



Teaching  
Regulation  
Agency

# **Ms Erin Dempsey: Professional conduct panel 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:** Ms Erin Dempsey

**Teacher ref number:** 4243134

**Teacher date of birth:** 1 December 1998

**TRA reference:** 23969

**Date of determination:** 12 December 2025

**Former employer:** Furze Platt Senior School, Berkshire.

## **Introduction**

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 10 to 12 December 2025 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Ms Erin Dempsey.

The panel members were Ms Rachel Kruger (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mrs Clare Russell (teacher panellist) and Dr Louise Wallace (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Jonathan White of Blake Morgan LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Matilda Heselton of Browne Jacobson solicitors.

Ms Dempsey was not 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 hearing dated 29 August 2025.

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

1. She failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Parent A, in that:
  - a. She engaged in inappropriate and/or unprofessional communication with Parent A in that she:
    - i. Suggested to Parent A that some of her colleagues picked on and/or targeted Pupil A;
    - ii. Suggested to Parent A that Pupil A was “not the only one to have issues with [Colleague A]”
    - iii. Suggested to Parent A that Pupil A’s Father attending a meeting would show him “how [Colleague A] and the school view and treat [Pupil A]”.
2. She failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Pupil A, by:
  - a) Providing her number to Pupil A;
  - b) Communicating with Pupil A using her personal mobile number;
  - c) Engaging in one or more phone calls with Pupil A;
  - d) Offering and/or giving Pupil A chocolate on one or more occasions;
  - e) Engaging in inappropriate and/or unprofessional communication with Pupil A in that she:
    - i. Suggested to Pupil A that the school was looking for a reason to suspend him;
    - ii. Suggested to Pupil A that the school treats him poorly;
    - iii. Suggested to Pupil A that he should attend a Spanish lesson because a certain colleague was away;
3. She engaged in inappropriate and/or unprofessional behaviour and/or failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard one or more pupils in that she:
  - a) failed to report that Pupil A had been vaping;
  - b) failed to report that multiple pupils were congregating in one toilet cubicle;

c) shared confidential information regarding pupils at the school with Pupil A and/or Parent A;

d) amended Pupil A's attendance data on one or more occasions;

e) amended Pupil A's records to appear that Pupil A had attended a detention when this was not the case on one or more occasions;

4. Her conduct as may be found proven at allegation 3(c) and/or 3(d) and/or 3(e) was dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

In the absence of a response from the teacher, the allegations were not admitted.

The panel received and accepted the legal advice provided by the legal adviser.

## **Summary of evidence**

### **Documents**

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

Section 1: Chronology and anonymised pupil list – pages 5 to 6

Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 8 to 19

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements – pages 22 to 62

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 64 to 184

Section 5: Teacher documents – page 257

In addition, the panel also received an Application Form dated 8 December 2025, relating to an application to proceed in absence.

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the hearing and the additional document referred to above.

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the Procedures.

### **Witnesses**

The panel heard oral evidence from the following witness called by the presenting officer:

[REDACTED]

## Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Ms Dempsey was employed by Furze Platt Senior School ("the school") as a history teacher from 1 September 2023 until 23 April 2024. Ms Dempsey qualified as a teacher in Canada, but was an unqualified teacher in England.

Pupil A was in Ms Dempsey's history class. Ms Dempsey was not Pupil A's form tutor and did not teach him any other subject.

On 11 March 2024 the school became aware that Ms Dempsey and Pupil A were in contact with each other using personal mobile phones. Pupil A shared messages between himself and Ms Dempsey on his mobile phone with the school. The school commenced an investigation, and Ms Dempsey was suspended on 14 March 2024. The investigation was conducted by [REDACTED]. As part of that investigation, the school reviewed Ms Dempsey's work email account, as well as the messages shown by Pupil A.

