



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Stephen Murphy: Professional Conduct Panel Hearing outcome

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

December 2025

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

Teacher: Mr Stephen Murphy

TRA reference: 20400

Date of determination: 8 December 2025

Former employer: Alsop High School, Liverpool, Merseyside

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 8 December 2025 at Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT, to consider the case of Mr Murphy.

The panel members were Mrs Melissa West (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mr Richard Young (lay panellist) and Mr Philip Jolowicz (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Abigail Trencher of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Zahra Evans of Capsticks LLP solicitors.

Mr Murphy was represented by Mr Nicholas Kennan, Counsel of Cornwall Street Chambers, instructed by Thompsons solicitors.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegation set out in the notice of hearing dated 23 September 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Murphy was guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence, in that:

1. On 9 August 2021 at South Sefton Magistrates' Court, he was convicted of assaulting Child A by beating him on the 5 June 2021.

Mr Murphy made an admission as to the conviction and that his conduct amounted to a conviction of a relevant offence.

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 hearing and response – pages 5 to 47

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 48 to 101

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

Section 5: Teacher's documents – pages 102 to 109

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the hearing, had watched the CCTV video and listened to the recording of the police interview. The panel also read the additional documents that the panel decided to admit.

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the document Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession 2020, (the "Procedures").

Witnesses

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

Mr Murphy gave oral 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.

On 1 September 2003, Mr Murphy commenced his employment as a PE teacher at Alsop High School ("the School").

On 5 June 2021, Mr Murphy allegedly physically assaulted Child A.

On 9 August 2021, Mr Murphy pleaded guilty at the South Sefton Magistrates' Court and was convicted of assault by beating of Child A.

On 6 November 2021, Mr Murphy's employment with the School ceased.

On 11 November 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 allegation against you proved, for these reasons:

- 1. On 9 August 2021 at South Sefton Magistrates' Court, you were convicted of assaulting Child A by beating him on the 5 June 2021.**

Mr Murphy made an admission as to the fact of the conviction.

Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the facts available to it.

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

The panel had before it a certificate of conviction from South Sefton Magistrates' Court, which recorded that Mr Murphy was convicted 9 August 2021 of assaulting Child A by beating him on 5 June 2021.

The panel noted that Mr Murphy pleaded guilty to the offence.

In respect of the conviction above, Mr Murphy was sentenced to a total of 40 hours of unpaid work, 10 days' rehabilitation activity requirement and £85 in costs.

Following examination of the documents before the panel, the panel found allegation 1 proven.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence

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

The panel noted that Mr Murphy admitted he had been convicted of a relevant offence.

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

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

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Murphy 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
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
 - not undermining fundamental British values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect.

The panel concluded that Mr Murphy’s actions were relevant to teaching, working with children and in an education setting. The offence involved an assault on a child and was clearly relevant to Mr Murphy’s role and position of trust as a teacher.

The panel noted that the behaviour involved in committing the offence had an impact on the safety and/or security of a child of school age, Child A.

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

The panel noted that Mr Murphy’s behaviour did not lead to a sentence of imprisonment, which was indicative that the offence was at the less serious end of the possible spectrum.

The panel also considered the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice. This was a case concerning an offence involving violence which the Advice states is likely to be considered a relevant offence.

The panel carefully considered the mitigating circumstances presented on behalf of Mr Murphy. In his oral evidence, [REDACTED]. On the date of the incident, Mr Murphy described a triggering event that led him to attempt to resolve the situation. However, his response was not a momentary lapse in judgment; rather, it involved a sustained loss of control.

The incident lasted approximately eight minutes, occurred in a public setting, and took place in the presence of a younger child. These factors indicate that the behaviour was not fleeting and had a greater potential to impact public confidence.

As set out above, the panel acknowledged that the offence did not result in a custodial sentence and therefore concluded that it fell at the lower end of the spectrum of seriousness. Nevertheless, given the duration of the incident, its occurrence in public, and the presence of a child, the panel concluded that the conviction was sufficiently connected to the teaching profession to be considered relevant.

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

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

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

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

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

In light of the panel's findings against Mr Murphy, which involved the conviction of assault against a child by way of beating, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public.

