



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Aaron Smith: Professional conduct panel hearing outcome

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

October 2025

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

Teacher: Mr Aaron Smith

Teacher ref number: 1043615

Teacher date of birth: 22 February 1981

TRA reference: 21227

Date of determination: 03 October 2025

Former employer: Co-op Academy, Bebington

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 29 September 2025 to 03 October 2025 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Aaron Smith.

The panel members were Ms Chloe Nash (lay panellist – in the chair), Mr Tony Coyne (lay panellist) and Mrs Hannah Foster (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Kimberley Clayton of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Caroline Collins of Capsticks LLP solicitors.

Mr Smith was not present and was not represented.

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, as amended on day one and day three of the hearing.

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

1. While employed as a teacher at the Co-op Academy Bebington:
 - a) On or around 15 June 2016, in an application for employment at Bebington High Sports College, he stated that his previous employment was in two part-time roles through SY4C, when that was not the case;
 - b) On one or more occasions between 1 October 2019 and 31 October 2021, as set out in Schedule A below, he submitted false information and/or documents.
2. While employed as a PE Teacher at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire between 2015 and 2016, on one or more occasions he submitted false information and/or documents, as set out in Schedule B below.
3. His actions at 1 (a), and/or 1(b) and/or 2 above were dishonest.

Schedule A

1. 13 October 2021 Letter from Dr Sheila Edwards undated, he submitted a letter which contains information as to [REDACTED] purportedly from Dr Sheila Edwards; Dr Sheila Edwards is fictitious
2. 13 October 2021 Email from Dr Sheila Edwards dated 13 October 2021, he submitted an email purportedly from Dr Sheila Edwards when Dr Sheila Edwards is fictitious
3. In October 2021 Notes of Welfare Meeting, he submitted one or more emails purportedly from Gemma Dalton (a Head Cardiac Nurse) and/or Holly Green; Gemma Dalton and/or Holly Green are fictitious
4. 19 October 2021 Email from Dr Sheila Edwards dated 19 October 2021, he submitted an email purportedly from Dr Shelia Edwards; Dr Sheila Edwards is fictitious
5. 13 October 2021 Notes of Welfare Meeting in the Welfare Meeting he stated that he had spoken with and/or met Dr Sheila Edwards on at least one occasion, and he had met with Gemma Dalton to discuss [REDACTED]; Dr Sheila Edwards and/or Gemma Dalton are fictitious

Schedule B

1. 1 July 2015 Application form for job at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire Stated that he had been employed by Leicester City Council between December 2002 – December 2004
2. 1 July 2015 Application form for job at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire Stated that he had been employed as professional football player at Leicester City FC between June 2000 – December 2001
3. 1 July 2015 Application form for job at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire Stated that he had been employed as professional/apprentice football player at West Bromwich Albion FC between June 1997 – April 2000
4. 28 June 2015 Letter to Individual B, [REDACTED] stated that he had signed a professional contract with West Bromwich Albion FC and had represented England Schoolboys at U15 level and had played for West Bromwich Albion FC and Leicester City FC between the ages of 11-20 years.
5. On or around 1 February 2016 in a School Assembly or similar presentation he presented a falsified team sheet inserting his name in a list of England youth team footballers and / or Leicester youth team.
6. 1 February 2016 and 28 June 2015 in a School Assembly or similar presentation (1 February 2016) and in Letter to Individual B, [REDACTED] (28 June 2015) Stated that he played football for England in a youth team.

Mr Smith admitted the facts of allegation 2. Mr Smith admitted allegation 3, to the extent that it related to allegation 2. Mr Smith denied the facts of allegation 1(a) and 1(b) and Schedule A. Mr Smith did not admit that those admitted facts amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that would 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, anonymised pupil list and list of key people – pages 4 to 6

Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 7 to 36

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 37 to 431

Section 4: TRA documents – pages 432 to 445

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

The panel members also confirmed they had read the service bundle.

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:

Witness A – [REDACTED]

Witness B – [REDACTED]

Witness C – [REDACTED]

Witness D – [REDACTED]

Witness E – [REDACTED]

Witness F – [REDACTED]

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Mr Smith was employed as a sports coach at S4YC from September 2013 to July 2015. From September 2015 to 29 February 2016 Mr Smith was employed by Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire.