Ms Dempsey resigned on 23 April 2024. On 27 June 2024 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:

**You are guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst employed as a History Teacher for Furze Platt Senior School, you;**

**1. You failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Parent A, in that;**

**a. You engaged in inappropriate and/or unprofessional communication with Parent A in that you;**

**i. Suggested to Parent A that some of your colleagues picked on and/or targeted Pupil A;**

**ii. Suggested to Parent A that Pupil A was "not the only one to have issues with [Colleague A]"**

iii. Suggested to Parent A that Pupil A's Father attending a meeting would show him "how [Colleague A] and the school view and treat [Pupil A]";

2. You failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Pupil A, by;

a. Providing your number to Pupil A;

b. Communicating with Pupil A using your personal mobile number;

c. Engaging in one or more phone calls with Pupil A;

d. Offering and/or giving Pupil A chocolate on one or more occasions;

e. Engaging in inappropriate and/or unprofessional communication with Pupil A in that you;

i. Suggested to Pupil A that the school was looking for a reason to suspend him;

ii. [not proved]

iii. Suggested to Pupil A that he should attend a Spanish lesson because a certain colleague was away;

3. You engaged in inappropriate and/or unprofessional behaviour and/or failed to take appropriate action and/or ensure appropriate action was taken to safeguard one or more pupils in that you;

a. failed to report that Pupil A had been vaping;

b. failed to report that multiple pupils were congregating in one toilet cubicle;

c. shared confidential information regarding pupils at the school with Pupil A and/or Parent A;

d. amended Pupil A's attendance data on one or more occasions;

e. Amended Pupil A's records to appear that Pupil A had attended a detention when this was not the case on one or more occasions;

4. Your conduct as may be found proven at allegation 3(c) and/or 3(d) and/or 3(e) was dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

In relation to Allegation 1, the panel was presented with emails sent from Ms Dempsey to Parent A about Pupil A.

In relation to Allegation 1 a) i), this included an email sent on 19 November 2023 in which Ms Dempsey wrote:

“I don’t agree with him being targeted by some because it’s not helping when it comes to his classes because he’s less likely to do work if he feels like you’re picking on him or accusing him of something.”

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that this email suggested to Parent A that Pupil A was being targeted by some of Ms Dempsey’s colleagues.

In relation to Allegation 1 a) ii), the same email went on to state:

“Those two do not see eye to eye but [Pupil A] isn’t the only one who has issues with him”. The reference to “those two” was plainly a reference to Pupil A and Colleague A. The panel found on the balance of probabilities that this email suggested to Parent A that Pupil A was not the only pupil to have issues with Colleague A.

In relation to Allegation 1 a) iii), the panel was presented with an email dated 26 February 2024 in which Ms Dempsey wrote to Parent A:

“You deserve a break from meetings, and this will help show his dad how [Colleague A] and the school view and treat him.”

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that this email suggested to Parent A that Pupil A’s father attending a meeting would show him how the school viewed and treated Pupil A.

The panel heard evidence from [REDACTED] who stated that the school would expect communications between staff and parents to be professional and appropriate to the staff member’s role. Ms Dempsey was not Pupil A’s form tutor or his pastoral manager. [REDACTED] told the panel that the emails Ms Dempsey wrote to Parent A fell short of the school’s expectations. [REDACTED] further stated that if Ms Dempsey had concerns about another teacher, there were ways to report that concern under the school’s safeguarding procedures and the whistleblowing policy.

The panel noted that Ms Dempsey’s role was limited to teaching history to Pupil A. None of the emails described related wholly or mainly to that subject. The emails were over-familiar and as such were inappropriate. The negative references to other staff members were unprofessional and the panel accepted [REDACTED] evidence that there were more appropriate, formal routes that Ms Dempsey could have followed, should she have had concerns about a colleague.

The panel therefore found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had engaged in inappropriate and unprofessional communication with Parent A and in doing so had failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Parent A.

In relation to Allegation 2, the panel was presented with emails and WhatsApp messages from Ms Dempsey to Pupil A.

In relation to Allegation 2 a), the panel was presented with an email dated 6 March 2024 in which Ms Dempsey emailed Pupil A with a mobile number and “WhatsApp” written next to it. Ms Dempsey had written:

“If you need anything, just put the name as ED. Just send a text if you need something”.

