



Mr Sammy Laurent: Professional conduct panel hearing outcome

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

June 2026

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

Teacher: Mr Sammy Laurent
Teacher ref number: 4048984
Teacher date of birth: 22 February 1997
TRA reference: 22377
Date of determination: 12 June 2026
Former employer: King Edward's School, Witley, Godalming

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ('the panel') of the Teaching Regulation Agency ('the TRA') convened on 9 to 12 June 2026 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Sammy Laurent.

The panel members were Mrs Emma Hendry (lay panellist – in the chair), Mr John Martin (former teacher panellist) and Mr Ian Hylan (teacher panellist).

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

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Mark Millin of Kingsley Napley solicitors.

Mr Laurent 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 5 February 2026.

It was alleged that Mr Laurent was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, in that whilst working as a Teacher of and / or as an Assistant Housemaster, at the King Edward's School ("the School") he:

1. In respect of Pupil A, he did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries and/or adequately safeguard Pupil A in that he:
 - a. Met with Pupil A in a café, and/or stroked her head and/or shoulders on or around 22 May 2023;
 - b. Engaged in email communications with Pupil A late at night and/or during the weekend and/or on public holidays between September 2021 and January 2022;
 - c. Engaged in email communications with Pupil A in which the frequency, timing and/or tone were inappropriate, between on or around September 2021 to February 2022;
 - d. Engaged in an online zoom meeting late at night whilst off sick with Pupil A in around February 2022;
 - e. Discussed personal matters during emails exchanged between around September and November 2021;
 - f. Provided personal relationship advice to Pupil A on or around 1 December 2021;
 - g. Agreed not to inform Pupil A's mother and/or anyone else that Pupil A was [REDACTED] on or around 12 October 2021 and/or 14 November 2021;
 - h. Invited Pupil A to inform him if she needed help with anything which did not comprise schoolwork on or around 17 December 2021;
 - i. Met with Pupil A in around December 2022 whilst off sick;
 - j. Did not keep formal records about his conversations with Pupil A between around September and January 2022;
 - k. Did not report his concerns about Pupil A to an appropriate school designated safeguarding lead;

- l. Was in frequent and/or close proximity to Pupil A on a school trip on or around 23 November 2022;
 - m. Was in frequent and/or close proximity to Pupil A during a party in [REDACTED] on or around 9 December 2022;
 - n. Met with Pupil A on School grounds or around 23 November 2021, which was unrelated to School matters;
 - o. Allowed Pupil A to direct lesson content and/or direct which pupils would be included in certain sports teams, between on or around September 2021 to June 2023.
2. On or around 4 June 2023, he stayed overnight at the School without authorisation and/or despite receiving a management instruction on or around 24 May 2023 to stay away from the School.

In Mr Laurent's written response to allegations dated 1 July 2024, he admitted allegation 1(c), and provided a partial admission to allegation 1(o), insofar as he accepted that pupils were allowed to some extent to direct lesson content for their GCSE class, as set out. Mr Laurent denied allegations 1(a), 1(l), 1(m) and 1(n), as set out in his written response dated 1 July 2024. Mr Laurent provided no admission to allegations 1(b), 1(d), 1(e), 1(f), 1(g), 1(h), 1(i), 1(j), 1(k) and 2 in his written response dated 1 July 2024.

Mr Laurent provided no admission in relation to whether his conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology and list of key people – pages 4 to 6

Section 2: Notice of hearing – pages 7 to 13

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 14 to 37

Section 4: TRA documents – pages 38 to 354

Section 5: Teacher's documents – pages 355 to 368

Exhibit 24 – Emails between Pupil A and Teacher from Pupil totalling 1541 pages.

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').

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]

Witness E – [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.

Mr Laurent commenced employment as a teacher at the School on 1 September 2020. He was also an assistant housemaster at the School.

On 25 March 2022, Mr Laurent attended a meeting at the School to discuss concerns regarding his email communications with Pupil A.

On 14 December 2022, further concerns were raised regarding Mr Laurent's relationship with Pupil A by matrons who had seen them alone together in a boarding house.

On 4 March 2023, a teacher at the School relayed concerns expressed by three female pupils about Mr Laurent.

On 6 March 2023, a LADO referral was made.

On 22 May 2023, a member of staff at the School reported further safeguarding concerns regarding the nature of Mr Laurent's contact and communication with Pupil A in the School's café.

A subsequent LADO referral was made on 24 May 2023, and the School appointed an external consultant to investigate allegations regarding Mr Laurent.

