



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr James Samson: Professional conduct panel hearing outcome

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

March 2026

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Summary of evidence	5
Documents	5
Witnesses	5
Decision and reasons	6
Findings of fact	6
Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State	14
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	16

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

Teacher: Mr James Samson

Teacher ref number: 0646037

Teacher date of birth: 27 May 1979

TRA reference: 24244

Date of determination: 19 March 2026

Former employer: Luckley House School, Wokingham

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 17 to 19 March 2026 by way of a virtual hearing to consider the case of Mr James Samson.

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

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr John Lucarotti of Blake Morgan LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Alex Mullen of QEB Hollis Whiteman chambers instructed by Capsticks LLP solicitors.

Mr Samson was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegation(s) set out in the notice of proceedings dated 17 December 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Samson was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that while employed as a teacher at Luckley House School (“the School”):

1. He failed to maintain professional boundaries with Pupil A in that:
 - a. In or around November 2023, he asked Pupil A for their personal phone number; and/or
 - b. Between February 2023 and May 2024, he exchanged one or more email messages with Pupil A when there was no professional reason to do so;
 - c. Between November 2023 and May 2024, he exchanged one or more messages with Pupil A via WhatsApp;
 - d. He contacted Pupil A outside of normal working hours and/or normal school hours and/or out of term time.
2. He sent one or more messages to Pupil A as set out in Schedule 1.
3. His conduct as may be proven at allegation 1 and/or 2 was sexually motivated.

Schedule 1

1. He sent a message that said “I was just looking at you and not listening to [Person C] anyway”; and/or
2. He sent a message that said “Shame I couldn’t get you back into my cupboard.... To find a folder [winking face emoji]”; and/or
3. He sent a message that said “Ha ha I was loving your rolling eyes! [emoji]”; and/or
4. He sent a message that said “Ah that’s nice, I have to say that I always find it far more enjoyable when you’re there too! Not sure why! [emoji with person’s arms/hands in the air and winking eye emoji]”; and/or
5. He sent a message that said “Just wondering if you have any more news on your UCAS stuff? And if you fancy the leisure centre tomorrow come along”; and/or
6. He sent a message signed off with a heart emoji and/or

7. He sent a message that said “Hey you! You know you are more than welcome to come and chill in my room for revision whenever (or just to escape French! [squinting eyes laughing emoji]”

In a statement of agreed facts signed by Mr Samson on 16 June 2025, he made admissions to allegations 1 and 2 but denied allegation 3.

Mr Samson further admitted that his conduct in relation to allegations 1 and 2 amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology and anonymised pupil list – pages 3 to 5

Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 6 to 47

Section 3: Statement of agreed facts – pages 48 to 52

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements and exhibits – pages 53 to 254

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 255 to 264

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- The four page document relating to school policies agreed by Mr Samson upon joining the School, which was the subject of the TRA’s application to admit further evidence.

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

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:

Pupil A

Witness B

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

The panel noted that, at the time of the allegations, Mr Samson was the Head of Department for Geography and a form tutor at the School, which is in Wokingham, [REDACTED]. He started at the School on 24 November 2021.

At the relevant time (the 2023-24 academic year), Pupil A was in [REDACTED] in the School.

In June 2024, Pupil A reported to Witness B, [REDACTED], that Mr Samson had asked for Pupil A's personal telephone number. He had apparently suggested this as a way of contacting Pupil A as he was having difficulties with his email. Pupil A reported that she was uncomfortable with some of the messages sent by Mr Samson.

Pupil A provided the School with copies of the WhatsApp messages. The School was also able to obtain the emails exchanged between Mr Samson and Pupil A from its records.

From examination of the records, it was apparent that between February 2023 and May 2024, Mr Samson exchanged messages with Pupil A via email, and that from November 2023 until May 2024, Mr Samson had also exchanged messages with Pupil A via WhatsApp.

