



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr James Coltella: 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 James Coltella

TRA reference: 20540

Date of determination: 21 January 2026

Former employer: Tonbridge School, Tonbridge

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened from 12 January 2026 to 21 January 2026 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr James Coltella

The panel members were Ms Jo Palmer-Tweed (teacher panellist – in the chair), Miss Yilshane Ali (lay panellist) and Mr David Loveless (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Luisa Gibbons of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Louisa Atkin of Capsticks LLP solicitors.

Mr Coltella was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in in public save that portions of the hearing were heard in private and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 27 October 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Coltella was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that while employed as a teacher at Tonbridge School, High Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 he:

1. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil A in that:
 - a. On one or more occasion he touched Pupil A's knee and/or shoulder;
 - b. On one or more occasion he grabbed and/or stroked Pupil A's hand;
 - c. On one or more occasion he hugged or attempted to hug Pupil A;
 - d. On one or more occasion he asked Pupil A to hug him
 - e. He described his relationship with Pupil A as a "friendship" or words to that effect;
 - f. He said to Pupil A "I can't wait till we are out of this place" or words to that effect;
 - g. He viewed and/or attempted to view Pupil A's social media account;
 - h. He proposed going to a restaurant with Pupil A.
2. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil B in that:
 - a. He said to Pupil B "I love you and I love the group" or words to that effect;
 - b. He said to Pupil B and /or other pupils "You can't say anything about what happens in this classroom to other people" or words to that effect;
 - c. On one or more occasions he touched and/or brushed Pupil B's leg;
 - d. On one or more occasions he touched and/or grabbed Pupil B's shoulder and/or knee.
3. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil C in that:
 - a. He obtained Pupil C's home address when there was no professional reason to do so;
 - b. He poked Pupil C and/or said words to the effect of "Shame on you for making me feel grumpy yesterday".

4. He instructed one or more pupils to recite inappropriate song lyrics to him or to other pupils.
5. On one or more occasions he sought and/or held non-classroom meetings (as set out in Schedule 2) alone with:
 - a. Pupil A;
 - b. Pupil B.
6. By his conduct as may be proven at any or all of allegations 1 – 5, he failed to follow management advice given to him in respect of his conduct with pupils.

Mr Coltella was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that while employed as a teacher at Skinners' School, St Johns Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 9PG he:

7. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil E in that:
 - a. He made the comments and/or had discussions with Pupil E as set out in Schedule 1 or words to that effect;
 - b. He encouraged Pupil E to keep their conversations a secret;
 - c. On one or more occasions, he rested one or more hands on Pupil E's knees;
 - d. On one or more occasions he hugged Pupil E;
8. On one or more occasions he sought and/or held non-classroom meetings (as set out in Schedule 2) with Pupil E.
9. His conduct as may be proven at any or all of allegations 1 – 8 was sexually motivated.
10. His conduct as may be found proven at allegation 7b was dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

Schedule 1

1. He told Pupil E that he wished that they were no longer at school so that he and Pupil E could go for a drink.
2. He asked Pupil E if they were attracted to him.
3. He told Pupil E that they were special and/or he had a special connection that he had not had with other pupils.

4. He told Pupil E that they were “good looking”.
5. He told Pupil E that they did not need to get back into school uniform for him after they had gone to the gym.

Schedule 2

Pupil Incident

- i. A Witness statement dated 3 May 2025, paragraphs 26 – 34
- ii. B Witness statement dated 21 March 2025, paragraph 13 and paragraph 27
- iii. E Witness statement dated 24 March 2025. Paragraphs 13 – 14 and [REDACTED] second bullet point.

In the absence of Mr Coltella, the allegations were not admitted, and there was no admission that Mr Coltella was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Following the conclusion of the TRA’s case, the allegations were amended as set out below. Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 remained unchanged.

It was alleged that Mr Coltella was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that while employed as a teacher at Skinners’ School, St Johns Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 9PG and/or Tonbridge School, High Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 he:

1. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil A in that:
 - a. On one or more occasion he touched Pupil A’s knee and/or shoulder;
 - b. On one or more occasion he grabbed and/or stroked Pupil A’s hand;
 - c. On one or more occasion he hugged or attempted to hug Pupil A;
 - d. On one or more occasion he asked Pupil A to hug him
 - e. He described his relationship with Pupil A as a “friendship” or words to that effect;
 - f. He said to Pupil A “I can’t wait till we are out of this place” or words to that effect;
 - g. He viewed and/or attempted to view Pupil A’s social media account;
 - h. He proposed going to a restaurant with Pupil A.

2. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil B in that:
 - a. He said to Pupil B “I love you and I love the group” or words to that effect;
 - b. He said to Pupil B and /or other pupils “You can’t say anything about what happens in this classroom to other people” or words to that effect;
 - c. On one or more occasions he touched and/or brushed Pupil B’s leg;
 - d. On one or more occasions he touched and/or grabbed Pupil B’s shoulder and/or knee.
3. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil C in that:
 - a. He obtained Pupil C’s home address when there was no professional reason to do so;
 - b. He poked Pupil C and/or said words to the effect of “Shame on you for making me feel grumpy yesterday”.
4. He instructed one or more pupils to recite inappropriate song lyrics to him or to other pupils.
5. On one or more occasions he sought and/or held meetings (as set out in Schedule 2) alone with:
 - a. Pupil A;
 - b. Pupil B.
6. By his conduct as may be proven at any or all of allegations 1 – 5, he failed to follow management advice given to him in respect of his conduct with pupils.
7. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil E in that:
 - a. He made the comments and/or had discussions with Pupil E as set out in Schedule 1 or words to that effect;
 - b. He encouraged Pupil E to keep their conversations a secret;
 - c. On one or more occasions, he rested one or more hands on Pupil E’s knees;
 - d. On one or more occasions he hugged Pupil E;
8. On one or more occasions he sought and/or held non-classroom meetings (as set out in Schedule 2) with Pupil E.

9. His conduct as may be proven at any or all of allegations 1 – 8 was sexually motivated.

10. His conduct as may be found proven at allegation 7b was dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology, anonymised pupil list and list of key people – pages 9 to 11

Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 12 to 38

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements – pages 38 to 107

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents exhibited to witness statements – pages 108 to 680

Section 5: Other Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 681 to 704

Section 6: Teacher documents – pages 705 to 734

In addition, the panel was provided with the following:

A bundle of documents relevant to service/ proceeding in absence pages 1 to 13

A case management decision following a case management hearing held on 4 September 2025.

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

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

Witnesses

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

Witness D – [REDACTED];

Pupil E;

Witness F - [REDACTED];

Pupil A;

Pupil C; and

Pupil B.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

On 1 September 2011, Mr Coltella was employed at Skinners' School as a teacher of English. He became the head of English, was subsequently appointed as Assistant Head of Sixth Form and became part of Skinners' School's senior leadership team.

In February 2020, a complaint was received by Skinners' School from the parents of Pupil E.

In September 2020, Mr Coltella was employed by Tonbridge School as a teacher of English and the [REDACTED].

In January 2021, Pupil E made a further complaint to Skinners' School and a direct referral to the LADO about Mr Coltella's conduct and this was communicated to the headteacher of Tonbridge School.

On 23 November 2021, a disclosure was made to Tonbridge School about alleged conduct by Mr Coltella towards Pupil A. Between November and December 2021, an investigation was carried out by Tonbridge School.

On 31 January 2022, Mr Coltella was referred to the TRA by Tonbridge School.

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:

While employed as a teacher at Skinners' School, St John's Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 9PG and/or at Tonbridge School, High Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 you:

1. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil A in that:

a. On one or more occasion you touched Pupil A's knee and/or shoulder;

In the note of Pupil A's interview as part of the School's investigation, he described the one-to-one sessions with Mr Coltella and stated that Mr Coltella always chose a chair or seat that was very close to him. Pupil A referred to Mr Coltella grabbing his hand and "he is always touching my shoulder and knee" It was recorded that Pupil A gestured to indicate the type of contacts on the knee and the "front of the shoulder from a forward direction".

In Pupil A's witness statement for this hearing, he stated that "the Teacher would also use the back of his hand to touch my shoulder/ upper arm when he was laughing as a way to try and get a reaction as if we were joking together."

Pupil A also stated that he recalled the touching of his shoulder taking place on "two types of occasion". One occasion was during a one-one session when Mr Coltella was trying to get an emotional reaction from Pupil A and make him feel annoyed so that he would read a passage in an angry state and be more connected to it. He stated that Mr Coltella had tried to get this reaction by pushing me, as if he was acting. The other type of occasion was when Mr Coltella and Pupil A would "bump into each other" in a public setting and whilst they were chatting Mr Coltella would touch Pupil A's shoulder. Pupil A stated that these latter instances did not "phase" him.

With respect to touching Pupil A's knee, Pupil A stated that this would be during one-to-one sessions. He recalled that, during a lengthy meeting in the Summer, Mr Coltella's leg was "so close to mine and he put his hand on my leg". He went on to state that the "touching my knee would also happen when he would laugh and I also recall that the teacher would touch my knee like my grandmother would as he would have his hand on me and would rub his thumb to comfort me, like someone would do if you were crying."

In the notes of Pupil C's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation he stated that Pupil A had told him about Mr Coltella touching his knee at the time that this had happened.

When Mr Coltella was interviewed during Tonbridge School's investigation, he was asked if he had ever touched Pupil A. Mr Coltella stated that he had shaken Pupil A's hand and patted on the back "like a pat on the shoulders to say well done." He was asked if he had ever hugged Pupil A and responded that "he had only done so in terms of patting Pupil A on the shoulder, never an emotional hug." Mr Coltella stated that he had reflected, but he was sure that "his actions were not construed in a sinister way" but acknowledged that "perhaps there was a line that he may have naively blurred."

In the School's disciplinary hearing, Mr Coltella was referred to what Pupil A had said during his interview, including having referred to multiple times of having been touched

on the knee. Mr Coltella stated that he “did not deny” there had been occasions when he had touched Pupil A in one-to-one meetings but that he had not caressed his hand. Mr Coltella stated that he “gave pats in a platonic way and hugs in an encouraging way, not anything sinister”.

In Mr Coltella’s representations for this hearing, dated December 2025, Mr Coltella referred to Pupil A’s evidence that the alleged touch by Mr Coltella of Pupil A’s knee was akin to that of his grandmother. He then went on to dispute the accusation that his actions were sexually motivated. The panel noted that Mr Coltella did not deny in his representations that he had touched Pupil A on the knee.

In light of Pupil A’s evidence and Mr Coltella having accepted that he had touched Pupil A on the knee and the shoulder, the panel considered that it was more likely than not that on one or more occasion Mr Coltella touched Pupil A’s knee and/or shoulder.

The panel went on to consider whether this was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Tonbridge School’s Code of Conduct (April 2020) stated that there was a duty upon all staff to keep young people safe and to protect them from sexual, emotional and physical harm. It was stated that this means that they must always act, and be seen to act in the child’s best interest, avoiding any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their actions. It also referred to the requirement to take prudent and reasonable precautions in relation to foreseeable harm. With respect to propriety and behaviour, it was stated that “staff must be even-handed, consistent and unambiguous in the way they treat boys, avoiding any actions that would be considered “unprofessional”, such as excessive informality in a boy’s room in his Boarding House”. Staff were also required to “avoid any words or actions that are over-familiar”.

