



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Ms Ruqaiyah Akhtar: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

November 2025

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Summary of evidence	5
Documents	5
Witnesses	5
Decision and reasons	6
Findings of fact	6
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	16
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	20

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

Teacher: Ms Ruqaiyah Akhtar

Teacher ref number: 0745807

Teacher date of birth: 2 June 1983

TRA reference: 20234

Date of determination: 12 November 2025

Former employer: Haberdashers' Crayford Academy, Kent

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ("the panel") of the Teaching Regulation Agency ("the TRA") convened on 10 to 12 November 2025 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Ms Akhtar.

The panel members were Mrs Beverley Williams (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mr Carl Lygo (lay panellist) and Ms Wendy Shannon (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Nicholas West of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Lee Bridges, instructed by Kingsley Napley solicitors.

Ms Akhtar 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 set out in the notice of proceedings dated 5 June 2025.

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

1. Whilst she was employed at Kingsford Community School between September 2013 and September 2014, she:
 - a) engaged in conversations of an inappropriate and/or sexual nature with Pupil A; and/or
 - b) permitted Pupil A to touch her breast and/or did not report Pupil A touching her breast; and/or
 - c) exchanged personal mobile phone numbers with Pupil A; and/or
 - d) exchanged text messages with Pupil A of an inappropriate and/or sexual nature; and/or
 - e) allowed Pupil A to visit her home; and/or
 - f) engaged in sexual intercourse with Pupil A.
2. Whilst she was employed at Harris Boys Academy she:
 - a) sent one or more inappropriate and/or topless pictures of herself to Pupil A (a former pupil of Kingsford Community School) in or around 2017; and/or
 - b) engaged in a sexual relationship with Pupil A (former pupil of Kingsford Community School) in or around 2015 and/or 2017 and/or 2020.
3. She sent Pupil A messages stating, 'But what you need to do is say to them that you made it up and you were angry and delete anything you have' and/or 'Delete the fkn messages and pictures now', or words to that effect.
4. She did not disclose the following to Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy School until 11 January 2021:
 - a) that in or around the summer of 2020 a former pupil (Pupil A) was making allegations of grooming; and/or
 - b) that in or around the summer of 2020 she was being blackmailed/threatened by Pupil A and that she had reported the conduct to Police.

5. Her conduct as set out at allegations 1a and/or 1b above and/or 1c and/or 1d and/or 1e and/or 1f and/or 2a and/or 2b was sexually motivated.
6. Her conduct as set out at allegations 1a and/or 1b and/or 1d and/or 1f and/or 2a and/or 2b was sexual in nature.
7. At the time of her conduct in allegations 1 and/or 2 above, she knew, or ought to have been aware, that Pupil A was vulnerable.
8. Her conduct as set out at allegations 3 and/or 4a and/or 4b above:
 - a) was dishonest; and/or
 - b) demonstrated a lack of integrity

Ms Akhtar made no formal admission of fact in respect of allegations 1(a)-(f), 2(a), 2(b), 3, 4(a), 4(b), 5, 6, 7, 8(a) or 8(b).

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 4 to 6

Section 2: Notice of hearing and response to notice of hearing – pages 7 to 19

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 20 to 51

Section 4: TRA documents – pages 52 to 504

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 505 to 533

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 2020 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]

Pupil A

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Ms Akhtar commenced employment at Kingsford Community School ('the School') on 1 September 2013.

Between September 2013 and September 2014, Ms Akhtar was Pupil A's form tutor.

On 29 January 2015, Pupil A was permanently excluded from the School.

Between 2015 and 2017, Ms Akhtar allegedly engaged in a sexual relationship with Pupil A and sent him topless pictures.

On 15 May 2020, Ms Akhtar applied for a role at Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy ('Haberdashers' Academy').

During the summer of 2020, Pupil A made allegations of grooming and Ms Akhtar reported Pupil A to the police for blackmailing her. She allegedly did not inform Haberdashers' Academy of these incidents.