The panel was satisfied that, notwithstanding its finding that the conviction was relevant to the teaching profession, there was no ongoing risk of repetition or harm to pupils or members of the public.

Mr Murphy had been a teacher for 18 years, including service in a school located in a deprived area, where he would have encountered many challenging pupils. There is no evidence of any previous concerns regarding his conduct towards pupils during that time.

[REDACTED].

[REDACTED].

Mr Murphy expressed what the panel accepted to be sincere and genuine remorse for his actions, which he admitted fully during both the police and court proceedings. In his oral evidence, he explained that he had been under considerable [REDACTED] and frustration due to Child A's escalating behaviour, which he had been unable to moderate despite repeated efforts and engagement with the School.

While the panel did not consider these circumstances to justify the misconduct, [REDACTED]. The panel considered it highly unlikely that similar circumstances would arise in a professional context or with members of the public. Furthermore, given the level of remorse shown and there having been no repetition since the date of the incident, the panel was satisfied that the risk of recurrence, [REDACTED], was minimal.

The panel considered whether public confidence in the teaching profession could be seriously weakened if conduct of the nature found against Mr Murphy was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession. However, the panel concluded that an ordinary, intelligent citizen, fully aware of the circumstances and particulars before the panel, would not regard their confidence in the teaching profession or its regulatory processes as diminished.

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 Murphy was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated. However, again, it was satisfied that given the circumstances and particulars before the panel, the public interest consideration to maintain proper standards did not require prohibition.

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 Murphy in the profession. Mr Murphy provided 2 character references that spoke to his performance as a teacher. The first was from [REDACTED] who wrote:

"Over the entire period of our employment together, Mr Murphy consistently demonstrated exceptional dedication, reliability, and integrity. He was one of the most hardworking and committed members of staff in our department. I consistently found him

to be honest, courteous, and highly professional, conducting himself with a level of responsibility and diligence that set a strong example to others. Mr Murphy is an outstanding Physical Education teacher who delivers high quality, inclusive, and engaging learning experiences for all students. As a Form Tutor, he has provided structure, care, and guidance to the young people under his supervision. He is held in high regard by both students and colleagues. A significant part of his contribution to the school community came from the extensive extra-curricular opportunities he organised and led. These included:

- Overseas Ski trips to a range of different continents
- Outdoor and adventurous activities residentials
- Football Manager of a range of different year groups
- The Duke of Edinburgh Award, for which he led numerous expeditions

Mr Murphy has given countless hours of his own time to ensure that students particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds had access to enriching experiences that built confidence, teamwork, and resilience. His commitment consistently went above the expectations of his role.”

The second character reference was from [REDACTED] who stated:

“During the time I have known him, I have seen him work as a highly experienced and truly exceptional teacher. He has a distinctly child-centred approach, adapting his methods to meet the individual needs of his students. His ability to connect with young people, motivate them, and develop their confidence has positively transformed the lives of many. His professional reputation within the community has always been strong and well-earned.

In terms of his personal qualities, I have always known him to be honest, reliable, and a person of unquestionable integrity. He is deeply community-orientated, consistently looking out for others and contributing wherever he can. His commitment to doing the right thing and ensuring the best for those around him has been evident throughout the many years I have known him.”

For the reasons set out above, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations did not outweigh the public interest in retaining Mr Murphy in the profession.

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. It found however that his misconduct, which did not lead to a custodial sentence, was

towards the less serious side of the spectrum. The panel also noted that the evidence in the police report confirmed that no bruising or other marks had been found on Child A, when they were visited by the police the day after the incident.

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

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;
- the commission of a serious criminal offence, including those that resulted in a conviction or caution, paying particular attention to offences that are 'relevant matters' for the purposes of the Police Act 1997 and criminal record disclosures.

Even though 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 Mr Murphy's actions were not deliberate.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Murphy was acting under extreme duress.

[REDACTED].

[REDACTED].

