



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Jack Wells: Professional conduct panel hearing outcome

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

April 2026

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

Teacher: Mr Jack Wells

TRA reference: 23058

Date of determination: 17 April 2026

Former employer: Little Dignum Primary School, Skelmersdale

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 14 to 17 April 2026 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Jack Wells.

The panel members were Mrs Monique Clark (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mr Jack Davies (lay panellist) and Mr David Loveless (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Nicholas West of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Shekyena Marcelle-Brown of counsel, instructed by Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Wells was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the Notice of Hearing dated 23 January 2026.

It was alleged that Mr Wells was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst working as a Year 4 Teacher at Little Digmaor Primary School ('the School'):

1. On or around 20 September 2023, he behaved in a threatening and/or intimidating and/or inappropriate manner, in that he:
 - a) Entered a Year 1 classroom carrying a knife;
 - b) Picked up Pupil A and/or made stabbing movements towards the pupil's head and/or shoulders; and/or
 - c) Left a sharp knife unattended in the sink of his Year 4 classroom.
2. On or around 19 September 2023, on one or more occasions, he threw Pupil A from his arms, up into the air.

Mr Wells made no formal admission in respect of allegations 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), and 2. Further, he made no admission as to whether his conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct 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, anonymised pupil list and list of key people – pages 4 to 6

Section 2: Notice of Hearing – pages 7 to 10

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 11 to 27

Section 4: TRA documents – pages 28 to 131

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- 11-page statement from Mr Wells – pages 132 to 142

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

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the document Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession May 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]

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

On 1 January 2022, Mr Jack Wells commenced employment as a Year 4 teacher at the School.

On 19 September 2023, whilst outside in the playground, Mr Wells allegedly picked up Pupil A and threw them up into the air from his arms on one or more occasions.

On 20 September 2023, Mr Wells allegedly entered a Year 1 classroom carrying a knife. While holding the knife, he picked up Pupil A and allegedly made stabbing movements towards their head and shoulders. Later that day, Mr Wells allegedly left a sharp knife unattended in the sink of his Year 4 classroom, where it remained accessible by pupils.

On 23 January 2024, Lancashire County Council made a referral to the TRA.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

- 1. On or around 20 September 2023, you behaved in a threatening and/or intimidating and/or inappropriate manner, in that you:**

a) Entered a Year 1 classroom carrying a knife

The panel considered the handwritten statement of Mr Wells, dated 20 September 2023. In that statement, Mr Wells described that on Wednesday 20 September 2023, between approximately 10:35am and 10:40am, he went to the School's kitchen to collect a utensil to cut a birthday cake that had been brought into School by a child in his class. He explained that he picked up a palette knife, which he described as a flexible utensil with no serrated edges. Mr Wells confirmed in his handwritten statement that after he left the kitchen he entered the Year 1 classroom to walk through to the Year 2 classroom.

The panel considered a further written statement of Mr Wells dated 31 October 2023. Mr Wells' version of events remained consistent with his handwritten statement that he went to the School's kitchen to collect a palette knife to cut a cake and on his way back to class he walked halfway through the Year 1 classroom to get to the Year 2 classroom. Mr Wells confirmed in this statement that he was carrying a knife whilst in the Year 1 classroom stating, "*I realised I had the palette knife in my left hand*".

The panel considered the written statement from Mr Wells which it had allowed to be admitted late. Mr Wells' statement confirmed, "*There is no dispute that I entered the Year 1 classroom with some sort of knife*". Although Mr Wells' evidence was hearsay as he did not attend the hearing, the panel considered it was plainly relevant to the allegations and appropriate weight could be given as his version of events remained consistent over a number of different documentary evidence sources.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A, dated 30 October 2024. Witness A explained that on 20 September 2023 she was teaching her Year 1 class, and that during breaktime from 10:15am to 10:30am the class watched a film as it was raining outside. She stated that at around 10:20am, Mr Wells entered her classroom carrying a knife. Witness A submitted that the knife "appeared to be a bread knife as it had a serrated edge, a handle, and was around 30cm in length". She stated that Mr Wells was holding the knife in his hand when he walked into the room, but his arm was close to his body, so the knife was down by his side. Witness A further explained that later that day Pupil A told another teacher, Witness C, that Mr Wells had come into the classroom with a knife. The panel noted that Witness A's evidence was supported by more contemporaneous documentary evidence in the form of a written statement. During questioning, Witness A was asked when this statement was made and she confirmed it was written at around 4.15pm on 20 September 2023 after she had reported the incident to Individual E, Deputy Headteacher. The panel considered Witness A's evidence regarding this allegation remained consistent.

