



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Ms Zoe Williams: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome

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

August 2025

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

Teacher:	Ms Zoe Williams
Teacher ref number:	1752145
Teacher date of birth:	19 December 1992
TRA reference:	22327
Date of determination:	27 August 2025
Former employer:	Ellingham Church of England Aided Primary School, Ellingham, Chathill

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 27 August 2025 by way of a virtual meeting, to consider the case of Ms Zoe Williams.

The panel members were Mrs Beverley Montgomery (lay panellist – in the chair), Mr Adnan Qureshi (lay panellist) and Ms Jasmin Choudhury (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Samantha Cass of Birketts LLP 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 Ms Williams that the allegations be considered without a hearing. Ms Williams provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted conviction of a relevant offence. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer Mr Jon Walters of Brabners LLP Solicitors, Ms Williams or any representative of Ms Williams.

The meeting took place in private.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of meeting dated 26 August 2025.

It was alleged that Ms Williams was convicted of a relevant offence in that she had been convicted of the following offences:

1. Engaging in sexual activity in presence of a child under 13 – offender 18 or over
2. Assaulting a girl under 13 by penetration with a part of your body / a thing
3. Making indecent photograph / pseudo-photograph of a child.
4. Making indecent photograph / pseudo-photograph of a child.
5. Making indecent photograph / pseudo-photograph of a child.
6. Sexual assault on a girl under 13 by touching.

Ms Williams admitted the facts of the allegations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. In respect of the admitted allegations Ms Williams also accepted that her conduct amounted to conviction of a relevant offence as set out in the statement of agreed facts signed on 24 April 2025.

The panel noted that there was a discrepancy between the allegations in the original Notice of Meeting dated 28 May 2025 and the Statement of Agreed Facts signed on 24 April 2025. The panel noted that a new Notice of Meeting was issued on 26 August 2025 with amended allegations matching those in the Statement of Agreed Facts (and referred to above). The panel also noted that the new Notice of Meeting had been sent to Ms Williams via the prison service.

Whilst the panel did not have a response to Ms Williams in relation to the updated Notice of Meeting, it noted that: (a) Ms Williams had admitted to the allegations set out in the Notice of Meeting dated 28 May 2025 in her Notice of Referral Form dated 28 October 2024; (b) Ms Williams had admitted to the allegations set out in the Notice of Meeting dated 26 August 2025 in the Statement of Agreed Facts; (c) the Notice of Meeting had been amended purely to accord with the admissions in the statement of agreed facts; and (d) there was not a material difference between the allegations. On this basis, the panel was content to proceed with the Professional Conduct Panel Meeting. The panel considered the allegations set out in the Notice of Meeting dated 26 August 2025.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section A: Notice of referral and notice of meeting – pages 2 to 13a

Section B: Notice of referral response – pages 14 to 18

Section C: Statement of agreed facts – pages 19 to 21

Section D: TRA documents – pages 22 to 61

Section E: Teacher documents – pages 62 to 63

Notice of Meeting dated 26 August 2025 and email to Ms Williams via the prison service dated 26 August 2025.

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 Ms Williams on 24 April 2025 and by the presenting officer on 24 April 2025.

Decision and reasons

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

In advance of the meeting, the TRA agreed to a request from Ms Williams 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.

Ms Williams was employed as a teacher at Ellingham Church of England Aided Primary School (“the School”) at the time of the conduct below.

Ms Williams was arrested on 4 July 2023, and her mobile phone was examined.

Ms Williams was charged with 3 counts of making an indecent photograph/ pseudo-photograph of a child contrary to Section 1(a) of the Protection of Children Act 1978; 1 count of assault of a girl under 13 by penetration with a part of her body/ a thing contrary

to Section 6 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003' 1 count of Assault of a girl under 13 by touching contrary to Section 7 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003; and 1 count of engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child under 13 – offender 18 or over contrary to Section 11 (1) (a) of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Ms Williams was convicted on all counts on 2 August 2023.

