



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Michael Heayes: Professional conduct panel 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 Michael Heayes
Teacher ref number:	8949123
Teacher date of birth:	28 February 1958
TRA reference:	20135
Date of determination:	31 October 2025
Former employer:	Teaching Personnel Ltd, Welwyn Garden City

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 30 to 31 October 2025 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Michael Heayes.

The panel members were Ms Susan Humble (lay panellist – in the chair), Dr Lee Longden (former teacher panellist) and Ms Samantha Haslam (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr James Corrish of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Lee Bridges of Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Heayes was present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the Notice of Proceedings dated 12 June 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Heayes was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute whilst working as a teacher at Noadswood School (the “School”), in that:

1. On 24 June 2021, he downloaded and/or was in possession of and/or made photographs and/or pseudo photographs of children that were inappropriate and/or of a sexual nature.

2. He knowingly downloaded files which he knew would likely contain indecent images of children.

Mr Heayes made no admission of fact in respect of allegations 1 and 2 prior to the hearing.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology and list of key people – pages 3 to 4

Section 2: Notice of Proceedings and response – pages 5 to 9

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 10 to 11

Section 4: TRA documents – pages 12 to 99

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 100 to 101

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

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 TRA did not call any witnesses to give evidence at the hearing.

Mr Heayes was in attendance and gave evidence.

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 Heayes commenced employment with Teaching Personnel Ltd on 6 May 2003.

On 8 March 2021, a referral was made to the police suggesting that offences relating to indecent images of children had been committed, and an IP address was supplied to the police which was linked to Mr Heayes’ home address.

On 24 June 2021, whilst Mr Heayes was working at the School, the police visited Mr Heayes' home address and seized his devices.

A HP computer tower found at his home address was subject to forensic examination and was found to contain illegal files, including 95 Category A files, 249 Category B files and 1803 Category C files.

Mr Heayes attended the police station for a voluntary interview on 2 July 2021.

Mr Heayes was subsequently prosecuted but was found not guilty.

On 5 July 2021, a referral was made to the TRA.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

- 1. On 24 June 2021, you downloaded and/or were in possession of and/or made photographs and/or pseudo photographs of children that were inappropriate and/or of a sexual nature.**

The panel proceeded on the basis that Mr Heayes denied this allegation.

The panel considered the printout of the PNC record dated 12 December 2022. The panel noted that Mr Heayes was charged with the following 3 offences:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

The panel also had sight of Mr Heayes' Microsoft Edge/Internet Explorer history, and torrent active transfers. The panel noted that Mr Heayes had accessed and downloaded multiple torrent files.

The panel considered the police report provided within the bundle. The report set out that a referral was made to the police on 8 March 2021, and an IP address was supplied which linked to Mr Heayes' home address. [REDACTED] visited Mr Heayes' home address on 24 June 2021 and removed Mr Heayes' laptop and desktop computer. The devices were subject to a forensic triage and Mr Heayes' computer was found to contain apparent indecent images and was submitted for a full digital forensic examination.

The report set out that following the full examination, Mr Heayes' computer tower was found to contain a considerable amount of illegal files. These were detailed in the report as follows:

- *'Category A- 71x images & 24x videos. Total 95x Cat A files.'*
- *Category B- 169x images & 80x videos. Total 249x Cat B files.*
- *Category C- 1504x images & 299x videos. Total 1803x Cat C files.'*

The report detailed that there were 983 prohibited images of children.

The report stated that the police also recovered search terms Mr Heayes had used indicative of those known to be used to locate indecent images of children on the internet.

Mr Heayes attended the police station for a voluntary interview on 2 July 2021. The record of interview, which Mr Heayes accepted in oral evidence was an accurate one, detailed that Mr Heayes was informed that the police had received a notification that caused officers to suspect that indecent images of children had been made available on the internet through peer to peer sharing addresses, via an IP address that was found to be based at Mr Heayes' home address. Mr Heayes was told that a HP computer tower found at his home contained indecent images of children. Mr Heayes confirmed his home address in that interview and that he was responsible for the HP computer tower and any content on it, and that although his [REDACTED] had access to the computer, he was the only one using 'peer to peer'.