The panel was not presented with any evidence to suggest that Mr Wells behaved in a threatening or intimidating manner. The panel noted Witness A's written evidence stated, "I wasn't too surprised that he had a knife with him" as she explained that teachers on

occasion use knives to cut birthday cakes. Witness A stated in her oral evidence that there was not a threat as Mr Wells “*was a trusted person in the School*”. There was no evidence that any of the pupils felt threatened or intimidated and Witness A reported Pupil A enjoyed their interaction with Mr Wells and was “laughing, smiling and screaming in an excited manner”. Witness A’s written statement confirmed, “none of the other children particularly noticed or reacted to Jack Wells’ presence as they were engrossed in a film they were watching”.

The panel considered there was evidence that Mr Wells’ behaviour was inappropriate. Witness A stated in her written statement, “Jack Well’s behaviour had alarmed me. It was not only that he had a knife around the children, and was being silly with it, but also the fact that he was very dismissive of my concerns...I don’t think Jack Wells is a danger to children, he just behaved irresponsibly in the moment”.

The panel considered that there was sufficient evidence to find that Mr Wells did enter the Year 1 classroom with a knife on 20 September 2023 and that this behaviour was inappropriate. The panel therefore found allegation 1(a) proven.

b) Picked up Pupil A and/or made stabbing movements towards the pupil’s head and/or shoulders; and/or

The panel considered the contemporaneous handwritten statement of Mr Wells. Mr Wells described that on Wednesday 20 September 2023, he remembered he needed to speak with Individual E regarding a Year 2 pupil and that he entered the Year 1 classroom to walk through towards the Year 2 classroom. He described stopping near the sink in the Year 1 classroom when Pupil A ran from the carpet area towards him and jumped up at him, and that he picked them up to stop them hitting him. He explained that he was holding the palette knife in one hand at that time and that he made a joke to Pupil A whilst still holding them, before moving towards the door and telling them to stay where they were.

The panel considered notes from a disciplinary investigation meeting dated 27 September 2023 which recorded, “JW stated that pupil A was not facing him” but “facing outwards...JW held the knife in one arm and pupil A in his second arm. [REDACTED] asked JW if he picked Pupil A up from the ground, JW stated that Pupil A ran up to him and jumped in the air towards him” and he then picked them up.

The panel considered a written statement from Mr Wells dated 31 October 2023. Mr Wells stated, “As I was approaching the door I looked behind me and saw Pupil A running towards me” and they jumped in his direction. Mr Wells explained he picked Pupil A up to stop them jumping into him and held them in his right arm as the palette knife, which at this point he had forgotten he was holding, was in his left hand. Mr Wells stated, “I took a few steps with Pupil A in my arms...and then I realised I had the palette knife in my left hand so I put the child down and made my way out the door”.

The panel noted the written statement from Mr Wells which it had allowed to be admitted late. This statement was consistent with Mr Wells' previous evidence and he accepted, "Pupil A ran towards me and jumped into my arms. I did not intentionally seek to pick up the child" and "I have never denied holding the child while carrying a palette knife. This action was not intentional or reckless; I picked the child up to prevent them from colliding with me and potentially causing injury to themselves, to me, or both". Mr Wells further confirmed, "any movement was incidental and may have resulted from natural body movement as I took a few paces back, rather than any deliberate action". Although Mr Wells' evidence was hearsay as he did not attend the hearing, the panel considered it was plainly relevant to the allegations and appropriate weight could be given as his version of events remained consistent over a number of different documentary evidence sources.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A, dated 30 October 2024. She stated that Mr Wells walked into the classroom holding a knife and walked straight to her desk and stood beside it. Witness A stated that Pupil A then asked Mr Wells what he was doing there, to which he replied that he had come to see the class. Witness A explained that Pupil A then ran around the desk towards Mr Wells, after which Mr Wells picked Pupil A up in a scooping motion, and carried them towards the door. She stated that Mr Wells was holding Pupil A in one hand and the knife in the other, with Pupil A's face towards the classroom and their back against him.

