



Ms Carol Thomas: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

April 2026

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

Teacher: Ms Carol Thomas

Teacher ref number: 9761938

Teacher date of birth: 04 April 1963

TRA reference: 24184

Date of determination: 30 April 2026

Former employer: Vision for Education, Arnos Vale, Bristol

Education Training Collective, Harvard Avenue, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 29 April 2026 and 30 April 2026 to consider the case of Ms Carol Thomas.

The panel members were Mr Ian Hylan (teacher panellist – in the chair), Ms Wendy Shannon (lay panellist), and Ms Claire Shortt (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Jamila Bernard-Stevenson of Blake Morgan LLP.

The TRA was represented by the Presenting Officer, Mr James Lloyd of Counsel instructed by Brabners Solicitors. The Teacher was not present and not represented.

The PCPH was conducted virtually, via Microsoft Teams.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegation

The panel considered the allegation set out in the notice of proceedings dated 20 February 2025.

It was alleged that Ms. Carol Thomas was guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence, in that:

1. On 8 November 2023, she was convicted at Teesside Magistrates' Court for the offence of harassment without violence.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Notice of proceedings and proof of service– pages 3 to 28

Section 2: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 29 to 98

Section 3: Teacher documents – pages 99 to 106

The panel also received a Proof of service bundle.

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

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

Decisions and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Ms Thomas was employed by Vision for Education (a recruitment agency specialising in providing staff for the education sector) to provide supply teaching services. Ms Thomas was engaged via this organisation between the following dates:-

- i) February 2014 to July 2016

- ii) September 2017 to October 2019
- iii) October 2021 to July 2023

Ms Thomas was employed as a teacher by the Education Training Collective between 13 September 2021 and 9 January 2024.

In order to determine this case, the panel considered the TRA hearing bundle. This contained a police case summary which set out the particulars of the offence. The panel learned from this that on 28 January 2023 at 00.27, Ms Thomas sent an abusive Facebook message from her Facebook account to the complainant [REDACTED]. Ms Thomas sent a further Facebook message to the complainant on 15 February 2023 at 21:39 from an account which was held under a different name. Further messages were sent by Ms Thomas to the complainant on 15 February 2023, 19th February 2023 and 20th February 2023 by Facebook and/or email.

On 8 November 2023, Ms Thomas was convicted (after trial) of the offence of harassment without violence at Teesside Magistrates' Court. On 29 November 2023, following a verdict of guilty, Ms Thomas was sentenced to a 15-day Rehabilitation Activity Requirement, a £200 fine and a 2-year restraining order was imposed. The terms of the restraining order were as follows:-

- i) Not to contact the complainant directly or indirectly by any means.
- ii) Not to enter [REDACTED]
- iii) To move away from the complainant in the event of a chance encounter.

The panel noted that the TRA hearing bundle made reference to other alleged behaviours which did not form part of the conviction or the allegation. Therefore, this information did not form part of the panel's decision.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

The panel found the following particulars of the allegation against Ms Thomas proved, for these reasons:

You have been convicted at any time, of a relevant offence, in that:

- 1. On 8 November 2023, you were convicted at Teesside Magistrates' Court for the offence of harassment without violence.**

The panel was presented with a certificate of conviction from Teesside Magistrates' Court confirming that Ms Thomas was convicted on 18 November 2023 of the offence particularised in the allegation.

The panel accepted the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of the commission of the offence by Ms Thomas.

The panel found this allegation proved.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence

Having found the allegation proved, the panel went on to consider whether the conviction amounted to a conviction of a relevant offence.

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 satisfied that the conduct of Ms Thomas in relation to the facts it found proved involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that by reference to Part 2, Ms Thomas 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
 - ...at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position.
 - Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.

The panel noted that Ms Thomas' actions were not directly relevant to working with children and/or working in an education setting. Notwithstanding this, the panel noted that an offence can be considered relevant even if it did not involve misconduct in the course of teaching. The panel determined that the offence that led to Ms Thomas' conviction can be considered to be relevant because it:-

- was contrary to the standards of personal and professional conduct expected of a teacher.
- would be likely to have an impact on the safety or security of pupils or members of the public.
- would be likely to affect public confidence in the teaching profession if the teacher were allowed to continue teaching.

