



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Steven Ward: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

January 2026

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

Teacher:	Mr Steven Ward
Teacher ref number:	3654810
Teacher date of birth:	1 January 1985
TRA reference:	23984
Date of determination:	15 January 2026
Former employer:	Arnbrook Primary School, Nottingham

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 12 to 15 January 2026 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Steven Ward.

The panel members were Mr Ian Hylan (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mr Tony Coyne (lay panellist) and Ms Wendy Shannon (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Samantha Cass of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr James Lloyd of Mountford Chambers.

Mr Steven Ward was present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of hearing dated 1 September 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Ward was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that while working as a Teacher at the Southwark Primary School:

1. On 9 November 2023, during a lesson, he:
 - a. consumed alcohol on one or more occasion/s;
 - b. was under the influence of alcohol during school hours.
2. On 10 November 2023, he:
 - a. consumed alcohol on one or more occasion/s during a lesson; and/or
 - b. was under the influence of alcohol during school hours.
3. On 13 November 2023, he was under the influence of alcohol during school hours.

Mr Ward denied allegations 1(a), 1(b), 2(a), 2(b) and 3.

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 2 to 13

Section 2: TRA witness statements and exhibits – pages 14 to 190

Section 3: All other TRA documents – pages 191 to 267

The panel also had sight of the notice of hearing dated 1 September 2025.

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

A screenshot of a text message exchange between Mr Ward and Witness B – page 268.

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

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the 2020 Procedures.

Witnesses

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

Witness A – [REDACTED]

Witness B – [REDACTED]

Witness C – [REDACTED]

Witness D – [REDACTED]

Mr Ward also gave oral evidence.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Mr Ward commenced his employment at Southwark Primary School (the “School”) as a trainee in September 2014. Mr Ward was subsequently employed as a qualified teacher in 2015.

On 6 November 2023, Witness D and Witness C commenced their [REDACTED].

On the afternoon of 9 November 2023 and on 10 November 2023, Witness D and Witness C were placed with Mr Ward to observe Mr Ward teach and assist with the pupils in the classes that Mr Ward was responsible for covering.

On 10 November 2023, Witness D and Witness C reported to Individual A, [REDACTED] that they had seen Mr Ward drinking alcohol on 9 and 10 November 2023.

On 13 November 2023, Mr Ward and Individual B, [REDACTED] had a scheduled in-person meeting at 8:30am. Mr Ward had a subsequent in-person meeting at 9:00am with Witness B, Individual B, Individual C, [REDACTED] and Individual D. It was alleged that Mr Ward was under the influence of alcohol during both of these meetings.

On 1 July 2024, the matter was referred to the TRA.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

While working as a Teacher at the Southwark Primary School:

1. On 9 November 2023, during a lesson, you:

- a. consumed alcohol on one or more occasion/s;**
- b. were under the influence of alcohol during school hours**

Mr Ward denied allegations 1(a) and 1(b).

The panel considered Witness A's written statement dated 23 February 2025 and exhibits which stated that he investigated allegations regarding Mr Ward having consumed alcohol during a lesson on 9 and 10 November 2023 and having been under the influence of alcohol on 9,10 and 13 November 2023. Witness A's role was to coordinate the collection of all relevant evidence, including witness interviews, preparing internal documents, and communications with Mr Ward. Witness A had interviewed Witness C and Witness D who reported that they had seen Mr Ward drinking from a blue Brewdog Punk IPA looking can and hiding drink in his bag and consuming a mint after each sip.

The panel considered Witness A's oral evidence, which was that, as part of Witness A's investigation, no physical evidence of alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks had been recovered.

The panel considered Witness B's written statement dated 4 April 2025 which stated that Witness C and Witness D had informed him that they had seen Mr Ward drinking alcohol during lessons on 9 and 10 November 2023.

The panel considered Witness B's oral evidence which was that Mr Ward did not deny consuming alcohol at that time or deny the allegations and stated that he would "*trust the investigation process*". The panel noted that Witness B had not ever seen Mr Ward consume alcohol but had smelt alcohol on his breath.

The panel considered the written and oral evidence of Witness C who explained that she and Witness D were [REDACTED] at the School from 6 to 10 November 2023 (inclusive).

The panel considered Witness C's written statement dated 10 November 2023 which stated that on 9 November 2023, she saw Mr Ward repeatedly "*drinking a bright blue can out of his bag*" and that he put a mint in his mouth immediately after drinking. Witness C's statement further stated that Mr Ward "*continued to drink from the can for the duration of the afternoon, while taking a mint after every drink.*"

The panel then considered Witness D's written statement dated 25 March 2025 which corroborated with Witness C's statement. The panel also noted that Witness C and Witness D's descriptions of what they observed was consistent with their account a

month later as part of the School's investigation and again in their oral evidence during the hearing.