The Code of Conduct also gave guidance on one-to-one situations. It stated that staff working in one-to-one situations with pupils are potentially more vulnerable to allegations, and that it “makes sense to plan and conduct such meetings to ensure that the security of both boy and staff are met”.

With respect to physical contact the Code of Conduct stated that there were occasions when it is entirely appropriate for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but that “a general culture of limited touch should be adapted to the individual requirements of each boy”. The Code of Conduct went on to state that staff should be aware that “even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued”.

The same requirements regarding one-to-one situations were set out in Tonbridge School’s Safeguarding policy. This also stated that “staff must be even-handed, consistent and unambiguous in the way they treat boys, avoiding any actions that would be considered ‘unprofessional’”.

The panel also had regard to Tonbridge School's Physical Restraint Policy. This stated that "there are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, is proper and necessary (e.g. comforting a distressed boy, demonstrating a musical instrument or coaching technique or congratulating a boy.)"

The panel did not consider the touching of Pupil A's shoulder in the two types of occasions he described as being a breach of appropriate boundaries. It appeared to the panel that Mr Coltella's actions in trying to improve the delivery of a passage Pupil A was reading were akin to a coaching technique. The panel noted that the other type of occasion was described as having occurred in public, and was not therefore as susceptible to being misinterpreted. Pupil A stated that he had not been "phased" by these latter instances.

The panel did consider that the touching of Pupil A's knee was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries. Such contact occurred in one-to-one sessions and was open to being misconstrued. Mr Coltella ought to have avoided any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question his actions.

The panel found this allegation proven.

c. On one or more occasion you hugged or attempted to hug Pupil A

d. On one or more occasion you asked Pupil A to hug him

In the notes of the interview held with Pupil A during the School's investigation, Pupil A stated that Mr Coltella "had asked Pupil A to hug him numerous times". Pupil A stated that he had done it once and "felt really bad". Pupil A stated that "these hugs are always instigated" by Mr Coltella and they made Pupil A feel uncomfortable. He stated that Mr Coltella did this by putting out his arms in a gesture to suggest giving or wanting a hug.

In Pupil A's witness statement, he stated that there were around three occasions when Mr Coltella had asked him to hug him when they were in one-to-one sessions, and that, each time it had happened, it was because he had had to console the teacher who had been someone who was "quite easy to upset". Pupil A could not recall the exact words used by Mr Coltella when he requested a hug, but he remembered that it was along the lines of "give me a hug" in a jovial tone, and that Mr Coltella would put his arms out.

Pupil A recalled one specific instance which had happened towards the end of the Christmas term. He stated that Mr Coltella had been concerned as to what people thought of him as Pupil A and the [REDACTED] of those pupils [REDACTED] preparing for the [REDACTED] were not responding to him, and they had become disinterested in the preparatory meetings. He stated that he believed that Mr Coltella was worried that Pupil A had fallen out with him, or had become upset him because he was busy. Mr Coltella had asked for a meeting with Pupil A who told him there was nothing to worry about and, following this, Mr Coltella had asked for a hug.

Pupil A stated that when the teacher made the request, he would give Mr Coltella a hug and there was no occasion when he refused to do so. He explained that he was not comfortable with it, but did not fight him off, but left the classroom feeling “horrible with himself”.

In oral evidence, Pupil A described Mr Coltella having hugged him on a few occasions, and described the hug as a “proper embrace” with each person’s arms held around the other whilst they were facing each other. He explained that this was not something that occurred in front of other people.

In Pupil B’s witness statement, he stated that he recalled that Mr Coltella had hugged Pupil A. In oral evidence, Pupil B clarified that he had not seen this happen, but had been told by Pupil A that it had occurred. Therefore, whilst Pupil B was unable to corroborate the hug having occurred from his own knowledge, this did support that Pupil A has been consistent in what he has told others.

In the notes of Mr Coltella’s interview during the School’s investigation, he was asked if he had ever hugged Pupil A. He stated that he had only done so in terms of patting Pupil A on the shoulder and that it was never an emotional hug.

During Tonbridge School’s disciplinary hearing, Mr Coltella stated he had no recollection of initiating a hug with Pupil A. He stated that when Tonbridge School had lost a match to Skinners’ School he had “gone in for a hug to reassure”. He stated that he gave pats in a platonic way and hugs in an encouraging way, and that it was not “anything sinister”.

In Mr Coltella’s representations to the TRA in June 2024, he stated that he acknowledged that he may have shaken hands/ patted a student on the back but at no time did he ask a student to hug him.

The panel noted that Mr Coltella’s description of events had waivered. He had initially said that he had never hugged Pupil A, then later described an incident on which he had done so and admitted that he had given hugs in an encouraging way. Whilst Mr Coltella maintained throughout that he had not initiated a hug, the panel observed that this was not the same as having engaged in a hug. The panel considered Pupil A’s evidence to be more credible with regards to Mr Coltella having hugged him and the circumstances when this had occurred. Pupil A has been consistent in his account, and it seemed unlikely that Pupil A would have initiated hugs given the discomfort he described feeling.

The panel found it proven that Mr Coltella had, on one or more occasion, hugged Pupil A and that, on one or more occasion, he had asked Pupil A to hug him. The panel went on to consider whether, in this regard, Mr Coltella had failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil A.

Having regard to the policies referred to above, such contact and requests occurred in one-to-one sessions and were open to being misconstrued. Mr Coltella ought to have

avoided any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question his actions. The panel considered Tonbridge School's Physical Restraint Policy which stated that "there are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force is proper and necessary (e.g. comforting a distressed boy...)". However, the panel was satisfied that the hugs were not to comfort Pupil A, but rather to console Mr Coltella. In those circumstances, the panel considered that hugging Pupil A and asking Pupil A to hug him was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found both allegation 1.c. and 1.d. proven.

e. You described your relationship with Pupil A as a "friendship" or words to that effect;

In the notes of Pupil A's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, he stated that Mr Coltella kept using the term "friendship" to describe their relationship, often with an accompanying gesture of two of his fingers overlapping and crossed.

In Pupil A's witness statement, he referred to Mr Coltella having used the word "friendship" with him around ten times during one-to-one sessions. He explained this would happen in two scenarios. The first was when considering Pupil A's [REDACTED], when Mr Coltella would "build me up and express admiration for me" and say something like "I really value this friendship". The other scenario was when Mr Coltella "became paranoid" and referred to their friendship and spoke about not wanting to lose it, and how much he valued it. Pupil A stated that he initially reacted positively because he was getting a lot from the teacher and valued his support. However, latterly, as he felt more uncomfortable with Mr Coltella's conduct he would react awkwardly when Mr Coltella said this and try to leave.

Pupil A spoke about this in his oral evidence stating that Mr Coltella's comments regarding their friendship was the context in which he had viewed the matters referred to in allegation 1.f and 1.h. Pupil A at one point referred to Mr Coltella having made comments about a "special friendship", but was careful to pause and reflect that adding the word "special" was his own embellishment rather than that being something said by Mr Coltella. He demonstrated the gesture that Mr Coltella made on numerous occasions when describing "the friendship". The panel found Pupil A's evidence to be credible. It was consistent and Pupil A took care to ensure that it was not exaggerated.

In the notes of the initial interview with Mr Coltella regarding these allegations, Mr Coltella stated that "if his being friendly, and the occasional pat on the shoulder could be misconstrued" "he had never intentionally caused anyone harm."

In the notes of the second interview with Mr Coltella as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, he stated that he felt he had been "kind, friendly and helpful."

In Mr Coltella's representations in June 2024, he described his rapport with pupils as having been "friendly rather than that of a friendship".

The panel noted that Mr Coltella had not specifically denied that he had described his relationship with Pupil A as a "friendship".

The panel found it proven that Mr Coltella described his relationship with Pupil A as a "friendship" or words to that effect.

The panel went on to consider whether this was a failure to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Pupil A.

Having regard to the policies referred to above, such comments occurred in one-to-one sessions, and were open to being misconstrued. Mr Coltella ought to have avoided any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question his actions. He failed to avoid using words that were over-familiar and his comments were ambiguous. The panel considered that describing his relationship with Pupil A as a "friendship" or words to that effect was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 1.e. proven.

2. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil B in that:

c. On one or more occasions you touched and/or brushed Pupil B's leg;

In the notes of Pupil B's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, he stated that he and Pupil A had started talking and shared the same worries. Pupil B stated that Mr Coltella would "touch and brush my leg".

In Pupil B's witness statement he stated that this happened frequently in group sessions and also in one-to-one meetings he had had with Mr Coltella. He stated that "it was like sitting next to one of your mates and them brushing you on the leg". He stated that he thought it was odd, but that it did not feel sexual, but "it was too much for a teacher".

He also stated that, in his first one-to-one session with Mr Coltella, Mr Coltella touched his leg and "this was when he would laugh and brush my leg if I said something funny, like him hitting your leg when saying a joke."

In oral evidence, Pupil B said that Mr Coltella would draw a chair up so he was sat opposite to Pupil B. He stated that because they were so physically close, their knees were already virtually touching.

In the notes of Mr Coltella's interview as part of the School's investigation, he gave an indication of his proximity to Pupil B, and said that he did not recollect touching Pupil B's knee.

In Mr Coltella's disciplinary hearing, Mr Coltella was asked if he remembered touching Pupil B. Mr Coltella stated that he did not recall, but that if he were to have, "what he knew he would recall was if he had grabbed someone, but not necessarily if it was a nudge". He stated that he did not recall touching Pupil B on the knee, but that if he were to have it "would probably have been something like brushing him on the knee".

The panel considered that it was more likely than not that Mr Coltella had touched and/or brushed Pupil B's leg, given that Mr Coltella had accepted the possibility of an accidental touch.

The panel went on to consider whether this was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Having regard to the policies referred to above, such contact occurred in one-to-one sessions, and was open to being misconstrued. Mr Coltella ought to have avoided any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question his actions. Since Mr Coltella touched Pupil B's leg on multiple occasions, whilst this may have been accidental, he ought to have ensured they sat further apart to mitigate the possibility of this occurring.

The panel found allegation 2.c. proven.

4. You instructed one or more pupils to recite inappropriate song lyrics to you or to other pupils.

In the notes of Pupil A's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, he described the training sessions he had attended with [REDACTED] of students preparing for the [REDACTED]. He stated that Mr Coltella "looks you in the eye and gets you to recite things like song lyrics". He stated that Mr Coltella would ask the boys to "do this to one another, if he decides that you are not doing it properly, he does it with you".

Pupil A then described some lyrics that he said were used "very often" from a song called "Marvin Gaye". He cited the section of the lyrics which referred to a "king size to ourselves" and "it's Karma Sutra show and tell". He stated that obviously the boys were going to laugh during these sessions yet Mr Coltella did not understand why they were laughing.

In Pupil A's witness statement, he stated that this occurred regularly in what he called [REDACTED] between September and mid-November and that this had happened each week during that period. He explained that this exercise related to speech writing and public speaking. He stated that it tied into Mr Coltella's philosophy of the need to get into character and connect with the words in a physical and emotional way and that by doing so they would be a better and more engaged speaker.