The report detailed that Mr Heayes stated that he used 'peer to peer' mostly for music and movies but that he had also downloaded pornography but would try to delete any indecent images. Mr Heayes stated that indecent images of children would have been downloaded on 2 occasions, firstly when he downloaded 1970's pornography from a business called '[REDACTED]', which had a folder within the zip file he downloaded containing a load of 'torrents', and he clicked on them to see what they were and they were child pornography. Mr Heayes stated that there was one folder from his download containing indecent images of children. Secondly, he had downloaded indecent images through a file download called 'hidden chan'.

In oral evidence Mr Heayes acknowledged that he had downloaded the illegal images and had accessed illegal and inappropriate images of children of a sexual nature but submitted that he did not intend to do so. Mr Heayes indicated that if, on opening a file, he found it to contain an inappropriate image of a child of a sexual nature he would, on recognising the content as falling within that bracket, delete it.

Mr Heayes confirmed that he had been the subject of a criminal prosecution in connection with the images which had been found on his computer and that the outcome

of that prosecution was that he had been found not guilty. The fact that that was the outcome of the criminal proceedings was not contested by the TRA.

Mr Heayes asserted within his oral evidence that the hearing bundle did not contain some information which had been before the Court in the criminal prosecution and that, he said, that documentation indicated, amongst other things, that 99% of the illegal images found were images reassembled by the technical expert from “parsed” content rather than complete images.

Mr Heayes said he did not disagree with the categorisation of these images but stated that the police and forensic report, as it was before the panel, was entirely unclear on which of the items identified were fragments of file as opposed to files. Mr Heayes submitted that it was inappropriate to act based on the numbers of images cited. Mr Heayes submitted it was essential to note that these images were not on his computer but the fragments of them were.

Mr Heayes did not dispute that he had downloaded the inappropriate images or that he had accessed certain images and that they included inappropriate photographs and pseudo photographs of children of a sexual nature. Mr Heayes was clear though that the downloads were unintentional and that on his accessing the illegal images of children and becoming aware of the content he deleted them.

In reaching this decision the panel carefully considered all Mr Heayes’ arguments, including his submissions that a large part of those images were fragments of files (though it noted it had very limited direct evidence before it to support his contention in that regard).

The panel carefully considered all of the evidence before it. The panel noted that it was clear from the evidence and acknowledged by Mr Heayes:

- (a) that Mr Heayes was working as a teacher at the School on 24 June 2021 and indeed was at the School and teaching on that day
- (b) that photographs and/or pseudo photographs of children that were inappropriate and/or of a sexual nature had been downloaded by Mr Heayes,
- (c) that Mr Heayes had accessed one or more of those images, Mr Heayes’ position being that on accessing them and establishing the nature of the content he would delete those images (and any related images)
- (d) that these images, or at least the constituent parts of these images, remained on Mr Heayes’ computer, on 24 June 2021

The panel noted that it had no evidence before it that Mr Heayes had, on 24 June 2021, downloaded or made photographs either as alleged or at all. The panel therefore found that part of the allegation unproven.

The panel found the balance of the allegation, being that on 24 June 2021 Mr Heayes was in possession of photographs and/or pseudo photographs of children that were inappropriate and/or of a sexual nature, proven on the balance of probabilities.

The panel noted that this would have been its finding whether or not those images were fragmented but in any event it had limited evidence regarding which, if any, of the images were “*parsed*”.

The panel therefore found allegation 1 partially proven, as above.

2. You knowingly downloaded files which you knew would likely contain indecent images of children.

The panel noted that Mr Heayes denied ever having downloaded indecent images of children knowingly and proceeded in its wider consideration of the evidence on that basis.

The panel carefully considered all the documents before it, including the findings in the police report.