The panel further noted the oral evidence of Witness C that she had seen Mr Ward drinking from a bright blue can with black writing written on the side of the can which she saw Mr Ward take and drink from his bag next to his desk followed by a mint after each mouthful. Witness C stated that she believed Mr Ward would drink from this can around every 5 minutes on average but that she could not be sure of timings. The panel noted that Witness C had observed Mr Ward drinking from a can from two different viewpoints and attached weight to the fact that she had sought to obtain further evidence, including noting if Mr Ward repeated the behaviour the following day and by seeking Witness D's opinion before formally reporting her concerns.

The panel considered the oral evidence of Witness D which was that he had seen Mr Ward drinking from a can from his bag around every 15 minutes or so and that he had found this to be unusual behaviour as he would have expected teachers to drink from a coffee cup or bottle of water. Witness D also stated that Mr Ward's behaviour was unusual as he would have a mint from what looked like a tin of Smints which he took from his pocket after each swig of his drink. The panel noted that Witness D could not be completely sure on 9 November 2023 that Mr Ward was consuming alcohol and that it wasn't until the following day that he became sure that what he had seen the day before was Mr Ward consuming alcohol.

The panel considered that there were some discrepancies between the accounts of Witness C and Witness D. However, the panel found that these were minor discrepancies which did not impact upon the substance of the allegation and witnesses accounts and considered that they were not concerning and made it more likely than not that their accounts were independently observed and reported.

The panel considered Mr Ward's view which was that efforts had been made by the School, in particular Witness B, to manage him out of the School. Further, the panel was provided with no evidence, including from Mr Ward, to support any contention that Witness C or Witness D had any reason to be dishonest or collude regarding their observations. The panel found Witness C and Witness D to be credible witnesses and that it was more probable than not that they had observed Mr Ward drinking from a can of Brewdog Punk IPA. The panel concluded that Witness C and Witness D had not colluded in providing their evidence regarding Mr Ward's actions.

The panel considered Mr Ward's oral evidence which was that he denied drinking alcohol on 9 November 2023 during a lesson but that it was a very realistic possibility that he put a can on his desk although he denied that this was alcohol or to having hidden the can. The panel considered Mr Ward's comments in the School's investigation which were that drinking at work was "*not something that [he] would ever do*".

The panel considered that Mr Ward was, on the balance of probabilities based on the evidence before it, more likely than not to have consumed alcohol on one or more occasion/s during a lesson on 9 November 2023 while working as a teacher at the School.

In light of the panel's findings in respect of allegation 1a), the panel then went on to consider allegation 1b).

The panel considered the meaning of the phrase "*under the influence (of alcohol)*". The panel considered this but also took account of the School's Code of Conduct which gives guidance relating to drug and alcohol consumption. The panel concluded that some indications of being "*under the influence*" would include but were not limited to: having consumed alcohol; smelling of alcohol; and displaying certain irrational or unusual personal behaviours.

When considering allegation 1b) the panel applied its understanding of "*under the influence*" and the panel already found that Mr Ward had consumed alcohol during School hours. The panel also noted the evidence that Mr Ward was repeatedly displaying unusual "*personal behaviour*" on this day. The panel considered that both Witness C and Witness D had observed Mr Ward repeatedly acting strangely in the way that he was concealing drinking from a can from his bag, turning away from the children and witnesses in the classroom when doing so and immediately consuming mints after each sip. The panel noted that both witnesses commented on Mr Ward's behaviour on this day as being particularly odd.

The panel also noted that Mr Ward had admitted in his oral evidence that the way in which he was drinking from a can, albeit he denied that this was alcohol, could be seen as "*furtive*". Although the panel took note of the fact that different people have different behaviours and different tolerances to alcohol than others, the panel considered Mr Ward's actions (as witnessed by two people in the classroom) to be particularly unusual. The panel therefore considered that he was more likely than not, on the balance of probabilities, to be under the influence of alcohol during School hours on 9 November 2023.

Having considered the evidence before it, the panel found allegations 1(a) and 1(b) proven on the balance of probabilities.

2. On 10 November 2023, during a lesson, you:

a. consumed alcohol on one or more occasion/s;

b. were under the influence of alcohol during school hours

Mr Ward denied allegations 2(a) and 2(b).