Following the concerns raised by Pupil A, Mr Samson's conduct was investigated by the School and he was dismissed on 26 July 2024.

Findings of fact

The panel had regard to the documentary evidence before it, which included emails and the entirety of the WhatsApp communications between Mr Samson and Pupil A.

The panel also heard oral evidence from two witnesses.

The first was Witness B, who was [REDACTED]. The panel noted the following aspects of her evidence in particular:

- she had conducted the investigation into Mr Samson, having been informed of the circumstances by Pupil A,
- she considered certain elements of the communications from Mr Samson, when viewed together, in her view, amounted to an 'early sign of grooming' behaviour.
- she had consulted with the LADO, who she reported as having the same opinion in relation to the possibility of this being grooming behaviour,
- Mr Samson had signed the relevant school policies, which included information about what was acceptable regarding contacting students.

The second witness was Pupil A. The panel noted the following aspects of her evidence in particular:

- Mr Samson was not currently her teacher [REDACTED], but she had been assisting him with running [REDACTED] since he joined the School in January 2022,
- she had indicated a need for a particular folder for academic purposes and that Mr Samson had offered to supply the folder from the cupboard in his room,
- she had found Mr Samson's messages to be 'weird' and 'un-teacher-like' but that she was not clear as to the motivation behind them ('it seemed there was something behind it but I wasn't clear what') and the messages could 'have just been friendly',
- she found that he appeared to be 'more invested' in his messages to her than other teachers,
- she had used the love heart emojis in respect of Mr Samson's messages as a way of acknowledging them,
- she had not reported the messages immediately (and waited until the end of the school year) as:
 - she felt she could manage the communications with Mr Samson in the interim,
 - she felt that his interactions with her otherwise were 'the same as' with other teachers,
 - she was concerned around the potential impact on other pupils in the event that the investigation meant that he would have to leave the School.

In considering whether to find the facts proved the panel reminded itself that:

- the burden of proving the facts of the allegations rested with the TRA and that Mr Samson did not have to prove anything,
- the standard of proof is the civil standard (“on the balance of probabilities”) and that this meant that before finding any factual allegation proved, it had to be satisfied that an event is more likely to have happened than not,
- it was able to accept an admission from Mr Samson and find the particular allegations proved, if it was satisfied that the admission was unequivocal and consistent with the other evidence before it,
- inferences are conclusions drawn by a process of reasoning from primary facts and as such inferences may only be properly drawn when they have a factual basis,
- ‘sexual motivation’ means that the conduct was done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a sexual relationship and that a finding that a particular action was inappropriate does not mean that it was sexually motivated.

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

a. In or around November 2023, he asked Pupil A for their personal phone number; and/or

PROVED

b. Between February 2023 and May 2024, he exchanged one or more email messages with Pupil A when there was no professional reason to do so;

NOT PROVED

c. Between November 2023 and May 2024, he exchanged one or more messages with Pupil A via WhatsApp;

PROVED

d. He contacted Pupil A outside of normal working hours and/or normal school hours and/or out of term time.

PROVED

Although all the sub-particulars for this allegation were admitted by Mr Samson, the panel nonetheless first considered whether there was evidence in support of each before assessing whether each sub-particular amounted to a failure to maintain professional boundaries.

In relation to 1(a), the panel noted that the evidence of Pupil A was that:

‘Around November 2023, Mr Samson asked for my personal phone number. He said that he was having problems with his email and that it would be easier to communicate about events going on at School if he had my number.’

The panel also noted the evidence of Witness B on this point:

‘The Policy states that staff cannot give their personal numbers or email addresses to pupils, and they should not communicate with pupils on social media. Staff should only communicate with pupils through their school email or a school telephone. Any video calls should be through Microsoft Teams.’

It is rarely appropriate for a staff member to ask a pupil for their personal mobile number. The only reason it would be appropriate is on a school trip to ensure that pupils are safe. It would never be for casual communication.’