The panel noted its findings in Allegation 1 and that Mr Heayes’ computer was found by the police to contain a considerable number of illegal files including:

- *‘Category A- 71x images & 24x videos. Total 95x Cat A files.*
- *Category B- 169x images & 80x videos. Total 249x Cat B files.*
- *Category C- 1504x images & 299x videos. Total 1803x Cat C files.’*

This included 983 prohibited images of children as well as what were described by the police as search terms indicative of those known to be used to locate indecent images of children on the internet.

The panel again considered the content of the record of the voluntary police station interview of Mr Heayes on 2 July 2021.

The record of the interview set out that, during his interview, Mr Heayes acknowledged that there were indecent images of children on his device that he had downloaded but that he believed he had deleted them.

Mr Heayes stated that indecent images of children would have been downloaded on 2 occasions, firstly when he downloaded 1970’s pornography from ‘[REDACTED]’, which

had a folder containing indecent images of children, and secondly, through a file download called 'hidden chan' which contained indecent images.

Mr Heayes stated that he would have deleted any category A-C indecent images and that he tended to click on things to download, go back a day later and see what he had. Mr Heayes stated that indecent images of children were uncovered from time to time and that he deleted them, and quite often if the name of a file came up and he could tell it would contain indecent images he would delete it before it had even downloaded.

The panel noted that Mr Heayes admitted that he had downloaded indecent images, and that he stated that they would be downloaded within other files from time to time, during his police interview.

In oral evidence, Mr Heayes repeated that he had never sought to or knowingly downloaded illegal content including indecent images of children.

Mr Heayes also clarified in evidence that the 'hidden chan' download had occurred just on one occasion. Mr Heayes explained that the result of the download was a number of files and then when he tried to open one, he had opened all of them as they were torrent files.

Mr Heayes confirmed that he had been using torrent sites to download music but did also use them to download pornography though never knowingly child pornography. Mr Heayes stated that he would on occasion download pornography peer-to-peer i.e. from another person via "pirate bay". Mr Heayes stated that he would not necessarily know the content of that pornography before it was downloaded saying *"you don't always get what you think you are going to get"*.

Mr Heayes described that on a number of occasions he would download files which simply had a number as a file name. He stated that on occasion that could result in child pornography being downloaded but emphasised this was unusual.

Mr Heayes stated that, in his barrister's summing up in the Criminal Court, they had said that 99% of the indecent images of children alleged to be on his computer were in the form of fragments. Mr Heayes said that the police reports had been totally upfront about that point but that was not apparent from the documents in the panel's bundle. Mr Heayes said that on the day the police picked up his computer he had been working at the School but that the dates with regard to most of the downloads as they were cited in evidence were wrong.

In response to the panel's question as to whether he reported any of the indecent images of children which he had downloaded, Mr Heayes informed the panel that he had not but that he had consulted a colleague who was an [REDACTED] and that this individual had informed him that he should simply delete it and that there was no point in reporting it as the police knew about it already.

The panel had sight of a table setting out a record of the Google searches Mr Heayes had made on his device which had been disclosed by the forensic search. Mr Heayes did not seek to contest the validity of this data. The panel noted the following search terms in particular:

- *'skinny teen masturbating'*
- *'skinny teen'*
- *'young Lolita blowjob redhead'*
- *'teen pussy dvd'*
- *'russian teen pussy' on 19 February 2021*
- *'fiona cooper schoolgirl pussy' on 8 May 2021*
- *'horseandteengirls'*

Mr Heayes did not contest that these were the search terms knowingly used by him to download material.

Mr Heayes' position in evidence was that the term "teen" was commonly understood in pornographic terms to refer to someone of age 18-22. Mr Heayes also submitted that his understanding was that any searches conducted in Google would only download legal content as Google was safe and well monitored. Mr Heayes also clarified his understanding that the 'fiona cooper' website was a website in which adults dressed up as opposed to a website on which children would be present.

