



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Christopher Woolhouse: 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

Teacher:	Mr Christopher Woolhouse
Teacher ref number:	455292
Teacher date of birth:	3 September 1982
TRA reference:	19566
Date of determination:	19 February 2026
Former employer:	Priors Hall School, Northamptonshire

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 19 February 2026 by way of a virtual meeting, to consider the case of Mr Christopher Woolhouse.

The panel members were Mrs Shabana Robertson (lay panellist – in the chair), Mrs Erin Sudds (teacher panellist) and Ms Antonia Jackson (teacher 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 Woolhouse that the allegations be considered without a hearing. Mr Woolhouse provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer Mr Adam Slack, Mr Woolhouse or any representative of Mr Woolhouse.

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 Woolhouse was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst employed as a headteacher at Priors Hall School (the 'School') he:

1. Between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to ensure that adequate records were kept in relation to safeguarding concerns, in that records were not:
 - a. Complete;
 - b. Organised;
 - c. Accurate;
 - d. Securely stored; and/or
 - e. Accessible to relevant staff
2. Between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to ensure that safeguarding issues were subject to adequate oversight in that he:
 - a. Did not ensure regular review of safeguarding files occurred and/or
 - b. Did not ensure regular minuted meetings with the DSL team about safeguarding issues took place
3. On one or more occasions between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to refer safeguarding concerns in relation to one or more pupils to the relevant Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub;
4. By his conduct at allegation 3, exposed one or more pupils to risk of abuse;
5. On one or more occasions between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to ensure that safeguarding files were forwarded to schools or relevant agencies when pupils left.

The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse admitted allegations 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d), 1(e), 2, 3, 4 and 5 and that his behaviour amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, as set out in the statement of agreed facts, signed by Mr Woolhouse on 7 July 2025.

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 4 to 6

Section 2: Notice of referral and notice of meeting – pages 7 to 23

Section 3: Statement of agreed facts and presenting officer representations – pages 24 to 30

Section 4: TRA documents – pages 31 to 416

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 417 to 428

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle, in advance of the hearing in addition to the letter confirming the change of panellist dated 18 February 2026.

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

Statement of agreed facts

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr Woolhouse on 7 July 2025 and subsequently signed by the presenting officer on 8 July 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 Woolhouse 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.

In September 2018, Mr Woolhouse was appointed headteacher of Prior’s Hall (‘the School’).

On 13 May 2020, Mr Woolhouse reported concerns to Individual A, the safeguarding lead at Inspiring Futures Through Learning ('the Trust'), that the School's internal systems for maintaining safeguarding records were being kept in poor order. This was the first time Mr Woolhouse had raised concerns.

On 22 June 2020, Individual B, reported to Individual A that there was material information missing from a pupil's safeguarding file. Individual A began an immediate investigation, which revealed several safeguarding failings, dating back to the time of Mr Woolhouse's appointment in September 2018.

Between September 2018 and June 2020, Mr Woolhouse allegedly failed to ensure that the School kept adequate records in relation to safeguarding concerns. It was alleged that the records were not adequately or appropriately completed, organised, filed or securely stored. Mr Woolhouse also allegedly failed to audit the safeguarding files or hold regular monitoring meetings with the DSL team.

Concerns also came to light that during his appointment as headteacher, Mr Woolhouse had allegedly failed to refer multiple safeguarding concerns to the relevant Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub ("MASH"), and that he had failed on at least one occasion to ensure that safeguarding files were forwarded to new schools or agencies when pupils left the School.

On 23 June 2020, Individual A referred the matter to Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board's Designated Officer, Individual C.

On 21 September 2020, a disciplinary hearing was held, at the end of which Mr Woolhouse tendered his resignation.

The matter was referred to the TRA on 23 June 2020.

Findings of fact

The panel considered that there was evidence in the bundle which was hearsay evidence and therefore considered the appropriate amount of weight to attach to such evidence, in each case, during the professional conduct panel meeting.