On 26 August 2021, the matter was referred to the TRA.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you not proved, for these reasons:

- 1. Whilst you were employed at Kingsford Community School between September 2013 and September 2014, you:**
 - a) engaged in conversations of an inappropriate and/or sexual nature with Pupil A; and/or**
 - b) permitted Pupil A to touch your breast and/or did not report Pupil A touching your breast; and/or**
 - c) exchanged personal mobile phone numbers with Pupil A; and/or**

- d) exchanged text messages with Pupil A of an inappropriate and/or sexual nature; and/or**
- e) allowed Pupil A to visit your home; and/or**
- f) engaged in sexual intercourse with Pupil A.**

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Pupil A, who stated that he was quite flirty with Ms Akhtar whilst he was in school, and she told him about her past relationships and would ask him about his relationship experiences. Pupil A stated that he would ask Ms Akhtar questions about her sex life. Pupil A stated that he could not remember *“all the details”* about their conversations, but they *“would talk about sex quite a lot”*. Pupil A stated that on one occasion he called Ms Akhtar over to where he was sitting and she came over. Pupil A stated that Ms Akhtar was speaking to him, and her breasts were quite close to him, so he *“pinched one and she didn’t say anything, she just smiled and laughed”*. Pupil A stated that after a few weeks of him being sent to her classroom for misbehaving, they exchanged mobile numbers and began texting each other *“quite frequently”*. Pupil A stated that he arranged to visit Ms Akhtar’s house and after that visited her house almost every day. He stated that at first, they would *“just meet to chat informally and be flirty with each other but it did eventually develop into us having sexual intercourse”*. Pupil A stated, *“Sexual intercourse would happen on rare occasions whilst I was a student at the School”*.

The panel questioned Pupil A’s recollection of dates during his oral evidence. The documentary evidence available to the panel included a police report dated 20 October 2020, and a LADO referral form dated 13 November 2020 in which Pupil A stated, *“I was 16 at the time where me and my tutor was exchanging pictures and visiting her at her apartment at the time in [REDACTED]...we would meet up and have sex”*. The panel confirmed Pupil A’s date of birth during his oral evidence and determined that Pupil A would not have turned 16 years old until [REDACTED].

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A, who stated that Pupil A had disclosed that he had been in a sexual relationship with Ms Akhtar when he was 16 years old.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B who stated, *“I understood that Pupil A had explained that the sexual relationship began when he was 16 years old. Therefore, there was no suggestion, taking the allegations of Pupil A into account, that there was any sexual relationship or inappropriate contact between Pupil A and Ruqaiyah Akhtar during his time at the School, as Ruqaiyah Akhtar was no longer working at the school at the time Pupil A turned 16 years old”*.

The panel considered the written statement of Ms Akhtar which was disclosed to Witness C on or around January 2021. Ms Akhtar’s evidence was consistent that, between

September 2013 and September 2014, there was no inappropriate contact or communications with Pupil A, and they did not exchange personal mobile phone numbers or text messages or have sex, and he did not visit her home address between these dates.

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence available to support Pupil A's allegations that there was any inappropriate contact or communication with Ms Akhtar between September 2013 and September 2014. Pupil A clarified during his oral evidence that any such conduct took place whilst he was 16 which would have been in or after [REDACTED].

The panel therefore found allegations 1(a) to 1(f) not proven.

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

2. Whilst you were employed at Harris Boys Academy you:

- a) sent one or more inappropriate and/or topless pictures of yourself to Pupil A (a former pupil of Kingsford Community School) in or around 2017; and/or**

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Pupil A, who stated that Ms Akhtar sent him "*nude photographs of herself on a regular basis*", which he recalled included photographs of her breasts and genitalia. Pupil A confirmed he only had limited screenshots because his phone was seized by the police, which contained all of the messages and photos and which he has never recovered. Pupil A also stated, "*There were many more photos than this but they have been lost on previous phones*".