It was brought to the School's attention on 5 June 2023 that Mr Laurent stayed overnight at the School on 4 June 2023.

On 14 June 2023, a further member of staff reported concerns about Mr Laurent's relationship with Pupil A.

A referral was made to the TRA on 3 August 2023.

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. In respect of Pupil A, you did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries and/or adequately safeguard Pupil A in that you:

a. Met with Pupil A in a café, and/or stroked her head and/or shoulders on or around 22 May 2023;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent denied this allegation as set out in his written response to the allegations dated 1 July 2024. Mr Laurent denied stroking Pupil A's head or shoulders. Mr Laurent stated that a group of pupils had been in a busy café and some of them were very upset that they had not been successful in their application for head girl or head boy. The panel noted that Mr Laurent stated that another member of staff had given a different pupil a hug but that he did not stroke Pupil A at any stage.

The panel considered a summary of video activity from the School's café on 22 May 2023 which was an appendix to the School's investigation report dated 19 June 2023. The panel noted that the summary described Pupil A's location in the video, and that she was sat on a small square table by the window, with the window to her right, a female pupil to her left, another female pupil opposite her and an empty seat to her right.

The panel noted that the summary described Mr Laurent standing up at the side of Pupil A and he "*strokes the right side of her hair with his right hand and pats her right shoulder with his right hand*". It further described Mr Laurent returning to the table, standing immediately behind Pupil A, and placing his left hand across her left shoulder, looking at Pupil A, before moving his hand from her shoulder to the top of the chair. The summary notes that Pupil A can be seen on occasion looking up at him.

The panel reviewed CCTV footage from the School's café on 22 May 2023 and identified three female pupils sitting at a table. The panel noted Mr Laurent approached the table, stroked Pupil A's hair and placed his right hand on her shoulder. He walked away from the table towards the counter for a short period of time and then returned to Pupil A's table, placing both of his hands on both of her shoulders, leaning over her and causing her to look up at him. The panel considered its interpretation of the video was broadly consistent with the summary of video activity as appended to the School's investigation report.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness A. The panel was conscious that Witness A's evidence was hearsay and could only be given limited weight, but nevertheless accepted her oral evidence that she had spent two and a half hours reviewing the CCTV footage when carrying out the School's investigation. Witness A confirmed in her oral evidence that she had drafted the summary of video evidence.

The panel considered a contemporaneous handwritten safeguarding concern reported by Witness C who was present in the café on 22 May 2023. The panel noted that Witness C stated that Mr Laurent knelt down beside Pupil A's chair and had his hand on her body which she felt was inappropriate. The panel also noted that Witness C noticed Mr Laurent standing behind Pupil A's seat rubbing his arms on her arms which she noted looked "*far too intimate*".

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness C, who confirmed she was in close proximity to Mr Laurent and Pupil A and stated, "*Pupil A was visibly upset, and Sammy Laurent was rubbing her back, arms and shoulders. It seemed very inappropriate and intimate*". The panel considered Witness C's oral evidence was consistent with her contemporaneous handwritten record of her observations.

The panel identified Witness C in the CCTV footage that it viewed, noting that she was present at the café at the time, and was seen consoling Pupil Z who was sat at the same table as Pupil A, including giving Pupil Z a hug.

The panel was confident from its review of the available CCTV footage that Mr Laurent met with Pupil A in the School's café, and stroked her hair and shoulders on or around 22 May 2023. The panel considered Mr Laurent's contact with Pupil A on this occasion amounted to a failure on his part to maintain appropriate professional boundaries, causing an experienced teacher colleague to feel uncomfortable and report her concerns to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead ('DSL').

The panel noted at times that limited physical contact may be appropriate between a teacher and a pupil, e.g. for consolation. However, the panel considered stroking a pupil's hair is an innately intimate gesture and would never be considered appropriate from a safeguarding perspective. The panel considered Mr Laurent's actions went beyond reassurance and became an intimate action, in breach of his safeguarding duties

and responsibilities. The panel considered Mr Laurent's actions conveyed inappropriate messages about what contact is appropriate between a teacher and a pupil, not only to Pupil A but to other pupils and colleagues who witnessed his actions in the café.

Having found that Mr Laurent's conduct as found proven did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries or adequately safeguard Pupil A, the panel found allegation 1(a) proved.

b. Engaged in email communications with Pupil A late at night and/or during the weekend and/or on public holidays between September 2021 and January 2022;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. However, the panel did note his written representations stated, "*I accept that the timings of these emails were inappropriate*" and "*I accept that sometimes they were late at night*".