The letters “Ed” appeared on the screenshots of Pupil A’s phone, and the number saved against those initials corresponded to that provided in the email of 6 March 2024. The panel was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that this was Ms Dempsey’s mobile number and that she had provided it to Pupil A.

In relation to Allegation 2 b), the panel was presented with numerous screenshots of WhatsApp messages between Ms Dempsey and Pupil A, the majority of which were sent by Ms Dempsey. [REDACTED] had stated in her evidence that Ms Dempsey did not have a work mobile phone, and the panel therefore drew the inference that the number Ms Dempsey had provided to Pupil A, and from which the WhatsApp messages had been sent, was her personal number.

The panel was therefore satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had been communicating with Pupil A using her personal mobile phone number.

In relation to Allegation 2 c), the panel was presented with a screenshot showing a voice call to Pupil A from Ms Dempsey. The panel was therefore satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had engaged in at least one phone call with Pupil A.

In relation to Allegation 2 d), the panel was presented with an email dated 10 January 2024 in which Ms Dempsey wrote to Pupil A:

“I was thinking about doing a small reward system for you going to class and staying in them that would come with some kind of treat at the end of the week. For this week, continuing from today until Friday, if you go to lessons and stay in them, I will get you one of the large Cadbury chocolate bars.”

On 18 January 2024, Ms Dempsey had written to Pupil A:

“Come find me before or after geography tomorrow, I have a small something for you.”

On 19 February 2024 Ms Dempsey sent Pupil A an email in which the subject heading was “Come get the chocolate”.

The panel was therefore satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had offered and given Pupil A chocolate on more than one occasion.

In relation to Allegations 2 a) to d) inclusive, the panel found on the balance of probabilities that in each of those instances, Ms Dempsey had failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Pupil A.

In her evidence, [REDACTED] had stated that the training she had given to teachers at the school made clear that the only appropriate methods of communication between teachers and pupils was either face-to-face in school or by email from the school email address. [REDACTED] stated that it would have been clear to the teachers that giving out a personal mobile number was unacceptable.

[REDACTED] stated that emails sent from the school email address should be about school work, and Ms Dempsey was not in a pastoral role, nor was she involved in decisions about suspensions. The panel was presented with the training slides used in the training to which [REDACTED] had referred. This made clear that communication on any form of social media was prohibited. The slides listed WhatsApp as an example of a social media platform.

The panel noted that Ms Dempsey had confirmed in her investigation interview that she had completed her face-to-face safeguarding training, delivered by [REDACTED], on 4 September 2023.

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that the basis of the communication with Pupil A was inappropriate, on account of it either being by way of mobile phone and WhatsApp or by way of email for a purpose not permitted under the school's procedures.

[REDACTED] stated in her evidence that school policy did not permit personal gifts being given to pupils. [REDACTED] explained that there was a centralised rewards system at the school, and prizes could be given for doing well in a quiz, for example. Sweets may be given out at the end of a term or after a test, but this would not be on an individual basis. The panel was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the circumstances in which Ms Dempsey had offered and given chocolate to Pupil A had not been within any of the scenarios that [REDACTED] had described as being acceptable.

In relation to Allegation 2 e) i), the panel was presented with an email from Ms Dempsey to Pupil A dated 30 November 2023 in which she wrote:

"I am trying to help keep you in school right now and I am not going to tell anyone that I saw you and [pupil] and [pupil] in that toilet but you have to be careful [Pupil A]. They are looking for a reason to suspend you, don't give them on."

The panel inferred that the final word of that section of the email should have been "one". The panel was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had suggested to Pupil A that the school was looking for a reason to suspend him.

In relation to Allegation 2 e) iii), the panel was presented with an email from Ms Dempsey to Pupil A dated 9 February 2024 in which she wrote:

"Also go to all of your classes today, [colleague] is away so you should be able to go to Spanish".

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey was suggesting to Pupil A that he should attend his Spanish lesson because a particular colleague was away.

In relation to Allegations 2 e) i) and 2 e) iii) inclusive, the panel found on the balance of probabilities that in each of those instances, Ms Dempsey had failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Pupil A.