Further and in addition, the panel noted that, pursuant to the Advice it is likely that:

- A conviction for harassment and/or stalking will be considered a ‘relevant offence.’

The panel determined that both the nature and gravity of this offence was very serious. Ms Thomas was convicted of an offence which involved a continuing course of conduct. The panel noted that the messages sent by Ms Thomas to the complainant were grossly offensive and caused the complainant and his daughter distress. The panel further noted that the escalation of Ms Thomas’ conduct indicated a lack of ability to self-regulate and a lack of appreciation of boundaries.

The serious nature of the conduct was reflected in the fact that a 2-year restraining order was imposed.

The panel considered that a finding that this conviction was for a relevant offence was necessary to reaffirm clear standards of conduct so as to maintain public confidence in the teaching profession.

Panel’s recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel’s findings in respect of a conviction of a relevant offence, 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 a 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- assessed by reference to the standard of the ordinary intelligent and well-informed citizen who both appreciates the seriousness of the proposed ‘sanction’ and recognises the high standards expected of all teachers, as well as other issues involved in the case;
- Declaring and upholding standards of conduct within the teaching profession;

- Prohibition strikes the right balance between the rights of the teacher and the public interest, if they are in conflict.

In light of the nature of the offence, the panel determined that public confidence in the profession would be undermined if appropriate action was not taken with respect to Ms Thomas' case.

As a result of this, the panel decided that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present.

Moreover, in light of the lack of evidence to the contrary, the panel concluded there was not a sufficiently strong public interest consideration in retaining her in the profession.

Notwithstanding 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 Ms Thomas.

In carrying out the balancing exercise, the panel had regard to the public interest considerations both in favour of, and against, prohibition as well as the interests of Ms Thomas. 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 pertain to this case are set out below:-

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;
- the commission of a serious criminal offence, including those that resulted in a conviction or caution, paying particular attention to offences that are 'relevant matters' for the purposes of the Police Act 1997 and criminal record disclosures;

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

The panel considered that the following mitigating factors were present in this case:

- [REDACTED]
- Ms Thomas claims that she has engaged in counselling (however, the panel noted that no independent evidence was provided to corroborate this.)
- The panel saw no evidence which indicated that Ms Thomas was previously subject to disciplinary proceedings/warnings.

Weighed against this and the behaviours set out above, the panel considered there were aggravating features in this case, including that:

- Ms Thomas has not expressed any remorse and/or insight into her conduct.
- Ms Thomas has attempted to minimise the gravity of her actions by stating in her police interview that she 'just sent a couple of emails.'
- Ms Thomas' conduct appears to be underpinned by attitudinal issues (i.e. believing that she was the true victim.)

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

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

The panel took into account the difficult personal circumstances that preceded Ms Thomas' conduct and the fact that there was no evidence that Ms Thomas had been subject to a disciplinary hearing before. However, in the panel's view, this mitigation was outweighed by the severity of Ms Thomas' conduct and its impact on the complainant and his family.

In the complainant's victim impact statement, he described himself as living [REDACTED]. However, the panel noted that as the complainant and his family members had not provided oral evidence at the hearing, the victim impact statements constituted hearsay evidence which had not been tested. Therefore, although the panel took these statements into account, it attributed less weight to them.

The panel determined that Ms Thomas' actions were fundamentally incompatible with her being a teacher. The nature and gravity of this offence was a matter of significant concern.

There were, accordingly, particularly strong public interest considerations in this case in terms of maintaining public confidence in the teaching profession and the declaring of proper standards of conduct in this case.

Ms Thomas' behaviour led to her being subjected to a lengthy restraining order, which is indicative of the seriousness of the offence. The panel considered very carefully the nature of the offence, the length of the restraining order, the absence of

the teacher's reflection on the offence and the absence of mitigation to reduce further risk.

