



Teaching  
Regulation  
Agency

# **Mr Paul Brown: 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	4
Documents	4
Witnesses	5
Decision and reasons	5
Findings of fact	5
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	18
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	24

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

**Teacher:** Mr Paul Brown

**Teacher ref number:** 9441791

**Teacher date of birth:** 2 November 1971

**TRA reference:** 22333

**Date of determination:** 19 November 2025

**Former employer:** Bransgore Church of England Primary School, Bransgore

## **Introduction**

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 17 to 19 November 2025 way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Paul Brown.

The panel members were Miss Sue Davies (lay panellist – in the chair), Mr Gamel Byles (teacher panellist) and Mrs Monique Clark (teacher panellist).

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

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Alex Mullen of Counsel instructed by Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Brown was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public save those parts which were heard in private and was recorded.

## **Allegations**

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of hearing dated 15 May 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Brown was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst working as the headteacher at Bransgore Church of England School (the 'School'):

1. Between June 2023 and July 2023, he engaged in inappropriate communications with Person A, in which he:
  - a) Accessed the adult social networking site 'Fetlife' and/or sent messages on 'Fetlife' to Person A during School hours;
  - b) Discussed previously sexually assaulting a child and/or children; and/or
  - c) Discussed arranging to meet with Person A's child and/or children with a view to sexual activity taking place
2. He did not report Person A's profile to 'Fetlife' and/or the police on becoming aware that a child and/or children may be at risk of sexual abuse.
3. His conduct at paragraphs 1(a) and/or 1(b) and/or 1(c) was sexual and/or sexually motivated.

Mr Brown admitted allegations 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 2 and 3 but on the caveated basis set out in the response to notice of hearing, signed by Mr Brown on 10 June 2025.

## **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 5 to 6

Section 2: Notice of hearing and response – pages 7 to 18

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 19 to 26

Section 4: TRA documents – pages 27 to 529

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 530 to 566

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]

## **Decision and reasons**

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Mr Brown commenced employment at Bransgore Church of England School ('the School') on 1 September 2013.

Between June 2023 and July 2023 Mr Brown allegedly engaged in conversations with Person A via an adult networking site called 'Fetlife' and allegedly discussed previously assaulting a child/children and arranging to meet Person A's child/children with a view to sexual activity taking place.

On 18 July 2023 Mr Brown was arrested but he was not charged with any offence.

A referral was made to the TRA on 20 April 2024.

## **Findings of fact**

The findings of fact are as follows.

In respect of all the allegations, the panel carefully considered the oral and written witness evidence and exhibits.

The panel scrutinised the entire bundle including the TRA's documents concerning the investigations and the meetings of the School and of the various authorities, including the Local Authority Designated Officer ("LADO") and the police, surrounding these allegations.

The panel noted that the evidence within many of these documents was hearsay but considered that the evidence was relevant and formed part of the official investigations.

The panel therefore admitted the hearsay evidence after careful consideration in each case but noted that the evidence should be considered carefully and cautiously, including in relation to the appropriate amount of weight to be placed on it.

The panel carefully considered the documents and correspondence of Mr Brown in the bundle including, without limitation, his initial response to the notice of hearing, his letter to the panel dated 24 October 2025 regarding his non-attendance and 2 undated documents entitled “*Submission for consideration by TRA panel*” and “*Overview of factors leading to the incident that brought about the misconduct allegations against me*” in its consideration of all allegations. The panel noted that these documents were hearsay, but as they represented the key evidence provided by Mr Brown, the panel decided that it was in the interests of justice that the evidence be admitted and considered. The panel was conscious that Mr Brown would not be cross examined in relation to this evidence or in relation to the other evidence in the bundle.

The panel was also conscious that Mr Brown had chosen to absent himself from proceedings and from the opportunity to put his evidence forward in response to the allegations.

The panel noted that Mr Brown had admitted to large parts of the allegations facing him but as some elements of those allegations were denied or not fully admitted it proceeded on the basis that this was a fully disputed hearing and determined that it would carefully consider all the evidence before it.

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

- 1. Between June 2023 and July 2023, you engaged in inappropriate communications with Person A, in which you:**
  - a) Accessed the adult social networking site ‘Fetlife’ and/or sent messages on ‘Fetlife’ to Person A during School hours;**
  - b) Discussed previously sexually assaulting a child and/or children; and/or**
  - c) Discussed arranging to meet with Person A’s child and/or children with a view to sexual activity taking place**

The panel noted that Mr Brown admitted allegations 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c) in his response to the notice of hearing though provided some contextual submissions and caveats both there and within his later written submissions.

Notwithstanding this, the panel considered all the evidence in front of it and reached a determination based on the evidence.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A.