Witness A submitted that Mr Wells walked quickly towards the door in a joking manner, before stopping and "angling the knife towards Pupil A's face and shoulder three or four times". The panel noted that this account was broadly consistent with the more contemporaneous documentary evidence in the form of Witness A's written statement dated 20 September 2023 in which she stated, Mr Wells scooped Pupil A up and their face was towards the classroom with their back against him, with the knife in his other hand. He stopped near the door and "pointed the knife" towards their face and shoulder "3 or 4 times".

During questioning, Witness A was asked why she did not describe Mr Wells' actions as a stabbing motion when she first reported the incident, and she explained that she was "trying to use words carefully". The panel noted that the first time the word "stabbing" was reported was in the notes from the disciplinary investigation meeting dated 27 September 2023 when the HR representative asked Mr Wells about the allegation of "stabbing gestures". The panel noted that Mr Wells consistently denied making any stabbing motions towards Pupil A.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness C, dated 9 December 2024. She stated that on 20 September 2023, after attending the [REDACTED] at around 3:30pm to assist with setting up technology, Pupil A ran over to her and stated that Mr Wells had a knife. Witness C stated that Pupil A then said that Mr

Wells “did this” and demonstrated a fast up-and-down motion with their hand and then said that this made them feel scared.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness D, dated 5 December 2024. Witness D confirmed that she was not present during the incident on 20 September 2023 but attended a meeting on 22 September 2023 with Pupil A, alongside the deputy headteacher. The panel considered the contemporaneous notes from this meeting during which Pupil A was specifically asked if Mr Wells had moved the knife. Pupil A is recorded as stating “yes” and they “indicated a wave motion”.

The panel considered there was sufficient evidence to find that Mr Wells did pick up Pupil A on 20 September 2023 whilst holding a knife. The panel was unable to find, on the balance of probabilities, that Mr Wells made stabbing movements towards Pupil A’s head or shoulders. The contemporaneous documentary evidence did not support the allegation of stabbing movements. The descriptions of “pointing” and “angling” the knife towards Pupil A were more consistent with Mr Wells’ evidence that there may have been some natural or incidental movement of the knife whilst Mr Wells was holding Pupil A. The panel noted that Witness A did not consider the incident to be serious enough to report immediately which was also consistent with Mr Wells’ version of events that he did not make any stabbing movements towards Pupil A. The panel further noted that it was not provided with any evidence from Individual F, who was a [REDACTED] and the only other adult present in the room at the time of the incident, nor any of the other pupils present.

As set out above, the panel was not presented with any evidence to suggest that Mr Wells behaved in a threatening or intimidating manner. The panel noted Pupil A’s written statement which confirmed “I was laughing” and they only mentioned that they were “a little bit scared” when specifically asked by Witness D if they were scared. Witness A’s contemporaneous statement reports Pupil A as “screaming playfully” and Witness A later reported Pupil A enjoyed their interaction with Mr Wells and was “laughing, smiling and screaming in an excited manner”. Witness A stated in her oral evidence “I don’t think Jack Wells is a danger to children. There was no malice in the incident. He was not ever going to hurt the child or ever had that thought – to him it was just a joke”.

The panel considered there was evidence that Mr Wells’ behaviour was inappropriate. Witness A explained in her written statement, “Jack Well’s behaviour had alarmed me. It was not only that he had a knife around the children, and was being silly with it, but also the fact that he was very dismissive of my concerns...I don’t think Jack Wells is a danger to children, he just behaved irresponsibly in the moment”. Witness A also confirmed in her oral evidence that the distance of the knife to the child was “enough to concern me”.

In Mr Wells’ written statement, he accepted, “I have consistently acknowledged and apologised for picking up and holding Pupil A...I recognise that this situation was

different given that I was holding a palette knife, and I accept that this does not reflect the standard of professionalism expected”.

The panel found allegation 1(b) proven, in so far as Mr Wells picked Pupil A up on 20 September 2023 and this behaviour was inappropriate.

c) Left a sharp knife unattended in the sink of your Year 4 classroom.

The panel noted that this allegation was not addressed in the handwritten statement of Mr Wells dated 20 September 2023 as the knife had not been discovered in the sink in his Year 4 classroom at this time.

The panel considered the notes from the disciplinary investigation meeting on 27 September 2023 in which it was recorded that Mr Wells “stated that he made an error in judgement. He then put the knife in the sink which he knows he should have returned to the kitchen”. When Mr Wells was asked to clarify the incident, it is recorded, “JW took the first knife (pallet knife) back to the kitchen and returned to class with a secondary knife which he then left in the sink in classroom. Jack confirmed this”.