Mr Smith completed an application form for Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire on 1 July 2015, where he set out his previous employment. Within this he had stated that he was employed at Leicester City Council between December 2002 and December 2004, that he had been employed as a professional/apprentice football player at West Bromwich Albion Football Club from June 1997 to April 2000, and that he had been employed as a Professional football player at Leicester City Football Club from June 2000 to December 2001. Mr Smith had also referred to a professional football contract within his cover letter.

Concerns came to light on or around February 2016, when Mr Smith delivered an assembly to pupils speaking about his experience as a professional football player at Leicester. Following the assembly, a pupil and / or parent contacted Woodlands School as they could not find Mr Smith online. Woodlands School investigated and allegedly found that Mr Smith had not been a professional football player at Leicester and that he had edited a photograph of the current team with his face, to show pupils.

On 15 June 2016, Mr Smith completed an application form for a job at the Co-op Academy Bebington ('the School'). Within this application Mr Smith stated that he had been employed in two previous part time roles through SY4C between September 2013 and February 2016.

Mr Smith commenced employment at the School as a PE teacher on 1 September 2016.

On 12 October 2021 concerns came to light regarding Mr Smith's repeated absence from the School. A welfare meeting was held with Mr Smith on 13 October 2021. Prior to this meeting, Mr Smith provided a letter from Dr Edwards of Liverpool psychotherapy and counselling service. Suspicions arose around the authenticity of this letter due to the lack of a letterhead and incorrect spelling and the grammar usage.

On 14 October 2021 the School contacted Liverpool psychotherapy and counselling service by telephone, and they were informed that Dr Edwards did not work there. The School was also provided with a copy of an email from Dr Edwards by Mr Smith, which gave rise to suspicions. The School repeatedly tried to contact Dr Edwards via this email address and there was a reply to say that she was on holiday, but she never responded with a letter on a headed paper. It had not been possible to get hold of Dr Edwards via telephone using the number she provided. Ultimately the School concluded that Dr Edwards did not exist.

The matter was referred to the TRA on 8 November 2022.

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. While employed as a teacher at the Co-op Academy Bebington:

- a) On or around 15 June 2016, in an application for employment at Bebington High Sports College, you stated that your previous employment was in two part-time roles through SY4C, when that was not the case;**

The panel noted that Mr Smith denied this allegation in his response to the proceedings.

The panel considered the copy of Mr Smith's application form for the teaching post at the School dated 15 June 2016. The panel considered the 'employment teaching history' section, and noted that Mr Smith had stated that from September 2013 to February 2016 he had worked at Croxeth Primary School and Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire in part-time roles through S4YC.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B. Witness B stated that due to the concerns emerging around information and documents provided by Mr Smith [REDACTED], she decided to check Mr Smith's HR file to confirm he was a qualified teacher and that the safer recruitment process had been followed.

Witness B stated that whilst doing this check she noticed that the School had not received a headteacher reference from his previous employer, which is required under the safer recruitment process. She stated that she noticed on Mr Smith's application that he had worked for S4YC, which is an organisation who employ people to cover teaching and run after school PE clubs. Witness B submitted that she called Witness D, [REDACTED], to request a reference. She stated that Witness D informed her that Mr Smith had worked for S4YC between 2013 and 2015 but one of their primary schools at which Mr Smith had been teaching, Woodlands, had then employed him on a permanent basis. Witness B stated that this concerned her as Woodlands was not mentioned on Mr Smith's application to the School.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness D, who stated that Mr Smith commenced employment with S4YC in September 2013 and finished employment in August 2015. Witness D clarified that Mr Smith's last working day with the school was in July 2015 (as stated in his witness statement) however he was paid up to the end of August 2015. He stated that Mr Smith was employed as a PE teacher and was responsible for delivering PE lessons to primary school children in line with the curriculum and for running after school sports clubs within a school setting.

Witness D submitted that in the first academic year that Mr Smith worked for S4YC (2013/2014), he was placed at Croxteth Primary School for 2 days a week and was placed at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire for 3 days a week.

Witness D stated that in Mr Smith's second academic year at S4YC (2014-2015), he worked at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire 5 days a week.

Witness D stated that in July 2015 Mr Smith's employment with S4YC ended because he became directly employed by Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire as a PE teacher. He commenced this role in September 2015.

