



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Michael Wheeler: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

March 2026

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

Teacher: Mr Michael Wheeler

TRA reference: 24356

Date of determination: 20 March 2026

Former employer: Pamphill CE First School, Dorset

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 16 to 20 March 2026 at Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT, to consider the case of Mr Michael Wheeler.

The panel members were Mr John Martin (former teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Mona Sood (lay panellist) and Mr David Boyle (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Helen Kitchen of Blake Morgan, solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Lee Bridges of Counsel.

Mr Michael Wheeler was present and was represented by Mr Andrew Faux of Counsel from The Reflective Practice.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the Notice of Proceedings dated 17 December 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Michael Wheeler was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst working as Headteacher at Pamphill CE First School ('the School'):

1. On or around January 2023, he used the School's credit card to purchase the following for Person C:
 - a. A new car battery;
 - b. Fuel; and/or
 - c. Food.
2. On or around March 2024 and/or 3 June 2024, he did not disclose information about the [REDACTED] Person A when directly asked about it by his line manager.
3. On or around 7 June 2024, he attempted to contact one or more witnesses to the School's investigation, despite being provided with specific instructions not to do so.
4. His conduct at paragraph 1, 2 and/ or 3 above was:
 - a. Dishonest; and/or
 - b. Lacked integrity

Mr Wheeler admitted the facts of allegations 1 and 3. He denied the facts of allegation 2. He also denied the facts of allegation 4 a) as it related to allegations 1, 2 and 3 and allegation 4 b) as it related to allegations 1 and 2. Mr Wheeler indicated that he was leaving it to the panel to determine allegation 4 b) in relation to allegation 3. Whilst the panel noted Mr Wheeler's position, in the absence of an admission, the panel considered 4 b) in relation to allegation 3 as denied.

Mr Wheeler did not admit that his conduct in relation to admitted allegations 1 and 3 constituted unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. This was treated as a denial by the panel.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology, List of Key People and Anonymised Pupil List – pages 5 to 8

Section 2: Notice of Hearing and Response – pages 9 to 13

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency Witness Statements – pages 14 to 36

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency Exhibits – pages 37 to 296

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 297 to 385

In addition, the panel received from the TRA:

- an amended list of key people which anonymised Witness D [REDACTED];
- an initial chronology document prepared by the TRA based on the evidential materials. Mr Wheeler agreed to the chronology, which contained no new evidence, being provided to the panel;
- a closing submission document prepared by the TRA which Mr Wheeler agreed could be provided to the panel.

The panel also received from Mr Wheeler:

- A two-page document being an extract from the School's website identifying the School's ethos and values which the TRA agreed could be placed before the panel.

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents within the bundle in advance of the hearing. The panel read the chronology, closing submission document and two-page extract from the School's website during the course of the hearing.

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the document Teacher Misconduct: Disciplinary Procedures for the Teaching Profession 2020, (the "Procedures").

Witnesses

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

Witness A, [REDACTED].

Witness B, [REDACTED].

Witness C, [REDACTED].

Witness D, [REDACTED], and

Mr Michael Wheeler also gave evidence to the panel.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Mr Michael Wheeler became the Headteacher of Pamphill First School (the School), part of Initio, from September 2021. He had previously held the role of assistant headteacher at another school within Initio from September 2018 to August 2021 and, prior to that, was a teacher at another school within Initio from September 2015 to August 2018.

On 18 January 2023 Mr Wheeler sent an email to Person A and to the School's [REDACTED] confirming use that he had made of the School's credit card.

On 27 January 2023 the CEO of Initio, Witness A met with Mr Wheeler to discuss issues arising from his use of the School's credit card.

On 1 February 2023 Witness A wrote to Mr Wheeler setting out formal advice about the credit card issues she had discussed with him.

On or about 11 March 2024, Witness C, Mr Wheeler's [REDACTED], during a meeting with Mr Wheeler asked him about an alleged [REDACTED] with Person A, [REDACTED].

On 28 May 2024 Witness A received an anonymous letter which raised issues about an alleged [REDACTED] between Mr Wheeler and Person A.

On 5 June 2024, Witness C again raised the issue of the alleged [REDACTED] between Mr Wheeler and Person A with Mr Wheeler.

On 7 June 2024, Witness B, an [REDACTED], was commissioned by Witness A to carry out an investigation into concerns raised about Mr Wheeler's conduct. Mr Wheeler was made aware of that investigation the same day.

On 11 June 2024 Mr Wheeler was formally invited in writing to attend an investigatory meeting about the concerns. On various unknown dates, Person A and Witness D were also formally invited in writing to attend investigatory meetings about the concerns raised.

On 19 June 2024 Mr Wheeler attended a formal disciplinary investigation meeting.

On 20 June 2024 Person A attended an investigatory interview.

On 21 June 2024 Mr Wheeler was suspended.

On 27 June 2024 Mr Wheeler attended a further investigatory meeting.