Witness A stated that on 18 July 2023 she was contacted by the LADO who informed her that Mr Brown had been arrested for offences relating to an online attempt to arrange for the sexual abuse of children.

Witness A informed the panel that Mr Brown was suspended from his role. Witness A was informed on 8 December 2023 that the police would not be taking any further action against Mr Brown.

Witness A informed the panel that in her capacity as [REDACTED] she commenced an internal investigation into Mr Brown's conduct on 7 December 2023.

Witness A stated that on 31 January 2024 she interviewed Mr Brown, and he confirmed he had accessed the site Fetlife during working hours, in his car, away from the School site.

The panel noted that Fetlife was an adult social networking site for people interested in BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism), fetishism and kink.

Witness A informed the panel that Mr Brown had mentioned that he had suffered sexual abuse as a child and stated that he described activity in the third-person with the online profile, rather than describing himself as participating in the sexual abuse of children. She stated that Mr Brown informed her that his use of the site was anonymous.

The panel carefully considered the notes of a disciplinary investigation meeting of Wednesday 31 January 2024 where Mr Brown was interviewed. The panel placed significant weight on this document as setting out Mr Brown's response to these factual matters in his investigation response to the School.

The panel noted that within this meeting Mr Brown acknowledged that he had engaged in a conversation with a person ("Person A") on Fetlife. Mr Brown emphasised that it was a "*site for people with fetishes and an adult network for people with interests*" but that it was not "*porn*" and it was legal. Mr Brown said that his use of the site was completely anonymous and that he did not use his own name. Mr Brown stated that he would generally access the site at night but that sometimes he would access it in the car if he had driven somewhere for a meeting or stopped for lunch but would not do so on school premises or using school resources.

Mr Brown explained in this meeting that he was unknowingly speaking to an undercover police officer and that they spoke about abuse and a shared experience when he was a child. Mr Brown recalls that he blocked the website on a Thursday morning when he was at an AI round table in Birmingham messaging Person A saying he did not want to talk anymore and that it was not appropriate. He indicated that he later re-engaged with the communication thinking that could be friends again but that he then again blocked the account at 3:15 AM on the following Monday morning. He stated that four hours later the police arrived.

Mr Brown indicated in this meeting that, at some point, part of him thought the children of Person A were at risk and that there were lots of allusions suggesting abuse as a child

and Person A suggested she abused her children. Mr Brown stated that the sexual activity was from Person A not from him. Mr Brown stated that he did not participate in conversations about the abuse of children and that he thought that Person A was making it up and did not suspect a child was involved.

The panel considered an e-mail from [REDACTED] ("Individual A") to Witness A of 19 December 2023. This email set out that Mr Brown began a conversation with someone whom he believed to be an adult female on an adult website (Person A) using a fake name. The adult female had claimed she had 2 children. The email set out that the communication between Mr Brown and Person A was sexual with regard to Mr Brown meeting with the woman and her children to engage in sexual activity.

The email set out that Mr Brown spoke to Person A about a lady who he knew who had a similar relationship with her children and that he (Mr Brown) claimed to have previously been involved sexually with the woman and children. The e-mail stated that a meeting of Person A and Mr Brown for a coffee was discussed.

Individual A stated that Mr Brown had given a full account admitting to all conversations but stated that he thought it was fantasy and denied any sexual interest in children or ever planning to meet with any children. The panel noted that Individual A confirmed that Mr Brown's devices had been searched as had his profile and that no further sexual conversation indicative of a sexual interest in children had been located.

In the e-mail it was noted that Individual A said that Mr Brown had stated he didn't believe the children were real and thought it was all fantasy and never intended to act on any of it. Individual A indicated that Mr Brown apologised and regretted having the conversations insisting it was a one off and he was in a bad place mentally at the time.

The panel considered the notes taken by Witness A during a phone call with Individual A on 1 February 2024 conducted as part of her investigations. The panel noted that this document was hearsay but proceeded to admit and consider it and place some weight on it recognising that they had had the opportunity to test the evidence with Witness A as a live witness during the Hearing.

Witness A informed the panel that the reason why she had contacted the police was to check whether Mr Brown's comments in the investigation meeting matched those given by him in the police investigation.

The panel noted that during the phone call with Witness A, Individual A had opened the copy she held noting the conversation Mr Brown had had over the app on her computer, to check the details.

The panel noted that Individual A had informed Witness A that Mr Brown had not informed the police, in his interviews, that he had reported the profile of Person A.

The panel noted that Individual A informed Witness A that Mr Brown had positioned himself in that conversation as involved with a woman and her family, and described the family as being very open with an open house.