The panel considered the written statement of Ms Akhtar which was shared with Witness C in or around January 2021 and stated, "*2017 Nov – Pictures were exchanged between us*". The panel noted that Ms Akhtar's evidence was supported by contemporaneous documentary evidence in the form of screenshots of a WhatsApp conversation between Ms Akhtar and Pupil A on 13 August 2020 which included a screenshot of three thumbnail pictures which were "*Modified 23 Nov 2017*".

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness C who stated that Ms Akhtar shared with him a number of screenshots and messages that she had shared with Pupil A, and he had seen thumbnails of topless images of Ms Akhtar that she had sent to Pupil A. Witness C confirmed in his oral evidence that he had seen the original thumbnail images and these were "*nude pictures*" of Ms Akhtar.

The panel further noted an email from Individual A dated 13 April 2022 which stated, "*I have been sent 3 pictures which the complainant states were sent to him in 2015.*"

However these pictures appear to be created in December 2015, however not sent to complainant until 23 of November 2017”.

Based on all of the available evidence, the panel was satisfied that Ms Akhtar had sent one or more inappropriate and/or topless pictures of herself to Pupil A in or around 2017.

The panel therefore found allegation 2(a) proven.

b) engaged in a sexual relationship with Pupil A (former pupil of Kingsford Community School) in or around 2015 and/or 2017 and/or 2020.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Pupil A who stated, *“Almost immediately after my exclusion from the School, I was visiting Ms Akhtar’s house and having sex with her every day. It was exclusively sexual and I would describe it as having been a ‘friends with benefits’ situation”.* Pupil A further explained, *“I believe that the relationship went on for about six to seven months in total. We then broke up [REDACTED] and that she could not see me anymore. I later found out that she was having an affair with somebody closer to her age, but after they broke up we got back together for a brief period (about one or two years after we initially broke up)”.* During Pupil A’s oral evidence, he confirmed that he recommenced a sexual relationship with Ms Akhtar in *“around 2019 or 2020”.*

The panel considered the written statement of Ms Akhtar which was shared with Witness C in January 2021 and stated, in *“Late 2017 – met once at my new apartment. We watched movies and talked. This led to sex”.* Ms Akhtar’s statement also refers to *“an argument [REDACTED]”* in August 2020 suggesting to the panel that she was still engaging in a sexual relationship with Pupil A at this time.

The panel considered that there was sufficient evidence to find that Ms Akhtar did engage in a sexual relationship with Pupil A in 2017 and 2020. The panel did not consider there to be sufficient evidence to make any finding of fact regarding a sexual relationship between Ms Akhtar and Pupil A in 2015.

The panel therefore found allegation 2(b) proven.

3. You sent Pupil A messages stating, ‘But what you need to do is say to them that you made it up and you were angry and delete anything you have’ and/or ‘Delete the fkn messages and pictures now’, or words to that effect.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Pupil A, who stated that he could not remember exactly what date the WhatsApp messages were received from Ms Akhtar but that one of them stated, *“delete the fkn messages and pictures now”.*

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence in the form of screenshots of WhatsApp messages between Ms Akhtar and Pupil A.

The panel noted that Ms Akhtar had sent Pupil A messages stating, *"But what you need to do is say to them that you made it up and you were angry and delete anything you have"* and *"Delete the fkn messages and pictures now"*.

The panel therefore found allegation 3 proven.

4. You did not disclose the following to Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy School until 11 January 2021:

- a) that in or around the summer of 2020 a former pupil (Pupil A) was making allegations of grooming; and/or**
- b) that in or around the summer of 2020 you were being blackmailed/threatened by Pupil A and that you had reported the conduct to Police.**

The panel had sight of a police incident report dated 20 October 2020 which recorded Pupil A reporting to the police that he was in a sexual relationship with Ms Akhtar in his school and college years.