The panel concluded that, it had been proven on the balance of probabilities that Mr Smith had provided false information to Co-op Academy Bebington. Having considered all of the evidence before it, the panel found allegation 1(a) proven.

b) On one or more occasions between 1 October 2019 and 31 October 2021, as set out in Schedule A below, you submitted false information and/or documents.

The panel noted that Mr Smith denied this allegation in his response to the proceedings.

The panel considered the letter from Dr Edwards dated 13 October 2021 provided within the bundle. The panel noted that the letter was not on headed paper and that it was purportedly from Dr Edwards of Liverpool psychotherapy and counselling. The panel further noted that the letter had been printed by the School, with a comment in pen made on the letter stating that Dr Edwards had been phoned six times and that the number did not exist.

The panel also had sight of an email chain between Witness B and Dr Edwards, where Dr Edwards had purportedly stated that she was on holiday and would call Witness B in the morning or on Friday. Witness B responded to the email stating that the number provided was unobtainable and Dr Edwards purportedly stated she was unsure why it was unobtainable and that she would call but she never did. The panel noted that the correspondence ended on 2 November 2021 when Witness B sent a final email that was never responded to.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A, who stated that she had concerns regarding Mr Smith's requests for time off work. She stated that Mr Smith had told the School that [REDACTED]. Witness A stated that there were occasions Mr Smith would ask to leave the School site [REDACTED].

Witness A stated that Mr Smith [REDACTED] place with Mr Smith on 9 June 2020, where Mr Smith confirmed that he was happy teaching remotely [REDACTED].

Witness A stated that on 12 October 2021 Mr Smith had submitted three special leave request forms covering six days of absence between October 2019 and October 2021. She stated that she asked to have a welfare meeting with Mr Smith on 13 October 2021 to discuss this.

Witness A stated that prior to the meeting, Mr Smith provided a letter from Dr Edwards to her [REDACTED], Witness B. She stated that upon reading the letter she became suspicious, as the letter included a misspelled name, contact details and was not on headed paper, [REDACTED]. Witness A stated that Witness B contacted the Liverpool psychotherapy service as they were the organisation named on the letter, and they had never heard of Dr Edwards.

Witness A stated that she asked Mr Smith why he had provided a letter from Dr Edwards and explained that the School could not get hold of her. She stated that Mr Smith told them that he had spoken to Dr Edwards before and that she usually phones him off a private number.

Witness A stated that at the Stage 2 meeting on 17 March 2022, the concerns were put to Mr Smith and he had no explanation as to why Dr Edwards had not been found on the General Medical Council register. Witness A also stated that Mr Smith had told her that bringing this to his attention had made him question the veracity of what had happened and made him realise he was the [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]. However, Witness A did not find this explanation plausible, [REDACTED]. Witness A also stated that she had asked Mr Smith how a female had impersonated a male [REDACTED] professional, and he responded that they had put on an accent.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B, who stated that she was provided with a copy of the letter from Dr Edwards on 12 October 2021. She stated that she gave the letter to Witness A.

Witness B stated that prior to the welfare meeting on 13 October 2021, Mr Smith also sent her an email forwarding email correspondence he had with Dr Edwards and attaching the letter. Witness B stated that Mr Smith's work email address and email signature appeared at the bottom of the email. She stated that during the welfare meeting, she tried to verify the authenticity of the letter from Dr Edwards, as she was suspicious of the spelling and grammar used. Witness B stated that she noted down on the letter her attempts to contact Dr Edwards.

In her written and oral evidence, Witness B submitted that on 13 October 2021 she also sent an email to Dr Edwards email address that was on the chain Mr Smith had forwarded to her. She stated that Dr Edwards responded requesting a call, and the next day she sent a further email requesting a copy of the letter on headed paper which was never responded to. Witness B stated that on 18 October 2021 she sent a further email and on 19 October 2021 Dr Edwards responded stating that she was on holiday. She sent a final email to Dr Edwards on 2 November 2021 and did not receive a response.

Witness B stated that she also contacted Liverpool psychotherapy and counselling service by telephone, and they informed her that Dr Edwards did not work there. She stated that during a stage 1 performance attendance meeting Mr Smith stated that Dr Edwards usually telephoned him from a private number, when they explained the difficulties they had experienced in trying to contact her.