The panel had noted the evidence of [REDACTED], referred to earlier, in relation to Ms Dempsey's role. Ms Dempsey was not involved in Pupil A's pastoral support and nor was she involved in decisions about suspensions. The parts of the emails referred to did not relate to Pupil A's history lessons and therefore went beyond the scope of appropriate or professional communications. If Ms Dempsey considered that the school was looking for a reason to suspend Pupil A, she had recourse to the avenues already described.

In relation to Allegation 3 a), the panel was presented with the notes of Ms Dempsey's investigation interview. [REDACTED] had confirmed in her witness statement that these notes were an accurate record of the interview. In that interview Ms Dempsey told [REDACTED], in relation to having seen Pupil A "in town" that:

"I saw them vaping but didn't go up to them, after school and weekends it is parents [sic] responsibility".

[REDACTED] asked Ms Dempsey if she considered this was a safeguarding concern and Ms Dempsey responded:

"No as it was outside school".

[REDACTED] told the panel that a teacher's safeguarding duty to children was not confined to school premises or school hours. There was a duty to report anything that might put a child at risk. In this case, a Year 9 student vaping would fall into that category. [REDACTED] further stated that the school had a system for reporting a concern out of hours, which Ms Dempsey could have utilised.

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had been under a duty to report that she had seen Pupil A vaping outside school and that she had failed to discharge that duty.

In relation to Allegation 3 b), the panel was presented with the email of 30 November 2023, previously referred to in relation to Allegation 2 e) i) in which Ms Dempsey had written to Pupil A:

"I am trying to help keep you in school right now and I am not going to tell anyone that I saw you and [pupil] and [pupil] in that toilet but you have to be careful [Pupil A]. They are looking for a reason to suspend you, don't give them on."

[REDACTED] had stated in her evidence that the toilets at the school consisted of individual cubicles. This meant that each cubicle contained the toilet and wash basin. As such, there was no reason for more than one pupil to be in a cubicle at any one time. [REDACTED] stated that the presence of more than one pupil in a cubicle would therefore raise a safeguarding concern as to the nature of any activity taking place in the cubicle. [REDACTED] explained that Ms Dempsey had access to Class Charts, which was the system in place at the time for reporting safeguarding concerns.

In her investigation interview, Ms Dempsey confirmed that she had not reported this incident.

The panel was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had been under a duty to report that she had seen multiple pupils congregating in a toilet cubicle and that she had deliberately failed to discharge that duty.

In relation to Allegation 3 c), the panel was presented with an email sent by Ms Dempsey to Parent A dated 1 February 2024 in which Ms Dempsey wrote:

“He has been doing an alright job at staying away from the “list” of people he can’t...Definitely was made easier this week as some of them were suspended or off sick”.

The panel noted another email dated 19 February 2024 in which Ms Dempsey wrote to Parent A: “[pupil] and [pupil] were on the trip today and [pupil] was off sick”.

The panel was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that information about students being suspended or off sick was confidential. The panel inferred that it was more likely than not that the contents of the “list” of people referred to in the email of 1 February 2024 would have been known to Parent A. The email of 19 February 2024 identified a pupil by name. The panel found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had shared confidential information regarding pupils at the school with Parent A.

The panel noted that in the investigation interview, Ms Dempsey was asked why she had shared another pupil’s Class Charts with Pupil A. Ms Dempsey had replied:

“Because I know if he’s not in class he is with [pupil] truanting, it showed up in class charts general activity”.

Ms Dempsey had acknowledged that sharing other students’ data was a data breach.

The screenshots presented to the panel contained the message to which [REDACTED] was referring in the investigation meeting. The panel found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had shared confidential information regarding pupils at the school with Pupil A.

In relation to Allegation 3 d), the panel was presented with screenshots of WhatsApp messages from Ms Dempsey to Pupil A in which she wrote:

“Am I changing your attendance for drama and chem. Were you there late or not there at all”.

When Ms Dempsey was asked about this message in the investigation interview she stated that:

“I just did English...It was not appropriate and I only did it for English after talking to [colleague]”.

[REDACTED] had asked Ms Dempsey if she was aware of the safeguarding aspects of correct registers. Ms Dempsey had confirmed that she was.