The notes stated that in the conversation Mr Brown said that he initially just watched but then described sexual activity he had with a child [REDACTED]. The notes indicated that Individual A had reported some of the conversation, which was graphic at points and confirmed that Mr Brown did describe himself as being involved in sexual activity with a child/children and did not position this as a third party. In Witness A's oral evidence she confirmed that one example of this correspondence from Mr Brown cited by Individual A to her was Mr Brown describing an [REDACTED] child holding Mr Brown's penis whilst he went to the toilet.

The panel had sight of and carefully considered email correspondence between Individual A and Witness A of March 2024 via which Individual A confirmed the content of the previous conversation between her and Witness A was as described. The panel considered that this added to the weight to be applied to this evidence.

The panel carefully considered the police occurrence report of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary which they had been provided with which describes the occurrence type as a "Child abuse referral" and the occurrence time as 4 July 2023 to 12 July 2023. The panel noted that the information within this report was hearsay however considered it was relevant and that it was in the interests of justice to admit it and they placed some weight upon it.

This stated that the police had received a report about Mr Brown engaging with Person A on Fetlife using the alias "Zeph". The report indicated that Mr Brown had suggested that he would be interested in meeting with Person A with a view to sexually abusing her 9 and 5 year old daughters.

The report stated that in a subsequent encrypted phone call Mr Brown talked about meeting up with Person A and that she could introduce him to her children, so they get to know him before he did anything sexual with them.

The police occurrence report went on to say:

*"There is evidence of discussions about getting the children involved and wanting to experience what he experienced with a family member. Person A says she is a lesbian so there are some experiences she can't give her daughters and Brown replies saying you can always get others involved to give a male perspective. Brown asks Person A if she has been able to get some 'special mummy time'. They also joke about Brown enjoying pizza with them with the topping being his cum. They discussed the idea of them all meeting with Person A not being involved as she doesn't want to cheat on her partner but she would be there to support the girls and advise/praise them. Brown replies so you would watch/support/encourage? He also asks have they watched*

*porn? and Do they have access to your toys? Brown also asked how would you feel about me teaching them how to kiss? and suggests to Person A that she should start showing them how to French kiss beforehand.*

*There are lead up discussions about wanting to meet and possible ways of introducing the suspect to the children such as running into him in a park or saying that he is a friend from work. There are discussions about the suspect being happy to travel to meet the UCOL or offering to pay for half her train fare but this is under the guise of meeting up for a "brew". There were discussions about meeting, however the purpose of meeting to sexually abused her children are not directly mentioned and it sounds like they would initially meet to get to know each other before introducing the children. Eventually the suspect texts Person A to say that he is not the right guy for her and he blocks her. The suspect tells the UCOL about a previous partner [REDACTED] who he states is similar to Person A in that [REDACTED] also engaged in a sexual relationship with her three children including her [REDACTED] daughter [REDACTED]. Suspects states that it was an open relationship/household and that he was also involved and had penetrated [REDACTED] with his fingers, she had licked/sucked him and he stated that she liked cum. He said that the adults would often watch pornography in front of the children with the adults engaging in sexual activity. Some of the messages sent by Brown are quickly deleted."*

The panel noted that the police occurrence report also provided a synopsis of the interview with Mr Brown in which he admitted to talking about inappropriate things with a woman on Fetlife but had thought it was all fantasy and that when she started talking about her children it made him think twice and he contacted her to say it was a mistake. He stated he was happy to remain friends as she seemed a nice person.

Mr Brown was recorded as stating to the police that although he initiated the conversation he felt that Person A was driving the conversation in a sexual direction and that he did not intend to meet her and he did not think the children were real. Mr Brown stated that when he heard real children in the background he reacted to it thinking it was insane and that it could be real and this was not what he wanted hence why he blocked her.

Mr Brown was asked about the woman and her children that he had described being in a previous relationship with and Mr Brown stated that this had been made-up and that this was all fantasy and that he had never sexually abused a child and that he would never do this. The panel noted that the police had indicated that they found nothing on Mr Brown's devices to suggest that this woman and her children existed. Mr Brown stated that he mainly used Fetlife to engage with other women about BDSM.

The panel noted that it would have been of assistance to have the transcript of the police interview with Mr Brown but that they had no reason to doubt the legitimacy of the detail of the communications and Mr Brown's response to them provided by the police. The panel noted that a large amount of the context of the occurrence report was consistent

with that which Mr Brown had told the panel in his submissions, albeit that the police occurrence report had further and substantially more inappropriate detail.

The panel considered the written submissions of Mr Brown including his responses to the notice of hearing. Mr Brown accepted and admitted that he had accessed Fetlife and/or sent messages to Fetlife during school hours but stated that this would only occur in his private vehicle during a break in the day or whilst travelling between meetings or appointments and that he never used any school devices or equipment.