The panel considered Witness C's written statement for the School's investigation dated 10 November 2023 which stated that on 10 November 2023, she saw Mr Ward *"drinking from the same coloured can from his bag."* Witness C's statement stated that she moved closer to get a better view of Mr Ward and she saw that the can said *"Brewdog Punk IPA' in bold black writing"* and that Mr Ward took a mint each time he drank. In her statement, Witness C stated that *"[h]alfway through the afternoon, [Mr Ward] moved the can from his bag to his desk, behind a mug. [Mr Ward] continued to drink from his desk and turned away from the children each time he drank."* Witness C's written statement further stated that Mr Ward continued to drink from the can when he had a conversation with Witness C and Witness D at the end of the School day. Witness C's statement stated that Mr Ward turned away from Witness C and Witness D and took a drink from the can before placing the can into his bag.

The panel then considered Witness D's written statement dated 12 November 2023 which supported Witness C's written statement dated 10 November 2023. Witness D's statement additionally stated that Mr Ward was drinking from his bag at times during the morning and in the afternoon on 10 November 2023.

As set out above, Witness D, Witness C and Mr Ward had a conversation together at the end of the day. Witness D's statement dated 12 November 2023 stated that Mr Ward opened another can shortly before the end of the lesson. After the lesson Mr Ward had a conversation with Witness C and Witness D. Their evidence was that Mr Ward *"turned his body to hide the can from [Witness D and Witness C]"* when he took a drink. The panel considered Witness D's statement as part of the School's investigation and that Witness D had observed from two different locations, Mr Ward drinking from a can in the classroom, one of which was only around 1m away from Mr Ward's desk.

The panel considered Mr Ward's oral evidence which was that he denied drinking alcohol on 10 November 2023 during a lesson but that it was a very realistic possibility that he had put a can on his desk although he denied that this contained alcohol. The panel noted that Mr Ward did not want to say yes or no as to whether he had turned away from [REDACTED] teachers when drinking from a can in order to hide it. The panel did note that Mr Ward accepted that it was regular practice for him to drink from cans but that he denied drinking alcohol during a lesson and that he thought this would have been a fizzy drink.

As set out above in relation to allegation 1 a), the panel found Witness C and Witness D to be credible witnesses, and it was more probable than not they had observed Mr Ward drinking alcohol from a can.

The panel considered that Mr Ward was, on the balance of probabilities based on the evidence before it, more likely than not to have consumed alcohol on one or more occasion/s during a lesson on 10 November 2023 while working as a teacher at the School.

In light of the panel's findings in respect of allegation 2a), the panel then went on to consider allegation 2b).

When considering allegation 2b) the panel applied its understanding of "*under the influence*" and the panel had already found that Mr Ward had consumed alcohol.

The panel also noted the evidence that Mr Ward was repeatedly displaying unusual "*personal behaviour*" on this day. The panel considered that both Witness C and Witness D had observed Mr Ward repeatedly acting strangely in the way that he was concealing drinking from a can from his bag, turning away from the children in the classroom when doing so and immediately consuming mints after each sip. The panel noted that both witnesses commented on Mr Ward's behaviour on this day as being particularly odd.

When considering allegation 2b) the panel considered the School's Code of Conduct, in particular the section entitled "*Signs of Possible Substance Abuse and Misuse*" which explicitly referred to an "*aroma of alcohol or drugs*". The panel considered the fact that witnesses had reported smelling alcohol on Mr Ward. Although the panel noted that some of the witnesses' evidence amounted to hearsay evidence and accordingly attached an appropriate amount of weight to such evidence.

Although the panel took note of the fact that different people have different behaviours and different tolerances to alcohol than others, the panel considered Mr Ward's actions as witnessed by two people in the classroom to be particularly unusual. The panel therefore considered that he was more likely than not, on the balance of probabilities, to be under the influence of alcohol during School hours on 10 November 2023.

Having considered the evidence before it, the panel found allegations 2(a) and 2(b) proven on the balance of probabilities.

3. On 13 November 2023, you were under the influence of alcohol during school hours

The panel noted that Mr Ward denied allegation 3.

The panel considered the written and oral evidence of Witness B who explained that Mr Ward had weekly meetings every Monday at 8.30am with Individual B which was an in-School support mechanism following his return to work after a period of sickness absence. Witness B stated that Mr Ward had a meeting with Individual B at 8.30am on 13 November 2023. Witness B's evidence was that after the previous meeting had finished, he was called into the meeting room with Individual B and Individual A as she had identified an aroma but did not state what she believed this to be. Upon entering into the meeting room where Individual B and Mr Ward had had their meeting, Witness B could smell a "*strong smell of alcohol*" and that "*it was a strong enough smell to notice it instantly when walking into a large two-person office.*"

Witness B stated that on 13 November 2023 at 9:00am, he had a meeting with Mr Ward Individual B and Individual C who all attended the meeting in person in Witness B's office and that Individual D attended via Teams. Witness B stated that he sat closest to Mr Ward and was about one metre away from Mr Ward. Witness B stated that there was "*a strong smell of alcohol coming from [Mr Ward's] breath.*" Witness B stated that he asked Mr Ward if he had consumed alcohol prior to coming into work and Mr Ward responded by saying that he had drunk alcohol the night before but not that morning.