On 20 November 2023 Ms Williams was sentenced to 16 months imprisonment; 15 years imprisonment comprising 10 years custody with an extension period of 5 years; 56 months imprisonment; 20 months imprisonment; 12 months imprisonment; and 32 months imprisonment, all to be served concurrently. She was also required to register with the police on the Sex Offenders Register indefinitely.

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:

You are guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence in that you have been convicted of the following offences:

- 1. Engaging in sexual activity in presence of a child under 13 – offender 18 or over**
- 2. Assaulting a girl under 13 by penetration with a part of your body / a thing**
- 3. Making indecent photograph / pseudo-photograph of a child.**
- 4. Making indecent photograph / pseudo-photograph of a child.**
- 5. Making indecent photograph / pseudo-photograph of a child.**
- 6. Sexual assault on a girl under 13 by touching**

The panel considered the statement of agreed facts, signed by Ms Williams on 24 April 2025. Ms Williams admitted allegations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the facts available to it.

The panel noted page 8 of the Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers ('the Advice') which states that, where there has been a conviction at any time, of a criminal offence, the panel will accept the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of both the conviction and the facts necessarily implied by the conviction, unless exceptional circumstances apply. The panel did not find any exceptional circumstances applied to this case.

The panel had been provided with a copy of the certificate of conviction from Newcastle Crown Court, dated 26 February 2025, which detailed that, on 2 August 2023, Ms Williams had been convicted of 3 counts of making an indecent photograph/ pseudo-photograph of a child contrary to Section 1(a) of the Protection of Children Act 1978; 1 count of assault of a girl under 13 by penetration with a part of her body/ a thing contrary to Section 6 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003; 1 count of Assault of a girl under 13 by touching contrary to Section 7 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003; and 1 count of engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child under 13 – offender 18 or over contrary to Section 11 (1) (a) of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

The panel noted that Ms Williams pleaded guilty to the offences.

In respect of the offences, Ms Williams was sentenced on 20 November 2023 to 16 months imprisonment; 15 years imprisonment comprising 10 years custody with an extension period of 5 years; 56 months imprisonment; 20 months imprisonment; 12 months imprisonment; and 32 months imprisonment, all to be served concurrently. She was also required to register with the police on the Sex Offenders Register indefinitely.

The panel found allegations 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 proven.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence

Having found all of the allegations proved, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of those proved allegations amounted to conviction for a relevant offence.

The panel considered the statement of agreed facts, signed by Ms Williams on 24 April 2025 and noted that she admitted she had been convicted of a relevant offence.

In doing so, the panel had regard to the document Teacher misconduct: The prohibition of teachers, which is referred to as “the Advice”.

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

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Ms Williams 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

- showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel concluded that Ms Williams' actions were relevant to teaching, working with children and working in an education setting, as Ms Williams had made indecent images of children, had sexually assaulted a child and had committed a sexual act in front of a child.

The panel concluded that the behaviour involved in committing the offences could have had an impact on the safety and/or security of pupils and/or members of the public.

The panel also took account of the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Ms Williams behaviour in committing the offences could affect public confidence in the teaching profession, given the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community.

The panel noted that Ms Williams' behaviour ultimately led to a sentence of imprisonment, which was indicative of the seriousness of the offences committed.

The panel also considered the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice. This was a case concerning offences involving sexual activity; any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or pseudo photograph or image of a child, or permitting any such activity, including one-off incidents; child cruelty; and child neglect. The Advice states that these matters are more likely to be considered relevant offences.

The panel found that the seriousness of the offending behaviour that led to the conviction was relevant to Ms Williams' ongoing suitability to teach. The panel considered that this conviction – was for a relevant offence was necessary to reaffirm clear standards of conduct, so as to maintain public confidence in the teaching profession.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of a conviction of a relevant offence, it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

In considering whether to recommend to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be made, the panel had to consider whether it would be an appropriate and proportionate measure, and whether it would be in the public interest to do so. Prohibition

orders should not be given in order to be punitive, or to show that blame has been apportioned, although they are likely to have punitive effect.

