



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Richard Lees: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome

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

January 2026

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Summary of evidence	4
Documents	4
Statement of agreed facts	5
Decision and reasons	5
Findings of fact	5
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	8
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	11

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

Teacher:	Mr Richard Lees
Teacher ref number:	1866572
Teacher date of birth:	7 June 1981
TRA reference:	21551
Date of determination:	14 January 2026
Former employer:	Holy Family Roman Catholic and Church of England College, Lancashire ("the school").

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ("the panel") of the Teaching Regulation Agency ("the TRA") convened on 14 January 2026 by way of a virtual meeting, to consider the case of Mr Richard Lees.

The panel members were Mrs Michelle Chappell (teacher panellist – in the chair), Dr Martin Coles (former teacher panellist) and Dr Sheila Cunningham (lay panellist).

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

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Lees that the allegations be considered without a hearing. Mr Lees provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted conviction of a relevant offence. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer, Ms Cher Lyne Peh of Browne Jacobson solicitors, or Mr Lees.

The meeting took place in private.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegation set out in the notice of meeting dated 30 October 2025.

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

1. On or around 13 November 2024, he was convicted at the Crown Court at Chester of:
 - a. 4 counts of Voyeurism;
 - b. Recording Images Beneath the Clothing of Another;
 - c. 3 counts of Making Indecent Photographs of Children;
 - d. Possession of Indecent Photographs of a Child; and
 - e. Possessing an Extreme Pornographic Image.

Mr Lees admitted the facts and admitted that he had been convicted of a relevant offence.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Notice of hearing and response – pages 4 to 26a

Section 2: Statement of Agreed Facts and Presenting Officer's Representations – pages 27 to 33

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 36 to 129

Section 4: Teacher documents – pages 131 to 133

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

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

Statement of agreed facts

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr Lees on 31 August 2025.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

In advance of the meeting the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Lees for the allegation to be considered without a hearing. The panel had the ability to direct that the case be considered at a hearing if required in the interests of justice or in the public interest. The panel did not determine that such a direction was necessary or appropriate in this case.

Mr Lees was employed at the school from 25 April 2022 until 31 August 2022 as a physical education teacher.

On 5 July 2022 Mr Lees was arrested at the school.

On 13 November 2024 Mr Lees was convicted of four counts of voyeurism, recording images beneath clothing of another, three counts of making indecent photographs of children, possession of indecent photographs of a child and possessing an extreme pornographic image.

On 7 February 2025 Mr Lees was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment for the voyeurism offences and nine months imprisonment, consecutive, for the remaining offences, making a total sentence of two years imprisonment. Mr Lees was also placed on the Sex Offenders Register for 10 years and was made the subject of a Sexual Harm Prevention Order for 10 years.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

1. On or around 13 November 2024, you were convicted at the Crown Court at Chester of:

a. 4 counts of Voyeurism;

b. Recording Images Beneath the Clothing of Another;

c. 3 counts of Making Indecent Photographs of Children;

d. Possession of Indecent Photographs of a Child; and

e. Possessing an Extreme Pornographic Image.

The panel was presented with a certificate of conviction from the Crown Court dated 27 March 2025, which confirmed that Mr Lees had been convicted of the offences set out in the Allegation. The panel accepted this certificate of conviction as proof of the commission of the offences concerned. This was consistent with Mr Lees' admission to the Allegation as set out in the Statement of Agreed Facts.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence

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

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

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

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Lees 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 an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel noted that the behaviour involved in committing the offences could have had an impact on the safety and security of pupils and members of the public. The panel noted that the voyeurism offences were committed in Mr Lees' home against members of the public, including colleagues. The offence of recording images beneath clothing involved the targeting of girls aged between [REDACTED] who were pupils at the school. The panel further noted that the offences relating to indecent photographs were on a

school computer. The panel had regard to the following remark from the sentencing judge:

“...it seems to me you are assessed as posing a risk to females with whom you have social contact, a high risk of serious harm. You are also assessed as a high risk of serious harm to children. Those are the assessments made by the probation officer who has interviewed you.”

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

“People send their children to school and have a right to believe that they will be safe with their teachers and that no harm will come to them. I am afraid your actions have disgraced your profession and your actions...are quite appalling...”

The panel further noted that Mr Lees’ behaviour ultimately led to a sentence of imprisonment, which was indicative of the seriousness of the offences committed.

The panel also considered the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice.

This was a case concerning offences involving voyeurism (including upskirting) and activity involving making and possessing any indecent photograph or image of a child.

The panel considered the offences committed by Mr Lees to be extremely serious. The panel noted the following remarks by the sentencing judge:

“It seems to me that all these offences involve a very significant degree of abuse of trust”.

In relation to the voyeurism offences specifically:

“This was behaviour designed for your sexual gratification and all those offences involve an enormous abuse of trust”.

In relation to the recording beneath clothing offence specifically:

“Finally, you are at school as a teacher and you are filming up the skirts of young girls [REDACTED]. Again, it is hard to imagine in your profession and your role a more serious breach of trust in relation to those young girls”.