In the same interview, [REDACTED] had asked Ms Dempsey why she had written to Pupil A:

“I can’t take everything off you all the time or say that you went”.

Ms Dempsey’s response was:

“He will ask if I can say he was in class, I won’t change the attendance. I’ve started to push back when he asks.”

In her evidence, [REDACTED] had explained that the registers were a legal document as well as a safeguarding tool, to ensure that the whereabouts of pupils was known. The training slides available to the panel recorded:

“It is essential that we have an accurate, and live, record of attendance in every lesson.”

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had amended Pupil A’s attendance data on one or more occasions.

In relation to Allegation 3 e), the panel was presented with an email sent from Ms Dempsey to Pupil A dated 20 November 2023 with the subject heading “Dt today”. Attached to the email was a document and the email read:

“I just fixed this so it “looks” like you went”.

On 7 February 2024 Ms Dempsey emailed Parent A. In that email she wrote:

“I saw him later and asked if he was going to go to the detention and he said he was not going to go, I have put that he attended them but he does need to go to them”.

In the investigation interview, Ms Dempsey accepted that she had said Pupil A had gone to the C2 detention so as to avoid it becoming a C3 detention. Ms Dempsey said that she had also done this for pupils in her tutor group.

The panel was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had amended Pupil A's records to appear that he had attended a detention when this was not the case.

The panel had [REDACTED] evidence in mind regarding the importance of accurate registers and considered that the same importance applied to records of attendance at detentions.

In relation to Allegations 3 a) to e) inclusive, the panel found on the balance of probabilities that in each of those instances, Ms Dempsey had engaged in inappropriate and unprofessional behaviour. In relation to Allegations 3 a) and b) specifically, Ms Dempsey had failed to take the appropriate action to safeguard pupils.

The panel noted that in relation to Allegations 3 b), d) and e) in particular, Ms Dempsey had told Pupil A that she would not report the congregation in the toilet and that she had amended his attendance records in relation to classes and detention, in order to give him the impression that she was assisting him, and in doing so, took steps that presented a safeguarding concern.

In relation to Allegation 4, the panel considered firstly, the allegation of dishonesty and then the allegation of lack of integrity.

In relation to Allegation 3 c), dishonesty was not proved for reasons set out below.

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had lacked integrity by sharing confidential information about other pupils with Parent A and Pupil A. A teacher acting with integrity would carefully protect confidential information and would not share it with other parents or pupils. Ms Dempsey was in a position of trust and failing to respect that confidentiality was a breach of that trust and amounted to a lack of integrity.

In relation to Allegation 3 d), the panel considered that Ms Dempsey's state of knowledge at the time of amending Pupil A's attendance data was as follows:

- She was aware that she should not be amending attendance records. This would have been clear from her safeguarding training.
- She was aware of the importance of accurate attendance records from a safeguarding perspective, as she accepted in her investigation interview.
- Pupil A's attendance data had been correctly recorded in the system, and so any amendment would make the record inaccurate.

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that amending records of attendance on a legal document that was maintained for safeguarding purposes would be considered dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people. The panel also found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had lacked integrity.

In relation to Allegation 3 e), the panel considered that Ms Dempsey's state of knowledge at the time of amending Pupil A's attendance data was as follows:

- She was aware that she should not be amending detention attendance records. This would have been clear from her safeguarding training.
- She was aware of the importance of accurate attendance records from a safeguarding perspective, as she accepted in her investigation interview. It logically followed that she would have been aware that the same importance would attach to detention records.
- Pupil A's attendance data had been correctly recorded in the system, and so any amendment would make the record inaccurate.

The panel found on the balance of probabilities that amending records of attendance at detentions would be considered dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people. The panel also found on the balance of probabilities that Ms Dempsey had lacked integrity.

The panel found the following particulars of the allegation(s) against you not proved, for these reasons:

**2. You failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Pupil A, by**

e. **Engaging in inappropriate and/or unprofessional communication with Pupil A in that you**

**ii suggested to Pupil A that the school treats him poorly;**

**4. Your conduct as proved at allegation 3 c)...was dishonest.**

In relation to Allegations 2 e) ii), the panel did not find the allegation sufficiently particularised to enable it to identify a specific communication or document that enabled the panel to find the matter proved, having regard to the burden of proof.