The findings of fact are as follows:

You were guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst employed as a headteacher at Priors Hall School (the 'School') you:

1. Between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to ensure that adequate records were kept in relation to safeguarding concerns, in that records were not:

a. Complete;

- b. Organised;**
- c. Accurate;**
- d. Securely stored; and/or**
- e. Accessible to relevant staff**

The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse admitted allegations 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d) and 1(e), as set out in the statement of agreed facts signed and dated by Mr Woolhouse on 7 July 2025. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered Mr Woolhouse's job description setting out his responsibilities which included that the headteacher was responsible for "*the welfare of the children within the school*" and in creating "*a safe and productive environment*". The panel noted that there was an entire section in the job description regarding safeguarding responsibilities.

The panel also considered the Trust's safeguarding procedures established the expectation that safeguarding documentation would be regularly reviewed, with aspirations of a "*highly vigilant and proactive culture towards safeguarding*".

The panel considered the written witness statement of Individual A dated 4 April 2024 in which she stated that Mr Woolhouse was responsible for safeguarding and was also the designated safeguarding lead ("DSL") at the School. The panel also considered the job description for the DSL which stated that Mr Woolhouse takes "*lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding*" as DSL. The panel took account of the School's child protection and safeguarding policy dated 2019/2020 which specifically named Mr Woolhouse as the person responsible at local level for the School's policy.

Individual A stated that on 13 May 2020, Mr Woolhouse telephoned her and informed her that the School's safeguarding folders were not organised in the way that they should be. She stated that Mr Woolhouse informed her that the paperwork was there, but not in the correct pupil files. Individual A stated that she asked Mr Woolhouse repeatedly whether any concerns had gone unreported, and that he assured her it was solely an organisational issue.

Individual A explained that safeguarding records were now stored electronically, but in 2020, the expected system was paper files for each pupil with a front chronology sheet and documents kept in chronological order. The panel noted from the bundle that these should then be filed in red files where there were two or more concerns relating to the same child or siblings and in green files where there had been no previous referrals.

The panel considered the written witness statement of Individual A, who explained that Mr Woolhouse informed her on 13 May 2020 during a telephone call that the safeguarding folders “*were not organised the way they should be,*” and she expressed concern that disorganisation could result in information being missed. Individual A stated that she instructed Mr Woolhouse that the sorting of safeguarding folders “*had to be prioritised*” and directed him to ensure that Individual D reorganised them “*as a matter of urgency*”, and that she he should personally go through the records and check after that they have been re-organised. Individual A stated that when she attended the School the following week, she claimed that Mr Woolhouse told her he was “*happy it was all sorted and in order*”, but she now believes that this was not true.

Individual A stated that on 22 June 2020, Individual B called her to raise a whistleblowing concern regarding safeguarding at the School. She stated that Individual B told her that there was an incident missing from a file in which a pupil [REDACTED], and Individual B had gone to log her part of the concern and found that the file was missing.

Individual A stated that Individual B said she asked Mr Woolhouse where the file was, to which Mr Woolhouse responded that it “*could be in his notebook at home,*” Individual A stated that this was inappropriate as the safeguarding information should be stored securely on site and available for immediate access to all DSLs.

Individual A stated that as a result of the missing file being disclosed, she travelled to the School the same day. She stated that she met with Mr Woolhouse, Individual B and Individual E, and asked them what other information was missing from the safeguarding files and if they had concerns about other pupils. Individual A stated that Individual E mentioned [REDACTED], and Mr Woolhouse failed to explain why this information was missing from safeguarding files.

Individual A stated that in total there were 39 red files (files storing safeguarding concerns and referral forms) that required organisation.

The panel considered Individual A’s statement in which she stated that pastoral notes and concern forms that had not been acted upon were found mixed together in plastic bags, and that a further concern form was discovered in Mr Woolhouse’s desk drawer, also unacted upon. Subsequently, after re-checking 39 red files, seven referrals (involving 13 children) were then made to MASH, indicating earlier records and/or actions were incomplete or not captured.

The panel considered the witness statement of Individual F dated 21 February 2024, who was commissioned by Individual A on 25 June 2020 to investigate safeguarding concerns at the School. Individual F stated that Individual A’s initial inquiry into missing files led to a “*comprehensive audit*” of all safeguarding records, which identified further failings. Individual F stated that in an interview with Mr Woolhouse on 16 July 2020, Mr Woolhouse made “*full and frank admissions*” to the matters put to him.