The panel did not identify any mitigation. It noted that Mr Lees had entered a guilty plea to these offences, albeit not at the earliest opportunity. The panel considered that Mr Lees lacked insight or remorse in relation to his offending behaviour. The panel noted the following remarks of the sentencing Judge:

"I have read with care the pre-sentence report. It seems that you are somebody who finds it difficult to display empathy. I accept that you have portrayed a great deal of shame around your behaviour, but you clearly did not want to associate yourself with the images offences. Your explanation seems to be that they just appeared on your computer and you do not know how. That was initially your defence; you are not someone who would know how to download them. But it seems you certainly know how to use computer equipment and you know how to use it covertly. It is nonsense to suggest that they just appeared on your computer. It seems to me that you are not really ready to take responsibility for the fact that you have an unhealthy interest in viewing images of this type. In relation to the voyeurism offences you have taken some responsibility, but again it is to a limited extent, in my judgment".

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

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

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

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

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely,

- the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils
- the protection of other members of the public
- the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Lees, which involved serious sexual offences, some of which involved children, gross breaches of trust and included offending inside and outside school, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.

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

The panel was also 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 Lees 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 Lees in the profession.

The panel considered the references included in the bundle. There was no evidence that Mr Lees' abilities as an educator were exceptional and the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above clearly outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Lees in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher, and abused his position of trust.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states that the expectation of both the public and pupils, is that members of the teaching profession maintain an exemplary level of integrity and ethical standards at all times. The panel noted that a teacher's behaviour that seeks to exploit or abuse their position of trust should be viewed very seriously in terms of its potential influence on pupils and be seen as a possible threat to the public interest.

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

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 elements that were relevant in this case were:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards, as set out above;
- the commission of serious criminal offences;
- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- 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;

- any activity involving viewing, making or possessing any indecent photograph or image of a child;
- 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);
- violation of the rights of pupils;

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

There was no evidence that Mr Lees' actions were anything other than deliberate.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Lees was acting under duress of any sort.

There was no evidence of Mr Lees having demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or of having contributed significantly to the education sector.

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 Lees 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 Lees. The serious nature of the offences and the gross breaches of trust 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.

For the reasons already set out above, the factors relevant to this matter included:

- 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;
- any sexual misconduct involving a child;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making and possessing any indecent photograph or image of a child;

As noted above, the panel took account of the sentencing judge's comments, based on the contents of the pre-sentence report, in relation to Mr Lees' limited insight and lack of apparent remorse, as well as his continuing risk to women and girls. The panel considered that the risk of repetition was high.

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 a relevant conviction

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

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

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding of a relevant conviction for serious sexual offences, which included making indecent images of children, for which the teacher received a total sentence of 2 years' imprisonment.

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 a relevant conviction, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Lees, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would protect children and safeguard pupils. The panel has observed:

“In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Lees, which involved serious sexual offences, some of which involved children, gross breaches of trust and included offending inside and outside school, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.”

A prohibition order would therefore prevent such a risk from being present in the future.

I have also taken into account the panel's comments on insight and remorse, which the panel has set out as follows:

“The panel did not identify any mitigation. It noted that Mr Lees had entered a guilty plea to these offences, albeit not at the earliest opportunity. The panel considered that Mr Lees lacked insight or remorse in relation to his offending behaviour.”

In my judgement, the lack of insight and 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 has observed:

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

I am particularly mindful of the finding of a relevant conviction for serious sexual offences including recording beneath the clothing of girls who were pupils at the school 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 a relevant conviction, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr Lees himself. The panel has commented:

“There was no evidence of Mr Lees having demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or of having contributed significantly to the education sector.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Lees 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 seriousness of the offences for which Mr Lees was convicted and their impact on the safety and wellbeing of pupils and members of the public. The panel has noted the following comments from the sentencing judge:

“...it seems to me you are assessed as posing a risk to females with whom you have social contact, a high risk of serious harm. You are also assessed as a high risk of serious harm to children. Those are the assessments made by the probation officer who has interviewed you.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel concerning the serious breach of trust involved in a teacher filming up the skirts of young girls in his school, and the lack of insight and remorse shown by the teacher for his behaviour.

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore to the contribution that Mr Lees 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, 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:

“For the reasons already set out above, the factors relevant to this matter included:

- 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;
- any sexual misconduct involving a child;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making and possessing any indecent photograph or image of a child;

As noted above, the panel took account of the sentencing judge's comments, based on the contents of the pre-sentence report, in relation to Mr Lees' limited insight and lack of apparent remorse, as well as his continuing risk to women and girls. The panel considered that the risk of repetition was high.”

I have considered whether not allowing a review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. 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 serious nature of the offences for which Mr Lees was convicted and received a sentence of imprisonment, the lack of insight and remorse, and the high 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 Richard Lees 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 Lees 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 Richard Lees 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 'D Oatley', with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Decision maker: David Oatley

Date: 15 January 2026

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