On 9 July 2024 Witness D attended an investigatory interview.

On 25 July 2024 Mr Wheeler's disciplinary hearing took place. During that meeting Mr Wheeler admitted that he [REDACTED] with Person A from around early 2023, throughout 2023, until around Feb 2024. The outcome of the disciplinary hearing was subject to an appeal hearing on 30 August 2024.

On 9 September 2024 Witness A made a referral to the TRA regarding Mr Wheeler.

The panel had careful regard to the oral and documentary evidence presented and the parties' submissions. It accepted the legal advice provided.

The panel approached all of the hearsay evidence before it with caution, applying close scrutiny to determine its reliability and compatibility with factors presented in other evidence and then decided what weight to attach to it. This included consideration of whether it was made contemporaneously with the occurrence of the matters addressed within it and whether it included multiple hearsay.

The panel confirmed that it had not relied upon any findings made during Initio's investigations or hearings. It formed its own view of the allegations before it based on the evidence presented to it. It did not have regard to any allegations save those that were addressed to Mr Wheeler in the Notice of Hearing.

The panel had exercised its own judgment in determining whether to accept the admissions made by Mr Wheeler.

The panel applied the civil standard "on the balance of probabilities" in its decision making on the disputed factual allegations. In making its decisions, including on the issue of dishonesty and lack of integrity, it had regard to Mr Wheeler's previous good character.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

- 1. On or around January 2023, you used the School's credit card to purchase the following for Person C:**
 - a. A car battery;**

b. Fuel; and/or

c. Food.

The facts of allegation 1 were admitted by Mr Wheeler who accepted that he had acted as described in the allegation.

The panel noted that it had received evidence of the following which it accepted:

- From Mr Wheeler, that he had used the School's credit card as alleged to purchase the specified items for Person C.
- From Person C's written testimony and that of other witnesses, including Mr Wheeler, that Person C's [REDACTED].
- Mr Wheeler's evidence, that the expenditure had been incurred in circumstances where Person C's car had broken down at the School site at the end of a school day, most likely ahead of a weekend. The expenditure was incurred to enable the family to get to the School and to [REDACTED]. This was against a background of there being issues with Person C's [REDACTED] at the School, [REDACTED].
- Witness A's evidence that the use of the credit card to purchase the items was contrary to Initio's financial policies, something accepted by Mr Wheeler. Mr Wheeler explained to the panel that he wished to respond quickly and humanely to Person C's challenging situation, rather than "robotically" following Initio's procedures.
- Mr Wheeler's evidence that he had reported the expenditure by email to the School's [REDACTED] and Person A on 18 January 2023, apparently a few days after it had been incurred. In his oral evidence Mr Wheeler expressed some surprise that he had reported the issue to Person A, [REDACTED], and could not explain why he had done so. She was someone with whom he accepted he [REDACTED] at the time the expenditure was incurred. Witness A's evidence to the panel was clear: that the email should have been sent to Mr Wheeler's [REDACTED] Witness C and not to Person A. Witness A assumed it was sent to the [REDACTED].
- Witness A's evidence that at a meeting with Mr Wheeler on 27 January 2023, held to discuss the expenditure, he stated that he had been seeking to engage different [REDACTED] but nobody was supporting them and he wanted to help them. He also confirmed to her at that time that he had not taken advice or spoken to a colleague as he knew what their answer would be: that it was inappropriate use of the School's credit card.

- Witness A's evidence that she had written a letter of management advice to Mr Wheeler about the expenditure and had continued to monitor the position. She had not taken the matter further. No further issues had arisen.
- That Mr Wheeler had later been offered the position of executive head of the School and a second school within Initio. Witness A confirmed in evidence that she had made the offer of the executive headship to Mr Wheeler.
- In her testimonial provided for Mr Wheeler, Person C's confirmation that Mr Wheeler had purchased the specified items for her and that he had helped her continue [REDACTED]. She referred to him being "100% professional" the whole time she knew him, both with herself and others.
- That the Initio Code of Conduct required employees to take action to enable children to obtain the best outcomes and have a duty of care to always act in pupils' best interests. The panel also noted that the Code required employees to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work including in the handling and claiming of monies.
- Witness A in her oral evidence described the expenditure by Mr Wheeler as raising procedural issues, in terms of Mr Wheeler's adherence to Initio's procedures, and demonstrating poor judgement rather than dishonesty. In her view it also did not raise issues about Mr Wheeler's integrity.

The panel noted Witness A's evidence that Mr Wheeler should have contacted [REDACTED] rather than incurring the expenditure on the School's credit card. It considered that this was not a practical step for Mr Wheeler to have taken given the circumstances he faced at that time.

Taking account of this evidence, which the panel found to be consistent with the admission made by Mr Wheeler, the panel accepted the admission made by Mr Wheeler and found allegation 1 proven.

2. On or around March 2024 you did not disclose information about the [REDACTED] Person A when directly asked about it by your line manager.