The panel considered the written statement from Mr Wells dated 31 October 2023 in which he accepted, “I realise with hindsight that this should have included removing the knife from the classroom sink and returning it to the kitchen, but I simply forgot” and “I accept that I left a knife in the classroom sink and I apologise for doing this”.

Mr Wells provided an undated written statement for the purposes of his disciplinary appeal meeting. The panel noted the following written response within this statement, “I left a sharp knife unattended in the sink of my classroom. I responded to this by accepting that this had happened and apologised for doing so”. As set out above, although Mr Wells’ evidence was hearsay as he did not attend the hearing, the panel considered it was plainly relevant to the allegations and appropriate weight could be given as his version of events remained consistent over a number of different documentary evidence sources.

The panel had sight of a photograph of the knife said to have been found in Mr Wells’ classroom dated 21 September 2023. The panel noted that the knife was presented against a 30cm ruler, and that the blade was over 20cm in length. The panel considered on the balance of probabilities that this was likely to be a sharp knife.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness D, who stated that on 22 September 2023 the Local Authority Designated Officer advised that the School could carry out an investigation internally. She explained that during the investigation it came to light that a knife had been left in Mr Wells’ classroom where it could have been accessed by children.

As set out above, the panel was not presented with any evidence to suggest that Mr Wells behaved in a threatening or intimidating manner by leaving a sharp knife unattended in his classroom. However, the panel accepted the oral evidence of Witness D that this behaviour was inappropriate, as the sink was fully accessible by pupils who would have been [REDACTED] years old, some of whom were [REDACTED] and or had [REDACTED].

The panel found that Mr Wells did leave a sharp knife unattended in the sink of his Year 4 classroom and his behaviour was inappropriate. The panel therefore found allegation 1(c) proven.

2. On or around 19 September 2023, on one or more occasions, you threw Pupil A from your arms, up into the air.

The panel noted that this allegation was not addressed in the handwritten statement of Mr Wells dated 20 September 2023 as the incident on 19 September 2023 had not been reported at this time.

The panel considered the notes from the disciplinary investigation meeting on 27 September 2023 in which it was recorded that Mr Wells acknowledged that this incident did happen and it was “an error of judgement and a lack of professionalism”. Mr Wells confirmed that he did not throw Pupil A high and they “enjoyed it”.

The panel considered the written statement from Mr Wells dated 31 October 2023 in which he accepted he had previously picked up Pupil A and threw them slightly in the air on one occasion and he apologised for his actions. Mr Wells stated, “I also apologised at the time and accepted the advice of more senior staff when it happened. I categorically deny throwing the same child in the air a second time which has been mentioned”.

Mr Wells provided an undated written statement for the purposes of his disciplinary appeal meeting. The panel noted the following written response within this statement, “I have acknowledged that my actions on that occasion were not professional and confirmed that I apologised...at the time”. As set out above, although Mr Wells’ evidence was hearsay as he did not attend the hearing, the panel considered it was plainly relevant to the allegations and appropriate weight could be given as his version of events remained consistent over a number of different documentary evidence sources.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A. Witness A explained that on 19 September 2023 she and Mr Wells were supervising their classes on the playground between 2:00pm and 2:30pm. She described Pupil A approaching them to start a conversation, after which Mr Wells picked Pupil A up and threw them upwards into the air, causing them to leave his arms momentarily before he caught them again. Witness A stated that Pupil A appeared to enjoy this interaction and was smiling and giggling. She explained that she told Mr Wells not to do that and said it made her

nervous to watch because of the risk that the child could fall onto the hard playground if not caught. She stated that her concern was for Pupil A's safety. The panel noted the contemporaneous documentary evidence in the form of a written statement from Witness A was consistent, stating that Mr Wells picked Pupil A up and threw them up into the air, and they "momentarily left his arms", before he caught them again.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B, dated 28 January 2024. She stated that on 19 September 2023 she was taking her class out for afternoon playtime when she saw Mr Wells throw Pupil A up into the air and then catch them again in a playful manner. She described being approximately fifteen feet away and stated that she could see clearly because Mr Wells threw Pupil A above head height, such that Pupil A was out of his hands. She described approaching Mr Wells and addressing him about the incident, telling him to use his head and that he could not throw children up into the air. She explained that she had not previously seen Mr Wells behave in that way, and that she spoke to him so that he would realise what he had done was wrong. Witness B stated that Mr Wells responded by saying "I know, yeah, yeah, sorry", and seemed to take on board that what he had done was not safe or appropriate. Witness B stated that she did not speak to Pupil A about the incident and did not see Mr Wells throw any other children into the air after that date. She described Mr Wells' actions as a safety risk and stated that throwing a child into the air was not appropriate.