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including multiple email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A (the School's investigation report dated 19 June 2023 reported 59 separate email chains during the period September 2021 to January 2022). In particular, the panel noted email exchanges on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day in 2021. The panel identified evidence of email exchanges during weekends with particular examples on Saturday, 6 November 2021 and Sunday, 7 November 2021 including messages sent by Mr Laurent to Pupil A as late as 20.19. The panel found further examples of email exchanges late at night including messages sent by Mr Laurent to Pupil A on 8 November 2021 as late as 22.58.

The panel considered the oral evidence of Witness C who was asked if it would be the School's normal practice for teachers to email pupils at night. Witness C confirmed that although it was not a written policy, she "*personally wouldn't email a student late at night*" despite working unsociable hours in the boarding community.

Based upon the available evidence, the panel concluded that Mr Laurent did engage in email communications with Pupil A late at night, during the weekend and on public holidays between September 2021 and January 2022.

The panel considered Mr Laurent's conduct as found proven did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries, especially considering Pupil A was a day pupil and some of the email exchanges would have therefore had to have been while Pupil A was at home. The panel further considered that Mr Laurent's messages, as an adult, late at night to a pupil discussing concerns and encouraging a casual friendship relationship, was a safeguarding issue and he therefore failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(b) proved.

c. Engaged in email communications with Pupil A in which the frequency, timing and/or tone were inappropriate, between on or around September 2021 to February 2022;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent admitted this allegation as set out in his written response to the allegations dated 1 July 2024. The panel's finding at allegation 1(b) above confirmed that the timing of Mr Laurent's email communications with Pupil A between September 2021 and February 2022 was inappropriate. The panel went on to consider whether the frequency and tone of the email communications was also inappropriate.

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. In particular, an email from Mr Laurent to Pupil A on 20 December 2021 stated, "*You'll be absolutely fine I promise you! You need to have more confidence in yourself, you are so much better than you think you are in every way*". The panel also noted an exchange on 4 November 2021 when Mr Laurent and Pupil A were discussing personal relationships. When Pupil A stated, "*I know kinda peak but it's all good I already had one of the other guys from there sci on snap and he snapped me and he's kinda leng*" and Mr Laurent replied, "*Hahahahahaha, wow*".

The panel noted that there were several chains of emails which were initiated after 8pm and at weekends, and that the emails were regular and frequent. For example, on 8 November 2021, Mr Laurent sent 15 messages to Pupil A between 21.42 and 22.58 at night.

The panel considered the content of the emails, which included Pupil A swearing, addressing Mr Laurent by his first name, Mr Laurent providing personal relationship advice, and Pupil A offering gossip, "*tea to spill*", to Mr Laurent.

The panel considered the investigating officer's comments that Mr Laurent discussed personal matters in an overly friendly manner with Pupil A.

The panel considered a summary of concerns document produced by the School on 25 May 2023. The panel considered Witness B's notes in the document stating that the email communications "*seem to portray a relationship that has become too familiar, even intimate*".

The panel considered the written representations of Mr Laurent, who stated that he had been a very young and inexperienced teacher who immediately changed his behaviour once it had been brought to his attention. Mr Laurent accepted that the style of the emails was unnecessarily informal and he explained how he had his emails on his phone so he would receive an instant notification and then send a quick reply.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B who confirmed that Mr Laurent and Pupil A had been frequently emailing each other between September 2021 and February 2022. Witness B confirmed in his oral evidence that his personal view was that Mr Laurent has been treating the School's email account as a substitute for WhatsApp and he was responding to Pupil A's emails as if they were WhatsApp messages because he had been warned to only communicate with pupils through School channels.

The panel found there was sufficient evidence that Mr Laurent had engaged in email communications with Pupil A in which the frequency, timing and tone was inappropriate, between September 2021 and February 2022. For the same reasons as set out at allegation 1(b), the panel found Mr Laurent's conduct as found proven did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries and he failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A. The panel therefore found allegation 1(c) proved.

d. Engaged in an online zoom meeting late at night whilst off sick with Pupil A in around February 2022;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. The panel noted Mr Laurent's written representations which stated, "*I accept that a Zoom call did occur, I do not accept that it was "late at night", I believe that it was in the early evening*".

