



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Richard Leighfield: Professional conduct panel meeting outcome

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

May 2026

Contents

Introduction	3
Allegations	4
Summary of evidence	4
Documents	4
Statement of Agreed Facts	4
Decision and reasons	4
Findings of fact	5
Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State	11

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

Teacher: Mr Richard Leighfield

Teacher ref number: 9337323

Teacher date of birth: 26 September 1971

TRA reference: 024981

Date of determination: 8 May 2026

Former employer: Northwick Manor Primary School, Worcester

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 8 May 2026 by way of a virtual meeting, to consider the case of Mr Richard Leighfield.

The panel members were Mr Terry Hyde (former teacher panellist – in the chair), Mrs Bernie Whittle (teacher panellist) and Ms Jan Stoddard (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Luisa Gibbons of Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP Solicitors.

In advance of the meeting, after taking into consideration the public interest and the interests of justice, the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Leighfield that the allegation be considered without a hearing. Mr Leighfield provided a signed statement of agreed facts and admitted conviction of a relevant offence. The panel considered the case at a meeting without the attendance of the presenting officer, Ms Sherelle Appleby of Browne Jacobson LLP or Mr Leighfield.

The meeting took place in private and was not recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegation set out in the notice of Meeting dated 20 February 2026

It was alleged that Mr Leighfield was guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence, in that:

1. On the 17 December 2024, he was convicted at Worcester Magistrates' Court of:
 - a) attempting to cause/incite a girl 13 – 15 to engage in sexual activity;
 - b) making indecent photographs / pseudo-photographs of a child;
 - c) possessing prohibited images of a child;
 - d) attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Notice of Meeting and signed notice of response form – pages 2 to 7

Section 2: Statement of Agreed Facts – pages 8 to 10

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 11 to 75

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").

Statement of Agreed Facts

The panel considered a statement of agreed facts which was signed by Mr Leighfield on 5 December 2025.

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

In advance of the meeting the TRA agreed to a request from Mr Leighfield for the allegation to be considered without a hearing. The panel had the ability to direct that the case be considered at a hearing if required in the interests of justice or in the public interest. The panel did not determine that such a direction was necessary or appropriate in this case.

Mr Leighfield was employed at Northwick Manor Primary School (“the School”) as a Year 5 class teacher from 1 September 2012. On 22 August 2024, the police informed the School that Mr Leighfield had been arrested.

Mr Leighfield was suspended on 27 August 2024.

Mr Leighfield was dismissed from his role at a disciplinary hearing on 11 December 2024.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

- 1. On the 17 December 2024, you were convicted at Worcester Magistrates’ Court of:**
 - a) attempting to cause/incite a girl 13 – 15 to engage in sexual activity;**
 - b) making indecent photographs / pseudo-photographs of a child;**
 - c) possessing prohibited images of a child;**
 - d) attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child.**

In the statement of agreed facts, Mr Leighfield admitted that he had been convicted as alleged.

The panel was provided with a certificate of conviction confirming that Mr Leighfield had been convicted of the offences as alleged. The panel accepted the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of both the conviction and the facts necessarily implied by the conviction. The panel noted that the certificate of conviction provided clarification that allegation a) related to “cause/incite a girl 13 – 15 to engage in sexual activity – no penetration”, and allegation b) related to “make indecent photographs/pseudo photographs of a child (categories A, B and C – one count of each)”.

The panel noted that Mr Leighfield was sentenced in the Crown Court on 23 January 2025 to a total of 30 months' imprisonment; an order was made for the deprivation and destruction of his telephone; a Sexual Harm Prevention Order was made until further Order; Mr Leighfield was ordered to sign the Sex Offenders' Register until further order and he was ordered to pay a victim surcharge.

REDACTED

The panel found this allegation proven in its entirety.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence

Having found the allegations proved, the panel went on to consider whether Mr Leighfield had been convicted, at any time, 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 first considered whether the conduct of Mr Leighfield in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Leighfield 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
 - not undermining fundamental British values, including the rule of law...
- 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 noted that the individual's actions were relevant to teaching, working with children and working in an education setting since these were serious sexual offences involving children or someone Mr Leighfield thought to be a child. Although there was no evidence that any child involved was a pupil that Mr Leighfield taught, they were of school age.