The panel noted that in Witness B's evidence, he stated that following the meeting at 9:00am with Mr Ward on 13 November 2023, Witness B spoke to Individual B and Individual C who both said that they could smell alcohol on Mr Ward. This is confirmed in Individual B's evidence.

The panel considered Mr Ward's oral evidence which was that he had offered to provide a breathalyser test on 13 November 2023, but this had been refused by Witness B. The panel also noted that Mr Ward denied drinking on the morning of 13 November 2023 but accepted that he had been drinking on the evening of 12 November 2023.

The panel also considered Mr Ward's oral evidence which was that he may well have had drinks on the evening of 12 November 2023 in an attempt to [REDACTED] in advance of returning to work on Monday 13 November 2023. The panel also considered that there were various accounts, including some of which amounted to hearsay evidence and were therefore given the appropriate amount of weight to them, that Witness B's room smelt of alcohol on 13 November 2023.

Whilst the panel noted Mr Ward's evidence which was that he had offered to provide a breathalyser test on 13 November 2023, which he stated was accepted and later refused by Witness B, the panel considered that Mr Ward's offer had been made after he had left the School site following his suspension. The panel concluded that it was more likely than not, on the balance of probabilities, that the offer to provide breathalyser test results was in connection with Mr Ward's [REDACTED] rather than as a member of staff who had been suspended pending investigation and that a significant period of time had elapsed since Mr Ward was suspended and left the premises. The panel also noted that Mr Ward admitted to having lied about his alcohol consumption outside School hours.

The panel also considered Mr Ward's view which was that Witness B had conducted a "*witch-hunt*" against him, but the panel was presented with no evidence which supported this view.

The panel considered that, on the balance of probabilities, Mr Ward was more likely than not to have been under the influence of alcohol during School hours on 13 November 2023.

Having considered the evidence before it, the panel found allegation 3 proven on the balance of probabilities.

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

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

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

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

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Ward 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...
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils’ well-being...
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel also considered whether Mr Ward’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.

Although none of the allegations found proven were included in the offences listed, the panel found that the allegations found proven, involving the consumption of alcohol and being under the influence of alcohol on School premises and during School hours, were relevant behaviours relating to alcohol offences.

For these reasons, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Ward 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 Ward was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Mr Ward'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 Ward'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 Ward was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel considered that although none of the allegations found proven were included in the offences listed, the panel found that the allegations found proven, involving the consumption of alcohol and being under the influence of alcohol on School premises and during School hours, were relevant behaviours relating to alcohol offences.

The panel found that the allegations found proven involving the consumption of alcohol and being under the influence of alcohol on School premises and during School hours, were relevant. The panel also considered the fact that Mr Ward had admitted to having lied to his colleagues and other professionals about his alcohol consumption outside School hours.

The panel considered that Mr Ward's conduct would potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Ward'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/or 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 light of the panel's findings against Mr Ward, a primary school teacher, which involved consuming and being under the influence of alcohol during lessons and School hours, there was a strong public interest consideration in 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.

There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious findings related to Mr Ward's relationship with alcohol and the repetitive nature of his misconduct. Although the panel considered Mr Ward's oral evidence during the hearing which was that he was addressing his alcohol issues, the panel were not provided with any independent evidence which would give the panel confidence that there was no risk of repetition.

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

The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr Ward 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 Ward in the profession. The panel considered Mr Ward's comments on having been an "*excellent teacher*". However, the panel was not provided with any evidence to support this view. The panel did however take note of Witness B's comments that Mr Ward had passed his appraisals and responded receptively to feedback when feedback was given.

Whilst there is evidence from Mr Ward and, to an extent from Witness B, that Mr Ward had ability as an educator, the panel considered that the adverse public interest

considerations above outweigh any interest in retaining Mr Ward 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

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; and
- collusion or concealment including...lying to prevent the identification of wrongdoing.