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. The panel noted an email exchange on 31 January 2022 where Mr Laurent confirmed that he [REDACTED]. In a subsequent email chain dated 2 February 2022, in which Pupil A notes Mr Laurent was not at School, he responded "*You want to zoom at all*" at 19.01, adding "*Let me know if you'd like to, I'm free all evening*" at 19.37. Mr Laurent then sent a Zoom link to Pupil A at 19.47. It is clear from the email chain that the Zoom meeting took place as Mr Laurent sent Pupil A an email at 20.34 stating, "*That was a nice chat! Hope you're ok. Don't put too much pressure on yourself, you'll get there, just need to give it time and work hard on lessons and clinics! I have full faith in you!*".

The panel did not accept Mr Laurent's suggestion that the Zoom meeting was not late at night. The email evidence confirmed the meeting took place between 19.47 and 20.34 which the panel considered was not "*early evening*" as suggested by Mr Laurent. Mr Laurent's email offering a Zoom meeting also stated, "*I'm free all evening*", suggesting that he was not concerned about limiting the meeting to early evening in any event.

The panel considered the oral evidence of Witness C who was asked if it would be the School's normal practice for teachers to arrange Zoom meetings with pupils at this time and she confirmed it was not.

Based on the available evidence, the panel was satisfied that Mr Laurent engaged in an online Zoom meeting late at night whilst off sick with Pupil A on 2 February 2022.

The panel considered Mr Laurent's conduct as found proven did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Pupil A would have joined the Zoom meeting from her home environment at a time when she would not have been under the supervision of any School staff and while Mr Laurent was absent from School on sickness absence. The panel further considered Mr Laurent failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A and his conduct was in breach of safer working practices. The panel noted that there was no evidence of any note of the content of the discussion and no document regarding this call on the School's systems.

The panel found allegation 1(d) proved.

e. Discussed personal matters during emails exchanged between around September and November 2021;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. In Mr Laurent's written submissions, he states, *"I accept that I might have discussed personal matters via email between September and November 2021, this was during the point where pupil A was struggling at home, I believe that at the time I was trying to do my best for the pupil, it was never anything seriously inappropriate, but I accept that emails should purely be used for school business"*.

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. In particular, the panel noted an email exchange dated 24 November 2024 discussing a boy in Pupil A's year, [REDACTED] and Mr Laurent replied, *"Hahaha that's not good at all" Who are you going with?"* encouraging Pupil A to continue discussing personal matters with him.

The panel noted Mr Laurent's frequent emails asking after Pupil A's wellbeing and inviting her to talk to him if she was upset, *"Have a good day today and I'll see if I can come find you later on when I'm back!"* The panel further noted Pupil A's frequent emails confiding in Mr Laurent and apparently relying on him for comfort, *"I've started crying again I don't know why and you're not even here so I can't talk to you about it"*, sent late at night.

The panel considered there was sufficient evidence to find that Mr Laurent discussed personal matters during emails exchanged with Pupil A between September and November 2021. Notwithstanding any informal mentoring arrangement that may have been in place at the material time, the panel considered the discussion of such matters to be evidence of Mr Laurent not maintaining appropriate professional boundaries. His actions blurred the boundaries as he communicated with Pupil A as a peer or a friend

rather than a teacher and his failure to report matters where Pupil A was clearly upset and emotionally vulnerable meant that he failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(e) proved.

f. Provided personal relationship advice to Pupil A on or around 1 December 2021;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. In his written submissions, Mr Laurent stated, *"I accept that what I said could be interpreted as being personal relationship advice, at the time, Pupil A was [REDACTED] and it was affecting her school life, there was also a relationship [REDACTED] that was not having a positive impact on the situation both at home and in school"*.

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. The panel noted that on 1 December 2021, Pupil A sent an email to Mr Laurent regarding a boy [REDACTED]. Mr Laurent replied, seeking further information and asking Pupil A about her feelings. The panel noted that Mr Laurent then continued the conversation late at night after 10pm, offering relationship advice and telling Pupil A *"just try not to even think about him, and know that's hard but it will really help! Don't message him...I'm serious, I mean every word"* and *"Of course he's going to say that! Just don't even give him the time of day, the fact that he's still hurting you and affecting you now just shows that! You deserve and could do 1000x better"*.

The panel noted that Pupil A later replied stating *"thank you for all the advice you've given me about it it has been extremely helpful"*.