Mr Wheeler denied allegation 2.

Witness C gave evidence to the panel that at a meeting in March 2024 after discussing other line-management issues, she had raised the issue of the [REDACTED] with Mr Wheeler. She told him that there were rumours circulating at the School regarding a possible [REDACTED] and Person A. When she then asked him directly "Are you having [REDACTED] Person A?", Mr Wheeler had replied "No". She had then asked

Mr Wheeler, “Where might these rumours have originated from and why?” He had answered “I honestly don’t know”. The panel noted that these questions and responses were recorded in the note that Witness C had compiled of the meeting some months after it took place. These had been prepared, at least in part, from handwritten notes she had made during the meeting.

In his evidence Mr Wheeler indicated that Witness C’s record of the relevant part of the meeting matched what he could recall of it. He accepted that he had been asked questions of the same nature and content to those recorded, if not completely identical in wording.

Mr Wheeler’s denial of allegation 2 was on the basis that his [REDACTED] Witness C had asked him whether he was [REDACTED] Person A in the present tense. He accepted that he had answered “No” to this question as [REDACTED] Person A had taken place from around early 2023 to February 2024 and so was not on-going in March 2024. Mr Wheeler told the panel that he therefore considered that he had not lied to Witness C.

Mr Wheeler accepted in his evidence that he had not been truthful in answering Witness C when she had directly asked him where rumours about [REDACTED] might have come from and why they were circulating. Mr Wheeler described that he felt “uneasy” on leaving the meeting as he had not “said everything”. Mr Wheeler told the panel that he had responded as he did as his priority was to protect [REDACTED]. He had later disclosed “all the necessary information” about [REDACTED] to Witness C on 5 June 2024 when he was again asked by her if he was having [REDACTED] Person A. The question was asked again at that time in response to an anonymous complaint that had been received by Witness A. Mr Wheeler told the panel that, at that time, [REDACTED] situation was more settled and he felt able to make such a disclosure.

Mr Wheeler accepted that it was open to the panel to make findings on allegation 2 based on his response to both questions raised with him by Witness C.

The panel considered that by answering the questions from Witness C as he had, Mr Wheeler had not disclosed information about [REDACTED] when directly asked about it. On this basis the panel found allegation 2 proven on the balance of probabilities.

3. On or around 7 June 2024, you attempted to contact one or more witnesses to the School’s investigation, despite being provided with specific instructions not to do so.

Mr Wheeler admitted this allegation.

Mr Wheeler accepted in evidence that he had become aware of the content of an emailed letter on 7 June 2024 advising him of his being the subject of an investigation about the [REDACTED] Person A. This was after he had received a call from Person A

when he was out cycling. He had not initially been aware that the call was from her as he had deleted her number from his telephone. Mr Wheeler then went home and read the letter. The letter, a copy of which was before the panel, indicated that the investigation related to his [REDACTED] Person A and that he should keep the matter confidential and not discuss it with colleagues.

The panel also had sight of a letter from Witness B to Mr Wheeler dated 11 June 2024 inviting him to a disciplinary investigation meeting. That letter indicated that the investigation related to Mr Wheeler's [REDACTED] Person A and that he should keep the matter confidential and not discuss it with colleagues.

There was some discussion within the hearing as to whether Person A and Witness D were, in fact, colleagues of Mr Wheeler. However, Mr Wheeler accepted that he had understood from the letters he had received that he should have kept the matters raised in them confidential and not have discussed them with Person A or Witness D.

The panel noted the telephone call and messaging records in the bundle before it. These recorded a number of calls and messages between Mr Wheeler and Person A between 7 and 20 June 2024. They included:

- On 7 June 2024, Person A calling Mr Wheeler at 17.32, Mr Wheeler calling Person A at 18.54, Person A phoning Mr Wheeler at 20.41 (the call being recorded as cancelled) and Mr Wheeler calling Person A at 20.46.
- A WhatsApp message from Mr Wheeler to Person A on 8 June 2024. This contained a message that Mr Wheeler, within the message to Person A, said that he had messaged to Person D. The message to Person D recorded:
 - Mr Wheeler having received a letter informing him [Mr Wheeler] of a disciplinary investigation which related to his [REDACTED] Person A and that Person A had been invited to be a witness.
 - That Mr Wheeler would be interested to know if Witness D had received a similar letter.
 - That Mr Wheeler was going to maintain that Witness D was unaware of the [REDACTED] Person A.
 - That Mr Wheeler had volunteered information the previous Wednesday that he and Person A had “crossed the line” before Christmas when asked about it by his line manager.
 - That Mr Wheeler had said that since January it had been strictly professional and that he had been trying to [REDACTED].