The panel noted Ms Akhtar's written representations that she provided to Witness C in or around January 2021 where Ms Akhtar stated, *"I contacted the police on 23/8/20 and told them I was being threatened and blackmailed and if I didn't give him money, he would report me for grooming"*. Ms Akhtar also stated, in *"2020 August – He told me he was going to accuse me of grooming"*. This is supported by correspondence from Ms Akhtar's legal representative dated 24 August 2022, which confirmed that she accepted allegation four which was drafted as, *"In or about August or September 2020, failed to disclose to Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy School that you were facing allegations of grooming and/or were being blackmailed by Pupil A so they could undertake a safeguarding risk assessment"*.

The panel considered the WhatsApp messages between Ms Akhtar and Pupil A and noted that Ms Akhtar said to Pupil A *"you say you love me but you let someone convince you I groomed you"*.

The panel noted that Pupil A admitted during his oral evidence that he asked Ms Akhtar to *"pay me money and I won't take you to court – I was trying to blackmail her"*, admitting that he now appreciated it was not the right thing to do but he was not in the best state of mind at the time.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A, who stated that in January 2021 Ms Akhtar reported to Individual B at Haberdashers' Academy that she had been interviewed by the police in respect of concerns raised by Pupil A, regarding that he had been involved in a sexual relationship with Ms Akhtar since he was 16 years old.

Witness A stated that Ms Akhtar also informed Individual B that she had reported concerns to the police in August 2020 as her relationship with Pupil A had ended and he was blackmailing her.

The panel considered the investigation meeting transcript dated 11 June 2021. The panel noted that Ms Akhtar stated at this meeting that her relationship with Pupil A was short lived, and he attempted to threaten and blackmail her for money and demanded she gave him her new car in July 2020. Ms Akhtar stated at the meeting that she reported Pupil A in August 2020 as, due to the level of abuse, threats and blackmail, she was concerned for her safety.

Ms Akhtar stated that at the time of her application and appointment to Haberdashers' Academy no formal allegation of grooming had been made and the allegations Pupil A was threatening to make were wholly without foundation and contrived as a threat as part of his attempt to blackmail her. She stated that she had notified the police.

Ms Akhtar stated that once she was aware Pupil A had made allegations against her to the police in January 2021, she promptly contacted the Designated Safeguarding Lead to make her aware of the allegations.

Based on all of the available evidence, the panel was satisfied that Ms Akhtar did not disclose to Haberdashers' Academy the allegations of grooming, threats, or threat of blackmail made by Pupil A during the summer of 2020, until 11 January 2021.

The panel therefore found allegations 4(a) and 4(b) proven.

5. Your conduct as set out at allegations 1a and/or 1b above and/or 1c and/or 1d and/or 1e and/or 1f and/or 2a and/or 2b was sexually motivated.

6. Your conduct as set out at allegations 1a and/or 1b and/or 1d and/or 1f and/or 2a and/or 2b was sexual in nature.

The panel considered Ms Akhtar's written representations dated 24 August 2022. Ms Akhtar accepted that the nature of her relationship with Pupil A from January 2020 to August 2020 was sexually motivated.

The panel's attention was drawn to section 78 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and to the cases of *Sait v The General Medical Council [2018]*, *Basson v General Medical Council [2018]* and *The General Medical Council v Haris [2021]* by the legal adviser.

The panel considered whether the conduct was sexually motivated. It noted that in *Basson* it was stated that, "[a] sexual motive means that the conduct was done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a sexual relationship".

The panel was also mindful of the Court of Appeal's conclusion in *Haris*. The Court found in that case that, "[i]n the absence of a plausible innocent explanation for what he did, the

facts spoke for themselves. A sexual motive was plainly more likely than not; I would go so far as to say that that inference was overwhelming.”

The panel considered that Ms Akhtar’s conduct in having sexual intercourse with Pupil A, and sending topless pictures were by their very nature, sexual, and that there was an absence of any alternative, innocent or plausible understanding of her conduct.

The panel considered the evidence, notably the documentary evidence of Ms Akhtar sending Pupil A topless pictures and the acceptance by both Ms Akhtar and Pupil A that they engaged in a sexual relationship.