The panel considered the interviews with staff members conducted by Individual F. During Individual B's interview dated 6 July 2020, Individual B reported that she received a concern form on 13 May 2020 for a child under a social worker following a MASH referral on 27 March 2020 which she and Individual E had made. When she went looking for the form, she saw a red file with nothing in it which left her "*shocked*". She stated that there was also nothing in the green file since 22 May 2019 and it was labelled with the year "*17/18 on the file*". Individual B also stated that a [REDACTED] was not shared with the children's new school despite Mr Woolhouse telling her this file had been shared. She stated that during her conversation with Mr Woolhouse on 13 May 2020 he disclosed that there were a lot of forms that had not been responded to and that a safeguarding incident involving a pupil [REDACTED] was missing when she went to record her contribution. Individual B also reported during the meeting that "*16 [out of] 27*" concern forms about sexualised behaviour had not been reported.

In Individual E's interview, dated 6 July 2020, he described taking a large green file and putting it in order to make sense out of it, stating "*it needed to be done*". He further claimed that, along with Individual B, he put the concern forms in "*alphabetical order*" because they were not in order.

The panel considered the written witness statement of Individual B, who stated that when she and Individual E attempted to use safeguarding files during lockdown in relation to a specific safeguarding incident, it became evident that "*files had not been kept in order*". She referred to an occasion where "*there was a pile of concern forms*" stored loosely elsewhere rather than filed correctly. Individual B described concerns being found "*in drawers and bags*", explaining that she and Individual E "*had to make up files*" due to the number of unfiled concern forms and uncollated incidents. She also described reviewing pages where records of disclosures referenced additional concerns, but "*nothing was written on the relevant section of the concern form*".

The panel considered the written witness statement of Mr Woolhouse, where he fully acknowledged that he made the serious errors and omissions as set out in the allegations. He stated that there had been "*no filing, no chronology and the files were not in order.*"

The allegation was admitted and was supported by evidence presented to the panel. The allegation was therefore, found proved.

The panel therefore found that between September 2018 and June 2020, whilst Mr Woolhouse was employed as a headteacher at the School, he failed to ensure that adequate records were kept in relation to safeguarding concerns, in that records were not complete; organised; accurate; securely stored; and/or accessible to relevant staff. There were multiple examples of this and that Mr Woolhouse acknowledged that these matters were within the remit of his responsibilities.

The panel found allegations 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d) and 1(e) proved.

2. Between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to ensure that safeguarding issues were subject to adequate oversight in that you:

- a. Did not ensure regular review of safeguarding files occurred and/or**
- b. Did not ensure regular minuted meetings with the DSL team about safeguarding issues took place**

The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse admitted allegation 2(a) and 2(b), as set out in the statement of agreed facts. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence before it.

In Mr Woolhouse's interview dated 16 July 2020, he accepted that he should have held more regular and consistent meetings. He admitted having been "*complacent*" and to not having had adequate "*oversight*" and that he could be much more "*rigorous*."

The panel further considered Mr Woolhouse's job description which set out his responsibilities, one of which was "*manage the day-to-day health and safety for the School*." The panel also considered the Trust's safeguarding procedures established the expectation that safeguarding documentation would be regularly reviewed, with a requirement for a "*highly vigilant and proactive culture towards safeguarding*".

The panel considered the investigation of Individual B where she stated that she was "*under the impression*" that Mr Woolhouse was quality assuring and that he filled out the annual safeguarding audit with Individual D.

The panel noted the independent investigation into safeguarding concerns, which stated that at a local school level, responsibility for the day-to-day operational effectiveness and adherence to these policies and procedures lies with the safeguarding leadership and the panel considered that this would have included Mr Woolhouse as lead DSL.

The panel noted Individual A's evidence that she held regular 1:1 meetings with Mr Woolhouse due to wider concerns about his competency, but that these meetings were not safeguarding team meetings and were not minuted.

Individual A stated that Mr Woolhouse told her that safeguarding meetings were occurring weekly. She claimed that they did not happen. She recorded that Individual D reported meeting with Mr Woolhouse to discuss cases "*at least once a week*" but there was no evidence such meetings were minuted.