He stated that he was not clear why that specific song had been chosen, but that they were meant to say the words in a “sincere and authentic way and not laugh”. He stated that, if they were messing around, Mr Coltella would step in, be very close to them “look us deep and directly in our eyes and say the lyrics with real sincerity”.

In the notes of Pupil B’s interview as part of Tonbridge School’s investigation, he stated that during the sessions, Mr Coltella would play music and stir up their emotions. He described how the group would sit in a circle and that Mr Coltella would get them to “stand up and look into his eyes and say a line back” and indicated these were lines from poetry and songs. He stated that the boys would do this with one another but if they were not doing it correctly, they would do it with Mr Coltella. Pupil B explained that one of the songs Mr Coltella used particularly was the song called “Marvin Gaye” and that the line he used from it was “Karma Sutra baby, show and tell”.

In Pupil B’s witness statement, he stated that the circumstances around this were to practise public speaking and this had been a way to work on how they expressed themselves. He stated they would have to repeat the lyrics of the song to Mr Coltella, the group or another person as if they were trying to convey a message. He stated that Mr Coltella would use this song “quite a lot” but Pupil B also recalled him using other songs.

In the notes of Pupil C’s interview as part of Tonbridge School’s investigation, he explained the [REDACTED] which started in the summer term of 2021. He described the repeating of song lyrics to one another and the “Marvin Gaye” song in which he said the “lyrics were sexualised”. He stated that Mr Coltella was “trying to make you feel uncomfortable, go to a place you don’t normally go”. He confirmed that these lines were said face to face with Mr Coltella at times.

In Pupil C’s witness statement, he gave some more context around the [REDACTED]. He stated that there were seven members of the group which included Pupil A and Pupil B as well as a few others. He explained that the [REDACTED] involved [REDACTED] and that the pupils had been keen to impress. He stated that Mr Coltella would call the sessions “training” and one of the first pieces of training involved Mr Coltella playing the song “Marvin Gaye” from the start until the chorus. He stated that Mr Coltella would make them sing and say the lyrics to one another, saying that “if they were going to do well, they would need to get outside of their comfort zone and connect with what we were doing psychologically”. He stated that this exercise happened quite a few times across the sessions throughout several months, and that he would describe it as Mr Coltella’s “go to”. He stated that he recalled Mr Coltella using other songs occasionally but could not remember what they were. He could not recall if the other songs had “sexual lyrics” but they were “emotionally charged”. He stated that the lyrics were uncomfortable to sing and say, and that they had to do this “face to face” with friends. He stated that there were also times when Mr Coltella would participate and they would have to sing the song to him, and he would look out for their eye contact. He stated that, if they were standing in a line, Mr Coltella would walk up and down the line, searching for eye contact.

In the notes of Mr Coltella’s interview as part of Tonbridge School’s investigation, he confirmed he had used the song “Marvin Gaye” as well as other songs in order to help the pupils to talk to each other in a “soft, not coercive, but kind and loving manner”. He stated that he had used the song for the last five years and it seemed to connect with the boys. He confirmed that the training had been his own design and the songs were ones that he believed worked well. Mr Coltella was asked if the lyrics were appropriate, and Mr Coltella stated that he asked the boys to say them to each other, not to him, but that he was in the room. He stated that if he did a demonstration, he “looked at the ground because he felt it would be inappropriate for him to look at the boys when saying the lines”.

In Mr Coltella’s disciplinary hearing, he stated that this was a small section of training and not a regular technique. He described how he would start by encouraging the boys to get angry and then become quite softly spoken and emotional with each other. He stated they would stand in a circle and two would come in and pick two lines and say them in a soft way. He stated that they would consider tone of voice and think about their breathing, while looking at each other. He referred to a group session when Mr Coltella had paired the boys together and watched them do this with each other whilst Mr Coltella was “going around their circle not looking them in the eyes as that would be inappropriate”.

In Mr Coltella’s representations to the TRA in June 2024, he stated that “it is now evident that the lyrics of the song chosen was unwise, but my intention was about helping them connect with emotion in public speaking so that they could better persuade individuals when at global competitions”.

Pupil A, Pupil B and Pupil C were all consistent that Mr Coltella instructed them to recite song lyrics to him or to other pupils. Mr Coltella did not dispute that this had happened. The panel considered that the lyrics were inappropriate, as there were other song lyrics that could have been used that were not sexual in nature.

The panel found allegation 4 proven.

5. On one or more occasions you sought and/or held meetings (as set out in Schedule 2) alone with:

- a. Pupil A;**
- b. Pupil B.**

Schedule 2

Pupil Incident

- i. A Witness statement dated 3 May 2025, paragraphs 26 – 34**

ii. B Witness statement dated 21 March 2025, paragraph 13 and paragraph 27

In Pupil A's witness statement, he explained that he and Mr Coltella had various one-to-one sessions for multiple reasons. He stated that the first took place in June/ July 2021, and whilst he could not recall the conversation, he stated that it was an emotional one. He recalled another when Mr Coltella provided reassurance at a time when Pupil A was under pressure due to his [REDACTED] and the level of sport that Pupil A was engaged in.

Pupil A stated that another one-to-one session took place during the summer holidays of 2021, which lasted three and a half hours. He stated that he and Mr Coltella had reviewed around 40 applications/ essays of pupils who wanted to be part of the [REDACTED], explaining that he had been the [REDACTED].

Following this, Pupil A estimated that he had weekly one-to-one sessions with Mr Coltella from around September to late November about his personal statement for his [REDACTED]. He stated that, as a result of Pupil A [REDACTED], and given Mr Coltella had studied French at University, Mr Coltella offered to help him with his personal statement, as well as giving Pupil A private sessions in Italian. Pupil A stated that the Italian lessons took place in Mr Coltella's classroom in the English department and began in around June 2021, with around one to two sessions a week but. as Pupil A became busier, and, as he sought to avoid Mr Coltella, the lessons became less regular with the last lesson in October 2021.

Pupil A described the one-to-one sessions as typically lasting an hour, save for the one three and a half hour session. He stated that, towards the end of Mr Coltella teaching at the school, Pupil A sought to shorten the sessions by providing an excuse so that they would last 15 minutes.

In the notes of Pupil C's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, Pupil C referred to Pupil A having lots of one-to one meetings with Mr Coltella and that "in recent times" Pupil B and Pupil C had waited outside as Pupil A had asked them to saying "it was almost for his safety and security." Pupil C also referred in his witness statement to having to wait outside for Pupil A and also Pupil B when they were having conversations with Mr Coltella, and that this felt necessary to make sure that "they were not kept longer than they had to be" with Mr Coltella.

In the notes of Pupil B's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, Pupil B referred to Pupil A having been voted [REDACTED] and that as a result Pupil A and Mr Coltella had a lot of one-to-one meetings. He stated that recently other boys had taken to waiting outside the classroom at Pupil A's request because Pupil A felt uncomfortable.

In Pupil B's witness statement, he stated that there was a point when Pupil A asked Pupil B to wait outside a classroom as Pupil A had to stay behind with Mr Coltella after a

lesson to discuss “hoodie sizes” for [REDACTED]. He referred to Pupil A being the head delegate for the [REDACTED] and together they would have one-to-one meetings “all of the time”.

In the notes of the interview with Mr Coltella, as part of the School’s investigation, Mr Coltella was asked if he was confident in all his dealings with Pupil A that boundaries were kept. Mr Coltella responded that “not telling anyone about one-to-one meeting was wrong.” Mr Coltella did not deny that he had held one-to-one meetings with Pupil A. In the notes of the disciplinary hearing, Mr Coltella stated that he should have told others when he met with Pupil A in the holidays and should have protected himself.

The panel noted that in Mr Coltella’s representations for this hearing he stated that Pupil A’s reference to an occasion in the Summer of 2021 to go through application essays for [REDACTED] was factually incorrect and a false memory. He stated that permission for [REDACTED] was not given until October 2021 and therefore Pupil A’s memory was inaccurate. The panel noted that whilst Mr Coltella disputed when this meeting took place, he did not dispute that a one-to-one meeting had taken place with Pupil A or the reason for it.

In light of the evidence of Pupil A, corroborated by the other pupils, and given Mr Coltella had not denied that the one-to-one meetings had taken place, the panel considered that it was more likely than not that on one or more occasions Mr Coltella sought and/or held meetings (as set out in Schedule 2) alone with Pupil A.

The panel found allegation 5.a. proven.

In Pupil B’s witness statement, he referred to the notes of his interview as part of Tonbidge School’s investigation. This stated that approximately two weeks before the end of the Summer Term 2021, Mr Coltella had asked to see Pupil B after lessons. He stated that they went into Mr Coltella’s room with the door shut and Mr Coltella had come and sat directly opposite him with no chair in between. Pupil B stated that the conversation had lasted about an hour, and that it was the “weirdest and most uncomfortable situation” he had ever been in.

In Pupil B’s witness statement, he stated that he thought that this had happened following an English lesson which were typically at the end of the day. He described the session as being like an “hour long therapy session”, that it was emotional, weird and felt unnecessary”. He stated that Mr Coltella commented along the lines of “You have so much potential, you need to tap into your emotional side” and “I can tell you are an emotional guy, you care”.

In Pupil B’s witness statement, he also referred to another one-to-one session with Mr Coltella in year 13 in around November 2021. He stated that this took place at break time in Mr Coltella’s class room and lasted around 20 – 25 minutes. He stated that this took

place as a result of Pupil B pulling out of [REDACTED]. In the notes of Pupil B's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, Pupil B also referred to this incident.

The panel noted that Pupil C had referred in his witness statement to waiting outside for Pupil A and also Pupil B when they had conversations with Mr Coltella.

In the notes of Mr Coltella's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, Mr Coltella said that he could not remember a one-to-one session at the end of the Summer Term 2021. He stated that he remembered "chatting one-to-one" in the past but could not remember this incident. He stated that he would have had conversations in training sessions about "how the students are and about public speaking" and would have followed up with individual sessions.

In the disciplinary hearing, Mr Coltella stated that he could not recall meeting with Pupil B in the Summer Term "due to a number of meetings he had held". When asked about the personal nature of the conversation reported by Pupil B, Mr Coltella stated that he remembered that he had told Pupil B how he could change people's perception of him, and encouraged Pupil B to believe in himself. He stated that his conversation was in terms of who Pupil B was as a person and what he could achieve.

Mr Coltella referred to Pupil B having spoken with Mr Coltella on a number of occasions, and Pupil B had emailed asking to discuss [REDACTED]. Mr Coltella stated that he had suggested the timing for the meeting, but that Pupil B had suggested meeting and queried why he would have done so if Pupil B had not felt safe.

In light of the evidence of Pupil B corroborated by Pupil C, and given Mr Coltella had not denied that the one-to-one meetings had taken place, the panel considered that it was more likely than not that on one or more occasions Mr Coltella sought and/or held meetings (as set out in Schedule 2) alone with Pupil B.

The panel found allegation 5.b. proven.

6. By your conduct as may be proven at any or all of allegations 1 – 5, you failed to follow management advice given to you in respect of your conduct with pupils.