The panel found that Ms Akhtar had engaged in sexual intercourse with Pupil A on multiple occasions and had sent multiple topless pictures to Pupil A. The panel considered that Ms Akhtar had intentionally engaged in a sexual relationship with Pupil A.

The panel found that Ms Akhtar’s conduct as found proven at allegations 2(a) and 2(b) was conduct of a sexual nature and her conduct was sexually motivated.

The panel therefore found allegations 5 and 6 proven.

7. At the time of you conduct in allegations 1 and/or 2 above, you knew, or ought to have been aware, that Pupil A was vulnerable.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B, who stated that when Pupil A moved to the School, he was “*referred for a special educational needs consultation*” and the decision was made for him to receive support for his learning needs. She stated that a “*large amount of support*” was put in place for Pupil A to engage him with the curriculum.

Witness B further submitted that “*the School made referrals for him to engage with external agencies and Social Services were involved*” and in June 2014, the School made a referral for Pupil A to receive education under an alternative provision, and there had been an increase in Pupil A’s “*involvement with external agencies, including the police*”.

During Witness B’s oral evidence, she accepted Pupil A was vulnerable due to his “*significant behavioural concerns and learning difficulties*”. Witness B accepted that Ms Akhtar would have been aware of Pupil A’s vulnerability in her role as his form tutor as she would have had daily contact with him, although it would have been the School’s Pastoral Support Officer at the School who would have taken on much of the demands relating to Pupil A’s vulnerability.

The panel reflected on whether Pupil A would have continued to have been considered vulnerable as a young adult post-2017 when it found the conduct at allegation 2 proven. The panel noted comments from Individual C at a LADO meeting on 20 January 2021

who stated, Pupil A *“had not suffered any trauma and didn’t show signs of someone who was the victim of emotional abuse”*. The panel further noted a record of a LADO ASV meeting dated 27 January 2021 which recorded, *“Chair asked if Pupil A has received support; CAIT advised this has not been provided, but he is not saying that he needs counselling or support”*.

The panel accepted that Ms Akhtar knew or ought to have known that Pupil A was vulnerable as a child. At the time of the conduct found proven at allegation 2, Pupil A was over 18 years old, but the panel was satisfied that he would have continued to be considered vulnerable. Ms Akhtar was 16 years older than Pupil A and there was a historical position of power from her previous role as his form tutor at the School. The panel therefore considered that there was evidence that Pupil A was vulnerable due to the age difference and power imbalance with Ms Akhtar, although this would have been at the lower end of the scale of vulnerability, and Ms Akhtar was aware or ought to have been aware of Pupil A’s vulnerability as a young adult.

The panel therefore found allegation 7 proven.

8. Your conduct as set out at allegations 3 and/or 4a and/or 4b above:

- a) was dishonest; and/or**
- b) demonstrated a lack of integrity**

The panel first considered whether Ms Akhtar had demonstrated a lack of integrity.

The panel was assisted by guidance from the case of *Wingate & Anor v The Solicitors Regulation Authority*, which states *“honesty is a basic moral quality which is expected of all members of society. It involves being truthful about important matters [...] Telling lies about things that matter [...] [is] generally regarded as dishonest conduct [...]”*.

The panel considered that Ms Akhtar had intentionally told Pupil A to delete the messages and pictures she had sent knowing the repercussions if he had reported the incident. The panel also felt that there was no good reason for Ms Akhtar to withhold from Haberdashers’ Academy that Pupil A had reported her for grooming and that she had reported him for blackmailing, and that she would have known that full disclosure of these events would have been required.

The panel therefore felt that Ms Akhtar had failed to act with integrity in relation to allegations 3, 4(a) and 4(b).

The panel then went onto consider whether Ms Akhtar had acted dishonestly in respect of allegations 3, 4(a) and 4(b). In reaching its decision on this, the panel considered the case of *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockford*.