The panel noted that the behaviour involved in committing the offence could have had an impact on the safety and/or security of pupils and/or members of the public. The origin of the indecent images was unknown to the panel. If they were images of someone known to Mr Leighfield, his possession of them would be likely to cause them distress. If they were images available online, his downloading of them would support an industry that exploits children, impacting on their safety and security. The panel noted that the certificate of conviction referenced there having been 1 Category A image, that being the most serious.

The panel also took account of the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Mr Leighfield's behaviour in committing the offence could affect public confidence in the teaching profession, given the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community.

The panel noted that Mr Leighfield's behaviour ultimately led to a sentence of imprisonment, which was indicative of the seriousness of the offences committed.

The panel also considered the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice.

This was a case concerning an offence involving sexual activity; sexual communication with a child; and any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or pseudo photograph or image of a child, or permitting any such activity, including one-off incidents which the Advice states are likely to be considered relevant offences.

The panel considered these to be very serious offences. Mr Leighfield has not presented any evidence in mitigation. The panel noted from his application form to the School that Mr Leighfield had been employed as a teacher since 1994 and had, in a previous school, been promoted to assistant headteacher. Nevertheless, the panel found that the seriousness of the offending behaviour that led to the conviction was relevant to Mr Leighfield's ongoing suitability to teach. The panel considered that a finding that these convictions were for relevant offences 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 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 protection of other members of the public; the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious findings of attempting to cause/ inciting a girl 13 – 15 to engage in sexual activity; attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child and making indecent photographs / pseudo-photographs of a child and possessing prohibited images of a child.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Leighfield 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 Leighfield 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 Leighfield in the profession. Whilst no doubt has been cast upon Mr Leighfield's abilities as an educator, the panel considered that the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Leighfield in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher, and he placed his own interests over that of a child.

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 Leighfield.

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;
- 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;
- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils);
- sexual misconduct, e.g. involving actions that were sexually motivated or of a sexual nature and/or that use or exploit the trust, knowledge or influence derived from the individual's professional position;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing, or publishing any indecent photograph or image, or indecent pseudo photograph or image, of a child, or permitting such activity, including one-off incidents;
- 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);
- violation of the rights of pupils;
- actions or behaviours ...that undermine fundamental British values of ... the rule of law...; and
- a deep-seated attitude that leads to harmful behaviour.

The panel noted that it should attach appropriate weight and seriousness to online behaviours. In this case, the panel noted that Mr Leighfield was sentenced to a significant term of imprisonment reflecting the seriousness of the offences in this case.

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 Leighfield's actions were not deliberate.

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

Mr Leighfield did not present any evidence to demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. There was no evidence of Mr Leighfield's personal conduct outside of the matters

for which he was convicted. The panel accepted that there was no previous misconduct or disciplinary action on record at the School.

Mr Leighfield did not provide any references attesting to his character or ability as a teacher.

The panel noted that the certificate of conviction did not state whether Mr Leighfield pleaded guilty in the criminal proceedings. However, the referral from the School stated that Mr Leighfield had attended court and pleaded guilty to making indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children. For these TRA proceedings, Mr Leighfield admitted the allegations and admitted that he had been convicted of offences that were relevant to a person's fitness to be a teacher. He also accepted that the commission of such offences were likely to be considered permanently incompatible with teaching. He agreed for this matter to be dealt with as a professional conduct panel meeting, saving the cost and resources of a hearing being convened.

The panel was not provided with any evidence of Mr Leighfield's reflection upon the offences, or of any rehabilitation. In the absence of such evidence, and given the seriousness of the offences, the panel was concerned by the risk of repetition.

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

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

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Leighfield. The seriousness of the offences, and the sexual nature of them were significant factors in forming that opinion. Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

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

The Advice indicates that there are certain types of case where, if relevant, the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period.