Mr Heayes was asked specifically about the search "*young Lolita blowjob redhead*" and whether there was a risk that such a search may result in illegal content being downloaded. Mr Heayes responded that there was "*no risk at all*" and that these were Google searches and that "*Google is well policed and Google is safe ground*" and that "*any responses would suggest the 18 to 22 age group*".

In response to the question "*isn't 'Lolita' used as a search term for an under 18 year old*" Mr Heayes responded, "*not on Google*".

The panel carefully considered the search terms used. The panel noted that it would consider that the word 'Lolita' in particular would be commonly understood by people to refer to a child. The panel noted that the search conducted by Mr Heayes referred to a "young Lolita" which it considered suggested a search for content of a sexual nature concerning a young child.

The panel did not find Mr Heayes' explanation plausible that he believed that the use of the search engine Google would inevitably result in only legal content being produced.

Further the panel did not find it likely that the insertion of the phrase “*young Lolita blowjob redhead*” into any search engine would be a search designed to procure legal content. Whilst making no finding as to how the term “teen” is used in pornography generally, the panel’s observation was that the basic definition of the phrase was a person between the age of 13 and 19 (and that clearly children formed the main part of that bracket).

The panel considered that the use of these search terms, on the balance of probabilities, would be likely to give rise to the download of files containing indecent images of children. The panel considered that the search terms appeared to be aimed at identifying sexual content of children and noted that this was consistent with the police report’s findings. Whilst carefully considering all the evidence, including Mr Heayes’ submissions, the panel formed the view, on the balance of probabilities, that any reasonable person would consider that in submitting the search terms used it was likely that files containing indecent images of children would be downloaded and that Mr Heayes would have known this when he chose to input the searches to download the files.

The panel particularly noted the evidence within the police report that on 26 May 2021 timed at 15.39.44 it appeared that Mr Heayes had downloaded a torrent file entitled “Master Film Lolita Special.avi”. Again, the panel considered that, on the balance of probabilities, Mr Heayes would have known when downloading this file that it would likely contain indecent images of children.

The panel carefully considered all the evidence and its findings above and found that, on the balance of probabilities, the TRA had demonstrated that Mr Heayes, whilst working as a teacher at Noadswood School, had knowingly downloaded files which he knew would be likely to contain indecent images of children.

The panel found allegation 2 proven, on the balance of probabilities.

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

Having found part 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 Heayes, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Heayes 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
 - not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- 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 Heayes' 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 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 was relevant.

The panel noted that although the allegations took place outside the education setting, they were relevant to Mr Heayes' position as a teacher in that the panel had concluded that he had been in possession of indecent images of children and had knowingly downloaded files which he knew would likely contain indecent images of children.

The panel was clear that this could lead to pupils, whom he would come into contact with on a daily basis in his role as a teacher, being exposed to or influenced by his behaviour in a harmful way and that the attitudes revealed by the allegations found proven could affect the way he carried out his teaching role.

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

In relation to whether Mr Heayes' 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 Heayes' 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 Heayes was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the panel found that the offence of 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 was relevant.

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

The panel considered that Mr Heayes' conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher, and of Mr Heayes in particular. The panel considered that the content which it had found proven, including that Mr Heayes had knowingly downloaded files that he knew would be likely to contain indecent images of children would be extremely disturbing for any pupil, parent or other in the community. The panel considered that Mr Heayes' actions were a long way below the high standards which the public were entitled to expect of teachers.

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Heayes' 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 the declaring and upholding of proper standards of conduct.

In light of the panel's findings against Mr Heayes, which involved possession of photos and/or pseudo photographs of children and knowingly downloading files which he knew would likely contain indecent images of children, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Heayes 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 Heayes 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 Heayes in the profession. The panel took into account that it had been provided with no evidence of any previous allegations or findings of wrongdoing.

Mr Heayes provided no evidence as to his ability as an educator.

The panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Heayes 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 Heayes.

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

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

- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- 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;

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 had found on balance of probabilities that Mr Heayes' actions in knowingly downloading files which he knew would likely contain indecent images of children, were deliberate.