- That his understanding was that he was asked (to the meeting) as [REDACTED] at the school where he was due to take up an executive headship role had written to Witness A expressing their concern after hearing rumours.
 - That he would be contacting his union first thing and concluded the message saying, “I’m sorry”.
- A message from Mr Wheeler to Person A on 13 June 2024 telling her that his investigatory meeting was the following Wednesday.
 - A message from Mr Wheeler to Person A on 19 June 2024 asking if there was “anything worth me knowing before I go into this meeting at 4” and, later that same day, another message saying, “Don’t worry I’m in it now”. He later messaged Person A saying that “Very little asked. Mainly focussed on whether the leadership of the school was compromised during [REDACTED]”.

A message from Mr Wheeler to Person A on 20 June 2024 saying that he “would appreciate a call tonight if possible” and two messages later than same day, the first telling Person A that he had “just had an email asking me to meet with the investigator again” and the second asking Person A “have you met with them?” When she replied saying “it’s best we let them handle everything” Mr Wheeler replied, “Why can’t you give me a straight answer?” Later the same day, he messaged Person A twice, the first message saying, “I’m just trying to figure out what they now want to ask me” and the second asking “what have you said Person A. If I’m a dead man walking I’d rather know. At least I can prepare”. Mr Wheeler then tried to call Person A at 22.06 and, afterwards, asked Person A if she was trying to punish him and when she replied “No” he then responded, “Then help me understand what’s happening”.

Witness D gave evidence that he had received a message from Mr Wheeler in June 2024 stating that [REDACTED] had made a complaint to the School and that he [Mr Wheeler] was being investigated and that the message said that Witness D should share everything with the Trust (Initio) as “it was becoming too messy”. Witness D reviewed the message in the bundle that Mr Wheeler had sent to Person A detailing what Mr Wheeler stated he had messaged to Witness D. Witness D indicated that, to his recall, this appeared to reflect what Mr Wheeler had messaged to him.

Mr Wheeler in his evidence to the panel indicated that he had agreed that he would update Person A about the investigation in his telephone call with her on 7 June 2024. He also told the panel that he was checking on Person A’s [REDACTED] as he stated he was aware that she had experienced [REDACTED] in early March 2024. Mr Wheeler had sought to keep Witness D out of the investigation.

The panel noted that Mr Wheeler had indicated in the investigation that he was not seeking to manipulate Person A and, in his written statement to the panel, that he was “enormously cross with myself for being naïve and allowing her to manipulate the situation”. The panel noted that the situation moved from Mr Wheeler keeping Person A informed to Mr Wheeler asking Person A to keep him informed.

The panel considered that in consequence of his knowledge of the matters under scrutiny during the investigation that Mr Wheeler would have known that Person A would be central to the investigation and would be required for interview as a witness. Mr Wheeler had included reference to this in a message to Person A on 8 June 2024 and in a message to Witness D at around the same time stating, “Person A has been asked to be a witness”. Mr Wheeler was aware that Person A knew that Witness D had some awareness of [REDACTED] and so would have understood that Witness D would also likely be a witness in the investigation.

Taking account of this evidence, which the panel found to be consistent with the admission made by Mr Wheeler, the panel accepted the admission made by Mr Wheeler and found allegation 3 proven.

4. Your conduct at paragraph 1, 2 and/ or 3 above was:

a. Dishonest; and/or

b. Lacked integrity.

Having found the facts of allegations 1, 2, and 3 proven, the panel went on to consider whether Mr Wheeler’s conduct in each of those allegations was dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

Mr Wheeler denied that his conduct in allegations 1, 2 and 3 were dishonest and denied that his conduct at allegations 1 and 2 lacked integrity. He did not deny or admit that his conduct at allegation 3 lacked integrity.

The panel was mindful of, and took into account, that Mr Wheeler was a person of previous good character.

In this context, being mindful of the legal advice provided to it, the panel proceeded to consider carefully if Mr Wheeler’s actions were dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

The panel considered allegation 4 a) and 4 b) in relation to allegations 1, 2 and 3 separately.

The panel first considered allegation 4 a) and 4 b) as it related to allegation 1.

Taking account of the contextual facts detailed in the panel's decision in relation to allegation 1 above, the panel considered that Mr Wheeler had a genuinely held belief that he was doing the right thing in supporting [REDACTED] as he did. He had seen an issue that was affecting adversely [REDACTED] at the School and wished to provide immediate practical support. He had used the School's credit card and made the School's [REDACTED] and Person A aware of his actions and had not sought to hide them. He had anticipated that the School would be reimbursed for the amount involved through other resources available to [REDACTED]. He had described how in the past the community had pulled together and that he was "leaning in" to this. If the community had not agreed to pay, he had indicated that he was prepared to settle the bill himself.

Taking account of these factors, the panel was of the view that Mr Wheeler genuinely thought he was doing the right thing and did not believe that his actions were dishonest and that ordinary decent people would not consider that Mr Wheeler's conduct in allegation 1 was dishonest.

