



Teaching  
Regulation  
Agency

# **Mr Ian McDonald: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome**

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

**February 2026**

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

<b>Teacher:</b>	Mr Ian McDonald
<b>Teacher ref number:</b>	0145932
<b>Teacher date of birth:</b>	12 May 1978
<b>TRA reference:</b>	24273
<b>Date of determination:</b>	18 February 2026
<b>Former employer:</b>	Bishop Martin Church of England Primary School, Skelmersdale

### **Introduction**

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 18 February 2026 by way of a virtual meeting, to consider the case of Mr Ian McDonald.

The panel members were Ms Sue Davis (lay panellist – in the chair), Mrs Erin Sudds (teacher panellist) and Mrs Shabana Robertson (lay panellist).

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

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr McDonald that the allegations be considered without a hearing. Mr McDonald provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted conviction of a relevant offence. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer, Kiera Riddy of Browne Jacobson LLP, Mr McDonald or any representative for Mr McDonald.

The meeting took place in private and was not recorded.

## **Allegations**

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of meeting dated 13 November 2025.

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

1. On 20 June 2024, he was convicted at Preston Magistrates Court for the following offences:
  - a) 3 counts of making indecent photograph/pseudo-photograph of a child
  - b) 1 count of possessing extreme pornographic image/images portraying an act of intercourse/oral sex with a dead/alive animal.

Mr McDonald admitted allegations 1(a) and 1(b), as set out in the response to referral form signed by Mr McDonald on 29 June 2025 and in the statement of agreed facts, signed by Mr McDonald on 13 August 2025.

## **Summary of evidence**

### **Documents**

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

Section 1: Notice of referral and response – pages 4 to 20

Section 2: Statement of agreed facts and presenting officer representations – pages 21 to 25

Section 3: TRA documents – pages 26 to 81

Section 4: Teacher documents – pages 82 to 86

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

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

### **Statement of agreed facts**

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr McDonald on 13 August 2025.

## Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

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

Mr McDonald was employed as headteacher at Bishop Martin Primary School (“the School”) from September 2022 until September 2023.

In or around April 2023 Mr McDonald was arrested by the online abuse team with Lancashire police. He was suspended by the School on 25 April 2023 and later resigned on 25 July 2023.

On 20 June 2024, at Preston Crown Court, Mr McDonald pleaded guilty to 3 counts of making indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of a child and 1 count of possessing extreme pornographic image/images portraying an act of intercourse/oral sex with a dead/alive animal.

On 24 July 2024 Mr McDonald was sentenced at Preston Crown Court.

The matter was referred to the TRA on 16 August 2024.

## Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

- 1. On 20 June 2024, Mr McDonald was convicted at Preston Magistrates Court for the following offences:**
  - a) 3 counts of making indecent photograph/pseudo-photograph of a child**
  - b) 1 count of possessing extreme pornographic image/images portraying an act of intercourse/oral sex with a dead/alive animal.**

The panel noted that Mr McDonald admitted allegations 1(a) and 1(b), as set out in the statement of agreed facts signed by Mr McDonald on 13 August 2025 and also in Mr McDonald’s response to the Notice of Referral signed and dated 29 June 2025.

Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel noted page 8 of the “Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers” (“the Advice”) which states that where there has been a conviction at any time, of a criminal offence, the panel will accept the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of both the conviction and the facts necessarily implied by the conviction, unless exceptional circumstances apply. The panel did not find that any exceptional circumstances applied in this case.

The panel had been provided with a certificate of conviction from Preston Crown Court, which set out that on 20 June 2024 Mr McDonald pleaded guilty and was convicted of 3 counts of making indecent photograph/pseudo-photograph of a child and 1 count of possessing extreme pornographic image/images portraying an act of intercourse/oral sex with a dead/alive animal.

In respect of the allegations, Mr McDonald was sentenced on 24 July 2024 to a community order for 3 years, another community order for 3 years to run concurrently, a requirement to participate in an accredited programme, a rehabilitation activity requirement, was required to register with the police for 5 years and was subject to a Sexual Harm Prevention Order for 5 years. Mr McDonald was also subject to an order made to deprive him of his rights to images and his mobile phone.

The panel found allegations 1(a) and 1(b) proven.

## **Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence**

Having found all of the allegations proved, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of those proved allegations amounted to a conviction at any time of a relevant offence.

In doing so, the panel had regard to the Advice.

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

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr McDonald was in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
  - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher’s professional position

- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- not undermining...the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect...
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities including Keeping Children Safe in Education ("KCSIE").

The panel noted that, although Mr McDonald's actions took place outside the education setting, the panel found that Mr McDonald's actions were relevant to teaching, working with children and/or working in an education setting, as it had found that Mr McDonald had been convicted of sexual offences involving images of children.

The panel noted that the behaviour involved in committing the offences could have had an impact on the safety and/or security of pupils and/or members of the public. The offences involved serious misconduct related to children for which Mr McDonald had been convicted.

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

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

This was a case concerning an offence involving any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or pseudo photograph or image of a child, or permitting any such activity, including one-off incidents, which the Advice states is likely to be considered a relevant offence. The panel considered the other offence was also relevant to Mr McDonald's fitness to teach in that it involved extreme pornography.

The panel commented that the offences were of a serious nature and were both relevant offences.