Witness B stated that in or around October 2021 Mr Smith showed her text messages on his phone from Ms Gemma Dalton of Royal Liverpool Hospital. She stated that she also showed her an email from Ms Dalton. Witness B stated that Mr Smith also mentioned a nurse named Holly Green and stated that he had been in regular in person contact with her. Witness B stated that she telephoned Broadgreen and the Royal Liverpool hospital to verify whether Ms Dalton and Ms Green worked there, to which both institutions confirmed that neither name existed on their files.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness C, [REDACTED]. Witness C stated that Mr Smith did take lots of phone calls whilst at the school and would answer the call saying, “*hello doctor*”. Witness C stated the calls were apparently from Mr Smith’s [REDACTED] doctor and he felt Mr Smith wanted his colleagues to hear those conversations as no other members of staff took personal calls at work.

Witness C was asked by the panel whether he thought Mr Smith believed those conversations were genuine and he replied, in hindsight, “*probably not*”.

The panel concluded that, on the balance of probabilities, Mr Smith had submitted false information and / or documents to the Co-op Academy Bebington. Having considered all of the evidence before it, the panel found allegation 1(b) proven.

2. While employed as a PE Teacher at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire between 2015 and 2016, on one or more occasions you submitted false information and/or documents, as set out in Schedule B below.

The panel noted that Mr Smith admitted allegation 2. Notwithstanding this, the panel made its own determination based on the facts.

The panel considered Mr Smith’s application form to Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire, dated 1 July 2015, which Mr Smith signed. The panel noted that within this form, Mr Smith had included the following in the ‘employment history’ section:

- Fitness consultant at Leicester City Council, from December 2002 to December 2004
- Professional football player at Leicester City Football Club from June 2000 to December 2001.
- Professional/apprentice football player at West Bromwich Albion Football Club from June 1997 to April 2000.

The panel considered Mr Smith’s cover letter to Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire, dated 28 June 2015. Within this cover letter Mr Smith stated that he had signed a professional contract with West Bromwich Albion FC and that he had represented England Schoolboys at U15 level and he had played for West Bromwich Albion FC and Leicester City FC between the ages of 11-20 years.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness D, [REDACTED]. Witness D stated that concerns arose when, following the assembly at the school in or around February 2016, a pupil and his father were unable to find any information online about Mr Smith’s football career. Witness D explained that he subsequently made enquiries on behalf of the school and found no evidence on the

internet indicating that Mr Smith had been a professional footballer. He also located the team sheet Mr Smith had shown to pupils during the assembly and researched the match in which Mr Smith claimed to have represented England but found no record of the game.

Witness D further stated that he contacted an individual at the Football Association, who confirmed that no match took place on the date in question and that their records showed Mr Smith had never represented England at any level.

The panel noted Witness F's evidence that Mr Smith had produced a team sheet which included the names of the current team members with his name substituted for one of them and yet, he was claiming that the match took place ten years previously, proving that it couldn't have been genuine.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness E, [REDACTED]. Witness E stated that Mr Smith worked at the school from 1 September 2015 to 29 February 2016. She stated that she did not work at the school during the period Mr Smith was employed but understood that an investigation was carried out into concerns that Mr Smith had falsified experience and qualifications during his application for employment.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness F, who stated that when Mr Smith commenced employment at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire, he claimed that he was an ex professional football player and played for Leicester. She stated that this was written on his application form, but he also verbally mentioned it to staff.

Witness F stated that she asked Mr Smith to deliver an assembly outlining his achievements and his career development to professional football as a way to provide inspiration and motivation. She stated that Mr Smith agreed to speak at the assembly and delivered it in or around February 2016.

Witness F submitted that as part of this assembly, Mr Smith showed the pupils a number of props including a football shirt, medals, team sheet and photos of him in the youth team. She stated that following the assembly a parent informed Individual A that their child had spoken about the assembly at home and so they googled Mr Smith and could not find any record of him on the internet. Witness F stated that following this, two members of staff Google searched Mr Smith and also could not find any trace of him. She stated that after looking into the matter, Individual A found that Mr Smith had edited his face into a picture of the youth team.

Witness F stated that Mr Smith had told her he was a professional footballer and had played for Leicester, and it was common knowledge before he was employed.

The panel noted that Mr Smith had stated in his application form to Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire dated 1 July 2015 and his letter to the Head Teacher dated 28 June 2015, and had voluntarily informed the Deputy Head Teacher, that he was a professional

footballer.

The panel concluded that this submission was false and had been fabricated by Mr Smith.

The panel found allegation 2 proven.