The panel firstly sought to ascertain the actual state of Ms Akhtar’s knowledge or belief as to the facts. The panel noted that Ms Akhtar admitted that she failed to notify

Haberdashers' Academy that she was facing blackmail from Pupil A and that Pupil A was threatening to make allegations of grooming. The panel noted that Ms Akhtar had not informed Haberdashers' Academy that she had contacted the police in respect of the blackmail.

The panel considered that Ms Akhtar would have known that these incidents should have been disclosed and she deliberately and intentionally failed to disclose this information. The panel noted the oral evidence of Witness C who stated, Ms Akhtar *"only told us when the police told her that they were going to inform us, up until then she had kept it hidden"*.

The panel considered whether Ms Akhtar had acted dishonestly according to the objective standards of ordinary decent people. The panel was mindful that professionals are not expected to be *"paragons of virtue"* but are held to higher standards appropriate to the profession. The panel felt that a teacher should have known to have disclosed these incidents and that the safeguarding of pupils could have been impacted. The panel considered that Ms Akhtar had not acted truthfully in failing to provide this information, and she was therefore acting dishonestly by failing to do so.

The panel therefore found allegations 8(a) and 8(b) proven.

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

Having found a number 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 Ms Akhtar, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Ms Akhtar 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...

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 Ms Akhtar'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 sexual activity was relevant.

The panel noted that although allegations 2 and 3 took place outside the education setting, it was relevant to Ms Akhtar's position as a teacher in that she had engaged in a sexual relationship with a former pupil.

For these reasons, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Ms Akhtar amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

In relation to whether Ms Akhtar'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.

Although the conduct that the panel found proven occurred after the pupil/teacher relationship between Ms Akhtar and Pupil A had ended, the panel was concerned about Ms Akhtar's conduct in engaging in a sexual relationship with a former pupil, whom she knew was vulnerable, and had a position of authority in her capacity as his form tutor only three years previously. The panel was particularly concerned Ms Akhtar's conduct was inappropriate taking into account the age difference and continuing power imbalance despite Pupil A having turned 18.

The panel was concerned that Ms Akhtar had concealed her previous employment with the School when submitting her application to her new employer at Haberdashers' Academy, and deliberately concealed Pupil A's allegations of grooming, blackmailing and threats against her in summer 2020 until she had no choice but to do so following an invite for a police interview in January 2021.

In considering the issue of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Ms Akhtar'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 Ms Akhtar was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the panel found that the offence of sexual activity was relevant.

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

The panel considered that Ms Akhtar's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

For these reasons, the panel found that Ms Akhtar'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 and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

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

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

In light of the panel's findings against Ms Akhtar, which involved engaging in an inappropriate sexual relationship with a former pupil, sending Pupil A topless pictures, asking Pupil A to delete the messages she had sent him and failing to disclose to Haberdashers' Academy that Pupil A was making allegations of grooming and that she had reported him for blackmail, there was a strong public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public.

The panel made very serious findings that Ms Akhtar's conduct was sexually motivated in forming and maintaining an inappropriate sexual relationship with a former pupil.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Ms Akhtar 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 Akhtar 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 Ms Akhtar in the profession. Whilst there was some character evidence from Individual E, [REDACTED], who was aware of the TRA's investigation that Ms Akhtar had a "*high level of competence in her role*", suggesting that she had ability as an educator, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Ms Akhtar in the profession. The panel considered that Ms Akhtar's behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher, and she sought to exploit her position of trust. The panel considered that retaining Ms Akhtar in the profession could lead to further risk to the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and former pupils.

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. The panel noted that a teacher's behaviour that seeks to exploit their position of trust should be viewed very seriously in terms of its potential influence on pupils and be seen as a possible threat to the public interest.

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

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;

abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);

an abuse of any trust, knowledge, or influence gained through their professional position in order to advance a romantic or sexual relationship with a pupil or former pupil;

sexual misconduct, e.g. involving actions that were sexually motivated or of a sexual nature and/or that use or exploit the trust, knowledge or influence derived from the individual's professional position;

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.

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 Akhtar's actions were not deliberate.