The panel found that the seriousness of the offending behaviour that led to the convictions were relevant to Mr McDonald's ongoing suitability to teach. The panel considered that a finding that the convictions were for relevant offences was necessary to reaffirm clear standards of conduct so as to maintain public confidence in the teaching profession.

The panel found, in connection with all offences listed in the allegations they had found proven, that Mr McDonald had been convicted of relevant offences.

## **Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State**

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

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

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

In light of the panel's findings against Mr McDonald, which involved sexual offences involving indecent photographs of children and extreme pornographic images relating to an animal, there was a strong public interest consideration in the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and the protection of other members of the public.

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

The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr McDonald 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 McDonald in the profession.

There was no evidence that Mr McDonald had made an outstanding contribution as an educator. The panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr McDonald in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher. The panel considered that it was of particular relevance that Mr McDonald was a headteacher of a primary school and some of the offending behaviour related to primary school aged children.

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

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

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;
- the commission of a serious criminal offence, including those that resulted in a conviction or caution, paying particular attention to offences that are 'relevant matters' for the purposes of the Police Act 1997 and criminal record disclosures;
- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing, or publishing any indecent photograph or image, or indecent pseudo photograph or image, of a child, or permitting such activity, including one-off incidents;
- failure to act on evidence that indicated a child's welfare may have been at risk e.g. failed to notify the designated safeguarding lead and/or make a referral to children's social care, the police or other relevant agencies when abuse, neglect and/or harmful cultural practices were identified; and
- 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).

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

There was no evidence that Mr McDonald's actions were not deliberate. On the contrary, the evidence was that Mr McDonald had actively clicked on links to images and had retained some of them.

There was no evidence that Mr McDonald was acting under extreme duress.

The panel was not provided with any evidence that Mr McDonald had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or to him having contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel noted that this was not a one-off incident.

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

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

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr McDonald. The seriousness of the offending was a significant factor in forming that opinion. Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

The panel went on to consider whether or not it would be appropriate for it to decide to recommend a review period of the order. The panel was mindful that the Advice states that a prohibition order applies for life, but there may be circumstances, in any given case, that may make it appropriate to allow a teacher to apply to have the prohibition order reviewed after a specified period of time that may not be less than 2 years.

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

One of these includes any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, including one off incidents.

The panel noted Mr McDonald's evidence in which he apologised for his actions and stated that he had accepted the consequences. The panel noted that Mr McDonald had engaged with the TRA process. The panel also considered that Mr McDonald had shown some insight to the serious impact of his behaviour [REDACTED]. However, the panel considered that the mitigation did not outweigh the seriousness of the offending behaviour.

The panel was not provided with any evidence to be able to assess the risk of repetition in respect of Mr McDonald's conduct.

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

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

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

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

In this case, the panel has found both of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to a relevant conviction.

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

In particular, the panel has found that Mr McDonald is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
  - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
  - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
  - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
  - not undermining...the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect...
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities including Keeping Children Safe in Education ("KCSIE").

The panel finds that the conduct of Mr McDonald was relevant to working with children and/or working in an education setting, as it had found that Mr McDonald had been convicted of sexual offences involving images of children.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding “...*that the behaviour involved in committing the offences could have had an impact on the safety and/or security of pupils and/or members of the public. The offences involved serious misconduct related to children for which Mr McDonald had been convicted*”.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of a relevant conviction, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr McDonald, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would protect children and safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, “...*that it was of particular relevance that Mr McDonald was a headteacher of a primary school and some of the offending behaviour related to primary school aged children*”. 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 noted Mr McDonald’s evidence in which he apologised for his actions and stated that he had accepted the consequences. The panel noted that Mr McDonald had engaged with the TRA process. The panel also considered that Mr McDonald had shown some insight to the serious impact of his behaviour* [REDACTED]

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe, “*The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr McDonald was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated*”.

I am particularly mindful of the finding that the offences “...*involved serious misconduct related to children for which Mr McDonald was convicted*”, and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

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

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of a relevant conviction, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr McDonald himself. The panel comment *“The panel was not provided with any evidence that Mr McDonald had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or to him having contributed significantly to the education sector.”*

A prohibition order would prevent Mr McDonald from teaching. A prohibition order would also clearly deprive the public of his contribution to the profession for the period that it is in force.

In this case, given the seriousness of the proven conduct, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comment *“...the panel considered that the mitigation did not outweigh the seriousness of the offending behaviour”*.

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr McDonald has made to the profession. In my view, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession.

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

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

I have considered the panel’s comments *“The panel found that the seriousness of the offending behaviour that led to the convictions were relevant to Mr McDonald’s ongoing suitability to teach”*, and that *“The panel was not provided with any evidence to be able to assess the risk of repetition in respect of Mr McDonald’s conduct”*.

I have considered whether not allowing a review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is proportionate to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that allowing a review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the seriousness of the conduct which related to primary age school children, the lack of full insight and the panel’s assessment that it had no evidence upon which to determine the risk of repetition.

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

**This means that Mr Ian McDonald is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or**

**children's home in England.** Furthermore, in view of the seriousness of the allegations found proved against him, I have decided that Mr McDonald shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of his eligibility to teach.

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

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Blomfield".

**Decision maker: Stuart Blomfield**

**Date: 20 February 2026**

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