



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Karl Whiting: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome

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

August 2025

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Summary of evidence	4
Documents	4
Statement of agreed facts	5
Decision and reasons	5
Findings of fact	6
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	12
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	14

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

Teacher: Mr Karl Whiting

TRA reference: 24446

Date of determination: 28 August 2025

Former employer: Huxlow Academy, Northamptonshire.

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 28 August 2025 by way of a virtual meeting, to consider the case of Mr Karl Whiting.

The panel members were Mr Alan Wells (former teacher panellist – in the chair), Miss Louisa Munton (teacher panellist) and Mrs Beverley Montgomery (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Helen Kitchen of Blake Morgan Solicitors.

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Karl Whiting that the allegations be considered without a hearing. Mr Karl Whiting provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer Jon Walters of Brabners LLP, Mr Karl Whiting or his representative George Smith of NASUWT.

The meeting took place in private.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegation(s) set out in the notice of meeting dated 22 May 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Karl Whiting was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that, while a teacher at Huxlow Academy ('the School'), he:

- 1. On 22 June 2023 after a school trip he:**
 - a) attended a meal with students without another member of staff present.**
 - b) drove students home and failed to:**
 - i) inform a manager that he intended to do so; and/or**
 - ii) ensure a second adult was present**
- 2. On various dates he corresponded with Former Student A by Facebook Messenger when Former Student A was under 18 years of age.**
- 3. By his actions at Paragraph 1 above he failed to safeguard students sufficiently.**
- 4. By his actions at Paragraph 2 above he failed to maintain professional boundaries with former students.**

Mr Whiting admitted the facts of allegations 1 (including 1a, 1b(i) and 1b(ii)), 2, 3, and 4.

Mr Whiting also admitted that his actions in the admitted allegations constituted 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: Anonymised pupil list – pages 1 to 2

Section 2: Statement of Agreed Facts – pages 3 to 6

Section 3: Notice of Referral and Mr Whiting's Response to the Notice of Referral – pages 7 to 21

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 26 to 138

Section 5: Teacher documents – page 139

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

The Notice of Meeting dated 22 May 2025 - pages 1 to 2

A further statement from Mr Whiting dated 20 July 2025 – pages 1 to 2

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").

Statement of agreed facts

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr Whiting on 3 April 2025.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

In advance of the meeting the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Whiting for the allegations to be considered without a hearing. The panel had the ability to direct that the case be considered at a hearing if required in the interests of justice or in the public interest. The panel did not determine that such a direction was necessary or appropriate in this case.

Between September 2017 and September 2024 Mr Whiting was undertaking teaching work as a teacher at Huxlow Academy, Northamptonshire ("the School"). His job title was Teacher of Science and Head of Year. At the time of the incidents concerned in the case he was employed as a Teacher of Science and Head of Year 10 at the School.

The School was a non-selective mixed secondary school and sixth form operated as an academy by Trove Learning Trust ("the Trust").

On 22 June 2023 after a school trip for Year 11 students at the School, that Mr Whiting and other staff attended to supervise the students, Mr Whiting attended a restaurant. He ate with three students. After the meal Mr Whiting drove Students A and B home in his car.

In [REDACTED] 2023 Student A left the School.

On 17 November 2023, Mr Whiting was invited by Student A, via Facebook Messenger, to attend a pantomime in which she was performing in January 2024.

Between November 2023 and early June 2024 Mr Whiting and Student A continued to correspond via Facebook Messenger.

In early June 2024 Student A invited Mr Whiting to attend another theatrical performance [REDACTED] and which he attended.

On 6 June 2024 Student A's father contacted the School and reported concerns about Mr Whiting's conduct following which the School commenced an investigation.

On 12 September 2024 Mr Whiting ceased working at the School.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel found the following particulars of the allegation(s) against you proved, for these reasons:

1. On 22 June 2023 after a school trip you:

a) attended a meal with students without another member of staff present.

b) drove students home and failed to:

i) inform a manager that you intended to do so; and/or

ii) ensure a second adult was present

Mr Whiting admitted the facts of allegation 1a, 1b(i) and 1b(ii).

The panel carefully considered the evidence before it in relation to this allegation.

On 22 June 2023 students in Year 11 at the School went on a school trip to a theme park. Mr Whiting, with colleagues from the School, attended the trip to supervise the students.

In the evening following the trip, three students from the School attended a restaurant. Mr Whiting also attended the restaurant and ate with the students. Apart from Mr Whiting, no other adults ate with the students at the restaurant. Mr Whiting paid for his own meal but not those of the students.

Following the meal at the restaurant, Mr Whiting drove Student A and Student B home in his car. Apart from Mr Whiting, no other adults were in the car with Student A and Student B.

Mr Whiting did not inform any member of staff from the School that he would drive Student A and /or Student B home from the restaurant.