The panel acknowledged that Mr Wheeler's actions were a breach of the procedural requirements. However, it recognised that he was putting [REDACTED] (rather than policy) first and acting in keeping with the ethos of the profession and in accordance with the requirements of the School's policies to act the best interests of pupils.

Taking these factors into account the panel determined that allegation 4 a) and 4 b) was not proven in relation to allegation 1.

The panel was surprised that the issue in allegation 1 was included in the case. The matter had already been resolved by Initio by way of management advice and Mr Wheeler had subsequently been identified for promotion by Initio.

The panel then went on to consider allegation 4 a) and 4 b) as it related to allegation 2.

The panel considered that Mr Wheeler had been given a clear opportunity to make a disclosure to Witness C about the [REDACTED] with Person A at his meeting with her in March 2024. He had chosen not to do so and, by his own account, had left the meeting feeling "uneasy" knowing that he had not "disclosed everything". Mr Wheeler also admitted to the panel in his oral evidence that he had lied about not knowing where the rumours might have originated from and why. He was clearly aware that this was likely to be because he had been in a [REDACTED] Person A, something the panel considered that he was seeking to conceal from Initio.

The panel concluded that Mr Wheeler intentionally took advantage of the question being put to him by Witness C in the present tense to seek to justify his own failure to disclose [REDACTED] as he knew he should. The panel did not consider Mr Wheeler's failure to disclose on that occasion was a spur of the moment decision or a temporary lapse in judgement. Mr Wheeler had been in a [REDACTED] for around 14 months with Person A

and he had chosen not to disclose [REDACTED] to Initio during this period of time. The panel considered this was a relevant contextual factor.

The panel concluded that Mr Wheeler's reasons for not offering information about the [REDACTED] in March 2024 was focussed on his own and [REDACTED] circumstances. Whilst this might explain why he acted as he did, the panel did not consider that it justified his intentional decision not to disclose the [REDACTED] Person A to Witness C when directly asked about it in March 2024.

For these reasons the panel found that Mr Wheeler had known that he should have disclosed [REDACTED] to Witness C in March 2024 but had intentionally not done so.

Taking these factors into account, the panel determined that Mr Wheeler was aware that his conduct was dishonest and that an ordinary decent citizen would consider that his conduct was dishonest. On this basis that panel found that Mr Wheeler's conduct in allegation 2 was dishonest. On the same basis, the panel also considered that Mr Wheeler's conduct lacked integrity.

The panel determined that allegation 4 a) and b) was proven in relation to allegation 2.

The panel then went on to consider allegation 4 a) and 4 b) as it related to allegation 3.

The panel considered that Mr Wheeler was aware from the letters that he had received from Initio that the matters under investigation should have been kept confidential by him and he should not have communicated with any witness in the investigation about those matters. Mr Wheeler accepted that he was aware of this. Mr Wheeler stated in oral evidence that he had told Person A that he would keep her informed about the investigation in response to her request, which was why he had been in communication with her between 7 and 20 June 2024. However, the panel considered that Mr Wheeler had subsequently also used the communications with Person A to try to ensure he was abreast of how the investigation was proceeding. The panel also considered that Mr Wheeler had sought to influence the investigation through his communications with Person A and Witness D. The panel noted that Mr Wheeler messaged Witness D saying that Mr Wheeler would maintain that Witness D was unaware of Mr Wheeler's [REDACTED] Person A. This was untrue as, on Mr Wheeler's own account, Witness D was aware of [REDACTED].

Taking these factors into account, the panel determined that Mr Wheeler was aware that his conduct was dishonest and that an ordinary decent citizen would consider that his conduct was dishonest. On this basis that panel found Mr Wheeler's conduct in allegation 3 was dishonest. On the same basis, the panel also considered that Mr Wheeler's conduct lacked integrity.

The panel determined that allegation 4 a) and 4 b) was proven in relation to allegation 3.

In summary, the panel found allegation 4 a) and 4 b) proven in relation to allegations 2 and 3 and allegation 4 a) and 4 b) not proven in relation to allegation 1.

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

Mr Wheeler denied that his actions in the allegations he had admitted amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Having found a number of the allegations proven, the panel went on to consider whether the facts of those proven 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 was not satisfied that the conduct of Mr Wheeler in relation to the facts proven in allegation 1 involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Wheeler, in relation to the facts found proven in allegations 2, 3 and 4 a) and 4 b) in relation to allegations 2 and 3, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards.

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

- A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.

The panel considered whether Mr Wheeler’s conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 10 and 11 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 none of the factors was relevant.