The panel noted the contemporaneous documentary evidence in the form of a written statement from Witness B which stated, "I saw Mr Wells throw up in the air and catch" Pupil A again "in a playful manner". Witness B recorded saying to Mr Wells, "use your head Jack, you can't do that, you can't throw kids up in the air" and he "seemed to take on board what I had said and realised that what he had done was not safe or appropriate".

The panel considered there was sufficient evidence to find that Mr Wells threw Pupil A from his arms, up into the air on one occasion on 19 September 2023. The panel therefore found allegation 2 proven.

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

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

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

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

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

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Wells, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Keeping Children Safe In Education ("KCSIE").

The panel considered that Mr Wells was in breach of the following provision: clause 7 of Part One of KCSIE 2023 which states, "*All staff have responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn*".

The panel also considered whether Mr Wells' 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 did not find that any of these offence types were relevant.

The panel considered that Mr Wells' conduct as found proven at allegations 1(a) and 1(b), namely entering a classroom carrying a knife and picking up Pupil A whilst carrying a knife, amounted to serious misconduct. The panel was concerned that such conduct breached fundamental safeguarding expectations and was incompatible with upholding a safe learning environment for pupils. The panel's view was that any physical contact between a teacher and a pupil must be safe, proportionate and justified, and Mr Wells' actions in picking up Pupil A were contrary to these requirements. By doing so, Mr Wells exposed Pupil A to unnecessary risk of injury and potential harm to their emotional wellbeing.

The panel did not consider Mr Wells' conduct as found proven at allegation 1(c) to amount to misconduct of a serious nature for a number of reasons. The panel noted that

this appeared to be an isolated mistake by Mr Wells in leaving a sharp knife in the sink of his classroom on 20 September 2023. The panel found that Mr Wells was denied the opportunity to remedy this mistake the next day as he met with Witness D before the school day started and was asked to work from home. The panel further considered that this error occurred in the context of a school environment which had a [REDACTED] to the storage of knives. The panel heard evidence that the School's kitchen and the specific drawer from which Mr Wells collected the knife from was unlocked and accessible to all staff and students. The panel was not provided with any evidence of specific policies or training regarding the use of knives within the School environment which could have heightened the seriousness of his conduct.

The panel did not consider Mr Wells' conduct as found proven at allegation 2 to amount to misconduct of a serious nature. The panel considered Mr Wells' conduct in throwing Pupil A in the air was clearly inappropriate as it placed Pupil A at risk of harm, particularly as they were a [REDACTED] pupil, and it modelled unsafe behaviour to other pupils. However, the panel concluded that there was only sufficient evidence to find that this was a one-off incident. The panel noted Witness B, [REDACTED], did not feel this conduct was serious enough to report as a safeguarding concern or even as a low-level concern. Witness B considered it was sufficient for her to have an informal discussion with Mr Wells, and she was satisfied that her words of advice were taken on board so that this conduct would not be repeated.

For these reasons, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Wells as found proved at allegations 1(a) and 1(b) 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 Wells was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Mr Wells' 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 Wells' 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 Wells was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the panel did not find that any of these offence types were relevant.

The panel considered that Mr Wells' conduct as found proved at allegations 1(a) and 1(b) could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher. For the same reasons as set out above as to whether Mr Wells was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the panel did not consider Mr Wells' conduct as found proved at allegations 1(c) and 2 could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher or bring the teaching profession into disrepute.

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

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

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

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

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

In light of the panel's findings against Mr Wells, which involved entering a classroom with a knife and picking Pupil A up whilst holding a knife, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.

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

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

no doubt had been cast upon his abilities as an educator and he is able to make a valuable contribution to the profession.

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

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 Wells.

The panel took further account of the Advice, which suggests that a prohibition order may be appropriate if certain behaviours of a teacher have been proved. In the list of such behaviours, those that were relevant in this case were:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards; and
- failure in their duty of care towards a child, including exposing a child to risk or failing to promote the safety and welfare of the children (as set out in Part 1 of KCSIE).