Mr Brown stated that he would never consider harming a child and that he fabricated the part of the conversation where he discussed previously assaulting a child to encourage Person A to open up and tell him more about what she was planning to do. Mr Brown stated that he was convinced that Person A was a fantasist and that he was almost certain that there were no children at risk of harm. Mr Brown stated that he had spent his entire career of 30 years keeping children safe.

Mr Brown stated that due to his poor state of mind and impaired judgement he pursued a conversation with Person A as he wanted to know what Person A was alluding to and due to a triggering response in his own adverse childhood experiences became intent on her revealing to him exactly what she had done or wanted to do with the children. He accepted this was entirely wrong and stated that it was a response to a dark morbid and intense fascination and that he has come to understand that it was caused by unresolved past trauma and poor state of mental health and physical health.

Mr Brown stated that he may have made a fiction about previously harming a child but could categorically say that he had never done so or been inclined to do so.

Mr Brown stated that he never had an intention to meet with Person A. Mr Brown did not admit discussing arrangements to meet with Person A's children citing that the messages exchanged did discuss meeting but only his meeting Person A to talk and have coffee. Mr Brown stated that he did not at any time attempt to arrange any specific time or date to meet Person A and had no intention of meeting her.

The panel also considered carefully and took into account the detailed analysis of the background to these matters provided by Mr Brown in the document entitled "*Overview of factors leading to the incident that brought about the misconduct allegations against me*".

The panel again considered all the evidence provided by Mr Brown and noted his stated heartfelt belief that what occurred was the result of unprecedented professional, and personal pressure and unresolved trauma from his past.

The panel carefully considered all the evidence before it. The panel was satisfied including, without limitation, from the written police occurrence report, the correspondence between the police and Witness A and the evidence which it had received including from Mr Brown himself that Mr Brown had accessed the adult social

networking site Fetlife and had engaged in inappropriate communications on that site with Person A between June 2023 and July 2023.

The panel noted that whilst they considered the evidence to be clear that Mr Brown had sent messages to Person A on Fetlife which constituted inappropriate communications the evidence of the extent to which those messages were sent during school hours was limited though they did find (a) that Mr Brown expressly admitted such actions within the statement he provided to the panel as well as within his response to the notice of hearing, (b) that Mr Brown admitted this during his investigatory interview including as evidenced by Witness A, and (c) that express reference was made in the investigatory interview to a message he sent to Person A on Thursday morning at a school AI roundtable in Birmingham which was clearly during school hours. The panel found allegation 1(a) proven on the balance of probabilities.

The panel was satisfied from the evidence before it, in particular, without limitation, the content of the police occurrence report and the content of the conversation between the Witness A and the police as recorded and agreed in an e-mail between them, and from Mr Brown's various admissions both at the time and within the statement and response which he had provided to the panel that it had been evidenced by the TRA:

- that Mr Brown had communicated with person A regarding previously sexually assaulting a child and or children and that this communication occurred between June 2023 and July 2023 and was inappropriate by its very nature. The panel noted that Mr Brown did not appear to deny this allegation, rather his submission was that the nature of that which he said was fantasy. The panel made no finding on whether Mr Brown's comments were fantasy or not, nor was this relevant to their findings in connection with this allegation as they considered that it was clear that, either way, they would consider the communications inappropriate. The panel found allegation 1(b) proven on the balance of probabilities, and
- that Mr Brown had communicated with Person A inappropriately between June 2023 and July 2023 in which communications he discussed arranging to meet with Person A's child and/or children with a view to sexual activity taking place. The panel carefully noted and considered Mr Brown's arguments that he had no intention to have any such meeting. The panel did not consider though that that was a relevant factor in relation to the question of whether or not these arrangements had been discussed or whether or not these communications were inappropriate, as the panel found they were. The panel carefully considered Mr Brown's submissions that the meeting envisaged within the evidence was one as between Person A and Mr Brown. Whilst the panel noted that this was being discussed, the panel was also satisfied that the TRA had demonstrated on the evidence that the discussions about the various activities which could be engaged in with Person A's children, and the ways in which Mr Brown might be introduced

to them were discussions which fell well within the description of '*discussions arranging to meet with the children with a view to sexual activity taking place*' and the panel found allegation 1 (c) proven on the balance of probabilities.

The panel therefore found allegations 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c) including the stem of allegation 1 proven on the balance of probabilities.

## **2. You did not report Person A's profile to 'Fetlife' and/or the police on becoming aware that a child and/or children may be at risk of sexual abuse.**

The panel noted that Mr Brown admitted allegation 2 to some extent though asserted that he did report the profile to Fetlife. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence.

The panel had sight of an email from Individual A to Witness A dated 19 December 2023. The email set out that Person A was claiming to be an adult female on Fetlife and that Mr Brown had messaged her and her profile claimed she was a lesbian and wanted to involve a man in the sexual relationship she had with her children.