The School's Code of Conduct for All Adults states:

- "a. "13.1 In certain situations e.g. out of school activities, adults may agree to transport pupils. Transport arrangements should be made in advance by a designated employee (with the permission of a senior leader) who will be responsible for planning and overseeing all transport arrangements and respond to any concerns that may arise. Wherever possible and practicable transport should be provided other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort"
- "b. 13.3 It is inappropriate for adults to offer lifts to a pupil, unless the need has been agreed with a manager and, if this falls outside their normal working duties, has been agreed with parents/carers"

In respect of driving the students home, although the panel was aware that Student A's parents had particular contact arrangements in place, the panel noted that Mr Whiting had obtained consent from Student A's mother to take Student A home.

The panel accepted the admission made by Mr Whiting which was supported by the evidence provided to the panel. The allegation was therefore found proven.

2. On various dates you corresponded with Former Student A by Facebook Messenger when Former Student A was under 18 years of age.

Mr Whiting admitted the facts of allegation 2.

In [REDACTED] 2023 Student A left the School (so is referenced as Former Student A) and was enrolled at [REDACTED] College.

On 17 November 2023 via Facebook Messenger Former Student A invited Mr Whiting to attend a pantomime [REDACTED]. The following day Mr Whiting accepted the invitation and agreed to attend.

Former Student A and Mr Whiting corresponded with one another via Facebook Messenger up to and including 4 June 2024, the date of a further theatrical performance [REDACTED]. Mr Whiting attended this performance.

The panel noted from the papers before it that the School's investigation report recorded that the exchange of correspondence between Mr Whiting and Former Student A on Facebook Messenger comprised of around 100 or so messages.

Throughout the contact described above Former Student A was under the age of 18 and Mr Whiting was aware of this.

The School's Code of Conduct for All Adults at paragraph 5 states:

"A relationship between an adult and a child or young person is not a relationship between equals; the adult has a position of power or influence. There is potential for exploitation and harm of children or vulnerable young people and all adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. Adults must not use their status or position to form or promote relationships with children (whether current pupils or not) that are of a sexual nature, or which may become so. Adults should maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report any incident with this potential."

On 6 June 2024 Former Student A's father contacted the School to report Mr Whiting's conduct following which the School conducted an investigation.

The panel accepted the admission made by Mr Whiting which was supported by the evidence provided to the panel. The allegation was therefore found proven.

3. By your actions at Paragraph 1 above you failed to safeguard students sufficiently.

Mr Whiting admitted the facts of allegation 3.

The panel found that Mr Whiting failed to sufficiently safeguard students by his actions in attending a meal with students without another member of staff being present and driving students home without informing a manager that he intended to do so and/or ensuring that a second adult was present.

The panel noted that these safeguarding measures were included within the School's Code of Conduct, although the panel considered that these actions would be a failure of basic safeguarding of students whether or not included in such a Code.

The panel accepted the admission made by Mr Whiting, which was supported by the evidence provided to the panel. The allegation was therefore found proven.

4. By your actions at Paragraph 2 above you failed to maintain professional boundaries with former students.

Mr Whiting admitted the facts of allegation 4.

The panel found that in corresponding with Former Student A by Facebook Messenger when Former Student A was under 18 years of age Mr Whiting failed to maintain professional boundaries with Former Student A.

The panel noted that the School's Code of Conduct required the maintenance of appropriate professional boundaries and recognised the power imbalance in relationships between adults and children.

The panel accepted the admission made by Mr Whiting, which was supported by the evidence provided to the panel. The allegation was therefore found proven.

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.

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 noted that Mr Whiting had accepted that his conduct in the allegations amounted to professional misconduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel first considered whether the conduct of Mr Whiting, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Whiting was in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Whiting in relation to the facts found proved involved breaches of Keeping children safe In education ("KCSIE").

The panel considered that Mr Whiting was in breach of the requirement that all staff should be aware of systems within their school which support safeguarding, including the staff behaviour policy (sometimes called a code of conduct) (page 5, para 13).

The panel also considered whether Mr Whiting'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 none of these offences was relevant.

The panel noted that although the allegations took place outside the education setting they involved students and a former student of the School and related to safeguarding and professional boundaries with those students and so affected the way Mr Whiting fulfilled his teaching role.

The panel considered that Mr Whiting's conduct in allegation 1, whilst not appropriate, was not so serious as to amount to unacceptable professional conduct. He had made mistakes and errors of judgement. Mr Whiting had not complied with the requirements of the School's code of conduct but the panel found that in giving the students a lift home he was motivated by seeking to prevent the students from having to walk home when it was later in the evening and dark.

The panel considered that Mr Whiting's conduct in allegation 2 represented a serious breach of professional boundaries in respect of a former student. His private correspondence via Facebook Messenger with Former Student A, a young person with

whom he had no on-going professional teaching relationship, created a serious risk of harm to the former student as well as putting himself at serious risk. Mr Whiting's conduct also put at serious risk the relationship between the School and the parents of its students and former students, as well as the wider reputation of the School. Such correspondence should never have taken place in the context of the previous professional relationship between Mr Whiting and Former Student A, particularly taking account of the imbalance of power between the correspondents.