These include:

- serious sexual misconduct e.g. where the act was sexually motivated and resulted in, or had the potential to result in, harm to a person or persons, particularly where the individual has used their professional position to influence or exploit a person or persons;
- any sexual misconduct involving a child;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, including one off incidents;

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

Although Mr Leighfield has made full admissions, he has not provided any explanation for his conduct, nor was there any evidence as to his understanding of the impact of his conduct. He has not provided any evidence of rehabilitation. The panel therefore had no evidence upon which it could be given any assurance that Mr Leighfield would not repeat the conduct.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended without provision for a review period.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

In this case, the panel has found all of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount a relevant conviction.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Richard Leighfield should be the subject of a prohibition order, with no provision for a review period.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Leighfield 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
 - not undermining fundamental British values, including the rule of law...
- 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 Leighfield involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance '*Keeping children safe in education*'.

The findings of misconduct are particularly serious as this was a case concerning an offence involving sexual activity; sexual communication with a child; and making and possessing illegal indecent images of a child.

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 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 Mr Leighfield, 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 offers this observation:

“There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious findings of attempting to cause/ inciting a girl 13 – 15 to engage in sexual activity; attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child and making indecent photographs / pseudo-photographs of a child and possessing prohibited images of a child.”

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 was not provided with any evidence of Mr Leighfield’s reflection upon the offences, or of any rehabilitation. In the absence of such evidence, and given the seriousness of the offences, the panel was concerned by the risk of repetition.”

Given the lack of evidence that Mr Leighfield has developed full insight and remorse, I agree with the panel’s assessment regarding the risk of repetition. 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 comments: “Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Leighfield were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.” I am particularly mindful of the nature of the findings in this case and the very negative impact that such findings are likely to 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 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 Mr Leighfield himself. The panel comments:

“Mr Leighfield did not present any evidence to demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. There was no evidence of Mr Leighfield’s personal conduct outside of the matters for which he was convicted. The panel accepted that there was no previous misconduct or disciplinary action on record at the School.

Mr Leighfield did not provide any references attesting to his character or ability as a teacher.”

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Leighfield 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 extremely serious nature of the panel’s findings, which in my judgment constitute behaviour incompatible with working as a teacher. I have also given weight to the panel’s findings that Mr Leighfield’s actions were both deliberate and committed free of extreme duress.

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

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended that no provision should be made for a review period.

In doing so it has referred to the Advice:

“The Advice indicates that there are certain types of case where, if relevant, the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period.

These include:

- serious sexual misconduct e.g. where the act was sexually motivated and resulted in, or had the potential to result in, harm to a person or persons, particularly where the individual has used their professional position to influence or exploit a person or persons;
- any sexual misconduct involving a child;
- any activity involving viewing, taking, making, possessing, distributing or publishing any indecent photograph or image or indecent pseudo photograph or image of a child, including one off incidents;

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

period before a review is considered appropriate. None of the listed characteristics were engaged by the panel's findings."

I have considered the panel's concluding comments:

"Although Mr Leighfield has made full admissions, he has not provided any explanation for his conduct, nor was there any evidence as to his understanding of the impact of his conduct. He has not provided any evidence of rehabilitation. The panel therefore had no evidence upon which it could be given any assurance that Mr Leighfield would not repeat the conduct.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would not be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended without provision for a review period."

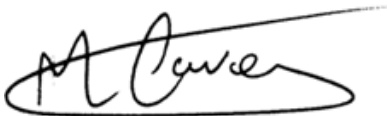
I have considered whether not allowing a review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that allowing a review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the extremely serious nature of the misconduct found, the need to maintain public confidence in the profession and the risk of repetition.

I agree with the panel therefore that allowing for no review period is necessary to maintain public confidence and is proportionate and in the public interest.

This means that Mr Richard Leighfield is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. Furthermore, in view of the seriousness of the allegations found proved against him, I have decided that Mr Leighfield shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of his eligibility to teach.

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

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



Decision maker: Marc Cavey

Date: 11 May 2026

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