Following concerns raised by the parents of Pupil E regarding Mr Coltella's conduct at Skinners' School, Mr Coltella was provided with a "Management Guidance Letter". This set out Skinners' School's expectations as to future conduct for someone in his position. Mr Coltella was advised that the areas he needed to focus on were:

"you need to re-evaluate the advice you give to students, making sure that it stays on the right side of counselling. We are not counsellors and must understand when to hand over.

You need to re-evaluate the setting and location in which meetings take place, the approach needs to be formal, with clear physical separation, and without physical contact.

You must continue to inform CF (your line manager) of any one-to-one meetings with students.

You must re-read the Code of Conduct and acknowledge to me (email is fine) when you have done so. In this way you can reflect on the School's policies and protocols, and the teaching standards, to ensure no further interactions can be perceived as 'inappropriate'.

Collectively, we need to consider how [REDACTED] trip is managed, given the toll it takes on students, particularly vulnerable ones. We will meet in the autumn before the next [REDACTED] gets under way".

The panel considered whether the allegations found proven at 1.a., 1.c., 1.d., 1.e., 2.c., 4. and 5. constituted a failure to follow this management advice. The panel considered that the conduct found proven allegations 1.a. 1.c., 1.d., 1.e., 2.c. all breached the management advice Mr Coltella had been given to ensure that there was clear physical separation in meetings and that there was no physical contact.

With respect to the conduct found proven at allegation 4, the panel did not consider instructing pupils to recite inappropriate song lyrics breached any of the specific terms of the management advice.

The panel did not consider that the one-to-one meetings found proven in allegation 5 breached the management advice. Pupil A described the Italian lessons taking place in Mr Coltella's classroom in the English department but did not describe the location of the other meetings. He stated that these typically lasted an hour and would have started at around 16:15. Witness F stated that the Tonbridge School day ran until 6pm, so there may well have been other pupils and/or teachers around.

Pupil C confirmed that when he waited outside for Pupil A there had been a thin glass panel in the door, and that he expected that he would have been able to hear some of what was going on inside, although the door was closed. Pupil B confirmed that when he waited for Pupil A that it had been a classroom he had waited outside.

Pupil B confirmed that the one-to-one meetings he had attended with Mr Coltella had been in Mr Coltella's classroom.

There was evidence that the one-to-one meetings had taken place in Mr Coltella's classroom were conducted in a room that had a glass panel in the door. There was therefore insufficient evidence that Mr Coltella had failed to follow management advice in respect of considering the location of such meetings.

The panel found allegation 6. proven in respect of the conduct found proven at allegations 1.a., 1.c., 1.d., 1.e., and 2.c. but not in respect of the conduct found proven at allegation 4. and 5.

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you not proved, for these reasons:

1. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil A in that:

b. On one or more occasion you grabbed and/or stroked Pupil A's hand;

In Pupil A's interview as part of the School's investigation, it is recorded that Pupil A stated that Mr Coltella "will be talking to me and grabs my hand", going on to say this happened many times, but it was also what Mr Coltella did when holding Pupil A's hand that made him feel uncomfortable. It was noted that Pupil A explained and gestured that Mr Coltella would stroke or caress Pupil A's hand with his thumb "like my grandmother would have".

In Pupil A's witness statement for this hearing he stated that the "teacher touching my hand happened more than 10 times and was not an irregular thing".

Pupil A stated that he specifically recalled a session when he opened up to the teacher emotionally when Pupil A "had a lot of things bottled up" and that he had felt amazing and a lot better. He stated that "he specifically recalled during this session the teacher touching my hand. From this point onwards, I had a level of trust with the Teacher and it was a bit like the Teacher was acting as a therapist and I got value out of this. I recall him making me cry in one of these sessions. It was during these sessions when he would grab my hand or leg".

The panel noted that in oral evidence Pupil A had referred to Mr Coltella putting his hand on Pupil A's hand and caressing it. Pupil A made no reference in oral evidence to Mr Coltella having "grabbed" his hand.

The word "grab" indicated to the panel a motion with an element of physical force. Pupil A's description of the manner in which Mr Coltella touched him did not tend to suggest that this occurred with physical force.

The panel considered that it was more likely than not that Mr Coltella would have touched Pupil A's hand rather than grabbing it.

The panel noted that Mr Coltella had denied having caressed Pupil A's hand during the course of his disciplinary hearing. In making representations to the TRA in June 2024, Mr Coltella stated that at no time did he engage in any stroking or touching. The panel was unable to test Mr Coltella's evidence as he was not in attendance.

In oral evidence, Pupil A demonstrated the caressing motion that Mr Coltella used on his hand. The panel noted that Pupil A had been consistent throughout his accounts (including during his oral evidence) about Mr Coltella stroking his hand and that he had not sought to overstate the position explaining it was in a manner akin to that displayed by his grandmother. His demonstration of the action to the panel was unsolicited, and came about naturally during the course of explaining what had happened. The panel considered Pupil A's account of this to be credible. The panel preferred Pupil A's account which it had had the opportunity to test.

The panel considered that it was more likely than not that on one or more occasions Mr Coltella had stroked Pupil A's hand.

The panel went on to consider whether Mr Coltella's stroking of Pupil A's hand was a failure to maintain professional boundaries.

The panel noted that Tonbridge School's Physical Restraint Policy stated that "there are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force is proper and necessary." An example was given of "comforting a distressed boy".

Based on the School's Physical Restraint Policy and Pupil A's description of Mr Coltella having stroked his hand at a time when Pupil A was upset, the panel did not consider this to constitute a failure to maintain professional boundaries.

The panel found allegation 1.b. not proven.

f. You said to Pupil A "I can't wait till we are out of this place" or words to that effect;

In the notes of Pupil A's interview as part of the School's investigation he stated that Mr Coltella had said to Pupil A "I can't wait 'til we are out of this place".

In Pupil A's witness statement, Pupil A stated that this had been said on one occasion during a one-to-one session. He stated that this was during an intense conversation in which Mr Coltella was saying how much he valued and admired Pupil A, that Pupil A reminded him of himself, and that Mr Coltella enjoyed spending time with Pupil A. He stated that Mr Coltella had referred to them both being busy, as Pupil A had a lot going on in terms of his academic work, [REDACTED] as an extra-curricular activity. He stated that Mr Coltella was therefore looking to the future and was excited about their blossoming friendship. Pupil A understood that Mr Coltella was indicating that he wanted to be away from the restrictions of Tonbridge School to develop their "relationship".

In the notes of Mr Coltella's disciplinary hearing, Mr Coltella explained that he had said that it would be great when they left for the summer, that they could all go out and it would be "nice to get together again". It was clear from Mr Coltella's comment that he was referring to a meeting with a group, rather than Pupil A alone.

In oral evidence, Pupil A stated that some of the masters at Tonbridge School would meet with groups of former pupils and referred to “old boys drinks” and occasions where masters would visit universities and buy drinks for former pupils.

Given that in Pupil A’s witness statement, Pupil A had referred to this comment arising in the context of both he and Mr Coltella being particularly busy, the panel considered that it was more likely than not that Mr Coltella had been referring to a time when they could relax, when the term was over.

The panel did not consider that this comment was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 1.f. not proven.

g. You viewed and/or attempted to view Pupil A’s social media account;

In the notes of Pupil A’s interview as part of Tonbridge School’s investigation, he stated that after half term, Mr Coltella had said that Pupil A had “popped up” on Instagram, and that when he checked back later he could not find Pupil A. Pupil A stated that he had blocked Mr Coltella. He stated that Mr Coltella had said to him, that the only way that could happen was if Pupil A had blocked him. He stated that he had denied to Mr Coltella that he had blocked him, and that he found this episode uncomfortable.

In Pupil A’s witness statement, he stated that he recalled this happening when he was in a one-to-one session with Mr Coltella. He stated that he could not recall whether the conversation took place in Mr Coltella’s classroom or elsewhere, but no-one else was “in ear shot of what was being said”. He stated that there had been no specific trigger to him blocking Mr Coltella other than his anxiety and discomfort about his relationship with Mr Coltella. He stated that he had seen the Skinner Sport Academy Instagram account “pop up” as a suggested follow on his Instagram and, as Pupil A had a public account and did not want Mr Coltella to see that, he blocked the Skinner Sport Academy Instagram account to which he knew Mr Coltella had access.

Pupil B reported what Pupil A had told him about this incident. He stated that Mr Coltella had looked Pupil A up on Instagram and had asked him a question about his profile picture, and that it was as a result of this that Pupil A had blocked Mr Coltella. He stated that Pupil A had told him that, a day or two later, the teacher had asked Pupil A if he had blocked him as Mr Coltella had looked him up and could not find his account, but that when Mr Coltella had used his other social media account he was able to look him up.

In Mr Coltella’s interview as part of Tonbridge School’s investigation, Mr Coltella stated that he had been scrolling on Instagram and Pupil A had popped up, and that he had “pressed on him by accident” and a video had started. He stated that he then went on to search for something. Mr Coltella stated that he was concerned that it would flag that he had viewed the profile, and that he was concerned that Pupil A would think “he was being

stalked". Mr Coltella agreed that he should have reported this to the designated safeguard lead, but instead apologised to Pupil A, said that he hoped Pupil A had not been concerned and asked if Pupil A had blocked him. When Pupil A said that he had not, Mr Coltella stated that he had been pleased that he had clarified the situation with Pupil A and moved on.

The panel noted that it was possible that Pupil A's recollection of this incident had changed over time, or that Pupil B might have misremembered what Pupil A had told him. Nevertheless, given that these two accounts were inconsistent, the panel considered there was insufficient evidence that Mr Coltella had viewed or attempted to view Pupil A's social media account intentionally.

The panel found allegation 1.g. not proven.

h. You proposed going to a restaurant with Pupil A.

In the notes of Pupil A's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, he stated that this conversation had followed half term, when Pupil A had been to a restaurant in [REDACTED]. He stated that Mr Coltella had asked Pupil A about his half term break and when Pupil A described the restaurant, Mr Coltella had said "Okay, let's go".

In Pupil A's witness statement, Pupil A stated that this comment had been made during their one-to-one sessions and that Pupil A's interpretation was that Mr Coltella was saying that they would go to the restaurant together as friends at some point in the future.

In the notes of the interview with Mr Coltella as part of the School's investigation, Mr Coltella stated that he had suggested that the whole group might go, in a way that "you might meet up with a group of ex-students when they come back to visit the school." Mr Coltella stated that he hoped that Pupil A had not thought that he meant a one-to one-meeting. He stated that Pupil A had told Mr Coltella that it was the best place he had ever been and suggested to Mr Coltella that they should go there, and Mr Coltella had agreed and used "us" which to him had meant the whole group. Mr Coltella stated that these were flippant remarks rather than anything else, and commented upon "how many times we say things along those lines", citing that he had suggested going for a meal with his Upper Sixth class the previous year, but that the event had never happened.

Mr Coltella made a similar comment in his disciplinary hearing.

In Mr Coltella's representations to the TRA in June 2024, he stated that he had never invited a student to a restaurant and the only time he had been to a restaurant with a group of students was with other members of staff and related to school business.

In Pupil A's oral evidence, Pupil A stated that he did not recall Mr Coltella saying this in the sense of suggesting a group visit to the restaurant. He stated that, in the context of Mr Coltella saying he "could not wait until they were out of this place" and Mr Coltella

referring to their “friendship” he took this as a personal invite. He confirmed that the subject of visiting this specific restaurant had not been revisited.