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

There was evidence that Mr Ward's actions were deliberate. The panel considered that Mr Ward made a choice to bring alcohol onto School premises knowing that this was against the School's Code of Conduct.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Ward was acting under extreme duress, e.g. a physical threat or significant intimidation. However, the panel did consider Mr Ward's evidence relating to his [REDACTED] albeit limited evidence was provided in support of this background.

Mr Ward did not demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or having contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel did not accept that the incident was out of character.

The panel noted Witness B's evidence which stated that on 10 July 2023, he was informed by Nottingham City LADO that Mr Ward was charged with a suspended sentence for driving under the influence of alcohol and without a license. Witness B stated that Mr Ward's sentence also included with an alcohol abstinence requirement,

rehabilitation activity requirement, 40 hours unpaid work requirement and that Mr Ward was disqualified from driving for three years.

Witness B stated that on 11 July 2023, Mr Ward informed Witness B of the suspended sentence and that Mr Ward additionally said that he had been arrested the previous week for driving whilst over the legal alcohol limit whilst disqualified [REDACTED] in the car.

The panel saw evidence that showed Mr Ward was previously subject to disciplinary proceedings and warnings which included a final warning to Mr Ward on 27 July 2023 as a result of a disciplinary panel that arose from Mr Ward's suspended sentence for driving under the influence of alcohol and without a license.

The panel considered Mr Ward's lack of insight, in particular during the hearing, which meant that he did not appear to be aware of how he had behaved in an unprofessional way. As such, the panel considered that there was a risk of repetition of Mr Ward's misconduct. Whilst the panel noted that Mr Ward had acknowledged that he had lied to professionals, he had not demonstrated remorse for his previous misconduct or demonstrated understanding of the impact of his behaviour on others.

The panel was not provided with any character references or other mitigation evidence. The panel did however find it helpful that Mr Ward attended and engaged fully in the hearing of the professional regulator.

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 Ward 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 Ward. The panel considered that the insufficient evidence provided relating to Mr Ward's current relationship with alcohol; awareness of his wrongdoing and the impact of his previous misconduct; and associated risk of repetition 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 two years.

The Advice indicates that there are certain types of case where, if relevant, the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period.

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

The Advice also indicates that there are certain other types of cases where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate.

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

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a 3 year review period. The panel were not assured that two years was a sufficient period of time for Mr Ward to be able to demonstrate insight into his previous misconduct; a sustained period of sobriety and an ability to meet professional standards.

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 Steven Ward should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of 3 years.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Ward 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...
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being...

- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

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

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a finding of consuming and being under the influence of alcohol on school premises and during school hours.

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 Ward, 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 light of the panel’s findings against Mr Ward, a primary school teacher, which involved consuming and being under the influence of alcohol during lessons and School hours, there was a strong public interest consideration in 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.”

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 considered Mr Ward’s lack of insight, in particular during the hearing, which meant that he did not appear to be aware of how he had behaved in an unprofessional way. As such, the panel considered that there was a risk of repetition of Mr Ward’s misconduct. Whilst the panel noted that Mr Ward had acknowledged that he had lied to professionals, he had not demonstrated remorse

for his previous misconduct or demonstrated understanding of the impact of his behaviour on others.”

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 Mr Ward was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.”

I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher consuming and being under the influence of alcohol during school hours 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 Ward himself. The panel has commented:

“Mr Ward did not demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or having contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel did not accept that the incident was out of character.”

The panel has noted that Mr Ward had passed his appraisals and responded positively to feedback. However, the panel was not provided with any character references

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Ward 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 insight and remorse, and the risk of repetition. The panel has said:

“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 Ward. The panel considered that the insufficient evidence provided relating to Mr Ward’s current relationship with alcohol; awareness of his wrongdoing and the impact of his previous misconduct; and associated risk of repetition 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.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel that Mr Ward’s actions were deliberate and that he “made a choice to bring alcohol onto School premises knowing that this was against the School’s Code of Conduct.”

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore to the contribution that Mr Ward 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 insight and remorse, does not in my view satisfy the public interest requirement concerning public confidence in the profession.

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended a 3-year review period.

I have considered the panel’s comments:

“The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a 3 year review period. The panel were not assured that two years was a sufficient period of time for Mr Ward to be able to demonstrate insight into his previous misconduct; a sustained period of sobriety and an ability to meet professional standards.”

I have considered whether a 3-year 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 2-year review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the serious nature of the misconduct found proven, the lack of either insight or remorse, and the risk of repetition.

I consider therefore that a 3-year review period is required to satisfy the maintenance of public confidence in the profession.

This means that Mr Steven Ward is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. He may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 22 January 2029, 3 years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Ward remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Mr Steven Ward 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: 16 January 2026

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