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate, the panel went on to consider the mitigating factors.

Mitigating factors may indicate that a prohibition order would not be appropriate or proportionate.

There was no evidence that Mr Wells actions were not deliberate. However, the panel noted it was not disputed that Mr Wells was in possession of a knife for a legitimate reason, namely, to cut a birthday cake, and the panel did not find that he acted in a threatening or intimidating manner.

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

There was no evidence before the panel that Mr Wells had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or that he contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel accepted that this was an isolated one-off incident that took place over the course of a few minutes.

The panel was provided with witness evidence to attest to Mr Wells' history and ability as a teacher. Witness B provided oral evidence about the positive relationships Mr Wells developed with pupils describing him as "jovial and a joker...he had a good sense of humour with them....just a nice relationship...not too strict. He was quite kind even if they were not in his class he would talk to them and ask how they were doing". Witness B further confirmed that she was not aware of any previous concerns regarding Mr Wells'

behaviour in her roles as a member of the School's senior leadership team and Assistant DSL at the School. Witness C described Mr Wells as always being a "very fun and jokey teacher" in her oral testimony. Witness D confirmed Mr Wells was a valued member of the School and "very much a team player and he would do anything for anybody". Witness D also confirmed that she had "never seen him acting in malicious way to anybody".

This witness evidence available to the panel was consistent with Mr Wells' written statements that he had never been subject to any disciplinary allegations throughout his career and always conducted himself "in a professional and responsible manner, with a strong commitment to the wellbeing of those in my care". Mr Wells also provided evidence of his contributions to the School including his responsibility for the development of PE and Geography, taking children to sporting competitions after school on a weekly basis, running two successful sports days for the School and attending the School's residential trips in his own time.

The panel took account of Mr Wells' expressions of regret and remorse within his written statements, stating "the whole incident has had such an impact on myself and also those around me, fuelling me with the feeling of guilt and disappointment". Mr Wells recognised that he had made an error in judgement and described his actions as a lack of professionalism.

Mr Wells confirmed that there was no intent to harm Pupil A at any point and that he was interacting in a friendly way with a pupil with whom he had a good rapport. However, the panel noted that he accepted, "I am aware that my positive rapport with Pupil A could be interpreted as over-familiarity and I need to take responsibility for my interactions with this pupil to ensure that incidents like this don't reoccur". The panel considered that the witness evidence was supportive of Mr Wells' position regarding the limited impact of the incident on Pupil A. Witness C confirmed Pupil A was "quite giddy" when describing the incident, and noting "she didn't seem scared at the time. She was not crying or distressed". Witness D confirmed, "At no time did I feel that Jack Wells acted with malice or intent". Witness D also noted the limited impact Mr Wells' conduct would have had on Pupil A, explaining that Pupil A is "very resilient". When asked if the incident would have had any impact on Pupil A, Witness D replied, "Honestly, I wouldn't have said so. If so, it would have been fleeting".

The panel considered that Mr Wells has showed significant insight into his actions. His written statement confirmed, "Having spent a lot of time thinking about the events with hindsight I can see how the whole situation may have looked in someone else's point of view. There was no intent to harm the child at any point and the journey of events I feel show this. I have apologised multiple times during this process about my part in this and I have admitted I have learnt my lesson. My future actions and the way I will conduct

myself in the future have been entirely influenced by this event and I promise that I will not put myself in a situation like this in the future”.

The panel also took into account the limited evidence available regarding the School’s policies and practices regarding the use of knives and the handling of children more generally. The panel considered Mr Wells was disadvantaged by what he described as “no clear or specific school policy governing the handling or use of knives” and “a wider issue of unclear guidance”. Witness D confirmed in her oral evidence that training had been provided on the use of reasonable force, but it was unclear whether this was provided to staff members before or after the incident on 20 September 2023.

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 the publication of adverse findings was a less intrusive measure available. Taking all of the circumstances into account, the panel decided that the public interest considerations weighed in favour of retaining Mr Wells in the profession. The documentary evidence confirmed that Mr Wells admitted his wrongdoing immediately, and the School’s staff spoke about him in positive terms. The panel considered that prohibition would not produce any material change or serve any useful purpose.

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 Mr Wells 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 all 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 also found some of the allegations 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 Jack Wells is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Wells involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance '*Keeping children safe in education*'.