The panel was not provided with any evidence that Mr Brown had reported Person A's profile to Fetlife or to the police, and the panel noted that the investigation meeting notes set out that the police had said the profile was not reported following checks on the website.

Witness A informed the panel that Individual A had informed her that Mr Brown had blocked the profile then unblocked it and asked to be friends with Person A then blocked it again later but that he did not report the profile. Witness A repeated in oral evidence that she was confident that Individual A was referring to Mr Brown having failed to report Person A's profile to Fetlife.

The panel considered the written submissions of Mr Brown, who stated that he was convinced Person A was a fantasist and was almost certain that there were no children at risk of harm.

Mr Brown stated that he did block and report the profile but that he could not evidence this. He stated that he did recall using the block and report function.

Mr Brown provided a transcript of an e-mail which he asserted was from Fetlife which indicated that if he had deleted his profile then it was unlikely that the report he submitted would remain and that the conversation would not. Mr Brown submitted that to block a profile and to a report a profile involved simply using one button though the panel had no evidence to validate or refute this.

Mr Brown made no assertion that he had reported these concerns regarding Person A's profile to the police or via any internal school process and the panel had no evidence that he had.

The panel again considered the police occurrence report and the e-mailed correspondence between Individual A and Witness A as well as the detail of Mr Brown's response and were satisfied that Mr Brown would have been fully aware in his correspondence with Person A that a child and/or children may be at risk of sexual abuse.

The panel carefully considered the evidence provided and determined that the TRA had proved on the balance of probabilities that Mr Brown did not report Person A's profile to the police or Fetlife on becoming aware that a child and/or children may be at risk of sexual abuse. The panel relied on the evidence of the police, including as communicated to them by Witness A in this regard. Individual A had said categorically that he did not report the profile and Mr Brown had failed to demonstrate that he had.

The panel also noted that Mr Brown's evidence was that having blocked Person A he then reinitiated the conversation with Person A and the panel found it unlikely that this was a step he would have taken had he already taken the step of reporting Person A's account. The panel took into account that the evidence from the police was that Mr Brown did not assert that he reported the Fetlife account in his interview with them.

The panel noted that Mr Brown asserted in his investigatory meeting with the School in relation to Person A's profile that he "*blocked it and reported it on the site and thought that would be enough*". Given Mr Brown's role as a Designated Safeguarding Lead ("DSL") and given his detailed knowledge of safeguarding and his acknowledgement that, at this point at least, he was concerned that children would have been at risk the panel found that position unbelievable.

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

### **3. Your conduct at paragraphs 1(a) and/or 1(b) and/or 1(c) was sexual and/or sexually motivated.**

The panel noted that Mr Brown admitted allegation 3 within his response to the notice of hearing but sought to contest it to some degree within his written submissions. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence.

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 [2020]*.

It noted guidance from *Basson v General Medical Council [2018]* 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 further noted that in *General Medical Council v Haris*, it was stated that, “*In 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 again carefully considered the allegations as they had found proven at Allegation 1. The panel noted that they had found that Mr Brown had engaged with Fetlife and considered that it was more likely than not that the purpose of his engagement with that website was sexually motivated.

The panel noted that Mr Brown asserted that his interaction with Fetlife was born of a long held interest in people, relationships and human sexual behaviour and interaction. Mr Brown stated that he would dip in and out of the site and found it interesting and educational and that it gave him a lens of a world beyond his experience.

Mr Brown also stated that he had very little time and the dopamine hit of the site for a few minutes was all he had available to him. Mr Brown stated that whilst he accepted what he said was wholly unacceptable it was not said for sexual gratification and that whilst his conversations were of a sexual nature he did not believe they were sexually motivated.

The panel noted that they had found that Mr Brown had discussed with Person A his having previously sexually assaulted a child and/or children and that he had discussed arranging to meet with Person A’s child and/or children with a view to sexual activity taking place. The panel noted the obviously sexual nature of the inappropriate correspondence which had passed between them as described in the police occurrence report and that the wording clearly suggested the pursuit of sexual gratification.

The panel carefully considered Mr Brown's explanations for his conduct however ultimately did not find them plausible or sufficient explanation for the conduct in which he had engaged as described in the evidence.

The panel noted that Mr Brown had not attended the hearing to explain his actions. The panel noted that Mr Brown accepted that his conversations were of a sexual nature.

The panel found on balance that the nature of the communications which Mr Brown had had with Person A, as they had found proven under allegation 1 (b) and 1 (c), were because of their nature capable of being sexual and because of the circumstances and what they found to be the purpose of Mr Brown in relation to those activities were sexual.