3. Your actions at 1 (a), and/or 1(b) and/or 2 above were dishonest.

The panel noted that Mr Smith denied this allegation.

The panel considered whether Mr Smith had acted dishonestly in respect of his conduct as found proven at 1(a), 1(b) and 2 and had regard to the case of *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockford*.

The panel firstly sought to ascertain the actual state of Mr Smith's knowledge or belief as to the facts. The panel took account of Mr Smith's admission that he acted dishonestly by providing false information and by misleading children during an assembly by creating false documents.

The panel noted that Mr Smith's evidence was that the mistakes on the application form to the School were not a direct attempt to mislead anyone, and that sharing the football team sheet he had created with pupils was to inspire them not to mislead.

The panel also noted Mr Smith's comments that [REDACTED]. Neither Mr Smith nor [REDACTED] gave evidence at the hearing. The panel concluded that, on the balance of probabilities, it was more likely than not that Mr Smith had been dishonest and was aware that he was being dishonest.

The panel concluded that Mr Smith's conduct as found proven at allegations 1(a), 1(b) and 2 was dishonest in that Mr Smith had knowingly submitted false information and created false documents. The panel was satisfied that Mr Smith had acted dishonestly and that his conduct would be considered dishonest by the standards of ordinary, decent people.

The panel found allegation 3 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 first considered whether the conduct of Mr Smith, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Smith 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
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel also considered whether Mr Smith'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 the offence of fraud or serious dishonesty was relevant.

For these reasons, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Smith 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 Smith was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Mr Smith'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 Smith'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 Smith was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found that the offence of fraud and/or serious dishonesty was relevant.

The panel noted that the advice is not intended to be exhaustive and there may be other behaviours that panels consider to be "conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute". The panel took into account that the children at the school would likely have been excited to hear that their teacher was a professional footballer and would have viewed him as a role model and the fact that he knowingly misled pupils is conduct that would bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel considered that ordinary members of the public would expect teachers not to provide false information or mislead pupils. The panel considered that Mr Smith's conduct would damage the public's perception of the teaching profession.

The panel considered any mitigating circumstances and Mr Smith's comments around being a [REDACTED] although noted that there was insufficient evidence provided for the hearing that this was in fact the case. The panel also considered whether Mr Smith may have felt under pressure when asked to deliver the assembly. However, the panel concluded that such pressure should not have led Mr Smith to fabricate props and did not outweigh the seriousness of Mr Smith's dishonest conduct.

The panel considered that Mr Smith's conduct would damage the public's perception of the teaching profession.

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

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

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

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

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

maintenance of public confidence in the profession, and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In light of the panel's findings against Mr Smith, which involved stating inaccurate information on an application to prospective employers and submitting false information and/or documents to the School and Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire, there was a strong public interest consideration in declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Smith 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 Mr Smith 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 Smith in the profession. Mr Smith provided no evidence to attest to his ability as a teacher. The panel considered the written and oral evidence provided that Mr Smith was a good teacher at various points in his career but that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Smith 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 Mr Smith.

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;

- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- dishonesty or a lack of integrity, including the deliberate concealment of their actions or purposeful destruction of evidence, especially where these behaviours have been repeated or had serious consequences, or involved the coercion of another person to act in a way contrary to their own interests;

- collusion or concealment including:
 - lying to prevent the identification of wrongdoing.

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 found that Mr Smith had acted deliberately and had knowingly provided false information and misled pupils.

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

Mr Smith did not demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct. The panel noted that Witness F described Mr Smith as a role model for the children and stated there had been no reason for him to mislead either the children or the staff. The panel concluded that there was no evidence to suggest Mr Smith had made a significant contribution to the education sector.

The panel did not consider that the incident was out of character and concluded that Mr Smith's behaviour constituted a pattern of conduct.

The panel considered Mr Smith's written submissions in regard to mitigation. Mr Smith stated that he was [REDACTED]. He stated that he did not know that the information he shared was fictitious and that he shared all information to aid his employer to best support him as he believed that [REDACTED].

Mr Smith stated that he did not know that Dr Edwards, Ms Green, Ms Dalton, Dr Pacati or Dr Edgar were fictitious. He stated that he had contact with these individuals via phone calls, texts and emails and that they were part of the [REDACTED].

Mr Smith stated that due to lockdown restrictions, he would wait, sleep outside hospitals, in car parks, on roads to be as close as possible to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED].