The panel considered the written witness statement of Individual B, where she claimed that safeguarding meetings did take place, but she did not consider them "*official meetings*" and that they did not take place regularly, though stated that there was "*(one*

taking place at least every fortnight)” and stated they were not minuted. She further noted that during lockdown “*staff would meet over MS Teams to discuss a variety of issues*”.

The panel considered the interviews with staff members conducted by Individual F. Individual A that Mr Woolhouse had safeguarding meetings “*regularly with DSLs*”. The interview of Individual B noted that Mr Woolhouse minuted the meeting between her, Individual D and himself. She further noted that Individual D tried to get him to join meetings but “*there was no routine meetings*”. In Individual E’s interview he stated that Individual D told him that the minutes of the December 2019 meeting were written at the time, but in fact they were written on 8 June 2020 and had been “*edited for 70 minutes*” on 8 June 2020.

The panel further considered a designated officer referral form for professionals where Individual A had stated that Mr Woolhouse knew he should be doing weekly meetings and should be ensuring he kept on top of his information.

The allegation was admitted and was supported by evidence presented to the panel.

The panel therefore found that between September 2018 and June 2020, whilst Mr Woolhouse was employed as a headteacher at the School, he failed to ensure that safeguarding issues were subject to adequate oversight by not ensuring regular reviews of safeguarding files and/or not ensuring regular minuted meetings with the DSL team about safeguarding issues took place.

The panel found allegations 2(a) and 2(b) proven.

3. On one or more occasions between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to refer safeguarding concerns in relation to one or more pupils to the relevant Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub;

The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse admitted allegation 3, as set out in the statement of agreed facts. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence before it.

In Individual G’s interview she described raising multiple safeguarding concerns and completing “cause for concern” forms. This included her having raised a concern in December 2019 [REDACTED]. She noted that during the subsequent safeguarding enquiry, she discovered that “*there was no concern/contact form in the school*” relating to the December 2019 incident. She said that she had expected feedback as to whether the matter had been referred but had been repeatedly told that it was “*all in hand*”, despite the absence of any recorded documentation. She further stated that she subsequently learned that MASH had not been informed, contrary to her expectation.

The panel considered the written witness statement of Individual A who stated that on 13 May 2020 it came to light that the School’s safeguarding folders were not organised in

the way that they should be. She stated that she held a meeting with Mr Woolhouse, Individual B and Individual E, during which she asked Mr Woolhouse why an incident relating to [REDACTED] had not been referred to MASH. She stated that he said he was unaware and that they should have been, and that Mr Woolhouse couldn't explain why the referrals hadn't been made.

In relation to [REDACTED], Individual A stated that Individual D told her that Mr Woolhouse was aware of approximately 95% of the concerns that had been raised and that they had agreed the outcomes together. She stated that Individual D shared that the concerns regarding [REDACTED] were not referred, as agreed with Mr Woolhouse, due to the [REDACTED] of the pupils. Individual A stated that the [REDACTED] of a pupil would never be a factor in the decision to make a referral, and that it was not up to the School to make that decision.

The panel further considered a designated officer referral form for professionals, which alleged that the files for [REDACTED] included information which should have been shared with MASH and it was "*unclear if this had occurred*". Mr Woolhouse further admitted "*he knows the information should have been referred.*" This view was also repeated in his investigation.

Individual A stated that, during a telephone call to MASH, she was required to read out 12 incidents that had not previously been referred. When Individual A was questioned as to why these referrals had not been made previously, Individual A stated that she felt uncomfortable as she was aware that they should have been.

Individual A stated that, after discovering that the safeguarding files had not been adequately organised, there were a total of 39 red files that required organisation. She stated that this resulted in 7 referrals involving 13 children to MASH.

The panel considered Mr Woolhouse's interview, in which he was recorded as admitting to not referring cases to MASH. He further claimed that the reason he did not refer them was that for some of the families "*we looked at things as one off*", but he admitted this was a failure. He also acknowledged that it was his responsibility to ensure that safeguarding concerns that need to be referred to MASH were in fact referred to the MASH.