For the reasons previously identified in its decision on the facts of allegation 1 (which it had found proven) and allegation 4 a) and 4 b) in relation to allegation 1 (which it had found not proven) the panel found that Mr Wheeler’s actions in relation to allegation 1

were not of a serious nature and did not fall significantly short of the standards expected of a teacher and so did not amount to unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to allegations 2, 3 and 4 a) and 4 b) in relation to allegations 2 and 3 the panel found that Mr Wheeler's actions were of a serious nature and had fallen significantly short of the standards expected of a teacher. A teacher is expected to be honest and act with integrity. Mr Wheeler had intentionally not disclosed his [REDACTED] Person A when asked and when he knew he should have done so. Mr Wheeler's [REDACTED] should have been made aware by him of [REDACTED]. Instead, he had intentionally not disclosed [REDACTED] to protect his own interests. This was particularly concerning as Mr Wheeler's actions as a headteacher set the tone and moral compass for the School. He should have been a role model for others. Mr Wheeler had also sought to contact two witnesses in the School's investigation in an attempt to try to influence the investigation.

The panel also took into account Mr Wheeler's failure to act on his understanding, at the time, that his actions were inappropriate and demonstrated both dishonesty and a lack of integrity.

For these reasons the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Wheeler amounted to misconduct of a serious nature which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession in relation to allegations 2, 3 and 4 a) and 4 b) in relation to allegations 2 and 3.

Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that Mr Wheeler was guilty of unacceptable professional misconduct in relation to these allegations.

In relation to whether Mr Wheeler'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 issues of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Mr Wheeler's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice. The panel concluded that none of the offences was relevant.

The findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed in allegations 2, 3 and 4 a) and 4 b) in relation to allegations 2 and 3 would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public's perception of a teacher.

For these reasons the panel found that the teacher's actions in relation to these proven allegations constituted conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

In summary, having found the facts of allegations 1, 2, 3 and 4(a) and 4(b) in relation to allegations 2 and 3 proven, the panel further found that Mr Wheeler's conduct in relation to those allegations, except for allegation 1, amounted to both unacceptable professional conduct and 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 maintenance of public confidence in the profession.
- declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct within the teaching profession.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Wheeler, which involved dishonesty and a lack of integrity in the context of his failure to disclose information about the [REDACTED] and his attempting to contact witnesses to an investigation despite being told not to do so, there was a strong public interest in declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct in the profession as the conduct found against Mr Wheeler was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

In addition, confidence in the profession would be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Wheeler was not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.

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 Wheeler in the profession. The panel decided that there was a very strong public interest consideration in retaining Mr Wheeler in the profession as he could make a valuable contribution to it. No doubt had been cast upon his abilities as an educator and evidence showed that he had made a range of significant contributions to the School and the wider school community. The panel noted in particular that under Mr Wheeler's leadership the School had moved from

the Ofsted category of special measures to the category of good. He had been promoted to the role of executive head of both the School and a second primary school within Initio by its CEO during the Spring term of 2024 prior to the issues arising in the allegations coming to light.

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 Wheeler.

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 proven. 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.
- abuse of trust.
- dishonesty or a lack of integrity.
- concealment including lying to prevent the identification of wrongdoing.

Although the panel considered that dishonesty and lack of integrity and abuse of trust were relevant factors, it did not consider that Mr Wheeler's dishonesty, lack of integrity and abuse of trust were at the most serious end of the spectrum. This had been reflected in its finding during the panel's consideration and determination regarding unacceptable professional conduct that Mr Wheeler's conduct had not displayed behaviours associated with the offence of serious dishonesty.

Even though some of the behaviour found proven 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 the teacher's actions were not deliberate.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr Wheeler was acting under extreme duress. However, the panel recognised that Mr Wheeler's conduct was affected by the fact that he was managing some challenging circumstances at the School and was concerned for [REDACTED] and his career, albeit that these concerns had arisen in consequence of his own actions.

Mr Wheeler had a good history prior to these events. He had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in his professional conduct and had contributed significantly to the

education sector during his 14 years as a teacher. The panel accepted that the incidents were out of character.

The panel also took into account the following factors:

- That the concerns in the proven allegations had taken place over a relatively short period of time.
- That, save for the issue of concern in the TRA case, the evidence before the panel suggested that he maintained high standards of personal and professional conduct and that he worked hard to demonstrate those high professional standards.
- The recognition that Mr Wheeler received from Initio in terms of his career progression and his having been offered the executive head roles at the School and a second primary school within Initio, a role to which he was appointed by Initio's CEO. The CEO was affirmative in her oral evidence about Mr Wheeler's qualities as a headteacher even after the issues in the TRA case had arisen.
- That Mr Wheeler had made admissions in the local disciplinary process and had engaged with, and made admissions in, the TRA's regulatory proceedings.
- That Mr Wheeler had expressed remorse for his actions and insight into the damage that they had caused to himself, his family and his career. However, the panel was disappointed that on occasions he appeared to be marginalising the impact of the events, or have more limited insight, into the effects of his conduct on Initio, the School and the wider school community.
- That Mr Wheeler had sought counselling and therapy to assist him after the events.
- Mr Wheeler had demonstrated developing insight into what had gone wrong and the contextual issues that had led to him act as he did.
- The many references provided in support of Mr Wheeler from a range of professionals, parents and members of the wider school community who appeared to the panel to be aware of the allegations in the case. They attested to Mr Wheeler's qualities as a teacher and leader, his honesty and integrity and his enthusiasm, care and humanity.