There was no evidence that Ms Akhtar was acting under extreme duress.

The panel was not presented with any evidence that Ms Akhtar demonstrated exceptionally high standards in her personal and professional conduct or contributed significantly to the education sector beyond what would have been expected of a teacher and member of senior leadership with her years of experience.

The panel noted that there was a serious lack of insight and remorse on the part of Ms Akhtar. The panel noted Ms Akhtar's written reflection dated 24 August 2022 which stated, *"it was an ill-advised decision on her part to enter into a relationship with Pupil A"* and she *"acknowledges the risks associated with the relationship"*, noting that it *"opened her up to exploitation, which Pupil A took advantage of when he sought to blackmail her for financial gain"*.

Ms Akhtar also stated *"she accepts that it would have been best practice to have informed her employer immediately of the allegations regardless of her perception of the level of risk posed to her, the Crayford Academy and her pupils. An appropriate notification would have allowed a safeguarding risk assessment to be completed to safeguard not only Mrs Akhtar but other members of the school community"*.

Ms Akhtar's written representations as recently as 17 July 2025 focused solely on the impact that these proceedings have had on her, rather than Pupil A. Ms Akhtar described how she has *"often felt ignored, side-lined, and failed by repeated delays and inconsistencies"* and [REDACTED].

The panel considered that there was a complete failure by Ms Akhtar to recognise the impact of her actions on Pupil A and his family. The panel accepted Pupil A's oral

evidence regarding the impact that Ms Akhtar's conduct has had on him, stating *"because of that whole situation I didn't have family support or communication with family, it is a lot of mental trauma and I still deal with it to this day. It has changed my life. It pushed me to the point I had to push everyone away as I didn't know who to trust"*.

The panel had sight of character references to attest to Ms Akhtar's character, but the panel noted the statements from Individual D, [REDACTED] and Individual E, [REDACTED], did not expressly confirm that they had knowledge of the allegations against Ms Akhtar before the panel and therefore could only be given limited weight.

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 to be sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Ms Akhtar 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 Ms Akhtar. The findings relating to Ms Akhtar's dishonesty, lack of integrity and exploitation of her position of authority as a teacher with a former pupil 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.

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.

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

The panel's findings that Ms Akhtar had deliberately concealed her previous employment at the School when applying to Haberdashers' Academy for her own self-interest, and her direction to Pupil A to delete messages weighed in favour of suggesting a longer period before a review is considered to be appropriate.

The panel found that Ms Akhtar's failure to take responsibility for her actions, provided evidence of a real risk of repetition. The panel was not convinced that if Ms Akhtar were permitted to continue in the teaching profession, that similar conduct would not happen to another former pupil, particularly as Ms Akhtar has shown limited insight into her actions and continues to teach at secondary school level. The panel heard compelling evidence from Pupil A about the impact of Ms Akhtar's conduct, and this undermined the panel's confidence in her ability to maintain safe and appropriate relationships with former pupils in the future.

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 three 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 some 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 some of the allegations not proven, including allegations 1(a) to 1(f). I have therefore put those matters entirely from my mind.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Ms Ruqaiyah Akhtar should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of three years.

In particular, the panel has found that Ms Akhtar 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...

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

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include findings of sexually motivated conduct in forming and maintaining an inappropriate sexual relationship with a former pupil and conduct that was found to be dishonest and to lack integrity.

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 Ms Akhtar 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 Akhtar, which involved engaging in an inappropriate sexual relationship with a former pupil, sending Pupil A topless pictures, asking Pupil A to delete the messages she had sent him and failing to disclose to Haberdashers' Academy that Pupil A was making allegations of grooming and that she had reported him for blackmail, there was a strong public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public." 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 a serious lack of insight and remorse on the part of Ms Akhtar. The panel noted Ms Akhtar's written reflection dated 24 August 2022 which stated, *"it was an ill-advised decision on her part to enter into a relationship with Pupil A"* and she *"acknowledges the risks associated with the relationship"*, noting that it *"opened her up to exploitation, which Pupil A took advantage of when he sought to blackmail her for financial gain"*. In my judgement, the lack 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 Ms Akhtar was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of a sexual and inappropriate relationship with a former pupil, dishonesty and lack of integrity 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 Ms Akhtar herself and the panel comment “The panel was not presented with any evidence that Ms Akhtar demonstrated exceptionally high standards in her personal and professional conduct or contributed significantly to the education sector beyond what would have been expected of a teacher and member of senior leadership with her years of experience.”