In relation to Allegation 4 as it related to dishonesty in respect of Allegation 3 c), the panel did not identify a dishonest act, which it would need to do in order to assess whether Ms Dempsey's state of knowledge would be considered dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people.

**Findings as to unacceptable professional conduct and 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 Dempsey in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards.

The panel considered in relation to Allegation 1, that if this had been the only allegation facing Ms Dempsey, unacceptable professional conduct would not have been found proved as the seriousness of the misconduct would not have been at a high enough level for this to be engaged.

However, in respect of Allegations 2, 3 and 4 the panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Ms Dempsey was in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
  - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher’s professional position
  - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils’ well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
  - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- 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 Dempsey’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 serious dishonesty was relevant in that the amendment of the attendance data and detention records was a serious matter in which Ms Dempsey had deliberately altered data on key safeguarding documents, resulting in a false picture being recorded of Pupil A’s attendance at classes and detention.

The panel noted that Ms Dempsey had focussed a considerable amount of attention on one pupil and in doing so had breached professional boundaries on multiple occasions and in a variety of ways. The communication by WhatsApp and email was extensive and was

inappropriate in that it rarely related to the sole subject that Ms Dempsey was teaching Pupil A.

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

In relation to whether Ms Dempsey's actions amounted to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, the panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. It considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils' lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave.

In considering the issue of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Ms Dempsey'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 Dempsey was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found that the offence of serious dishonesty was relevant.

The panel considered that Ms Dempsey's conduct in relation to Allegations 2, 3 and 4 brought the profession into disrepute due to the nature and extent of the breaches of professional boundaries already referred to.

The panel further considered that while Ms Dempsey's conduct in relation to Allegation 1 did not amount to unacceptable professional conduct, it did bring the profession into disrepute as it undermined her colleagues in communications to a parent.

For these reasons, the panel found that Ms Dempsey'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
- the maintenance of public confidence in the profession
- declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct within the teaching profession.

In the light of the panel's findings against Ms Dempsey, which involved multiple breaches of professional boundaries and a lack of integrity and dishonesty, 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 Ms Dempsey 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 Dempsey 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 Dempsey in the profession. Whilst there was evidence that Ms Dempsey had been motivated by a desire to help Pupil A, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Ms Dempsey in the profession, since her behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states that the expectation of both the public and pupils, is that members of the teaching profession maintain an exemplary level of integrity and ethical standards at all times.

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

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 are set out below, as adapted for this case:

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

panel found breached when considering the question of unacceptable professional conduct.

- failure in their duty of care towards a child, including failing to promote the safety and welfare of the children (as set out in Part 1 of KCSIE);
- dishonesty or a lack of integrity;
- concealment including:
  - failure to challenge inappropriate actions, defending inappropriate actions or concealing inappropriate actions;
  - lying to prevent the identification of wrongdoing;

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate, the panel went on to consider the mitigating factors that it could identify from the evidence, Ms Dempsey not having advanced any directly. Mitigating factors may indicate that a prohibition order would not be appropriate or proportionate.

The panel noted that Ms Dempsey was an unqualified teacher in England and had limited experience of teaching. The panel further noted that the content of the messages sent by Ms Dempsey to Pupil A were aimed at improving Pupil A's outcomes at school. There was no attempt to instigate a social relationship outside school and the panel found that Ms Dempsey's motivations arose from the best of intentions. The panel's findings, however, reflected the panel's conclusion that Ms Dempsey had displayed a serious lack of judgment, notwithstanding those good intentions.

The panel noted that Ms Dempsey had made admissions in her investigation interview and had accepted wrongdoing. However, the panel also noted that she continued to send messages to Pupil A after her resignation from the school and having been subject to disciplinary procedures, which raised significant concerns as to her level of insight.

There was no evidence that Ms Dempsey's actions were not deliberate and no evidence to suggest that she was acting under duress.