These notably included the following:

Mr Wheeler's good reputation and teaching and leadership skills

- From a [REDACTED]:

- “[re Mr Wheeler becoming headteacher] ... fortunately we were lucky to get Mr Wheeler, a teacher with a great reputation locally who had previously worked at [REDACTED]”.
- “I believe Mike Wheeler to be an exceptional, community-minded individual and excellent teacher”.
- From a [REDACTED] at another school, who had appointed Mr Wheeler in 2014 to [REDACTED]:
 - “He was a key part of lifting the school from a position of falling rolls and declining results. His energy and enthusiasm helped to build a confident Year 6 team who began delivering ever increasing improved SATS whilst maintaining our strong culture of pastoral care”.
 - “I do not recall ever having to correct or steer his judgement about how to support a child or engage their parents. This is one of the reasons I was confident he would progress into Senior Leadership and Headteaching at some point in his career”.
 - “Mike was so well regarded by the Trust we worked in, by Governors [REDACTED] and by myself that we supported his secondment to another local school in the Trust as Assistant Head”.
 - “Mike is currently a big loss to education. The school he was head of thrived under his leadership to the extent that he was due to be promoted to Executive Head”.

Mr Wheeler acting in the interests of pupils and facing challenges

- From a [REDACTED] to Mr Wheeler:
 - “I found ... [Mike] to be a highly motivated, conscientious and pupil-centred professional. He was committed to achieving strong outcomes for children”
 - “Mike showed determination in addressing challenges within school systems and was solutions-focused in his approach. He was willing to take responsibility, to engage in difficult conversations where necessary, and to advocate for what he believed to be in the best interests of pupils”.
 - “I believe he has the capacity for reflection and learning, and that he remains capable of making a positive contribution to education in the future”.

Mr Wheeler’s hard work, motivation and enthusiasm:

- From a [REDACTED]:
 - At [REDACTED] as [REDACTED], [Mike] ... demonstrated strong leadership and an ability to bring people together. He created a positive and supportive team environment ... He is also dynamic and highly motivated, qualities which led to his promotion to Deputy Head after three years, clearly reflecting his ... commitment to leadership”.
 - “Mike ... had a particularly strong impact on those [children] who were more vulnerable or challenging. He worked hard to build self-esteem in pupils who lacked confidence, and many children who had previously struggled responded positively to his calm, consistent approach, going on to thrive both socially and academically”.
 - “[Mike] ... is very much a “get up and go” person who is not afraid to take initiative and make things happen. He leads by example and brings energy and positivity into everything he does”.
 - “Mike is hard working, compassionate and principled. He is dedicated to helping others succeed ... I consider him to be a person of strong integrity who consistently acts with kindness and professionalism”.

- From a [REDACTED]:
 - “Mike Wheeler was an energetic and enthusiastic leader at Pamphill and undoubtedly had a positive impact on the progression and success of the school ... we felt the school was safe in his hands. Mike was approachable, friendly and professional in his manner”.
 - “His enthusiasm always shone through”.
 - “Mike is a compassionate and caring individual who would go a long way to help someone in difficulty ... Mike holds many of the positive qualities which make for a good headteacher ... and has the potential to be a great teacher, so deserves the opportunity to return”.

Mr Wheeler’s honesty, integrity and professionalism

- From a [REDACTED]:
 - “I have always found him to be respectful, honest and dependable. He gives his full commitment to any role or cause he undertakes. He takes responsibility for his actions and conducts himself with fairness and integrity. I trust him without hesitation and consider him to be a person of strong moral character.”

- “He consistency demonstrates professionalism, ethical leadership, and dedication to student success ... he has a unique ability to connect with young people, inspire confidence, and encourage both academic and personal development”.
- From a [REDACTED] where Mr Wheeler [REDACTED]:
 - “More recently we have worked together at ... [the] [REDACTED]. In this role he is trusted by both the committee and club members to oversee key responsibilities, including safeguarding matters, the club’s finance and general governance decisions”.
 - “His ability, commitment and genuine passion for teaching are clear to anyone who sees him in action. Given the talent and value, he brings, I strongly believe he has a great deal to continue offering within the teaching profession. In all my experience with him I have never had cause to question his integrity”.

Mr Wheeler’s vision, commitment and sense of duty:

- From a [REDACTED]:
 - “Mike brought energy, enthusiasm and a clear strategic vision to the role [of Headteacher]”
 - “I observed Mike’s commitment to improving opportunities for children ... He approached [the role of Headteacher] with maturity, dedication and a strong sense of duty to both staff and pupils”.
 - “Mike is a gifted educationalist. He has vision, drive and the ability to inspire. He understands the importance of community, opportunity and aspiration for young children”.
 - “I consider Mike Wheeler to be a committed, capable and fundamentally decent individual”.
- From an [REDACTED] of Mr Wheeler:
 - “Mike has always struck me as professional, reflective, and deeply committed to securing the very best educational experiences for the children in his care”.
 - “He is someone I have always considered to be trustworthy, thoughtful and dedicated to the principles of good education”.