The panel was therefore of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Ms Thomas.

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

Notwithstanding this, the panel was troubled by the absence of insight and remediation in this case. Without independent (or indeed any) evidence of remediation, the panel could not be reassured that the conduct would not reoccur. The panel noted that emotional regulation and an appreciation of boundaries are important qualities and qualities which the public would expect a qualified teacher to possess. Sending a series of abusive messages to the complainant indicates that Ms Thomas may lack these qualities. Owing to the repeated nature of the conduct and the fact that no character references have been provided in support of Ms Thomas' case, the panel was unable to conclude that the conduct was out of character.

The Advice indicates that there are certain other types of cases where it is likely that the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of a longer period before a review is considered appropriate. However, none of the listed characteristics were engaged by the panel's findings.

In summary, the panel therefore decided that its findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and that it would be proportionate in all the circumstances for the prohibition order to be recommended with provision for a review period of two years.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

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

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Ms Carol Thomas should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of two years.

In particular, the panel has found that Ms Thomas 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
 - ...at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position.
 - Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.

The panel finds that the conduct of Ms Thomas amounted to a conviction of a relevant offence.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as they include a finding that "Ms Thomas was convicted of an offence which involved a continuing course of conduct. The panel noted that the messages sent by Ms Thomas to the complainant were grossly offensive..."

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

"...the panel noted that an offence can be considered relevant even if it did not involve misconduct in the course of teaching. The panel determined that

the offence that led to Ms Thomas' conviction can be considered to be relevant because it:-

...

- *would be likely to have an impact on the safety or security of pupils or members of the public."*

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, "*Ms Thomas has not expressed any remorse and/or insight into her conduct.*"

The panel has also commented that Ms Thomas "*...has attempted to minimise the gravity of her actions...*"

In my judgement, the lack of evidence of any 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, "*...that public confidence in the profession would be undermined if appropriate action was not taken with respect to Ms Thomas' case.*"

I am particularly mindful of the finding that "*The panel further noted that the escalation of Ms Thomas' conduct indicated a lack of ability to self-regulate and a lack of appreciation of boundaries*" and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

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

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

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Ms Thomas herself. The panel comment,

“The panel considered that the following mitigating factors were present in this case:

- [REDACTED]
- *Ms Thomas claims that she has engaged in counselling (however, the panel noted that no independent evidence was provided to corroborate this.)*
- *The panel saw no evidence which indicated that Ms Thomas was previously subject to disciplinary proceedings/warnings.”*

A prohibition order would prevent Ms Thomas from teaching. A prohibition order would also clearly deprive the public of her 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 insight or remorse, and the panel’s finding that Ms Thomas “...has not expressed any remorse and/or insight into her conduct.”

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel that “*Ms Thomas’ behaviour led to her being subjected to a lengthy restraining order, which is indicative of the seriousness of the offence.*”

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Ms Thomas 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 evidence of 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. In this case, the panel has recommended a two-year review period.

I have considered the panel’s comments,

“...the panel was troubled by the absence of insight and remediation in this case. Without independent (or indeed any) evidence of remediation, the panel could not be reassured that the conduct would not reoccur. The panel noted that emotional regulation and an appreciation of boundaries are important qualities and qualities which the public would expect a qualified teacher to possess. Sending a series of abusive messages to the complainant indicates that Ms Thomas may lack these qualities. Owing to the repeated nature of

the conduct and the fact that no character references have been provided in support of Ms Thomas' case, the panel was unable to conclude that the conduct was out of character."

The panel has also said that a two-year review period would "...would be appropriate and that it would be proportionate in all the circumstances..."

I have considered whether a two-year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that allowing a two-year review period is sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the seriousness of the proven conduct and the lack of evidence of insight or remorse.

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

This means that Ms Carol Thomas is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. She may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 6 May 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 she does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Ms Thomas remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Ms Thomas has a right of appeal to the High Court within 28 days from the date she is given notice of this order.



Decision maker: Stuart Blomfield

Date: 1 May 2026

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