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, the recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an appropriate response. The panel took into account that violence is one of the factors that may weigh in favour of prohibition with a longer review period. However, it weighed this against all the evidence before it. In particular, the absence of a custodial sentence, no visible marks being found on Child A, [REDACTED], and, that it was a one-off isolated incident.

Given that the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that are not acceptable, and the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession. The panel accepted the

submission made by Mr Murphy's representative, that due to Mr Murphy's standing in the community, publication would have a particularly adverse effect on Mr Murphy and serve as a stain on his reputation. In all the circumstances, the panel did not consider that any useful purpose would be served by prohibiting Mr Murphy from teaching.

The panel concluded that it would not make a recommendation of prohibition.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

In this case, the panel has found all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to a relevant conviction.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that that the findings of a relevant conviction should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Stephen Murphy 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
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
 - not undermining fundamental British values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a teacher being convicted of an offence which involved violent conduct towards a child.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In assessing that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of a relevant conviction, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I

have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Murphy, 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 and safeguard pupils. The panel offers this observation:

“In light of the panel’s findings against Mr Murphy, which involved the conviction of assault against a child by way of beating, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of 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 it sets out as follows:

“Mr Murphy expressed what the panel accepted to be sincere and genuine remorse for his actions, which he admitted fully during both the police and court proceedings. In his oral evidence, he explained that he had been under considerable [REDACTED] and frustration due to Child A’s escalating behaviour, which he had been unable to moderate despite repeated efforts and engagement with the School.

While the panel did not consider these circumstances to justify the misconduct, [REDACTED]. The panel considered it highly unlikely that similar circumstances would arise in a professional context or with members of the public. Furthermore, given the level of remorse shown and there having been no repetition since the date of the incident, the panel was satisfied that the risk of recurrence, [REDACTED], was minimal.”

In my judgement, the degree of remorse identified by the panel means that I accept its assessment that the risk of the repetition of this behaviour is limited. I have therefore given this element some 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 makes the following observation:

“The panel considered whether public confidence in the teaching profession could be seriously weakened if conduct of the nature found against Mr Murphy was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession. However, the panel concluded that an ordinary, intelligent citizen, fully aware of the circumstances and particulars before the panel, would not regard their confidence in the teaching profession or its regulatory processes as diminished.”

I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher receiving a conviction for an offence involving violent conduct towards a child in this case and the negative impact that such a finding may have on the reputation of the profession.

I have had to consider that the public has a high expectation of professional standards of all teachers and that the public might regard a failure to impose a prohibition order as a failure to uphold those high standards. In weighing these considerations, I have had to consider the matter from the point of view of an “ordinary intelligent and well-informed citizen.”

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of a relevant conviction, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr Murphy himself. The panel notes having had the benefit of considering strong character evidence attesting to his commitment to his students and their education from which it can be inferred that he has made a sustained and positive contribution to the sector. The panel also confirms that the events under consideration constituted a one-off, isolated, incident, and provides this observation:

“Mr Murphy had been a teacher for 18 years, including service in a school located in a deprived area, where he would have encountered many challenging pupils. There is no evidence of any previous concerns regarding his conduct towards pupils during that time.”

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

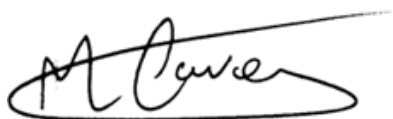
In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the degree of remorse demonstrated by Mr Murphy and minimal risk of repetition as well as the evidence cited of his general good character and positive contribution to the education of young people.

I have also weighed the panel’s concluding comments in my deliberations:

“Given that the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that are not acceptable, and the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession. The panel accepted the submission made by Mr Murphy’s representative, that due to Mr

Murphy's standing in the community, publication would have a particularly adverse effect on Mr Murphy and serve as a stain on his reputation. In all the circumstances, the panel did not consider that any useful purpose would be served by prohibiting Mr Murphy from teaching."

For these reasons, I agree with the panel's recommendation that, while the misconduct found was undoubtedly serious, a prohibition order is not proportionate or in the public interest. I consider that the publication of the findings made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that were not acceptable and that the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Cavey', enclosed within a large, loopy oval stroke.

Decision maker: Marc Cavey

Date: 10 December 2025

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