The panel considered there was sufficient evidence to find Mr Laurent had provided personal relationship advice to Pupil A on or around 1 December 2021. For the same reasons as set out at allegation 1(e), the panel found Mr Laurent's conduct as found proven did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries and that he failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A. The panel therefore found allegation 1(f) proved.

g. Agreed not to inform Pupil A's mother and/or anyone else that Pupil A was [REDACTED] on or around 12 October 2021 and/or 14 November 2021;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing.

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. The panel noted that on 12 October 2021, Pupil A emailed Mr Laurent from home saying, *"I've stopped crying but I still feel shitty."* The panel noted that Mr Laurent then asked if Pupil A's mother knew that Pupil A was struggling. When Pupil A said that she didn't, and asked Mr Laurent,

“please don’t say anything to her though”, the panel noted that Mr Laurent replied, *“no I won’t, I just want you to be happy”*. In a further email chain discussing Pupil A’s emotions dated 14 November 2021, the panel noted that Pupil A again asked Mr Laurent *“don’t tell anyoneee”*, and Mr Laurent replied stating that he would not.

The panel considered there was sufficient evidence to find Mr Laurent had agreed not to inform Pupil A’s mother or anyone else that Pupil A [REDACTED] on or around 12 October 2021 and 14 November 2021.

[REDACTED]. The panel considered it would have been appropriate for Mr Laurent to make a safeguarding disclosure in these circumstances and pass the information on to the School for record keeping and to take appropriate action.

The panel found Mr Laurent’s conduct as found proven did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries and that he failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A. The panel therefore found allegation 1(g) proved.

i. Met with Pupil A in around December 2022 whilst off sick;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. The panel considered Mr Laurent’s written submissions which confirmed, *“I accept that I did meet with a pupil while I as off sick. Pupil A emailed me asking if I she could speak with me, I told her that I was not in school and could it wait until I was back in school, she said that it was important”*.

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. The panel noted an email exchange on the evening of 13 December 2022 where Pupil A asked to speak with Mr Laurent if he was going to be in School the next day. Mr Laurent replied, *“Of course you can!”* and explained he may not be teaching full lessons depending on how he is feeling. On the morning of 14 December 2022, Mr Laurent emailed Pupil A to explain he was not in School that day stating, *“but if you want to chat, I can sit down in Wakefield with you Period 3 if you want!”*. Pupil A replied to confirm that she had a PE lesson during Period 3 and Mr Laurent replied, *“Ok, well p4 you should have me, so if you want to chat then let me know and come over”* to Wakefield House.

The panel noted that there was no evidence to support Mr Laurent’s submission that he asked Pupil A if their discussion could wait until he was back in School, nor was there any evidence to support his suggestion that Pupil A said it was important. It appeared from the email chain to be Mr Laurent that initiated the conversation on 14 December 2022 and suggested they meet despite him being on a period of sickness absence.

The panel considered an undated note typed up by Witness B in which he expressed a number of concerns about the meeting between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. In particular, the

fact that Mr Laurent had been alone with a pupil, which could leave him vulnerable to allegations of wrongdoing. The panel noted that Witness B was especially concerned given he had already spoken to Mr Laurent about his email communication with Pupil A.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B which confirmed he met with Mr Laurent to discuss these concerns on 16 December 2022 and the undated typed note which was a contemporaneous record of this discussion. Witness B described that his feeling at the time of the meeting was "*frustration*".

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness D, who witnessed the meeting between Mr Laurent and Pupil A on 14 December 2022. Witness D's statement confirmed she was walking through Wakefield House with another matron, [REDACTED], when she noticed Mr Laurent sitting on a sofa and Pupil A sitting opposite to him on another sofa. Witness D recalled thinking it was strange to see Mr Laurent as she knew that he was meant to be sick that day. Witness D confirmed it was a shared common area for both boys and girls but she was concerned as at this time there was nobody else present in the house. Witness D considered it to be a safeguarding concern and reported the incident to Witness B.

Witness D confirmed in her oral evidence that she asked Pupil A what she was doing and she replied, "*just talking*" and looked at Mr Laurent and said, "*you shouldn't be here*" to which Mr Laurent replied, "*we're just talking*". Witness D explained she was not aware of any informal mentoring arrangement, but "*whether or not he was her mentor he should have said 'I am sick' or at least gone somewhere public like the café. I do not take safeguarding lightly and I wouldn't ever talk to a child with a door closed or without anyone else being around*".

The panel considered a summary of concerns document produced by the School on 25 May 2023 which noted that, at the time Mr Laurent was off sick and that later that day, he had been too ill to do his evening house duty.