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

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a teacher breaching fundamental safeguarding expectations and failing to uphold a safe learning environment for pupils.

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

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

“In light of the panel’s findings against Mr Wells, which involved entering a classroom with a knife and picking Pupil A up whilst holding a knife, there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils.”

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 it sets out as follows:

“The panel took account of Mr Wells’ expressions of regret and remorse within his written statements, stating “the whole incident has had such an impact on myself and also those around me, fuelling me with the feeling of guilt and disappointment”. Mr Wells recognised that he had made an error in judgement and described his actions as a lack of professionalism.

Mr Wells confirmed that there was no intent to harm Pupil A at any point and that he was interacting in a friendly way with a pupil with whom he had a good rapport. However, the panel noted that he accepted, “I am aware that my positive rapport with Pupil A could be interpreted as over-familiarity and I need to take responsibility for my interactions with this pupil to ensure that incidents like this don’t reoccur”. The panel considered that the witness evidence was supportive of Mr Wells’ position regarding the limited impact of the incident on Pupil A. Witness C confirmed Pupil A was “quite giddy” when describing the incident, and noting “she didn’t seem scared at the time. She was not crying or distressed”. Witness D confirmed, “At no time did I feel that Jack Wells acted with malice or intent”. Witness D also noted the limited impact Mr Wells’ conduct would have had on Pupil A, explaining that Pupil A is “very resilient”. When asked if the incident would have had any impact on Pupil A, Witness D replied, “Honestly, I wouldn’t have said so. If so, it would have been fleeting”.

The panel considered that Mr Wells has showed significant insight into his actions. His written statement confirmed, “Having spent a lot of time thinking about the events with hindsight I can see how the whole situation may have looked in someone else’s point of view. There was no intent to harm the child at any point and the journey of events I feel show this. I have apologised multiple times during this process about my part in

this and I have admitted I have learnt my lesson. My future actions and the way I will conduct myself in the future have been entirely influenced by this event and I promise that I will not put myself in a situation like this in the future”.

In my judgement, the significant insight and remorse demonstrated by Mr Wells means that the risk of repetition is negligible. 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 records that it “...was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr Wells was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.”.

I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher behaving in a way that jeopardised the safety of pupils in this case and the impact that such a finding may have 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 Wells himself. The panel notes the following:

“The panel was provided with witness evidence to attest to Mr Wells’ history and ability as a teacher. Witness B provided oral evidence about the positive relationships Mr Wells developed with pupils describing him as “jovial and a joker...he had a good sense of humour with them...just a nice relationship...not too strict. He was quite kind even if they were not in his class he would talk to them and ask how they were doing”. Witness B further confirmed that she was not aware of any previous concerns regarding Mr Wells’ behaviour in her roles as a member of the School’s senior leadership team and Assistant DSL at the School. Witness C described Mr Wells as always being a “very fun and jokey teacher” in her oral testimony. Witness D confirmed Mr Wells was a valued member of the School and “very much a team player and he would do anything for anybody”. Witness D also confirmed that she had “never seen him acting in malicious way to anybody”.

This witness evidence available to the panel was consistent with Mr Wells' written statements that he had never been subject to any disciplinary allegations throughout his career and always conducted himself "in a professional and responsible manner, with a strong commitment to the wellbeing of those in my care". Mr Wells also provided evidence of his contributions to the School including his responsibility for the development of PE and Geography, taking children to sporting competitions after school on a weekly basis, running two successful sports days for the School and attending the School's residential trips in his own time."

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Wells 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.

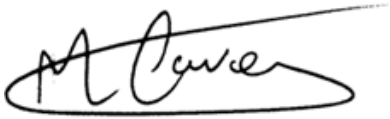
I have considered the panel's concluding remarks:

"The panel 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 the publication of adverse findings was a less intrusive measure available. Taking all of the circumstances into account, the panel decided that the public interest considerations weighed in favour of retaining Mr Wells in the profession. The documentary evidence confirmed that Mr Wells admitted his wrongdoing immediately, and the School's staff spoke about him in positive terms. The panel considered that prohibition would not produce any material change or serve any useful purpose.

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."

Given the panel's findings regarding the relative seriousness of Mr Wells' actions, his previous good disciplinary record, the isolated nature of the events in this case, and the apparently low risk of repletion given his significant insight and remorse I have concluded that a prohibition order is not proportionate and in the public interest.

I consider therefore 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: 21 April 2026

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