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely: the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils; the protection of other members of the public; the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In light of the panel's findings against Ms Williams, which involved making indecent photos of a child, penetration of a child, sexual assault of a child and a sexual act in the presence of a child, there was a strong public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public. This was especially given the serious nature of the convictions.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Ms Williams 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 Ms Williams was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

The panel was not provided with any evidence attesting to Ms Williams ability as an educator or any evidence of insight and remorse. The panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Ms Williams in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.

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 Ms Williams.

The panel took further account of the Advice, which suggests that a prohibition order may be appropriate if certain behaviours of a teacher have been proved. In the list of such behaviours, those that were relevant in this case were:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;

- the commission of a serious criminal offence, including those that resulted in a conviction or caution, paying particular attention to offences that are 'relevant matters' for the purposes of the Police Act 1997 and criminal record disclosures;
- 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);
- 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;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing, or publishing any indecent photograph or image, or indecent pseudo photograph or image, of a child, or permitting such activity, including one-off incidents;
- failure to act on evidence that indicated a child's welfare may have been at risk e.g. failed to notify the designated safeguarding lead and/or make a referral to children's social care, the police or other relevant agencies when abuse, neglect and/or harmful cultural practices were identified;
- 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);
- violation of the rights of pupils; and
- a deep-seated attitude that leads to harmful behaviour.

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

There was no evidence that Ms Williams actions were not deliberate.

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

There was no evidence that Ms Williams demonstrated exceptionally high standards in her personal and professional conduct or having contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel did not accept that the incident was out of character.

The panel noted that there was no evidence of insight and/or remorse on the part of Ms Williams.

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 a prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an appropriate response. Given that the nature and severity of the behaviour was at the more 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 be appropriate in this case. The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made, was insufficient in these circumstances. The panel considered that publication would not meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Ms Williams. The severity of the behaviour for which there were several serious convictions and subsequent lengthy imprisonment, and the lack of insight and remorse shown by Ms Williams was a significant factor in forming that opinion.

Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

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

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

- 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; and
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, including one off incidents.

The Advice also indicates that there are certain other types of cases where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate. The panel did not find any of these to be relevant in this case.

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 provisions 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 a relevant conviction.

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

In particular, the panel has found that Ms Williams 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
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel finds that the conduct of Ms Williams fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include serious sexual convictions involving children.

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 a relevant conviction, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Ms Williams, 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, "In light of the panel's findings against Ms Williams, which involved making indecent photos of a child, penetration of a child, sexual assault of a child and a sexual act in the presence of a child, there was a strong public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public. This was especially given the serious nature of the convictions." 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 there was no evidence of insight and/or remorse on the part of Ms Williams." In my judgement, the lack of evidence of insight or remorse 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 Ms Williams behaviour in committing the offences could affect public confidence in the teaching profession, given the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community." I am particularly mindful of the finding of serious sexual convictions involving children 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 a relevant conviction, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Ms Williams herself and the panel comment “There was no evidence that Ms Williams demonstrated exceptionally high standards in her personal and professional conduct or having contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel did not accept that the incident was out of character.”

A prohibition order would prevent Ms Williams 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 following “The panel was not provided with any evidence attesting to Ms Williams ability as an educator or any evidence of insight and remorse. The panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Ms Williams in the profession, since her behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding that “The panel concluded that Ms Williams’ actions were relevant to teaching, working with children and working in an education setting, as Ms Williams had made indecent images of children, had sexually assaulted a child and had committed a sexual act in front of a child.”

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Ms Williams 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 serious circumstances in this case, that is not backed up by evidence of full remorse or 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 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. The panel found the following to be relevant in this case:

- 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; and
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, including one off incidents.”

The panel decided “that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate.”

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 evidence of full remorse or 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 Ms Zoe Williams 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 Ms Williams 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.

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



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.