When considering all of the available evidence, the panel was satisfied that Mr Laurent met with Pupil A on 14 December 2022 whilst he was off sick. The panel accepted that although the venue for the meeting was an open, shared common room, Mr Laurent would have known that it would be sparsely populated as the meeting took place during normal lesson time. The panel considered it was inappropriate for Mr Laurent to meet with Pupil A in such circumstances and accepted Witness D's evidence that he should not have arranged to meet her without anyone else being around.

The panel considered Mr Laurent's conduct as found proved did not maintain appropriate professional boundaries and that he failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A in holding a meeting with her alone. The panel therefore found allegation 1(i) proved.

j. Did not keep formal records about your conversations with Pupil A between around September and January 2022;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. The panel considered Mr Laurent's written submissions which confirmed, "*I accept that I did not keep formal records of my conversations with Pupil A. I clearly should have been keeping clear detailed records of my conversations*".

The panel considered the appendices to the School's investigation report which set out Child Protection Online Monitoring System ('CPOMS') entries from staff at the School regarding Pupil A. The panel noted that, after the first entry from Mr Laurent on 3 October 2021, there was no further evidence of any entries that he had submitted, despite evidence of frequent email correspondence with Pupil A, a Zoom meeting on 2 February 2022 and a face to face meeting with her on 14 December 2022 which Mr Laurent recalled was to discuss something important. The panel noted that the other entries on the CPOMS records within the bundle included other staff members' concerns regarding Mr Laurent's close relationship with Pupil A.

The panel considered the notes of an interview with Mr Laurent carried out as part of the School's investigation on 26 May 2023. The panel noted that Mr Laurent responded to questions in the interview regarding documenting concerns on CPOMS saying, "*yes, they must be on there.*" When this concern was put to Mr Laurent in a subsequent investigation meeting on 5 June 2023, the notes recorded Witness A asking, "*Is there a reason why you aren't putting things on CPOMS, Sammy?*" and Mr Laurent's response was recorded as "*Shook head and said I don't know*".

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B, who explained during that time Mr Laurent was "*given clear instructions about how to conduct informal meetings, to create CPOMS notes, never leave himself vulnerable in meetings by being one to one with a pupil and other basic tenets*". He further stated there was a "*clear direction to Mr Laurent to...record the substance and content of meetings*".

The panel found there was no evidence that Mr Laurent kept formal records about his conversations with Pupil A between around September 2021 and January 2022, save for one CPOMS entry on 3 October 2021 which confirmed to the panel that Mr Laurent knew how to access and record concerns on the CPOMS system.

The panel found Mr Laurent's failure to keep formal records was a serious safeguarding concern and that he had therefore failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A. The panel therefore found allegation 1(j) proved.

k. Did not report your concerns about Pupil A to an appropriate school designated safeguarding lead;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. The panel considered Mr Laurent's written submissions which stated, "*I accept that I did not report my concerns about pupil A to a DSL at school*". Mr Laurent further accepted, "*In future I would seek advice from my line manager should a pupil approach me with such welfare or safeguarding issues. I would report to the DSL to ensure that there is record of the concerns raised*".

The panel's consideration of the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle, including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A, provides evidence of Pupil A disclosing information about her [REDACTED] which should have warranted a report to the School's DSL.

The panel considered the notes of an interview with Mr Laurent carried out as part of the School's investigation on 5 June 2023. The panel noted that Mr Laurent's responses to questions in the interview regarding documenting and reporting concerns accepted that he had not done so. Witness A is recorded as saying the only CPOMS entry that Mr Laurent did submit on 3 October 2021 "*tells them to do nothing but to put Pupil A to you. Now nobody else in the school knows what is happening and only you know what's happening. And your memory of what is happening is not very good because we've just been through some emails and you can't tell me what they mean*".

Based on the available evidence, the panel found that Mr Laurent did not report his concerns about Pupil A to an appropriate School DSL. As with allegation 1(j), the panel found Mr Laurent's failure to report concerns about Pupil A to the School's DSL was a serious safeguarding concern and he had therefore failed to adequately safeguard Pupil A. The panel therefore found allegation 1(k) proved.

2. On or around 4 June 2023, you stayed overnight at the School without authorisation and/or despite receiving a management instruction on or around 24 May 2023 to stay away from the School.

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. In his written submissions, Mr Laurent stated, "*I strongly disagree with this allegation...I did not receive any form of instruction in writing, and when I requested the notes from the meeting, the points were very contradictory*".