The panel considered Individual B's written witness statement in which she set out the School's expected referral pathway to MASH. She explained that MASH is the body which they would report concerns to regarding the safeguarding of children provided those concerns were serious enough. Individual B further described it was "*practice for you to inform other members of staff that a MASH referral had been made.*"

The allegation was admitted and was supported by evidence presented to the panel.

The panel considered that it was demonstrated that on one or more occasion between September 2018 and June 2020 Mr Woolhouse failed to refer safeguarding concerns in relation to one or more pupils to the relevant Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. The panel found allegation 3 proven.

4. By your conduct at allegation 3, exposed one or more pupils to risk of abuse;

The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse admitted allegation 4, as set out in the statement of agreed facts. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence before it. The panel noted that allegation 3 had been found proven.

The panel considered Mr Woolhouse's interview with the investigator, in which he accepted that he had not referred safeguarding concerns to MASH and acknowledged that by failing to do so he could have exposed children to harm.

During Mr Woolhouse's interview as part of the School's investigation he accepted that his failure to refer, placed children at specific risk of harm [REDACTED].

In Mr Woolhouse's email of 5 May 2022 he stated that *"I fully recognise my errors/lack of judgments and how they have caused upset and potential harm to others"*.

The panel considered a number of examples of children who had reported serious safeguarding issues which it appeared were not properly followed up by Mr Woolhouse including relating to sexual and physical abuse. The panel also considered that some of these matters met the high threshold for MASH (in that they took at least two of the subsequent referrals through to the assessment stage). The nature of the safeguarding concerns therefore was indicative of the fact that pupils were exposed to risk of abuse and harm by Mr Woolhouse's actions/inaction. The panel considered that Mr Woolhouse's failure to act put pupils at increased risk.

The allegation was admitted and was supported by evidence presented to the panel. The allegation was therefore, found proven.

The panel found allegation 4 proven.

5. On one or more occasions between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to ensure that safeguarding files were forwarded to schools or relevant agencies when pupils left.

The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse admitted allegation 5, as set out in the statement of agreed facts. Notwithstanding his admission, the panel made a determination based on the evidence before it.

The panel considered the written witness statement of Individual B, who stated that safeguarding files for children who had left the School had not been shared with the new schools, noting specifically that there was *"[REDACTED]... where we subsequently found*

out that the files had not been shared with children's new school," explaining that these were blue files, containing essential information which must be transferred in accordance with national procedures for pupil movement.

The panel also considered the written witness statement of Individual A, who stated that that following the discovery of missing records in June 2020, she identified occasions where safeguarding files had not been forwarded when pupils left the School. Individual A stated that during a meeting with Mr Woolhouse, Individual B and Individual E, Individual E mentioned [REDACTED]. She stated that this information was missing from the safeguarding files, and when she requested the information, Individual D informed her that these pupils had moved away. Individual A stated that she had instructed staff that they needed to find out where [REDACTED] had moved to so that she could make the local authority aware of the alleged concerns.

The panel considered the interview with Individual B as part of the School's investigation where she was recorded as stating that there were 10 files in Mr Woolhouse's drawers relating to children who had left the School which had not been shared and were therefore missing. Further, there were another 17 children's files which should have transferred to new schools and/or relevant agencies.

The allegation was admitted and was supported by evidence presented to the panel. The panel considered that Mr Woolhouse had, on more than one occasion between September 2018 and June 2020, failed to ensure that safeguarding files were forwarded to schools or relevant agencies when pupils left.

The panel found allegation 5 proven.

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

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

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

The panel considered the Teachers' Standards and found that, by reference to Part 2, the following standards were potentially engaged:

- 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 Woolhouse, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Keeping Children Safe In Education ("KCSIE"), in particular Annex B which stipulated various safeguarding requirements for referrals for a DSL including record keeping and referral procedures.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Woolhouse, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Working Together to Safeguard Children given that the facts found proven regarding Mr Woolhouse's conduct related to various safeguarding breaches concerning pupils.

The panel also considered whether Mr Woolhouse'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 was relevant. However, the panel did consider that the behaviours found proven concerning Mr Woolhouse's conduct related to serious safeguarding matters and had placed children at risk of abuse and harm. The panel considered the paramount importance of safeguarding in all education settings, especially for those in the role of DSL and headteacher.