The panel concluded that on the balance of probabilities, and viewing the allegations found proved as a whole and their knowledge of what was said, and in the absence of a

plausible innocent explanation, that the TRA had demonstrated on the balance of probabilities that Mr Brown's conduct as found proven at allegation 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c) was sexually motivated.

The panel found allegation 3 proven.

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

Having found the allegations proved, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of those proved allegations amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

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

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

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Brown 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 was satisfied that the conduct of the teacher, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Keeping Children Safe In Education ("KCSIE").

The panel considered that Mr Brown's actions engaged the following clauses in part one of KCSIE: 2, 4, 5, 9 and 20. The panel noted that clause 20 provided that any child may benefit from early help, but all school and college staff should be particularly alert to the

potential need for early help for a child who is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child.

The panel also considered whether Mr Brown'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 the offence type of sexual activity was relevant.

The panel noted that Mr Brown accepted that his actions were unacceptable professional conduct.

The panel noted that although the allegations took place outside the education setting, they were relevant to Mr Brown's position as a teacher in that he had engaged in conversations, on an adult social networking site, regarding sexually abusing children.

The panel noted Mr Brown was a headteacher and the DSL at his School and that they had found proven that he had failed to escalate either to the website concerned or the police the fact that a child or children appeared to be at serious risk of sexual abuse. The panel could not conceive of any legitimate explanation for this failure.

The panel noted that they had found that Mr Brown had discussed with Person A meeting up with Person A's children for the purposes of sexual abuse and that the evidence was that he had discussed sexual activities which he could engage in with them. The panel noted that they had found that Mr Brown discussed with Person A detailed allegations about abuse of children in which he had previously engaged and considered that even if these allegations were fictional (as Mr Brown asserted and on which the panel had not needed to reach any finding for these purposes) that did not render the action of discussing engaging in illegal sexual activity with a child anything less than the very serious misconduct it clearly was. The panel noted that they had found that Mr Brown's actions as described in allegation 1 were sexually motivated.

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

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Mr Brown was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Mr Brown's actions amounted to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, the panel took into account the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. It considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents

and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils' lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave.

In considering the issue of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Mr Brown's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice.

As set out above in the panel's findings as to whether Mr Brown was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found that the offence type of sexual activity was relevant.

The findings of misconduct are extremely serious, and the conduct displayed would, the panel considered, inevitably have a seriously negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher.

The panel considered that Mr Brown's conduct would damage the public's perception of Mr Brown and of the teaching profession generally. The panel considered that the public would, rightly, be shocked and appalled if they found out that any teacher was engaging in sexually motivated communications which discussed the illegal sexual abuse of children (regardless of whether or not such abuse was fantasy) and if they heard that any teacher had failed to report when a child appeared to be at risk of sexual abuse.

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Brown'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 protection of other members of the public, the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and the declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Brown, which include that they had found he had engaged, for sexually motivated reasons, in inappropriate communications concerned with the sexual abuse of children and given his failure to notify the police when he became aware that children were potentially at risk of sexual abuse, there was a strong public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Brown were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.

The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr Brown was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

In addition to the public interest considerations set out above, the panel went on to consider whether there was a public interest in retaining Mr Brown in the profession. Though the panel noted and considered carefully the evidence in the bundle concerning Mr Brown's career successes and, in general terms, noted that having headteachers with the record of success which Mr Brown seemingly demonstrated was clearly desirable, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Brown in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.

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

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

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;
- 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;

- failure to act on evidence that indicated a child's welfare may have been at risk e.g. failed to notify the designated safeguarding lead and/or make a referral to children's social care, the police or other relevant agencies when abuse, neglect and/or harmful cultural practices were identified;
- failure in their duty of care towards a child, including exposing a child to risk or failing to promote the safety and welfare of the children (as set out in Part 1 of KCSIE);

The panel noted that the Advice specifies that panels should attach appropriate weight and seriousness to online behaviours including, but not limited to, online misconduct; facilitating online abuse; or facilitating inappropriate relationships (including both online only relationships and where online relationships move into contact relationships). The panel noted that they found this paragraph of the advice was relevant to the allegations which it had found proven and determined that they would apply appropriate weight and seriousness to these matters in their recommendations.

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order may be appropriate, the panel went on to consider the mitigating factors. Mitigating factors may indicate that a prohibition order would not be appropriate or proportionate.

The panel found no evidence that Mr Brown's actions were not deliberate.

Though the panel noted that Mr Brown reported a high level of stress and anxiety the panel found no evidence that Mr Brown was acting under extreme duress.

The panel noted that there was evidence in the bundle of Mr Brown's leadership within the teaching profession and it noted that they had heard evidence from Witness A that he had been a successful headteacher.