For these reasons, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Whiting in allegation 2 amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Mr Whiting was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct in relation to allegation 2.

In relation to whether Mr Whiting'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 Mr Whiting'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 Mr Whiting was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

The panel did not consider the finding of misconduct in allegation 1 to be serious. It did not consider that the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher. The panel considered that the finding of misconduct in allegation 2 to be serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher.

For the reasons given in relation to its findings regarding unacceptable professional conduct the panel did not consider that Mr Whiting's conduct in allegation 1 could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher and did consider that Mr Whiting's conduct in allegation 2 could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Whiting's actions in allegation 1 did not constitute conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute and that Mr Whiting's actions in allegation 2 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/conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in relation to allegation 2, 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 maintenance of public confidence in the profession and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Whiting in failing to maintain professional boundaries by corresponding with a former student under the age of 18 by Facebook Messenger, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of a former student under the age of 18.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Whiting in allegation 2 were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.

The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr Whiting in allegation 2 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 Mr Whiting in the profession. The panel considered there was a public interest consideration in retaining Mr Whiting in the profession since there was no evidence before it that cast doubt upon his abilities as an educator.

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.

In view of the clear public interest considerations that were present, the panel considered carefully whether or not it would be proportionate to impose a prohibition order, taking into account the effect that this would have on Mr Whiting.

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 although the panel did not consider them to be the most serious departure;
- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, ...;
- failure in their duty of care towards a child by failing to be aware of the School's code of conduct.

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.

The panel noted that the teacher's actions were deliberate and there was no evidence to suggest that Mr Whiting was acting under duress. There was no evidence before the panel of any previous disciplinary action by the School in relation to Mr Whiting, who was considered by the panel to have a good professional character.

The panel noted that in his statements Mr Whiting said he had reflected on the allegations and that he understood his mistakes and poor judgements and the risk they presented to the School. He accepted that he had fallen short of the standards required of him. He acknowledged that he had become emotionally over-invested in a class that had included Former Student A and was seeking to be supportive and caring. He stated that he had reacquainted himself with relevant policies and what was expected of him and was committed to undertaking further training. Mr Whiting also stated that, in consequence, there was no risk of repetition. Mr Whiting expressed his deep regret at putting himself and the School's reputation in the situation he had and letting his employers and himself down. He took full responsibility for, and understood the seriousness of, his actions and expressed remorse. He outlined personal challenges that he was facing at the time of the events [REDACTED] which he had reflected upon and accepted clouded his judgement. He committed himself to rebuilding trust and ensuring that the failings were never repeated.

The panel considered that Mr Whiting had demonstrated a good level of insight into his actions and their seriousness, was remorseful and was committed to continued learning to ensure that there was no repeat of his conduct. Taking account of these factors the panel considered that the risk of repetition was low.

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, the recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an appropriate response. Given that the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that are not acceptable, and the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

In this case, the panel has found all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts in relation to allegation 2 only amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. In this case, the panel has found that allegation 1 did 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 Mr Karl Whiting should not be the subject of a prohibition order. The panel has recommended that the findings of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Whiting is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position

- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Whiting, involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE).

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

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of unacceptable professional conduct 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 Mr Whiting, 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 although the allegations took place outside the education setting they involved students and a former student of the School and related to safeguarding and professional boundaries with those students and so affected the way Mr Whiting fulfilled his teaching role." 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 in his statements Mr Whiting said he had reflected on the allegations and that he understood his mistakes and poor judgements and the risk they presented to the School. He accepted that he had fallen short of the standards required of him. He acknowledged that he had become emotionally over-invested in a class that had included Former Student A and was seeking to be supportive and caring. He stated that he had reacquainted himself with relevant policies and what was expected of him and was committed to undertaking further training. Mr Whiting also stated that, in consequence, there was no risk of repetition. Mr Whiting expressed his deep regret at putting himself and the School's reputation in the situation he had and

letting his employers and himself down. He took full responsibility for, and understood the seriousness of, his actions and expressed remorse.” 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 Mr Whiting in allegation 2 were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of failing to maintain professional boundaries with a former student under the age of 18 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 Mr Whiting himself and the panel comment “In addition to the public interest considerations set out above, the panel went on to consider whether there was a public interest in retaining Mr Whiting in the profession. The panel considered there was a public interest consideration in retaining Mr Whiting in the profession since there was no evidence before it that cast doubt upon his abilities as an educator.”

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning insight or remorse. The panel has said, “The panel considered that Mr Whiting had demonstrated a good level of insight into his actions and their seriousness, was remorseful and was committed to continued learning to ensure that there was no repeat of his conduct. Taking account of these factors the panel considered that the risk of repetition was low.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel that “Given that the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel

determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case.”

I have given weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Whiting has and could continue to make to the profession.

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 'SABuxcey', with a horizontal line extending from the start of the signature.

Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey

Date: 1 September 2025

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