The panel considered that it was more likely than not that Mr Coltella had made a flippant remark given that there did not appear to have been any arrangements made for he and Pupil A to visit the restaurant. The panel did not consider that this comment was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 1.h. not proven.

2. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil B in that:

a. You said to Pupil B “I love you and I love the group” or words to that effect;

In the notes of Pupil B’s interview as part of Tonbridge School’s investigation, he stated that Mr Coltella had said “I love you and I love the group”, “stuff along those lines”.

In Pupil B’s witness statement he referred to meetings with the [REDACTED] which took place every week after school in the Year 12 summer term and the first term of Year 13 where they would practice public speaking. He stated that in a few of those meetings with Mr Coltella and in their first one-to-one session, Mr Coltella said words along the lines of “I love you and I love the group.” He stated that Mr Coltella had said this “as if he was saying it to his mates”.

In oral evidence, Pupil B stated that this comment had definitely been made in a group session, but that he could not recall if it had been said in a one-to-one session.

There was insufficient evidence that this comment had been made in a one-to-one meeting with Pupil B or as to the circumstances in which such a comment had been made in a group meeting. In light of this, the panel did not consider that it had been proven that making such a comment was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 2.a. not proven.

b. You said to Pupil B and /or other pupils “You can’t say anything about what happens in this classroom to other people” or words to that effect;

In the notes of Pupil B’s interview as part of Tonbridge School’s investigation, he referred to the sessions in which the pupils were preparing for [REDACTED] programme and stated that Mr Coltella would make comments such as “You guys have to trust me, trust each other” and also, “You can’t say anything about what happens in this classroom with other people”. He stated that the explanation Mr Coltella gave was that it would “break the trust between the group”. Pupil B stated that “as the trip took shape,” and other students became involved, the same training was extended to them, but without the original seven boys “who were going to get involved again later in the process”.

In Pupil B's witness statement he stated that he could not remember the exact words used by Mr Coltella but that he did say "things like that" referred to in Pupil B's interview.

In Mr Coltella's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation he stated that he had told the pupils that they should only discuss their meetings with parents, but not with lower years, "as it would give away what was coming up in the next [REDACTED]" and they would not be fully engaged.

In oral evidence, Pupil B stated that Mr Coltella had not said they could tell their parents, but that they could not tell others about what happened in their meetings. He stated that the pupils had taken this to mean that they could not tell their parents. He accepted that during preparation for [REDACTED], he was sure that Mr Coltella would have said not to tell the lower years about their meetings.

The panel considered that it was more likely than not that Mr Coltella had made this comment with reference to not telling the lower years what would be coming up in their training sessions. In light of this, the panel did not consider that it had been proven that making such a comment was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 2.b. not proven.

d. On one or more occasions you touched and/or grabbed Pupil B's shoulder and/or knee.

In the notes of Pupil B's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, he stated that Mr Coltella would grab Pupil B's knee or shoulder "to reassure me, like a mate". Pupil B stated that he did not feel this was appropriate from Mr Coltella who was his teacher and described him as "very touchy feely".

In Pupil B's witness statement, he stated that "grabbing my knee is a similar incident to what I describe above", which the panel took to understand to be a reference to Mr Coltella hitting Pupil B's leg when making a joke. The panel noted that this appeared to be a reference to a single incident. Pupil B went on to state that sometimes, Mr Coltella would "shake my knee in a matey way" and he recalled this happening in his first one to one session with Mr Coltella.

Pupil B stated that he remembered Mr Coltella grabbing Pupil B's shoulder during a group session. He stated that if they were not focussing, Mr Coltella would grab their shoulders and hold them "for us to switch on". He stated that he could not recall specific instances of this happening, but it happened a few times and was "done in a way to get us to wake up". He stated that when Mr Coltella did this, "it was not a shock or intimidating; it was like how a friend would touch you on the shoulder and it was something I would not think twice about".

In the notes of Mr Coltella's interview as part of the School's investigation, he gave an indication of his proximity to Pupil B, and said that he did not recollect touching Pupil B's knee.

In Mr Coltella's disciplinary hearing, Mr Coltella was asked if he remembered touching Pupil B. Mr Coltella stated that he did not recall, but that if he were to have, "what he knew he would recall was if he had grabbed someone, but not necessarily if it was a nudge". He stated that he did not recall touching Pupil B on the knee, but that if he were to have done so it "would probably have been something like brushing him on the knee".

The panel considered that it had been proven that Mr Coltella had touched or grabbed Pupil B's knee but considered that there was insufficient evidence that this had occurred more than once. As a single incident, and without further details as to the circumstances in which this took place, the panel did not consider that this was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel considered that Mr Coltella had touched and/or grabbed Pupil B's shoulder. The panel noted that Tonbridge School's Physical Restraint Policy stated that "there are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force is proper and necessary." The panel did not consider that it was a failure to maintain professional boundaries to touch a pupil's shoulder in a group setting to prompt the pupil to engage in the session.

The panel found allegation 2.d. not proven.

3. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil C in that:

a. You obtained Pupil C's home address when there was no professional reason to do so;

In the notes of Pupil B's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, he stated that, during one of [REDACTED], Pupil C had asked Mr Coltella how he had got on finding somewhere to live, as Mr Coltella had previously shared that he had been trying to buy a new home. Mr Coltella had told him the name of the village in which he was living at that time and Pupil C explained that his family had recently moved to the same village. Pupil C stated that Mr Coltella then started to draw a plan of the area on the board and indicated the house where Pupil C lived. Pupil C stated that he assumed that Mr Coltella had looked up his address on the school system and then searched for the address on a map.

In Pupil C's witness statement, he stated that there had been a time gap of a lesson or greater between him informing Pupil C where he lived and Mr Coltella drawing the plan on the board.

In the notes of Mr Coltella's disciplinary hearing, he stated that "on the Tonbridge App, when you typed in boys' names, you saw their addresses". He stated that he had seen

Pupil C's address which he recognised as being somewhere a friend had once lived and had "googled it". He stated that he had mentioned it in front of the whole class and they had had a conversation about the village.

There was no evidence, other than that of Mr Coltella, as to how Mr Coltella had obtained Pupil C's address. Mr Coltella may have come across it when using the Tonbridge App for entirely professional reasons, and noticed his own connection to the address. The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence to find this allegation proven.

The panel found allegation 3.a. not proven.

b. You poked Pupil C and/or said words to the effect of "Shame on you for making me feel grumpy yesterday".

In the notes of Pupil C's interview as part of Tonbridge School's investigation, he described a situation when Mr Coltella came up to Pupil C after an [REDACTED] and "poked" Pupil C and said "Shame on you for making me feel grumpy yesterday" and that Mr Coltella had asked if anyone else was "[REDACTED]".

In Pupil C's witness statement, he stated that he was "fairly sure" that the specific trigger for Mr Coltella's conduct had been that, during one of [REDACTED], Mr Coltella had asked Pupil C to leave or threatened to ask him to leave. In response, Pupil C had said "Do you want me to leave" and Pupil C got up and left. He stated that it was difficult to remember specific times and in which part of the building this had happened. He stated that he also remembered that it had happened when he bumped into Mr Coltella around the school and he thought that it happened in the English building, when he was with a group of students. He went on to state that there may have been other people in the English block but no one was concentrating on what he and the other students were doing so no other people would have witnessed this.

Pupil C had previously referred in his statement to Pupils A, B, D and himself becoming more uncomfortable with [REDACTED] and more outspoken with each other about the discomfort they were experiencing. He referred to them seeking to distance themselves from Mr Coltella and said that they had become disruptive during the sessions.

The panel was unclear from Pupil C's evidence whether this was alleged to have occurred on a single occasion or multiple occasions. The panel was also unclear whether anyone else was present given Pupil C's reference to being with a group of students, yet also saying no one would have witnessed it.

The panel was concerned at the inconsistencies in Pupil C's evidence. The panel found there was insufficient evidence for it to find proven that Mr Coltella had poked Pupil C and used the words alleged. If Mr Coltella had acted as alleged, the panel did not consider that it would have been a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries in the context of making a pupil emotionally aware of the consequences of his actions.

The panel found allegation 3.b. not proven.

7. Failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil E in that:

- a. You made the comments and/or had discussions with Pupil E as set out in Schedule 1 or words to that effect;**

Schedule 1 stated:

- 1. You told Pupil E that you wished that they were no longer at school so that you and Pupil E could go for a drink.**

The panel was provided with a note of a meeting held with Pupil E's parents who complained about Mr Coltella's behaviour towards Pupil E. This included a complaint that Mr Coltella had made "an offer to meet socially once through school (i.e. once Pupil E had left Skinners')".

The panel was provided with a bullet point list of concerns that Pupil E provided to Skinners' School. The first bullet point stated "James Coltella told me that he wished I was out of school so we could go for drinks together".

In Pupil E's witness statement he gave context to the circumstances in which this comment was made. He explained that one-to-one meetings between himself and Mr Coltella began when Pupil E was in his lower 6th year. He stated that they began as a "space to talk" about choosing a university course, writing a personal statement and using the UCAS website to apply to universities. He explained that the meetings would take place in the English department office, which was an office that English staff shared, and he remembered members of staff entering the room on a couple of occasions. He stated that almost all of the meetings took place after school hours and he recalled having the meetings on no more than ten occasions. He stated that they typically lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. In oral evidence, Pupil E stated that the room had been next door to one of the English classrooms, and that there had been three desks for the English faculty to use. He stated that there were rarely other members of staff around, but it was a shared office so on one or two occasions someone from the English faculty might have popped in.

With regard to the specific comment alleged at allegation 7.a.1., Pupil E stated that he recalled Mr Coltella saying this on around three occasions, but could not recall the exact words used. He explained that he had felt discomfort as Mr Coltella was alluding to a scenario in which there would be less restrictions for what Mr Coltella wanted their relationship to become. In oral evidence, Pupil E stated that the comments made him feel as if Mr Coltella intended to form "some sort of friendship or personal relationship" with him once he had left Skinners' School and was no longer a pupil.

In oral evidence, Pupil E stated that this comment had been made in the same meeting as some of the other bullet points in the list of concerns Pupil E had sent by email to the Skinners' School. Pupil E described the other concerns he had identified arising from that meeting and had summarised them in the bullet point list:

- “James Coltella told Pupil E that he noticed the way Pupil E looked at him, and asked if Pupil E was attracted to him
- In this private meeting in his office, James Coltella invited me there on the pretense [sic] of going through my personal statement. When the meeting had finished, he printed out my personal statement and scribbled notes on it so that I wouldn't raise suspicion from my parents when I got home late after school
- James Coltella told me I was good looking.”

Pupil E stated in oral evidence that Mr Coltella had invited him to the meeting to go through his personal statement, but when he arrived, it had become obvious, quite quickly, that was not the primary reason for Mr Coltella wanting to speak with him. He stated words to the effect that “there was an elephant in the room”. Pupil E explained that he had wanted Mr Coltella to tell him what it was, but Mr Coltella had told Pupil E to go first. Pupil E stated that he had asked if Mr Coltella was attracted to him. He stated that Mr Coltella denied that he was. The panel noted in the bullet point list of Pupil E's concerns it stated “I asked him if he was attracted to me and he said that he thought that I was attracted to him.”