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

In relation to whether Mr Woolhouse'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 Woolhouse'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 Woolhouse was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found that none of these offences were relevant. However, the panel considered the allegations found proven related to serious safeguarding concerns and putting children at risk of abuse and harm which would significantly damage the public perception of teachers. The panel considered that members of the public would not expect safeguarding to be compromised in this way.

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

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Woolhouse'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.

In light of the panel's findings against Mr Woolhouse, which involved failing to ensure safeguarding concerns were properly managed, including inadequate record-keeping, insufficient oversight, failure to refer serious concerns to MASH, and failures in transferring safeguarding information when pupils left the School, the panel considered that there was a strong public interest consideration in protecting the safeguarding and

wellbeing of pupils, as the conduct found demonstrated issues which exposed children to risk.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if these matters were not taken seriously by the regulator, as members of the public expect all teachers, in particular headteachers and DSLs to demonstrate high levels of vigilance and compliance in relation to safeguarding matters.

Finally, the panel was of the view that there was a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession, particularly around safeguarding, which is a fundamental professional expectation.

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 Woolhouse in the profession. Whilst the panel considered that Mr Woolhouse had long service in the teaching profession, no evidence was provided as to his ability as an educator or to him having made an exceptional contribution to the teaching profession. The panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Woolhouse in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.

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

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

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;
- 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.

In light of the panel's findings, the panel considered whether any of the mitigating factors set out in the Advice were present.

There was no evidence that Mr Woolhouse's had any deliberate intent to cause the failings which he had. The panel noted Mr Woolhouse's own written witness statement describing his actions as the product of inexperience, and to being "*overwhelmed*", further claiming *that "none of this was done maliciously"*. The panel also acknowledged that Mr Woolhouse was relatively new to a headteacher position. However, the panel found that this did not diminish the serious nature of the behaviour found proven.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Woolhouse was acting under extreme duress e.g., a physical threat or significant intimidation. The panel did note that Mr Woolhouse was working in the role of head teacher during the COVID-19 lockdown period, which was a particularly challenging time, although this did not take away the seriousness of the behaviour found proven.

The panel further noted that there was no evidence before it of previous disciplinary proceedings or formal warnings against Mr Woolhouse prior to the matters under consideration.

The panel considered whether there was any evidence of Mr Woolhouse's good character. There were no formal character references.

The panel considered whether there were any additional mitigating factors. The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse made full admissions within the statement of agreed facts and that, in his interview with Individual F, he made "*full and frank admissions*" and was described as "*deeply contrite*." In his written witness statement, Mr Woolhouse acknowledged that he had "*made serious errors and omissions*", stated that he was "*ashamed*," and accepted that his actions could have placed children at risk. The panel considered this to demonstrate a degree of insight and remorse.

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 Woolhouse 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 Woolhouse. The serious nature of the behaviour found proven 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.

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

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

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

The panel considered the extent of any mitigating circumstances and Mr Woolhouse's level of insight. The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse accepted and acknowledged his failings and described them as coming from poor and inexperienced leadership and becoming "*overwhelmed and anxious.*" For this reason, the panel considered that this was a situation where a review period was appropriate.

In assessing risk of repetition, the panel considered that Mr Woolhouse's conduct was extended over a prolonged period, affecting multiple aspects of safeguarding. However, the panel was provided with no evidence regarding Mr Woolhouse being at risk of repeating his actions and considered that it had found that Mr Woolhouse had demonstrated insight and remorse. Taking into account the severity of Mr Woolhouse's misconduct found proven and the potential impact on pupils, the panel needed to consider an appropriate period of time after which the prohibition order could be reviewed. The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse had stated that he did not want to work as a headteacher or within a leadership role in the future.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a 5-year review period.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

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

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Christopher Woolhouse should be the subject of a prohibition order with a review period of 5 years.

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

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

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include findings of failing to ensure adequate safeguarding records were maintained and transferred, and failing to refer safeguarding concerns, which put children at risk of abuse and harm.