The panel again considered Mr Brown's statement that early in his life he had experienced both physical and sexual abuse. They also considered Mr Brown' statement that that since his suspension he has attended a support group and undertaken counselling to understand his mental health issues.

Mr Brown had mentioned that during the covid-19 pandemic he struggled to manage the workload, including carrying out a variety of roles in addition to his headteacher's role and he was experiencing significant stress and anxiety. [REDACTED].

The panel reminded itself that Mr Brown stated that due to his poor state of mind and impaired judgement he pursued that conversation with Person A as found proven in the allegations as he wanted to know what Person A was alluding to and due to a triggering response in his own adverse childhood experiences. He accepted this was entirely wrong and stated that it was a response to a dark morbid and intense fascination and that he

has come to understand that it was caused by unresolved past trauma and poor state of mental health and physical health.

The panel noted that Mr Brown stated that he regretted engaging with Person A and that he created fictional scenarios to get Person A to engage with him and now knows this was poor judgment and that he should have ended the conversation sooner.

Mr Brown stated that he has worked hard to understand himself and that his counselling sessions have helped him come to terms with his past.

The panel had sight of character references from the following individuals, submitted on behalf of Mr Brown:

- Individual B, [REDACTED]
- Individual C, [REDACTED]
- Individual D, [REDACTED]

The panel carefully considered and took account of the following comments in particular:

Individual C, [REDACTED], stated:

- *“I have always found Paul to be a highly professional and respected colleague. He is well- thought of and valued through his work as a National Leader of Education. He has a wealth of knowledge about school leadership and communicates it with credibility, humility and warmth.”*
- *“I agree that he acted unwisely and without rational perspective, but I don’t believe he has ever, or would ever, harm another human being including a child.”*

Individual D, [REDACTED], stated:

- *“I always found him highly knowledgeable and professional and we soon developed a very positive working relationship. Paul always had the best interests of all of his pupils at heart and we often found ourselves fighting the fight with other professional bodies trying to get his students all the help and support they needed.”*
- *“In my opinion I believe that Paul is safe to work with children, I believe that Paul was caught up in a misguided and ill-judged attempt to find out more details about a situation he should have handled differently. I think he was fascinated about the woman and her motivation due to his own childhood experiences and by the time he had realised the danger he was in by even talking to her the damage was done. I do not believe that Paul had any intention of meeting her or would ever take part in any activity that would have caused harm to a child. Paul has spent his*

*life helping children and is fully aware of the damage caused by any form of childhood abuse. Paul is a good man who has had his life's work taken away by this very sad affair."*

The panel considered the mitigation asserted by Mr Brown as set out above carefully in reaching their decision. They also noted that Mr Brown had seemingly sought to develop some level of insight with regard to his actions but had not, in its view, demonstrated sufficient recognition of the seriousness of his behaviours as found proven or regarding his failure to escalate the fact that he had become aware of the potential sexual abuse of children.

The panel noted Mr Brown's relatively recent decision to engage with a psychotherapist. Though noting this and his counselling sessions the panel did not consider that Mr Brown had demonstrated that he had developed sufficient insight into his actions and his motivations. The panel noted that Mr Brown, although initially admitting the allegations and acknowledging that the content of his actions was sexual had demonstrated no awareness of the sexual motivation which the panel had found proven.

The panel noted that they had no medical evidence before them in support of Mr Brown's assertions regarding his health and with regard to any influence that may have had on his behaviour.

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would not be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order. Recommending that the publication of adverse findings would be sufficient would unacceptably compromise the public interest considerations present in this case, despite the severity of the consequences for Mr Brown of prohibition.

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Brown.

The panel's concerns about the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public, following their findings that Mr Brown had engaged in sexually motivated correspondence with regards to the sexual abuse of children and had failed to report when he became aware that there was a risk that children may be at risk of sexual abuse, were significant factors in forming this opinion.

In addition the panel concluded that the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and the declaring and upholding of proper standards of conduct, would reasonably require, in its view, prohibition of a teacher (who was a headteacher and

DSL) who voluntarily engaged in detailed discussion regarding arranging to meet with a mother's child and/or children with a view to sexual activity taking place with those children. 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.

The panel found that the case types of:

- 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; and
- Any sexual misconduct involving a child

were relevant. In reaching this finding in relation to "*any sexual misconduct involving a child*" being engaged the panel accept that some, or all, of that which was described may or may not have been fantasy but it was clear to the panel that, insofar as the misconduct expressly involved the discussion of the sexual abuse of specific children, it fell within this case type.

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 again reminded itself that it had found that Mr Brown had engaged in sexually motivated inappropriate communications with someone whom he understood to be a mother of two daughters. They had discussed in detail his previously sexually assaulting a child and arranging to meet with her children with a view to sexual activity taking place.