The panel noted that Pupil E had said that he had been aware of rumours regarding Mr Coltella including that Mr Coltella was “very close to a former pupil” who was an ex-pupil of his. He stated that there was jovial speculation that this may have been more than a friendship. He stated that there were also “school boy conversations” and a running joke that Mr Coltella would see homosexual imagery in texts where it was not obvious. He confirmed that there had been speculation regarding Mr Coltella's sexuality. The panel noted that Pupil E would likely have viewed his meetings with Mr Coltella through the lens of this speculation.

Pupil E was asked whether it was conceivable that when Mr Coltella had said he thought Pupil E was attracted to him, that Mr Coltella had been trying to establish whether it was necessary to put additional boundaries in place. Pupil E confirmed that he had thought about that meeting a lot, and that was “certainly a motive that has crossed my mind as a possibility.”

Mr Coltella was asked by Witness F about the list of bullet points that Pupil E had sent to Skinners' School. Mr Coltella was employed at Tonbridge School by this time. Mr Coltella stated that he had been Pupil E's sixth form tutor and that Pupil E had been confused about selecting the correct university and course. Mr Coltella reflected that as a young

naïve teacher he had blurred the lines sometimes between counsellor and teacher. He recognised that he should not have met boys alone, but highlighted that the office was not a private office; it was an English department room and they could have been interrupted at any point. He stated that the meetings had not been late as everyone had to leave the site shortly after 6pm. The note of the meeting with Mr Coltella states that Mr Coltella expressed his astonishment at the allegations. He admitted to keeping in touch with former students, and that he had met them for a drink sometimes, but never on their own and sometimes with colleagues.

The panel considered that it was more likely than not that Mr Coltella may have made the comment alleged, noting that it was consistent with the type of comments Mr Coltella made to Pupil A at Tonbridge School.

However, the panel did not consider that Mr Coltella had failed to maintain professional boundaries in saying this. The panel had regard to Skinners' School's Code of Conduct for Teaching and Support Staff which required staff to not establish or seek to establish social contact with students, and whilst it was unwise to make a comment referring to social contact once Pupil E was no longer a pupil of the school, the Code was silent as to the school's position regarding former students. The panel noted that although this was a one-to-one session, it had not been conducted in a remote, secluded area of the school and other members of staff could (and did on other occasions) enter the room.

The panel found allegation 7.a.1. not proven.

2. You asked Pupil E if they were attracted to you.

This was not a concern that Pupil E's parents raised. It was, however, amongst the bullet points of concerns that Pupil E subsequently sent to Skinners' School. The bullet point stated "James Coltella told me that he noticed the way I look at him and asked if I was attracted to him".

The panel noted from Pupil E's oral evidence that this was alleged to have occurred in the same meeting as that referred to in allegation 7.a.1 above. Pupil E stated in oral evidence that he had asked Mr Coltella if he was attracted to Pupil E first. In light of this evidence, it would have been a reasonable question to ask Pupil E in response to Pupil E asking the same question of Mr Coltella. This would have helped Mr Coltella to establish whether Pupil E was developing an infatuation with him which Mr Coltella would have to take steps to guard against under Skinners' Schools' Code of Conduct.

Pupil E was asked whether it was conceivable that when Mr Coltella had said he thought Pupil E was attracted to him, that Mr Coltella had been trying to establish whether it was necessary to put additional boundaries in place. Pupil E confirmed that he had thought about that meeting a lot, and that is "certainly a motive that has crossed my mind as a possibility."

Even if Mr Coltella had made the comment alleged, the panel did not consider that there was sufficient evidence that Mr Coltella had failed to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 7.a.2. not proven.

3. You told Pupil E that they were special and/or you had a special connection that you had not had with other pupils.

This was not a concern that Pupil E's parents raised. It was, however, amongst the bullet points of concerns that Pupil E subsequently sent to Skinners' School. The bullet point stated: "James Coltella told me that I was very special and we had a special connection that he had never had with a pupil before".

In Pupil E's witness statement, he stated that he could recall Mr Coltella having told Pupil E that he was special on more than one occasion but could not recall the exact words Mr Coltella had used. He stated that he remembered Mr Coltella saying that he had never "had a connection like theirs with another student before". He explained that the background to this was Pupil E having said that he had been aware of Mr Coltella having a reputation for having "golden students" that he was fond of and who he showered with praise. Pupil E stated that he had therefore challenged Mr Coltella when he said Pupil E was special that he had had special relationships with other students, and Mr Coltella had responded with words to the effect of "I have not had anyone like you before."

Witness F gave evidence that he had had a conversation with Witness D before Mr Coltella was employed at Tonbridge School. He stated that Witness D had told him that Mr Coltella sometimes made too many demands of an individual pupil, styled as sometimes expecting a degree of "discipleship". Witness D commented in oral evidence that some pupils would have felt that Mr Coltella favoured some students over others.

The panel considered that it would have been consistent with this evidence of Mr Coltella's behaviour to have made the comment alleged.

However, the panel had regard to Pupil E's witness statement that said he had a lot of self-doubt about his ability and, as part of their meetings, Mr Coltella would give Pupil E a lot of praise and tell Pupil E that he was very bright and able. The panel considered that, in these circumstances, Mr Coltella may have been seeking to bolster Pupil E's confidence, and that there was insufficient evidence that in making such a comment Mr Coltella was failing to maintain professional boundaries.

The panel found allegation 7.a.3. not proven.

4. You told Pupil E that they were "good looking".

This was not a concern that Pupil E's parents raised. It was, however, amongst the bullet points of concerns that Pupil E subsequently sent to Skinners' School. The bullet point stated "James Coltella told me that I was good looking."

The panel noted from Pupil E's oral evidence that this was alleged to have occurred in the same meeting as that referred to in allegation 7.a.1 above. The panel noted that a comment that a pupil was "good looking" was not necessarily inappropriate, for example it could be said to bolster a pupil's confidence.

The panel had regard to Pupil E's comment that Mr Coltella re-establishing boundaries was "certainly a motive that has crossed my mind as a possibility."

In light of that comment, even if Mr Coltella had made the comment alleged, the panel did not consider that there was sufficient evidence that Mr Coltella had failed to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 7.a.4. not proven.

5. You told Pupil E that they did not need to get back into school uniform for him after they had gone to the gym.

This was not a concern that Pupil E's parents raised. It was, however, amongst the bullet points of concerns that Pupil E subsequently sent to Skinners' School. The bullet point stated: "When I visited his office having gone to the gym, James Coltella (in response to the fact I had changed back into school uniform) said that I did not need to get back into school uniform for him".

The panel noted that Pupil E would have viewed his meetings with Mr Coltella through the lens of this speculation regarding Mr Coltella's sexuality and [REDACTED].

Witness D stated in his witness statement, that he would not expect a pupil who had been to the gym and who had come to see him to change their clothes. He also stated that it was very common for pupils to go to the gym and see teachers afterwards.

In light of this evidence, even if Mr Coltella had made the comment alleged, the panel did not consider that there was sufficient evidence that Mr Coltella had failed to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 7.a.5 not proven.

b. You encouraged Pupil E to keep your conversations a secret;

The note of Witness D's meeting with Pupil E's parents includes reference to a concern about a "series of one-to-one meetings, ostensibly about university choices, but ultimately counselling meetings (including the phrase 'don't tell your mother')".

This allegation was also amongst the bullet points of concerns that Pupil E subsequently sent to Skinners' School. The bullet point stated: "James Coltella would regularly check that I had not told my mother about our meetings".

In Pupil E's witness statement, he stated that he could recall Mr Coltella saying this to him, but could not recall his exact words.

Having been informed of the bullet point list of concerns Pupil E had presented to Skinners' School, Mr Coltella met with Witness F in February 2021 to discuss it. He stated that both of [REDACTED] and that Pupil E was unsure about taking medicine. Mr Coltella stated that he had talked to the student about being under pressure to opt for medicine and encouraged him to make his own decision.

In Mr Coltella's representations to the TRA he stated that he only sought to help Pupil E navigate a very difficult university decision, as both his teacher and his form tutor.

The panel noted that the quality of Pupil E's recollection was variable, and without an example of an occasion when this had happened, or of the type of discussion Pupil E was asked to keep from his [REDACTED], there was insufficient evidence that this had occurred or if it had that it was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 7.b. not proven.

c. On one or more occasions, you rested one or more hands on Pupil E's knees;

The note of Witness D's meeting with Pupil E's parents include reference to a concern about "a hand placed on Pupil E's knee (certainly once)".

This allegation was also amongst the bullet points of concerns that Pupil E subsequently sent to Skinners' School. The bullet point stated "James Coltella, while we were sat at his desk, rested his hand on my knees."

In Pupil E's witness statement, he stated that this had occurred when Mr Coltella and Pupil E had been sat on swivel chairs at his desk. He stated that he remembered Mr Coltella turning his chair and he rested both of his hands on Pupil E's briefly and did not move them. He described the way in which Mr Coltella had just rested his hands and did not squeeze or move his hands. He stated that his hands had stayed there for a couple of seconds.

Having been informed of the bullet point list of concerns Pupil E had presented to Skinners' School, Mr Coltella met with Witness F in February 2021 to discuss it. He stated that he could not recollect whether or not he touched Pupil E's knee in 2015. Mr Coltella admitted that he was "tactile" and referred to his "Italian heritage as a possible explanation".

The panel noted that the contact referred to by Pupil E was similar to that found proven in respect of Mr Coltella's conduct towards Pupil A. This was also consistent with Mr Coltella's admission of being a "tactile" person.

The panel considered that it had been proven that Mr Coltella had rested his hands on Pupil E's knee but considered that there was insufficient evidence that this had occurred more than once. As a single incident, which may well have been accidental, the panel did not consider that this was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 7.c. not proven.

d. On one or more occasions you hugged Pupil E;

This was not a concern that Pupil E's parents raised. It was, however, amongst the bullet points of concerns that Pupil E subsequently sent to Skinners' School. The bullet point stated: "when I left his office, James Coltella would often initiate an embrace".

In Pupil E's witness statement, he stated that he recalled this happening on more than one occasion but less than five times. He explained that when he was ready to leave the office, Mr Coltella would get up and say goodbye to him at the door and would initiate an embrace by holding his arms open for a hug.

The panel noted that this was consistent with the conduct the panel had found proven in respect of Mr Coltella instigating hugs with Pupil A.

The panel noted that Skinners' School's Code of Conduct stated that there were occasions when it was entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with students, but that it was crucial they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. It referred to a 'no touch' approach being impractical for most staff and that this may in some circumstances be inappropriate. It stated that when physical contact is made with students this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate. It also stated that physical contact should never be secretive. There was no evidence as to whether the hugs described were behind closed doors, or whether the door would have been open at the time of the hug. The panel considered that even if Mr Coltella had hugged Pupil E on one or more occasions, there was no context as to the discussions that had taken place beforehand and therefore insufficient evidence that there was a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries.

The panel found allegation 7.d. not proven.

8. On one or more occasions you sought and/or held non-classroom meetings (as set out in Schedule 2) with Pupil E.

Schedule 2 included:

Pupil Incident

iii. E Witness statement dated 24 March 2025. Paragraphs 13 – 14 and [REDACTED] second bullet point.