In light of the above, and bearing in mind the admissions of Mr Samson, the panel found this sub-particular proved. It was evident that Mr Samson had obtained Pupil A’s personal number from Pupil A and that this was a breach of professional boundaries.

In relation to 1(b), the panel reviewed the email correspondence in detail and noted the evidence of Pupil A to the effect that all the various emails had some reference to school-related activities in some shape or form.

Accordingly, the panel was unable to conclude that there was no professional reason for the email exchanges between Mr Samson and Pupil A, and thus notwithstanding the admission of Mr Samson to this sub-particular, the panel found this not proved.

In relation to 1(c), the panel noted the WhatsApp correspondence between Mr Samson and Pupil A between November 2023 and May 2024. This extended to 41 pages of messages within the hearing bundle. The panel also noted the evidence of Witness B, which it has previously referred to in respect of 1(a).

Accordingly, and noting the admissions of Mr Samson in relation to this sub-particular, the panel found this proved.

In relation to 1(d), the panel noted the timing and dates of the WhatsApp correspondence between Mr Samson and Pupil A. It noted messages sent from Mr Samson on Christmas Day and New Years Eve 2023 and that these were during school holidays. During term-time, in January and February 2024, there were also examples of Mr Samson sending messages late at night and at the weekend. The panel also noted the evidence of Witness B, which it has previously referred to in respect of 1(a), and that the School staff handbook expressly states that it is not appropriate to contact pupils on public holidays.

Accordingly, and noting the admissions of Mr Samson in relation to this sub-particular, the panel found this proved.

2. He sent one or more messages to Pupil A as set out in Schedule 1.

PROVED

The panel noted that this allegation, unlike allegation 1, did not provide a description of the regulatory concern raised by Mr Samson's alleged behaviour. The TRA invited the panel to find that the messages in question were at the very least inappropriate and contended that the absence of such an express descriptor in the allegation did not preclude the panel from making such a finding.

The panel had regard to the agreed statement of facts signed by Mr Samson and noted that this allegation had been admitted in its entirety and that it had also been accepted by Mr Samson that this allegation amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. In light of this, the panel was content to make findings in respect of this allegation, notwithstanding the omission of what might be thought to be important information as to how the TRA put its case.

The panel noted that, with one exception (namely item 6, in relation to love heart emojis which had been sent by Pupil A and not Mr Samson), there was evidence in the bundle that all of the messages set out in schedule 1 had been sent by Mr Samson and that this was confirmed by the evidence of Pupil A, and the admissions of Mr Samson.

Accordingly, the panel found that this allegation was proved.

3. His conduct as may be proven at allegation 1 and/or 2 was sexually motivated.

NOT PROVED

The panel then considered whether each of the particulars it had found proven in respect of allegations 1(a), 1(c), 1(d) and 2 amounted to sexually motivated conduct, bearing in mind the definition of sexual motivation, namely conduct done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a sexual relationship.

In conducting this exercise, the panel had close regard to the WhatsApp correspondence and the evidence of Pupil A. From reading the WhatsApp messages, it was apparent to the panel that Mr Samson had corresponded in a way which was at times deeply inappropriate, suggestive and had the potential to be misconstrued.

The three key examples of this were the following messages:

- "I was just looking at you and not listening to [Person C] anyway",
- "Shame I couldn't get you back into my cupboard.... To find a folder [winking face emoji]",

- “Ah that’s nice, I have to say that I always find it far more enjoyable when you’re there too! Not sure why! [emoji with person’s arms/hands in the air and winking eye emoji]

The panel acknowledged that it was possible that these messages could be interpreted in a way that suggested some form of sexual interest in Pupil A on the part of Mr Samson. However, the panel considered that this was not the only possible explanation for these messages.

In relation to the first message, the panel noted that Pupil A had provided more context to this in her oral evidence. She had explained that Person C had asked her to stand up in front of the end of term school assembly and answer particular questions in front of the whole school. This provides a possible explanation as to why he was looking at Pupil A and not Person C.