The panel considered the contemporaneous notes of a meeting with Mr Laurent, Witness B and the School's head of HR held on 24 May 2023. The panel reviewed the notes which included Witness B saying to Mr Laurent, "*For your own welfare, I would recommend you leave the School site. We will also require you to be off the School site*".

In considering whether a management instruction had been provided to Mr Laurent to stay away from the School, the panel considered the notes of an interview with him which was carried out as part of the School's investigation on 26 May 2023. The panel noted

that Mr Laurent stated that, during his suspension, *“they kind of advised me to get offsite”*.

In a later investigation meeting on 5 June 2023, Mr Laurent was asked if he stayed at the School on 4 June 2023 and he replied, *“Yes. Played hockey. There is a big competition in Derby yesterday and got back here at 2:30 in the morning. I was not sure as I had not heard anything if I needed to be here today. So I thought I'll just stay here in case I wake up to an e-mail saying I did to save driving home and then come back”*.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B, who stated that in their meeting on 5 June 2023, Mr Laurent had informed him that he had spent a night at the School in his flat adjoining the boarding house. Witness B stated that a letter was subsequently sent to Mr Laurent to allege that he had failed to comply with reasonable management requests. Witness B was asked in his oral evidence whether the notes of the meeting on 24 May 2023 were an accurate recollection of what was said by him verbally at the meeting. Witness B confirmed it was *“Certainly what I said to him”* and that Mr Laurent was specifically instructed that the School did not expect him to carry out any professional duties at all.

Based on the available evidence, the panel was satisfied that Mr Laurent had received a management instruction on 24 May 2023 to stay away from the School and he acted upon this instruction by staying with his parents. There was no evidence to suggest Mr Laurent had authorisation to stay at the School on 4 June 2023, but he had done so nevertheless.

The panel therefore found allegation 2 proved.

The panel found the following particulars of the allegations against you not proved, for these reasons:

h. Invited Pupil A to inform you if she needed help with anything which did not comprise schoolwork on or around 17 December 2021;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent provided no formal response to this allegation before the hearing. In his written submissions, Mr Laurent stated, *“I accept that I said to Pupil A that they could contact me if they needed me. I did this due to two reasons. At the school where I did my teacher training, one of the teachers, before every holiday would say to the pupils that they could contact them via email if they needed anything, and the housemasters also said something similar to this”*.

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. The panel noted that on 17 December 2021, which was in the School holidays, Mr Laurent sent Pupil A an email regarding the exam specification and exam paper he would be setting. The panel

noted that Mr Laurent then referenced Pupil A's [REDACTED] and stated, "*let me know if you need anything else that isn't to do with schoolwork as well.*"

The panel considered there was sufficient evidence to find that Mr Laurent had invited Pupil A to inform him if she needed help with anything which did not comprise schoolwork on or around 17 December 2021. However, the panel was of the view that Mr Laurent's conduct did not amount to a failure to maintain appropriate professional boundaries or to a failure to adequately safeguard Pupil A. The panel considered that offering support to pupils outside of schoolwork should not automatically amount to a breach of appropriate professional boundaries and there are circumstances where this may be appropriate. As such, the panel did not find allegation 1(h) proved.

I. Were in frequent and/or close proximity to Pupil A on a school trip on or around 23 November 2022;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent denied this allegation as set out in his written response to the allegations dated 1 July 2024.

The panel considered a typed safeguarding concern reported by Witness E on 14 June 2023 regarding [REDACTED]. The panel noted Witness E's concern that Mr Laurent sat with Pupil A on the train journey both to and from [REDACTED] and sat with Pupil A for the majority of the conference. The panel also noted that Witness E had noticed that Mr Laurent and Pupil A walked together for approximately 25 minutes, "*significantly removed from the rest of the group*".

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness E, who stated he recalled seeing Mr Laurent sitting with Pupil A on the train to [REDACTED]. They also walked alongside each other to and from the conference (separate from the group for parts of the journey), they sat together at the conference and sat next to each other on the train journey back. Witness E noted that Mr Laurent did speak with other pupils, but he primarily spoke with Pupil A. Witness E noted, "*At the time, I had found it odd that Sammy Laurent was not aware of the optics of being seen with Pupil A throughout the day*". Witness E's oral evidence was broadly consistent with his written statements, but he accepted Mr Laurent's account when it was put to him that Mr Laurent had led the group walking to the conference venue in [REDACTED] with a group of pupils, stating that this "*sounds right*".