The panel was not provided with any evidence of exceptionally high standards of personal and professional conduct.

The panel noted that Ms Dempsey had no previous referrals to the TRA.

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 Ms Dempsey 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 Dempsey. The multiple breaches of safeguarding procedures, which had extended to dishonestly altering attendance records, and breaches of professional boundaries over a period of several months 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. The only behaviour type that was engaged in this case was serious dishonesty. The panel accepted, however, that there was a spectrum of dishonest acts. Dishonestly altering attendance records was undoubtedly serious, as already discussed. However, within the range of dishonest acts, the panel did not view it as one of the more serious examples of dishonesty.

The panel took into account Ms Dempsey's apparently positive motivation and her lack of experience, balanced against the seriousness of her conduct, as set out in the analysis above.

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, after which Ms Dempsey may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, that period being two years. The panel considered that this would allow Ms Dempsey sufficient time to reflect seriously on her conduct and demonstrate insight, while allowing her the opportunity to apply to rejoin the profession in the future.

## 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 2 e and 4, and/or found that some allegations do not amount to unacceptable professional conduct or conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute I have therefore put those matters entirely from my mind.

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

In particular, the panel has found that Ms Dempsey is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
  - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
  - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
  - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

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

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 Dempsey 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 the light of the panel’s findings against Ms Dempsey, which involved multiple breaches of professional boundaries and a lack of integrity and dishonesty, 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, which the panel sets out as follows, “The panel noted that Ms Dempsey had made admissions in her investigation interview and had accepted wrongdoing. However, the panel also noted that she continued to send messages to Pupil A after her resignation from the school and having been subject to disciplinary procedures, which raised significant concerns as to her level of insight.” In my judgement, the lack of full insight 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 Dempsey was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the finding of dishonesty in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

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

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Ms Dempsey herself and the panel comment “The panel was not provided with any evidence of exceptionally high standards of personal and professional conduct.”

I have considered the following “The panel noted that Ms Dempsey was an unqualified teacher in England and had limited experience of teaching. The panel further noted that the content of the messages sent by Ms Dempsey to Pupil A were aimed at improving Pupil A’s outcomes at school. There was no attempt to instigate a social relationship outside school and the panel found that Ms Dempsey’s motivations arose from the best of intentions. The panel’s findings, however, reflected the panel’s conclusion that Ms Dempsey had displayed a serious lack of judgment, notwithstanding those good intentions.”

A prohibition order would prevent Ms Dempsey 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 dishonesty. The panel has said, “The panel found that the offence of serious dishonesty was relevant in that the amendment of the attendance data and detention records was a serious matter in which Ms Dempsey had deliberately altered data on key safeguarding documents, resulting in a false picture being recorded of Pupil A’s attendance at classes and detention.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the following “The panel noted that Ms Dempsey had focussed a considerable amount of attention on one pupil and in doing so had breached professional boundaries on multiple occasions and in a variety of ways. The communication by WhatsApp and email was extensive and was inappropriate in that it rarely related to the sole subject that Ms Dempsey was teaching Pupil A.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding that “The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Ms Dempsey. The multiple breaches of safeguarding procedures, which had extended to dishonestly altering attendance records, and breaches of professional boundaries over a period of several months were significant factors in forming that opinion.”

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Ms Dempsey has made to the profession. In my view, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession. A published decision, in light of the circumstances in this case, that is not backed up by full insight, 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 2 year review period.

I have considered the panel's comments "The panel took into account Ms Dempsey's apparently positive motivation and her lack of experience, balanced against the seriousness of her conduct, as set out in the analysis above." The panel has also said 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, after which Ms Dempsey may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, that period being two years. The panel considered that this would allow Ms Dempsey sufficient time to reflect seriously on her conduct and demonstrate insight, while allowing her the opportunity to apply to rejoin the profession in the future."

I agree with the panel in the matter of a review period and have decided that a 2 year period is proportionate in this case and is in the public interest.

**This means that Ms Erin Dempsey is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England.** She may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 17 December 2027, 2 years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If she does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Ms Dempsey remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

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



**Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey**

**Date: 17 December 2025**

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