In relation to the second message, the panel noted that Pupil A had explained why Mr Samson may have made reference to the cupboard and the reasons for entering the cupboard to obtain a folder. Pupil A recounted that she had told him that she had damaged her folder and that she would need a new one, and that folders were kept in his cupboard.

In relation to the third message, Pupil A explained that dealing with [REDACTED] could be quite challenging as it was quite ‘intense.’ Pupil A stated that it was easier to manage the pupils when both of them were present.

The panel also noted that emojis and ellipses were not deployed in a uniform way by society generally and that there was not always a consensus as to their meaning. Therefore, it did not follow that a winking face emoji following a message would always denote a sexual connotation.

Furthermore, the panel noted Pupil A’s evidence that she did not consider Mr Samson’s behaviour to be sexually motivated at the time. Although she considered some of his messages ‘a bit weird’ and ‘un-teacher-like’ she also stated:

‘Mr Samson’s communication in person did not alarm me. He continued to be friendly and interested in what I was doing, just like the other teachers were.’

The panel considered that Pupil A’s assessment of Mr Samson’s behaviour in person was significant in assessing whether his motivation towards her was sexual, especially given the ambiguous nature of the messages in question. Given that there were no other indicators beyond a potentially suggestive tone in three messages, and that there were possible explanations for these messages which were not indicative of a pursuit of sexual gratification or a sexual relationship, the panel did not consider that this allegation was proved on the balance of probabilities.

In considering the question of sexual motivation generally, the panel did also consider the matters found proved in respect of allegation 1, and the other messages within schedule 1. It did not consider that these aspects changed the position as far as sexual motivation was concerned. In the view of the panel, the other three messages in schedule 1 were not of a character that indicated sexual motivation by their content alone.

The panel considered that this was a teacher who breached professional boundaries by corresponding with the pupil in an ill-judged manner. But this of itself was not indicative of sexual motivation.

For the avoidance of any doubt, the panel was clear that Mr Samson's actions in the way he behaved towards Pupil A were highly inappropriate. However, the panel was unable to conclude, on the available evidence, that sexual motivation was present on the part of Mr Samson. Accordingly, the panel found that this allegation was not proved.

In summary, the panel found the following allegations proved:

1(a), 1(c), 1(d) and 2.

The panel found the following allegations not proved.

1(b), 3.

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

Having found a number 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*, ("the Advice").

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

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

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

- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...

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

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

The panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

The panel considered that Mr Samson's actions; in seeking and obtaining the phone number of a pupil, corresponding with them both inside and outside of term time and school hours, and sending messages which were ill-judged and inappropriate, was conduct that fell well below the appropriate standards.

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

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

The findings of misconduct are serious, and the conduct displayed would be likely to have a negative impact on the individual's status as a teacher.

In light of the repeated breach of school policies around communication with pupils and the overly familiar nature of the communications from Mr Samson to the pupil, the panel considered that Mr Samson's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

For these reasons, the panel found that the teacher'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. The panel noted that 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 and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Samson, which related to him seeking and obtaining the phone number of a pupil, corresponding with them both inside and outside of term time and school hours, and sending messages which were ill-judged and inappropriate, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Samson were not treated with seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.

The panel was of the view that there was a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession as the conduct found against Mr Samson was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

In addition to the public interest considerations set out above, the panel went on to consider whether there was a public interest in retaining Mr Samson in the profession.

Whilst there was limited evidence before it that Mr Samson had ability as an educator and contributed to the wider school community, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above might outweigh any interest in retaining Mr Samson

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 Samson.

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, the one that was relevant in this case was:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;

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

There was no evidence that Mr Samson's actions were not deliberate.

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

The panel noted that there were no previous regulatory findings against Mr Samson.