The panel concluded that, based on the evidence available at the hearing, it was not possible to substantiate Mr Smith's account.

The panel 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 Mr Smith 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 Mr Smith.

Mr Smith's lack of insight and remorse was a significant factor in forming that opinion. The panel noted that Mr Smith did not engage with the formal process and instead resigned with immediate effect shortly after the formal meeting at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire, leaving the school and its pupils without a teacher. The panel also noted that, although Mr Smith acknowledged in his written submissions that he had made mistakes at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire and apologised, they did not feel this demonstrated genuine remorse or insight. The panel noted that Mr Smith went on to provide false information and displayed unprofessional conduct at the Co-op Academy Bebington. The panel therefore considered that there remained a risk of Mr Smith repeating this behaviour.

The panel considered it relevant that Mr Smith's actions were incompatible with safer recruitment protocols, noting that he failed to disclose the last school at which he had worked. The panel also concluded that, if Mr Smith were to apply for a teaching role in the future, then schools should be aware of Mr Smith's previous dishonest conduct and therefore prohibiting Mr Smith would help ensure that this information formed part of the safer recruitment protocols. 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 two years.

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

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

The Advice also indicates that there are certain other types of cases where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate. One of these includes fraud or serious dishonesty, and the panel noted that Mr Smith's dishonesty is likely to have a lasting impact on staff at both the School and Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire.

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

circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period of five years.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

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

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

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Smith 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
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance.
- 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 Mr Smith fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include findings which involved stating inaccurate information on an application to prospective employers, submitting false information and/or documents to the School, conduct found to be dishonest.

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 Smith 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 had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely, the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, the protection of other members of the public, the maintenance of public confidence in the profession, and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.” 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 Mr Smith did not engage with the formal process and instead resigned with immediate effect shortly after the formal meeting at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire, leaving the school and its pupils without a teacher. The panel also noted that, although Mr Smith acknowledged in his written submissions that he had made mistakes at Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire and apologised, they did not feel this demonstrated genuine remorse or insight. The panel noted that Mr Smith went on to provide false information and displayed unprofessional conduct at the Co-op Academy Bebington. The panel therefore considered that there remained a risk of Mr Smith repeating this behaviour.” In my judgement, the lack of full 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 public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Smith was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of providing false information to schools and dishonesty 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 Smith himself and the panel comment “Mr Smith did not demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct. The panel noted that Witness F described Mr Smith as a role model for the children and stated there had been no reason for him to mislead either the children or the staff. The panel concluded that there was no evidence to suggest Mr Smith had made a significant contribution to the education sector.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Smith 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 “The panel considered any mitigating circumstances and Mr Smith’s comments around being a [REDACTED] although noted that there was insufficient evidence provided for the hearing that this was in fact the case. The panel also considered whether Mr Smith may have felt under pressure when asked to deliver the assembly. However, the panel concluded that such pressure should not have led Mr Smith to fabricate props and did not outweigh the seriousness of Mr Smith’s dishonest conduct.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding that “The panel found that Mr Smith had acted deliberately and had knowingly provided false information and misled pupils.”

In reaching my decision I have given considerable weight to the following “The panel considered it relevant that Mr Smith’s actions were incompatible with safer recruitment protocols, noting that he failed to disclose the last school at which he had worked. The panel also concluded that, if Mr Smith were to apply for a teaching role in the future, then schools should be aware of Mr Smith’s previous dishonest conduct and therefore prohibiting Mr Smith would help ensure that this information formed part of the safer recruitment protocols.”

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Smith 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 or remorse, does not in my view satisfy the public interest requirement concerning public confidence in the profession.

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended a 5 year review period.

I have considered the panel's comments "The Advice also indicates that there are certain other types of cases where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate. One of these includes fraud or serious dishonesty, and the panel noted that Mr Smith's dishonesty is likely to have a lasting impact on staff at both the School and Woodlands Primary School, Cheshire." The panel has also said "The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period of five years."

In this case, factors mean that allowing a lesser review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the dishonesty found, the lack of full insight or remorse, which could risk repetition of this behaviour.

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

This means that Mr Aaron Smith is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. He may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 14 October 2030, 5 years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Smith remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Mr Aaron Smith has a right of appeal to the High Court within 28 days from the date he 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: 8 October 2025

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