consider the impact of her conduct on others, particularly Pupil A. The panel was informed that since leaving the teaching profession in 2011, Miss Flinders has not returned to teaching or the education setting since this time. The panel noted that Miss Flinders did not immediately leave teaching after her serious misconduct in 2000 and only left the profession when her conduct came to light in 2011 after she was suspended from her duties.

Again, the panel noted that the offence Abuse of Position of Trust contrary to s3(1) of the Sexual Offences Act (Amendment) 2000 was not enacted until 8 January 2001 and the sexual relationship only ceased a matter of weeks before in December 2000. For that reason, no further action was taken by the police. The panel considered that this was a significant factor when considering the seriousness of Miss Flinders' conduct. The panel noted that the conduct was at the most serious end of the spectrum and therefore no review period was appropriate in this case due to the very nature of her conduct which seriously breached the teacher pupil boundary, abused her position of trust and failed to protect the safety and well-being of Pupil A.

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

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

In this case, the panel has found all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Miss Helen Flinders should be the subject of a prohibition order, with no provision for a review period.

In particular, the panel considered the proven conduct in relation to the Teacher Standards and they said "Miss Flinders' conduct took place prior to the date that the Teachers Standards came into force. Accordingly, the panel had regard to its knowledge and experience of teaching standards at the time of the conduct. Having done so, it considered that the teacher pupil boundary had been an important one then, and that Miss Flinders had breached this by her serious misconduct in having a sexual relationship with one of her pupils."

The panel finds that the conduct of Miss Flinders fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding of a teacher having a sexual relationship with a pupil

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Miss Flinders, 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/safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, "The panel noted that whilst the term "safeguarding" was not widely used back in 2000, there was still a clear expectation for teachers to keep children safe and protect their well-being." The panel went on to say "The panel noted that Miss Flinders had admitted to attending Pupil A's parents' house to have sex with Pupil A. The sexual encounters were planned, and the sexual relationship was sustained for approximately 6 months. The panel considered that by the very nature of Miss Flinders' conduct, she breached the teacher pupil boundary, abused her position of trust and failed to protect the safety and well-being of Pupil A."

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

I have also taken into account the panel's comments on insight and remorse, which the panel sets out as follows, "The panel noted that Miss Flinders showed some remorse. She stated in her witness statement dated 2 April 2025, "I wish to apologise to Pupil A for my behaviour at the time. I am truly sorry. I hope the process for him of reliving these events have not harmed him in any way. I hope he can move forward in a positive light." The panel has also commented that "Miss Flinders lacked insight into her misconduct and did not recognise the potential harm it could have caused, not least to Pupil A."

In my judgement, the lack of full insight means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour and this puts at risk the future wellbeing of pupils. I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe, "the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found

against Miss Flinders was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher developing a sexual relationship with a pupil in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

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

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of unacceptable professional conduct 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 Miss Flinders herself and the panel comment “There was no compelling evidence to suggest that Miss Flinders demonstrated exceptionally high standards in her personal and professional conduct or had contributed significantly to the education sector.” The panel had sight of character references, including “Helen was a very dedicated teacher and her GCSE Art results were the best the school had ever achieved. She celebrated the GCSE work attained by the pupils by creating an ‘Art Gallery’ environment within the school where staff, parents and the public and a representative of the OCR exam board were invited to attend over three evenings. The aim of the ‘Art Gallery’ was to raise pupil confidence, value their achievements and give pupils the opportunity to feel proud and grow in confidence.”

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the lack of full insight. The panel has said, “Whilst there was some evidence that Miss Flinders felt remorse for her misconduct, the panel did not consider that Miss Flinders showed a great deal of insight into her conduct, especially in circumstances where she has had 25 years to consider the impact of her conduct on others, particularly Pupil A. The panel was informed that since leaving the teaching profession in 2011, Miss Flinders has not returned to teaching or the education setting since this time. The panel noted that Miss Flinders did not immediately leave teaching after her serious misconduct in 2000 and only left the profession when her conduct came to light in 2011 after she was suspended from her duties.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding that “The panel noted that Pupil A had stated that the relationship was consensual, never felt taken advantage of and that

he did “not hold any bad feelings toward her”. Despite this, the panel considered the potential harmful impact that this relationship could have had on Pupil A’s life, his parents and the wider school community. The panel noted that Miss Flinders lacked insight into her misconduct and did not recognise the potential harm it could have caused, not least to Pupil A.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the following “The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Miss Flinders. The fact that Miss Flinders engaged in a sexual relationship with one of her pupils was a significant factor in forming that opinion. Miss Flinders seriously breached the teacher pupil boundary, abused her position of trust and failed to protect the safety and well-being of Pupil A.”

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Miss Flinders has made to the profession. In my view, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession. A published decision, in light of the circumstances in this case, that is not backed up by full insight, does not in my view satisfy the public interest requirement concerning public confidence in the profession.

For these reasons, I have concluded that a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest in order to achieve the intended aims of a prohibition order.

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended that no provision should be made for a review period.

I have considered the panel’s comments “the panel noted that the offence Abuse of Position of Trust contrary to s3(1) of the Sexual Offences Act (Amendment) 2000 was not enacted until 8 January 2001 and the sexual relationship only ceased a matter of weeks before in December 2000. For that reason, no further action was taken by the police. The panel considered that this was a significant factor when considering the seriousness of Miss Flinders’ conduct. The panel noted that the conduct was at the most serious end of the spectrum and therefore no review period was appropriate in this case due to the very nature of her conduct which seriously breached the teacher pupil boundary, abused her position of trust and failed to protect the safety and well-being of Pupil A.”

In this case, factors mean that allowing a review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the seriousness of the findings and the lack of full insight.

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

This means that Miss Helen Flinders is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or

children's home in England. Furthermore, in view of the seriousness of the allegations found proved against her, I have decided that Miss Helen Flinders shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of her eligibility to teach.

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

Miss Flinders has a right of appeal to the High Court within 28 days from the date she is given notice of this order.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SABuxcey', with a horizontal line extending from the start of the signature.

Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey

Date: 30 April 2025

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