The panel noted that Mr Samson had admitted the allegations in advance of the hearing but had not engaged with the TRA proceedings beyond that or supplied any further detail as to his level of insight or remediation. The panel was therefore unable to fully assess the extent to which any risk of repetition had been addressed. Notwithstanding this, the panel noted that the allegations found proved in this case primarily related to inappropriate communications in breach of school policies and not the more serious allegation of sexual motivation which had been pursued by the TRA. The panel took comfort from Mr Samson's reported comments at the 22 July 2024 disciplinary hearing where he stated:

- 'the language became over familiar and inappropriate'
- 'it was just me thinking at all and just using completely inappropriate language, far too over familiar. Should not have done.'

- 'not language I should be using. Bad wording.'
- 'Basically, I communicated outside the working day, should have kept it in school hours but through the right channels'

The panel considered that these comments demonstrated considerable insight and reflection on the part of Mr Samson and indicated to the panel that the risk of Mr Samson repeating the same behaviour was low.

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 those proven facts amount to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel has also found some of the allegations not proven. 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 conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, in respect of Mr James Samson, should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Samson 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...

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

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a finding that Mr Samson engaged in highly inappropriate behaviour towards Pupil A.

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

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, "*...that Mr Samson's actions in the way he behaved towards Pupil A were highly inappropriate*". A prohibition order would therefore prevent such a risk from being present in the future.

I have also taken into account the panel's comments on insight and remorse, which the panel sets out as follows, "*The panel noted that Mr Samson had admitted the allegations in advance of the hearing but had not engaged with the TRA proceedings beyond that or supplied any further detail as to his level of insight or remediation. The panel was therefore unable to fully assess the extent to which any risk of repetition had been addressed*".

The panel has also commented that Mr Samson provided some comments at the disciplinary hearing in July 2024, and "*The panel considered that these comments*

demonstrated considerable insight and reflection on the part of Mr Samson and indicated to the panel that the risk of Mr Samson repeating the same behaviour was low”.

In my judgement, the lack of full insight means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour, and this puts at risk the future wellbeing of pupils. I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe, *“In light of the repeated breach of school policies around communication with pupils and the overly familiar nature of the communications from Mr Samson to the pupil, the panel considered that Mr Samson’s conduct could potentially damage the public’s perception of a teacher”.*

I am particularly mindful of the finding that *“...in seeking and obtaining the phone number of a pupil, corresponding with them both inside and outside of term time and school hours, and sending messages which were ill-judged and inappropriate, was conduct that fell well below the appropriate standards”.*

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 Samson himself. The panel has noted that there was only limited evidence before it that Mr Samson *“...had ability as an educator and contributed to the wider school community”.* The panel also found that there were no previous regulatory findings against Mr Samson.

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

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the lack of available evidence of his insight or remorse. The panel has said that whilst it considered that evidence from the disciplinary hearing in 2024 demonstrated considerable insight, it has also found that it was unable to fully assess the extent to which any risk of repetition had been addressed. In my view, the panel’s findings mean that there remains some risk of repetition.

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel that Mr Samson's proven conduct was highly inappropriate and that it fell significantly short of the standards expected of a teacher. I have also considered that panel's findings that Mr Samson's conduct was deliberate in nature and that he was not under extreme duress.

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Samson has made to the profession. In my view, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession. A published decision, in light of the circumstances in this case, that is not backed up by full remorse or insight, 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.

I have considered the Advice, which lists factors which may weigh in favour of a longer review period. In this case, I do not find that any of the factors listed in the Advice are present.

I have also considered the panel's findings on Ms Samson's insight and remorse.

In my view, allowing a two-year review period (the statutory minimum) reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. This period will afford Mr Samson the opportunity to further reflect on the proven conduct and reduce the risk of repetition even further.

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

This means that Mr James Samson 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 1 April 2028, two 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 Samson remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

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

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

Decision maker: Stuart Blomfield

Date: 27 March 2026

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