- “[Mike] ... is the kind of teacher and leader who adds value to a school community through his attitude, his work with staff, and his relationships with pupils and families. Losing someone of his calibre from the teaching profession would, in my view, be a significant loss – both to the schools he may go on to serve and to the wider system”.

Help and support:

- From Person C, [REDACTED] who had been supported by Mr Wheeler:
 - “I found him to be an excellent headteacher; all the children seemed to really like him. He was extremely supportive and helpful”.
 - “Mr Wheeler was never anything but 100% professional, the whole time I knew him with myself and others. He was an exceptional headteacher”.

The panel also had regard to the two references provided for Mr Wheeler [REDACTED] dated June 2021 when Mr Wheeler applied for the role of Headteacher at the School.

The panel found no aggravating factors in the case.

The panel considered that the issues arose in a very particular set of stressful circumstances which were unlikely to arise in the same way again. Mr Wheeler was trying to lead the School when it was facing the challenge of dealing with a vexatious complaint, one which Witness D considered was the worst that he had encountered in his professional career. Additionally, Mr Wheeler was having to take on different roles at the School to cover for absent staff and address significant budgetary constraints.

Taking account of the mitigating factors identified above, and Mr Wheeler’s developing insight and remorse, the panel was of the view that the risk of repetition was minimal. Mr Wheeler had learnt from his experience and the panel was satisfied that he now understood the importance of acting with honesty and integrity at all times and he would be careful to ensure he did so in the future, even when facing stressful circumstances.

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 the mitigating factors that were present, 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 some of those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

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

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that the findings of unacceptable professional conduct and/or 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 Wheeler is in breach of the following standards:

- A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.

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

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a headteacher conducting himself in a way that was dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In assessing 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 that may 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 Wheeler, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

The panel does not record having been presented with evidence that Mr Wheeler's behaviour negatively impacted on the safety and wellbeing of pupils.

I have taken into account the panel's observations on insight and remorse:

- "That Mr Wheeler had made admissions in the local disciplinary process and had engaged with, and made admissions in, the TRA's regulatory proceedings.
- That Mr Wheeler had expressed remorse for his actions and insight into the damage that they had caused to himself, [REDACTED] and his career. However, the panel was disappointed that on occasions he appeared to be marginalising the impact of the events, or have more limited insight, into the effects of his conduct on Initio, the School and the wider school community.
- That Mr Wheeler had sought [REDACTED] to assist him after the events.
- Mr Wheeler had demonstrated developing insight into what had gone wrong and the contextual issues that had led to him act as he did."

The panel goes on to comment as follows:

"Taking account of the mitigating factors identified above, and Mr Wheeler's developing insight and remorse, the panel was of the view that the risk of repetition was minimal. Mr Wheeler had learnt from his experience and the panel was satisfied that he now understood the importance of acting with honesty and integrity at all times and he would be careful to ensure he did so in the future, even when facing stressful circumstances."

In my judgement, the evidence of Mr Wheeler's insight and remorse means that I agree with the panel the risk of a repetition of this behaviour is low. I have therefore given this element some 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 offers this observation:

"The findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed in allegations 2, 3 and 4 a) and 4 b) in relation to allegations 2 and 3 would be likely to have a negative

impact on the individual's status as a teacher, potentially damaging the public's perception of a teacher."

I am particularly mindful of the finding of dishonesty 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 Wheeler himself:

"The panel decided that there was a very strong public interest consideration in retaining Mr Wheeler in the profession as he could make a valuable contribution to it. No doubt had been cast upon his abilities as an educator and evidence showed that he had made a range of significant contributions to the School and the wider school community. The panel noted in particular that under Mr Wheeler's leadership the School had moved from the Ofsted category of special measures to the category of good. He had been promoted to the role of executive head of both the School and a second primary school within Initio by its CEO during the Spring term of 2024 prior to the issues arising in the allegations coming to light."

I have also noted the very extensive character evidence that the panel records attesting to Mr Wheeler's commitment to teaching.

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Wheeler 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.

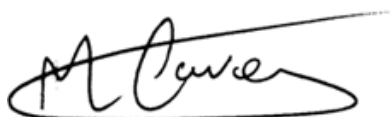
I have considered the panel's concluding remarks:

"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 the mitigating factors that were present, 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.”

In this case, and while noting that his actions were both deliberate and committed free of extreme duress, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the relative seriousness of Mr Wheeler’s misconduct, as well as the evidence of his contribution to the profession and his insight and remorse.

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 black ink, appearing to read 'M. Cavey', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Decision maker: Marc Cavey

Date: 23 March 2026

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