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the lack of insight or remorse. The panel has said:

“Ms Akhtar’s written representations as recently as 17 July 2025 focused solely on the impact that these proceedings have had on her, rather than Pupil A. Ms Akhtar described how she has *“often felt ignored, side-lined, and failed by repeated delays and inconsistencies”* and [REDACTED].

The panel considered that there was a complete failure by Ms Akhtar to recognise the impact of her actions on Pupil A and his family. The panel accepted Pupil A’s oral evidence regarding the impact that Ms Akhtar’s conduct has had on him, stating *“because of that whole situation I didn’t have family support or communication with*

family, it is a lot of mental trauma and I still deal with it to this day. It has changed my life. It pushed me to the point I had to push everyone away as I didn't know who to trust".

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding that "The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Ms Akhtar. The findings relating to Ms Akhtar's dishonesty, lack of integrity and exploitation of her position of authority as a teacher with a former pupil were significant factors in forming that opinion."

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Ms Akhtar 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 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 a 3 year 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.

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

The panel's findings that Ms Akhtar had deliberately concealed her previous employment at the School when applying to Haberdashers' Academy for her own self-interest, and her direction to Pupil A to delete messages weighed in favour of suggesting a longer period before a review is considered to be appropriate.

The panel found that Ms Akhtar's failure to take responsibility for her actions, provided evidence of a real risk of repetition. The panel was not convinced that if Ms Akhtar were permitted to continue in the teaching profession, that similar conduct would not happen to another former pupil, particularly as Ms Akhtar has shown limited insight into her actions and continues to teach at secondary school level. The panel heard compelling evidence from Pupil A about the impact of Ms Akhtar's conduct, and this undermined the panel's confidence in her ability to maintain safe and appropriate relationships with former pupils in the future."

However, I have also given significant weight to the following comments from the panel:

"Although the conduct that the panel found proven occurred after the pupil/teacher relationship between Ms Akhtar and Pupil A had ended, the panel was concerned about

Ms Akhtar's conduct in engaging in a sexual relationship with a former pupil, whom she knew was vulnerable, and had a position of authority in her capacity as his form tutor only three years previously. The panel was particularly concerned Ms Akhtar's conduct was inappropriate taking into account the age difference and continuing power imbalance despite Pupil A having turned 18."

"The panel accepted that Ms Akhtar knew or ought to have known that Pupil A was vulnerable as a child. At the time of the conduct found proven at allegation 2, Pupil A was over 18 years old, but the panel was satisfied that he would have continued to be considered vulnerable. Ms Akhtar was 16 years older than Pupil A and there was a historical position of power from her previous role as his form tutor at the School. The panel therefore considered that there was evidence that Pupil A was vulnerable due to the age difference and power imbalance with Ms Akhtar, although this would have been at the lower end of the scale of vulnerability, and Ms Akhtar was aware or ought to have been aware of Pupil A's vulnerability as a young adult."

I disagree with the panel on the recommended period of review, in my view the panel have not given sufficient weight in considering the review period to the finding that Ms Akhtar was in a historical position of trust and power, she had been Pupil A's form tutor three years before starting an inappropriate and sexual relationship with him, when she ought to have known he was vulnerable. I have decided that allowing a three year or lesser review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession, due to the serious nature of the findings, the lack of either insight or remorse, and the risk of repetition.

I have taken into account the Advice, particularly:

"Where a case involved any of the following, it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period:

- 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."

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

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

Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey

Date: 18 November 2025

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