The panel reminded itself that it had found that Mr Brown had not reported concerns to the police or Fetlife on his becoming aware that a child or children could be at risk of sexual abuse.

The panel was concerned that the allegations as found proven demonstrated sexually motivated behaviour whereby the teacher had seemingly placed his own sexual needs

and fantasies, and his presumed desire to keep these matters confidential, over the need to protect a child/children who he knew were potentially at risk of sexual abuse.

The panel again noted Mr Brown's detailed mitigation as set out above, his limited remorse, his attempts to understand the motivating factors behind his conduct and its triggers. The panel did not consider that Mr Brown had evidenced an understanding of the fundamental risk his actions potentially posed towards children or the fundamental inconsistency between his actions as found proven and his position as a teacher.

In all the circumstances the panel remained extremely concerned that Mr Brown's actions could be repeated.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended without provisions for a review period.

## **Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State**

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

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

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

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

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Brown 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 was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Brown, involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE).

The panel finds that the conduct of Mr Brown fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding of engaging in inappropriate communications concerned with the sexual abuse of children, failure to notify the police that children were potentially at risk of sexual abuse and conduct found to be sexually motivated.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Brown, 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 Mr Brown, which include that they had found he had engaged, for sexually motivated reasons, in inappropriate communications concerned with the sexual abuse of children and given his failure to notify the police when he became aware that children were potentially at risk of sexual abuse, 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 or remorse, which the panel sets out as follows:

“The panel noted that Mr Brown stated that he regretted engaging with Person A and that he created fictional scenarios to get Person A to engage with him and now knows this was poor judgment and that he should have ended the conversation sooner.”

“The panel considered the mitigation asserted by Mr Brown as set out above carefully in reaching their decision. They also noted that Mr Brown had seemingly sought to develop some level of insight with regard to his actions but had not, in its view, demonstrated sufficient recognition of the seriousness of his behaviours as found proven or regarding his failure to escalate the fact that he had become aware of the potential sexual abuse of children.”

In my judgement, the lack of full insight or remorse means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour and this puts at risk the future wellbeing of pupils. I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe, “the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Brown were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the finding related to inappropriate communication related to child sexual abuse and failure to notify the police in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

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

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

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr Brown himself and the panel comment “The panel noted that there was evidence in the bundle of Mr Brown’s leadership within the teaching profession and it noted that they had heard evidence from Witness A that he had been a successful headteacher.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Brown 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 lack of full insight or remorse. The panel has said, “The panel noted Mr Brown’s relatively

recent decision to engage with a psychotherapist. Though noting this and his counselling sessions the panel did not consider that Mr Brown had demonstrated that he had developed sufficient insight into his actions and his motivations. The panel noted that Mr Brown, although initially admitting the allegations and acknowledging that the content of his actions was sexual had demonstrated no awareness of the sexual motivation which the panel had found proven."

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding that "the panel concluded that the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and the declaring and upholding of proper standards of conduct, would reasonably require, in its view, prohibition of a teacher (who was a headteacher and DSL) who voluntarily engaged in detailed discussion regarding arranging to meet with a mother's child and/or children with a view to sexual activity taking place with those children."

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Brown has made to the profession. In my view, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession. A published decision, in light of the circumstances in this case, that is not backed up by full insight or, does not in my view satisfy the public interest requirement concerning public confidence in the profession.

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended that no provision should be made for a review period.

I have considered the panel's comments:

"The panel was concerned that the allegations as found proven demonstrated sexually motivated behaviour whereby the teacher had seemingly placed his own sexual needs and fantasies, and his presumed desire to keep these matters confidential, over the need to protect a child/children who he knew were potentially at risk of sexual abuse."

"The panel again noted Mr Brown's detailed mitigation as set out above, his limited remorse, his attempts to understand the motivating factors behind his conduct and its triggers. The panel did not consider that Mr Brown had evidenced an understanding of the fundamental risk his actions potentially posed towards children or the fundamental inconsistency between his actions as found proven and his position as a teacher."

"In all the circumstances the panel remained extremely concerned that Mr Brown's actions could be repeated."

In this case, factors mean that allowing a review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the

seriousness of the findings, the limited evidence of full insight or remorse, and therefore the risk of repetition.

I consider therefore that allowing for no review period is necessary to maintain public confidence and is proportionate and in the public interest.

**This means that Mr Paul Brown is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England.** Furthermore, in view of the seriousness of the allegations found proved against him, I have decided that Mr Brown shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of his eligibility to teach.

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

Mr Brown has a right of appeal to the High Court within 28 days from the date he is given notice of this order.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Buxcey".

**Decision maker: Sarah Buxcey**

**Date: 24 November 2025**

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