The panel noted the reference to [REDACTED] in Schedule 2. There was no [REDACTED] in the panel bundle.

The panel noted that it was possible that the Schedule ought to have referred to a document that Pupil E sent by email to Skinners' School containing a list of bullet points of concerns and which Pupil E exhibited as E1. However, the panel did not consider that this had been made sufficiently plain to Mr Coltella in order for him to address the allegation. The panel decided that it could not be found proven that Mr Coltella had sought and/or held non-classroom meetings with Pupil E as set out in the second bullet point of [REDACTED], in circumstances in which no document labelled [REDACTED] was provided to the panel.

The panel noted that Schedule 2 required that both the non-classroom meetings referred to in paragraphs 13 to 14 of Pupil E's statement and [REDACTED] be proven in order for this allegation to be found proven.

The panel therefore found allegation 8. not proven.

9. Your conduct as may be proven at any or all of allegations 1 – 8 was sexually motivated.

The panel considered whether the conduct found proven at allegations 1.a., c., d., e., 2.c., 4., 5.a., b., and 6. was sexually motivated. The panel considered whether, even in the absence of any direct evidence, sexual motivation should be inferred from all of the circumstances in the case.

The panel had particular regard to allegation 4 since this was the only conduct found proven that was inherently sexual in nature given the content of the lyrics in the Marvin Gaye song that pupils were instructed to recite. The panel noted that Mr Coltella's retrospective rationale for the pupils reciting these lyrics was consistent with the explanation he gave to the pupils at the time. The panel also noted that Pupil A, Pupil B and Pupil C accepted that there were other songs that Mr Coltella used, but that those songs were used less frequently than the others.

The panel noted that Mr Coltella has been consistent that he did not look at the pupils when they recited the lines, and yet Pupil A, Pupil B and Pupil C all confirmed in oral evidence that Mr Coltella had looked directly at them. The panel had in mind that sexual motivation might not be the only explanation of such conduct. There could be other explanations, such as that the song had been used to push the pupils out of their comfort zones and enhance their public speaking skills. It was possible that Mr Coltella had sought to downplay his role when the pupils were reciting the lines to detract from the obvious impropriety of the song being used.

The panel went on to consider the context of the other conduct found proven.

Pupil A stated that he had been made [REDACTED] for no reason at all, and he realised that he did not have to apply to be [REDACTED] despite everyone else having to do so. The panel noted that both Pupil C and Pupil B could not precisely remember, but referred to there having been a vote amongst the [REDACTED], and that others had put themselves forward to be made [REDACTED]. It appeared to the panel more likely than not that Pupil A had been [REDACTED], rather than having been selected by Mr Coltella.

Pupil B referred to a one-to-one session with Mr Coltella two weeks before the end of the Summer term which he described as “like an hour long therapy session.” He stated that he walked away from the conversation “not feeling great and feeling weirded out.” Pupil B stated in his interview as part of the School’s investigation that Mr Coltella asked him about whether he had explored his emotions, and that Pupil B had felt that Mr Coltella was almost asking him if he had explored his sexuality. In Pupil B’s witness statement, he stated that looking back, he could not recall if Mr Coltella had explicitly asked about his sexuality, but that he remembered feeling “super uncomfortable at times as it felt like relationships, sexuality and exploring my inner self were coming up in the conversation, at the very least implicitly.” He stated that he felt like he was “being psychoanalysed” by Mr Coltella.

In oral evidence, Pupil A referred to a conversation with Pupil B in the Summer of 2021 before going into the [REDACTED]. He stated that he did not personally have concerns but that Pupil B stated that he felt uncomfortable.

Pupil A stated that he was initially keen on the sessions with Mr Coltella as he was helping him with his personal statement, but around September 2021, he started to form the view that Mr Coltella was always coming up with reasons to meet.

In Pupil A’s witness statement, he stated that there had been a turn in his attitude and that of the [REDACTED] towards Mr Coltella in around October 2021 when they met with Mr Coltella for a five hour session discussing the [REDACTED]. He stated that during a break in that meeting, Pupil B and another pupil spoke about Mr Coltella being “strange”. He stated that Pupil B shared that he felt uncomfortable and that Mr Coltella seemed “emotionally invested” in how they were behaving. He stated that they spoke about Mr Coltella’s use of the Marvin Gaye song, which they all thought was strange and “we were not sure of the teacher’s intention and what he was getting out of it”.

Pupil B also referred to their group becoming suspicious of what was happening as they found it weird. He stated that their reactions changed as they stopped “buying into it” and began to realise that the sessions and the exclusive nature of them was “bizarre and abnormal”.

It was clear that Pupil A had not always felt uncomfortable. He referred to a one-to-one session when he had opened up to Mr Coltella emotionally and had felt “amazing and a lot better”. This was one of the sessions when he recalled Mr Coltella touching his hand. He stated that, from that point onwards, he had a level of trust with Mr Coltella.

Pupil A stated that he became uncomfortable because Mr Coltella would sit so close to him and that by the end of Mr Coltella’s time at Tonbridge School he felt “manipulated and stupid” that he had let the relationship get to that stage.

The specific example Pupil A gave was of an instance when Mr Coltella had asked him for a hug, was towards the end of the Christmas term (at the end of November). He stated that, by this point, Mr Coltella was concerned about what people thought of him as the [REDACTED] were not responding to him as their attitude had changed and they were not taking [REDACTED] seriously. The panel noted that this occurred after the pupils discussed Mr Coltella and shared their view that Mr Coltella was “strange”.

Pupil A stated that when Mr Coltella would refer to their friendship Pupil A initially reacted positively to it because he was “getting a lot from the teacher and I valued him”. He stated that it was in around October 2021 that he became more aware of Mr Coltella’s conduct and spoke to Pupil B. He stated that he felt he was “letting it get out of control and that the teacher was obsessed with me”.

In oral evidence, Pupil A stated that he felt uncomfortable and that there was some sort of attraction towards him. He stated that there was nothing explicit and that Mr Coltella had not made any “advances on him”, but that it was a combination of things that Mr Coltella did over a long period of time that was “so weird and unnecessary” and that this was something he had “never experienced with another teacher” in his school career.

Pupil B confirmed in oral evidence that Mr Coltella had never said anything explicitly sexual to him.

The panel asked Pupil A, Pupil B and Pupil C in oral evidence whether they had been aware of any rumours about Mr Coltella. Pupil A stated that he had exchanged a message via social media with a friend at Skinners’ School. Pupil A could not remember the exact content, but had asked what his friend had thought of Mr Coltella whilst he was teaching at Skinners’ School. He stated that his friend had said that he was not personally involved, but he knew that a couple of his friends were really affected by Mr Coltella and did not like him at all. Pupil C confirmed that there were, at times, mentions of Skinners’ School and although he could not remember any specific instance, it had come up that boys who had been [REDACTED] had felt discomfort. He confirmed that he had not spoken with anyone at Skinners’ School. Pupil B stated that he knew a few people at Skinners’ School although they were not good friends. He stated that he had heard of things that were a “bit bizarre”, but nothing in detail.

The panel also had regard to Witness D's evidence that Mr Coltella was a driven teacher who was wholly committed to the extracurricular life of Skinner's School. He stated that the way he ran [REDACTED] was beyond anything he had ever encountered. He referred to Mr Coltella being an impactful speaker. He also spoke of pupils perceiving that Mr Coltella had his favourites, and that there was some negativity from pupils who were not one of those pupils that Mr Coltella was working with regularly. It was clear that Mr Coltella was ambitious, with Witness F having said that Mr Coltella had talked about his ambition to be a headteacher in his early 40s and that he was openly applying for other positions on that pathway.

The panel considered the overall thrust of the evidence. The panel was conscious that neither Pupil A nor Pupil B stated that Mr Coltella had ever said anything explicitly sexual to them, and Pupil A confirmed that Mr Coltella had never made any "advances" on him. Mr Coltella was the [REDACTED] and in that role he would have been working closely with pupils to prepare for their applications and interviews. In addition, Mr Coltella was using his speech writing skills to prepare the pupils for [REDACTED]. It was evident that Mr Coltella sought to engage the pupils' emotions in helping them to speak more persuasively or to ensure that pupils had sufficient emotional resilience for the next stages of their academic career. That was open to misinterpretation, and it is clear that the pupils' views about Mr Coltella's intentions changed as they started discussing their sessions with each other. In conjunction with this, it was apparent that there were rumours around Mr Coltella's time at Skinners' School. It was through this lens that Pupils A, C and D started to view Mr Coltella's conduct. The panel noted that Mr Coltella's conduct did not come to light until a third party reported their concerns about Mr Coltella's actions towards Pupil A. The fact that a third party had been sufficiently concerned to have raised this matter would also have affected the manner in which the pupils viewed Mr Coltella's conduct.

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence that Mr Coltella's conduct was sexually motivated. There was no evidence of any sexual gratification nor were there any apparent stepping stones on the way to a sexual relationship. Mr Coltella gave no signals, verbal or physical, whereby he sought to verify if there was any attraction by the pupils towards himself.

The panel found allegation 9. not proven.

10. Your conduct as may be found proven at allegation 7b was dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

Since the conduct at allegation 7.b. was not found proven, allegation 10 was also found not proven.

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

Having found allegations 1.a., c., d., e., 2.c., 4., 5.a., b., and 6. 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 Coltella in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Coltella, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Coltella 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
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...
- 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 Coltella in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Keeping Children Safe In Education (“KCSIE”) in force at the time.

The panel considered that Mr Coltella was in breach of the following provisions: to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; to make sure that his approach was child-centred; to consider what was in the best interests of the child; and to prevent the impairment of children’s mental health or development.

The panel found one or more sub-allegations proven in respect of Mr Coltella’s breach of boundaries towards Pupil A and Pupil B, as well as having instructed one or more pupils to recite inappropriate song lyrics to him or to other pupils. Pupil A described the

discomfort he felt, at the time, as a result of Mr Coltella having breached appropriate boundaries, leading Pupil A to avoid one to one interactions with Mr Coltella. From Pupil A's oral evidence it was clear to the panel that Mr Coltella's conduct has had a lasting impact upon Pupil A. He described the pressures placed upon him by Mr Coltella. He also perceived a sense of attraction or favouritism on the part of Mr Coltella towards him, which was something he did not want to have to deal with at the time. Although the panel did not find it proven that Mr Coltella's actions were sexually motivated, the breach of boundaries by Mr Coltella left Pupil A uncertain of Mr Coltella's intentions towards him. Pupil A referred to the trust he had placed in Mr Coltella having been broken, that he had felt manipulated by him, [REDACTED]. Pupil B described having felt uncomfortable following a meeting in which he was alone with Mr Coltella when personal and emotional matters were discussed. He described the conversation as "going on for way too long and that too many personal questions were being asked". He stated that he felt like he was being "psychoanalysed" by Mr Coltella and that he had felt confused and shaken up by it for a week afterwards.

The panel was not satisfied that the conduct of Mr Coltella in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Working Together to Safeguard Children.

The panel also considered whether Mr Coltella's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice.

The Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with such an offence exist, a panel is likely to conclude that an individual's conduct would amount to unacceptable professional conduct.

The Panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

Nevertheless, the panel considered that Mr Coltella's actions were serious given the negative impact on Pupil A and Pupil B. In his dogged determination to achieve academic success for them, his methodologies were open to misinterpretation and he failed to safeguard their welfare.

The panel noted that Tonbridge School had been made aware that Mr Coltella had been given guidance for future practice by Skinners' School, when Mr Coltella was employed there, as a result of Mr Coltella "sometimes expecting a degree of 'discipleship' from his pupils and that this level of intensity had led to a complaint from a pupil". However, Witness F explained that, on interviewing Mr Coltella, he had been sufficiently satisfied by Mr Coltella's level of reflection that it was not considered necessary to put in place additional support or monitoring, over and above their usual processes. The pupil who had complained about Mr Coltella at Skinners' School came forwards with more detailed allegations. These were brought to the attention of Tonbridge School on 5 February 2021 and Witness F met with Mr Coltella to discuss the allegations. [REDACTED]. No additional support or monitoring was put in place.

From September 2020, Mr Coltella came to be appointed as Tonbridge School's [REDACTED] which would have necessitated one-to-one meetings with pupils. Tonbridge School's Safeguarding Policy stated that "if anyone employed by the School is regularly in a one-to-one situation with boys, a risk assessment can be undertaken". No evidence was adduced to the panel of such a risk assessment have been carried out. Nevertheless, since Mr Coltella knew he was regularly holding one-to-one meetings with pupils it was incumbent upon him to ensure that a risk assessment was made, and adhered to.

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

In relation to whether Mr Coltella'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 Coltella'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 Coltella was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

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

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Coltella's actions constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

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

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

There was a public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious findings of failing to maintain appropriate boundaries with pupils.

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

The panel was of the view that a public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr Coltella 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 Coltella in the profession. The panel decided that there was a public interest consideration in retaining the teacher in the profession, since he has significant ability as an educator and he is able to make a valuable contribution to the profession.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states that the expectation of both the public and pupils, is that members of the teaching profession maintain an exemplary level of integrity and ethical standards at all times. The panel noted that a teacher's behaviour that seeks to exploit 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 this case, the panel did not consider that Mr Coltella had sought to exploit his position of trust, but that was the effect of his actions.

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;

- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- 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;
- ... other deliberate behaviour that undermines pupils, the profession, the school or colleagues; and
- a deep-seated attitude that leads to harmful behaviour.

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.

The panel considered that Mr Coltella's actions were deliberate in that he chose to hold the one-to-one sessions without taking measures to ensure boundaries were maintained, and that he chose the song lyrics for the pupils to recite. The panel accepted, however, that there was no evidence of any malicious intent.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Coltella was acting under extreme duress, e.g. a physical threat or significant intimidation.

Mr Coltella had previously received management advice but was otherwise of previously good history. There was evidence that he had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in teaching and that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. He had an unblemished career as a teacher for approximately 14 years.

Witness D referred in his oral evidence to Mr Coltella being outstanding as a teacher. He stated that Mr Coltella had a strong personality, that his teaching was "personality driven" and that the majority of students loved being taught English by him. Witness D stated that Mr Coltella had been assistant head of the sixth form and spoke of his efficiency in this capacity. He stated that Mr Coltella was an impactful speaker and that he spoke in assemblies. He referred to Mr Coltella being wholly committed to extracurricular activities and that he ran the rugby and hockey teams. He described the way in which Mr Coltella ran [REDACTED] as being beyond anything he had ever encountered. He stated that this programme had been transformative for students. Witness D had attended [REDACTED] and stated that some students spoke of the programme having transformed their educational experience and what they were going to do with their lives. He referred to Mr Coltella as a highly intelligent and successful teacher. There were, however, issues with Mr Coltella favouring some students over others, and this left a "negative residue" with those who he was not working with regularly.

Witness F stated that he considered that Mr Coltella was a “very bright, intelligent subject expert” who demonstrated an “impressive array of subject knowledge in languages”. At his best, Witness F stated that he had seen evidence of Mr Colella inspiring pupils but this was also an area of risk. Witness F stated that Mr Coltella was a highly competent, dedicated teacher who worked hard on pupils’ behalf, as well as having his own ambitions. He stated that Tonbridge School had been looking to replace a highly experienced member of staff who had retired and thought that this replacement had been found in Mr Coltella.

The panel also had sight of references provided by the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] of Skinners’ School to Tonbridge School and both referred to Mr Coltella as “outstanding” and “inspirational”.

The panel noted that a review was conducted following Mr Coltella’s completion of his first term at Tonbridge School. This referred to Mr Coltella having settled in very smoothly to the department; his rapport with boys at every level being clear to see. It referred to a lesson observation in which the pupils were responding thoughtfully and sensitively and Mr Coltella’s energy and focus was admirable. The review stated that “it has been a huge help to be able to replace a very experienced, long-standing member of the department with someone as capable and professional as James. He has contributed at every level, from circulating and discussing resources in department meetings to leading English extension classes on King Lear and running [REDACTED] mock-interviews. I would not hesitate in giving James departmental responsibilities in the future, should he be interested”. The review went on to refer to Mr Coltella’s “calm yet authoritative air with the younger boys” and that he had “enjoyed dropping his guard with the older boys and they have been quick to approach him with UCAS queries and hope for help with Personal Statements”.

Mr Coltella produced a number of statements attesting to his character. One reference was from Witness D who confirmed in oral evidence that he had provided this reference on 9 January 2023 in connection with Mr Coltella’s application to a number of US universities in order to undertake a Master’s in Public Administration prior to a potential career in public policy. The reference referred to Mr Coltella having made an extraordinary contribution to the life of the school and stated that he was a naturally gifted teacher. He referred to Mr Coltella as “a people person, deriving joy from others’ successes as well as his own, and that he invests huge energy, and some emotion into his career, and that it is perhaps this that has brought him into risky situations”.

A former colleague who worked with Mr Coltella over a period of 9 years stated that Mr Coltella “had an enormously positive impact on our student body and was held in high esteem by his fellow professionals. It referred to being confident that Mr Coltella had “reflected seriously on his situation and had learned an important lesson”.

An email was adduced from Pupil A in November 2021 congratulating Mr Coltella on his appointment as housemaster, stating that it was “truly deserved”.

Numerous emails were also provided from parents thanking Mr Coltella for the support provided to their sons including his “kind and patient mentoring... in particular the [REDACTED]”; his “dedication and professionalism”; thanking Mr Coltella for the “wonderful opportunity and experience of [REDACTED]”, expressing appreciation for his “involvement, investment and personal time given over to all the boys involved in this opportunity” and expressing regret that Mr Coltella was leaving Skinners’ School. One email referred to Mr Coltella leaving “an incredible legacy and indelible qualities on the boys”. Another referred to Skinners’ School having “lost an excellent master.”

Two emails were provided from pupils expressing gratitude and good luck for his future role at Tonbridge School. For example, one referred to the “number of opportunities you have created for me; from the extra rugby matches... to the opportunity to go to a [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] for me really was genuinely one of the best weeks of my life and I do believe that it has created a lasting impact on me.”

Three photographs were provided to the panel of the cover and some pages of a book presented to Mr Coltella of a collection of memorable quotes, parting messages and pictures from his nine years at Skinners’ School.

The panel noted that Mr Coltella had participated in Tonbridge School’s investigation and disciplinary process and that he had engaged with the TRA proceedings, having provided written representations and responding to the notice of proceedings. He apologised for not having attended the hearing.

The panel carefully considered Mr Coltella’s representations. The panel was concerned that Mr Coltella’s comments were largely directed at the impact of the proceedings on his own career and life, referring to the potential impact on his new career, as well as the effects upon his physical and mental health. He referred to “Waking up every day to the reality of my situation has taken a huge toll on me.” He also referred to the impact on himself and his family as being “immeasurable” at the time the police were investigating.

However, the panel noted that he had referred to his dismissal as being a “terrible wakeup call” and stated that he had done a “lot of work on myself over the last 4 years and can genuinely say that I am a different person. From therapy to study, I have worked hard to re-launch my career and myself.” He stated that he fully recognises “how I need to change and behave, fully empathising and appreciating different perspectives – indeed the work I have undertaken on myself has helped me to better understanding [sic] varying perspectives as well as completing training on preventing and responding to sexual harassment and other sexual misconduct”.

Throughout Mr Coltella's representations he acknowledged and accepted that he had blurred boundaries. He stated that "it is appreciable that errors were made on my part." and recognised that the "lyrics of the song chosen was unwise" for [REDACTED]. He also recognised that he "did not heed the advice to truly alter my practice." He also referred to the "regular and fervent positive praise" he was receiving for his "approach, teaching and training methods helping people find their voice and confidence, authorised a somewhat laissez-faire attitude, and I clearly made myself vulnerable." The panel considered that Mr Coltella had developed sufficient insight to suggest that the risk of repetition had been mitigated, as it was apparent that Mr Coltella understood his errors in his approach to relationships with pupils. For example, he referred to having become "hypersensitive and cautious" in his interactions with others. He stated "My Italian heritage and upbringing fostered a demonstrative manner; however, the need to think about how your actions are received by others has now been acutely understood. I now fully realise that policies are clearly put in place to protect all parties and had I followed procedure then I would not have placed myself in a vulnerable position".

Mr Coltella's understanding of the impact of his conduct on others was less evident, although he did refer to his "remorse for any emotional harm I may have unintentionally caused." His concluding paragraph stated "I have learned many lessons from this terrible situation and only ever wanted the best for others. As my character references attest, there was never any malicious intent and I am deeply sorry for any emotional harm I may have caused. It is clear to me where I have erred and what I must do in order to never repeat mistakes of the past".

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, the recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an appropriate response. Given that the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, having considered Mr Coltella's insight into his behaviour and his contribution to the teaching profession, the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that are not acceptable, and the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

In this case, the panel has found some of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. In this case, the panel has found some of the allegations not proven. I have therefore put those unproven matters entirely from my mind.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that the findings of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Coltella 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
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...
- 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 Coltella, 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 Coltella fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

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

considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Coltella, 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 safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, *“the panel did not consider that Mr Coltella had sought to exploit his position of trust, but that was the effect of his actions.”* 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 sets out as follows, *“The panel was concerned that Mr Coltella’s comments were largely directed at the impact of the proceedings on his own career and life, referring to the potential impact on his new career; as well as the effects upon his physical and mental health.”*

However, the panel has also commented that Mr Coltella *“... had developed sufficient insight to suggest that the risk of repetition had been mitigated, as it was apparent that Mr Coltella understood his errors in his approach to relationships with pupils. For example, he referred to having become “hypersensitive and cautious” in his interactions with others”*.

In my judgement, I accept the panels finding that Mr Coltella has developed sufficient insight as to mitigate the risk to 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, *“panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Coltella were not treated with seriousness when regulating the conduct 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, or 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 Mr Coltella himself. The panel comment *“There was evidence that he had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in teaching and that he had contributed significantly to the education sector.”* This is supported by a number of positive testimonials.

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Coltella 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.

For these reasons, I have concluded that a prohibition order is not proportionate or in the public interest. I consider that the publication of the findings made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that were not acceptable and that the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "S. Blomfield".

Decision maker: Stuart Blomfield

Date: 28 January 2026

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