There was no evidence that Mr Heayes was acting under extreme duress.

Mr Heayes did not demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel had no evidence that the incidents were out of character.

Mr Heayes was given several opportunities to indicate what, if anything, he would do differently in the future and to provide whatever evidence in mitigation he wished to provide. Mr Heayes declined to provide any evidence of mitigation or remorse; rather Mr Heayes maintained his innocence of any wrongdoing.

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would not be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order. Recommending that the publication of adverse findings would be sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Mr Heayes 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 Heayes. The fact that Mr Heayes had been found to have knowingly downloaded files that would likely contain indecent images of children and the obvious safeguarding risks arising from this as well as the need to maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold appropriate standards were significant factors 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.

One such type of case which the panel considered relevant was 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 offence types 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. None of the listed characteristics were engaged by the panel's findings.

The panel again considered that it had found proven that Mr Heayes had knowingly downloaded files that he knew would contain indecent images of children. The panel noted that it did not consider Mr Heayes had provided any plausible explanation for this including with regard to the search terms which he had utilised.

The panel noted that Mr Heayes had provided no evidence of insight or remorse or mitigation, and the panel considered that the risk of repetition of the behaviour was on the face of it a substantial one. The panel took into account that Mr Heayes had not previously been accused of misconduct so far as it was aware.

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 to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring

the profession into disrepute. In this case, the panel has found allegation 1 partially proven, I have therefore put those unproven matters entirely from my mind.

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

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Heayes 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
 - not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- 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 Heayes fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding which involved possession of photos and/or pseudo photographs of children and knowingly downloading files which Mr Heayes knew would likely contain indecent images of 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 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 Heayes 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 Mr Heayes, which involved possession of photos and/or pseudo photographs of children and knowingly downloading files which he knew would likely contain indecent images of children, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.” A prohibition order would therefore prevent such a risk from being present in the future.

I have also taken into account the panel’s comments on insight and remorse, which the panel sets out as follows, “Mr Heayes was given several opportunities to indicate what, if anything, he would do differently in the future and to provide whatever evidence in mitigation he wished to provide. Mr Heayes declined to provide any evidence of mitigation or remorse; rather Mr Heayes maintained his innocence of any wrongdoing.” 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 public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Heayes were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the finding involving indecent images of 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 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 Heayes 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 Heayes in the profession. The panel took into account that it had been provided with no evidence of any previous allegations or findings of wrongdoing.”

“Mr Heayes provided no evidence as to his ability as an educator.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Heayes 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 following comments;

“The panel noted that although the allegations took place outside the education setting, they were relevant to Mr Heayes’ position as a teacher in that the panel had concluded that he had been in possession of indecent images of children and had knowingly downloaded files which he knew would likely contain indecent images of children.”

“The panel was clear that this could lead to pupils, whom he would come into contact with on a daily basis in his role as a teacher, being exposed to or influenced by his behaviour in a harmful way and that the attitudes revealed by the allegations found proven could affect the way he carried out his teaching role.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding that “The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Heayes. The fact that Mr Heayes had been found to have knowingly downloaded files that would likely contain indecent images of children and the obvious safeguarding risks arising from this as well as the need to maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold appropriate standards were significant factors in forming that opinion.”

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Heayes 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 evidence of 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 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.

One such type of case which the panel considered relevant was any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph

or images or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, including one off incidents.”

The panel has also said “The panel noted that Mr Heayes had provided no evidence of insight or remorse or mitigation, and the panel considered that the risk of repetition of the behaviour was on the face of it a substantial one. The panel took into account that Mr Heayes had not previously been accused of misconduct so far as it was aware.”

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, the lack of evidence of either insight or remorse and the risk of repetition.

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 Mr Michael Heayes 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 him, I have decided that Mr Heayes shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of his eligibility to teach.

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

Mr Heayes 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 'S Buxcey', with a horizontal line extending from the start of the signature.

Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey

Date: 5 November 2025

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