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 Woolhouse, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

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

“In light of the panel’s findings against Mr Woolhouse, which involved failing to ensure safeguarding concerns were properly managed, including inadequate record-keeping, insufficient oversight, failure to refer serious concerns to MASH, and failures in transferring safeguarding information when pupils left the School, the panel considered that there was a strong public interest consideration in protecting the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, as the conduct found demonstrated issues which exposed children to risk.”

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

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

“The panel considered whether there were any additional mitigating factors. The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse made full admissions within the statement of agreed facts and that, in his interview with Individual F, he made “*full and frank admissions*” and was described as “*deeply contrite*.” In his written witness statement, Mr Woolhouse acknowledged that he had “*made serious errors and omissions*”, stated that he was “*ashamed*,” and accepted that his actions could have placed children at risk. The panel considered this to demonstrate a degree of insight and remorse.”

The panel has also said that “it was provided with no evidence regarding Mr Woolhouse being at risk of repeating his actions and considered that it had found that Mr Woolhouse had demonstrated insight and remorse.”

I have therefore given this element weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel has observed:

“Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if these matters were not taken seriously by the regulator, as members of the public expect all teachers, in particular headteachers and DSLs to demonstrate high levels of vigilance and compliance in relation to safeguarding matters.”

I am particularly mindful of the finding of several safeguarding failings which put children at risk of abuse and harm in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

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

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

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

“Whilst the panel considered that Mr Woolhouse had long service in the teaching profession, no evidence was provided as to his ability as an educator or to him having made an exceptional contribution to the teaching profession.”

The panel has also observed that:

“The panel further noted that there was no evidence before it of previous disciplinary proceedings or formal warnings against Mr Woolhouse prior to the matters under consideration.

The panel considered whether there was any evidence of Mr Woolhouse’s good character. There were no formal character references.”

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel's finding that although there was no evidence that Mr Woolhouse's behaviour was deliberate, his behaviour involved serious safeguarding concerns which put children at risk of abuse and harm. The panel has said:

"There was no evidence that Mr Woolhouse's had any deliberate intent to cause the failings which he had. The panel noted Mr Woolhouse's own written witness statement describing his actions as the product of inexperience, and to being *"overwhelmed"*, further claiming *that "none of this was done maliciously"*. The panel also acknowledged that Mr Woolhouse was relatively new to a headteacher position. However, the panel found that this did not diminish the serious nature of the behaviour found proven."

I have also placed considerable weight on the panel's finding that the adverse public interest considerations that it identified "outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Woolhouse in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher." The panel has observed that the serious safeguarding concerns "would significantly damage the public perception of teachers" and that "members of the public would not expect safeguarding to be compromised in this way."

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

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended a 5-year review period.

The panel has noted that its findings did not engage any of the characteristics that the Advice says weigh in favour of no review period or a longer review period. I have noted that the Advice says that these characteristics are not exhaustive lists and that panels should consider each case on its individual merits taking into account all the circumstances involved.

I have considered the panel's comments:

"The panel considered the extent of any mitigating circumstances and Mr Woolhouse's level of insight. The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse accepted and acknowledged his failings and described them as coming from poor and inexperienced leadership and becoming *"overwhelmed and anxious."* For this

reason, the panel considered that this was a situation where a review period was appropriate.

In assessing risk of repetition, the panel considered that Mr Woolhouse's conduct was extended over a prolonged period, affecting multiple aspects of safeguarding. However, the panel was provided with no evidence regarding Mr Woolhouse being at risk of repeating his actions and considered that it had found that Mr Woolhouse had demonstrated insight and remorse. Taking into account the severity of Mr Woolhouse's misconduct found proven and the potential impact on pupils, the panel needed to consider an appropriate period of time after which the prohibition order could be reviewed. The panel noted that Mr Woolhouse had stated that he did not want to work as a headteacher or within a leadership role in the future.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a 5-year review period."

I have considered whether a 5-year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that allowing a 2-year review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the serious nature of several safeguarding failures which put children at risk and the potential damage to the public's perception of the teaching profession.

I consider therefore that a 5-year review period is required to satisfy the maintenance of public confidence in the profession.

This means that Mr Christopher Woolhouse is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. he may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 26 February 2031, 5 years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Woolhouse remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Oatley', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Decision maker: David Oatley

Date: 20 February 2026

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