The panel noted that Witness E's account was disputed by Mr Laurent. The panel took account of the fact that Witness E's report was not contemporaneous and had been written over six months after the trip. The panel was conscious that there was no additional evidence to support this allegation such as eyewitness accounts from others that were present on the trip.

Although the panel considered there was evidence to support the fact that Mr Laurent was on a School trip with Pupil A [REDACTED], there was not sufficient evidence, on the balance of probabilities, to find that he was in frequent and/or close proximity to Pupil A.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(I) not proved.

m. Were in frequent and/or close proximity to Pupil A during a party in [REDACTED] on or around 9 December 2022;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent denied this allegation as set out in his written response to the allegations dated 1 July 2024.

The panel considered the typed safeguarding concern reported by Witness E on 14 June 2023 regarding a [REDACTED]. Witness E reported that Mr Laurent and Pupil A spent a large proportion of their time together in the common room where there was music, dancing and the lights were low.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness E, who stated he recalled noticing that Mr Laurent and Pupil A were spending time together. Witness E stated that they spent the majority of the event together and he saw them in the room where they had a DJ and disco lights. He further recollected coming and going from the room several times and seeing them talking together.

In his oral evidence, Witness E confirmed that his role at the party as Assistant Housemaster was to be “*across all spaces*” and he “*went through all the spaces and kept an eye and chatted to people*”.

The panel considered written submissions of Mr Laurent, who, in his response denied this allegation and stated that he had spent a long period of time at the party with another member of staff positioned in the stairwell so that pupils could not go upstairs. He stated that he had then positioned himself in the main room of the house where the disco was happening as there was no member of staff there. Mr Laurent stated that pupils would come and speak with him, and he had a conversation with Pupil A but that she spent most of her time with her friends.

As with allegation 1(I) above, the panel took account of the fact that Witness E’s report dated 14 June 2023 was not contemporaneous and had been written by Witness E over six months after the party had taken place. The panel noted that Witness E’s account was disputed by Mr Laurent. The panel was conscious that there was no additional evidence to support this allegation such as eyewitness accounts from others that were present at the party.

Although the panel considered that there was evidence to support the fact that Mr Laurent and Pupil A were present at the party on 9 December 2022, there was not

sufficient evidence, on the balance of probabilities, to find that he was in frequent and/or close proximity to Pupil A.

The panel found allegation 1(m) not proved.

n. Met with Pupil A on School grounds or around 23 November 2021, which was unrelated to School matters;

The panel noted that Mr Laurent denied this allegation as set out in his written response to the allegations dated 1 July 2024, stating, *"I do not accept this allegation, I never met with Pupil A outside of school hours"*.

The panel considered the appendices to the School's investigation report dated 19 June 2023 which set out chains of emails between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. The panel noted that on 23 November 2021, a chain of emails appeared to indicate that Mr Laurent informed Pupil A that he was outside in the School grounds if she wished to speak to him.

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. The panel noted that there was a disparity in the evidence that it had been provided with relating to email exchanges on 23 November 2021. The School's investigation report referred to an email from Mr Laurent to Pupil A at 20.38 stating *"Currently out the back of tutor and Edward"* to support an assertion that they may have met. However, this email was not included in the evidence provided to the panel and the panel could only give this hearsay evidence limited weight.

The panel noted that there was an email from Pupil A to Mr Laurent at 22.52 where she stated, *"Thank you for everything this evening all your words of wisdom were very helpful"*, but there was no evidence to suggest that they had met in person and the panel considered that they could have corresponded by a different means.

The panel considered notes from an investigation meeting with Mr Laurent on 5 June 2023 when he was asked, *"Why would you invite the child to come out and meet you at the back at twenty to nine at night in November when it's dark?"* and he responded, *"I wasn't inviting her. I was just saying that"*.

Based on the available evidence, the panel considered that there was not sufficient evidence to make a finding, on the balance of probabilities, that Mr Laurent had met with Pupil A on School grounds on or around 23 November 2021.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(n) not proved.

o. Allowed Pupil A to direct lesson content and/or direct which pupils would be included in certain sports teams, between on or around September 2021 to June 2023.

The panel noted that Mr Laurent partially admitted this allegation, insofar as he stated that he would ask different pupils on different days which of their sports they needed footage for in their GCSE PE class, as set out in his written response to the allegations dated 1 July 2024.

The panel considered the contemporaneous documentary evidence available in the bundle including the email records between Mr Laurent and Pupil A. The panel noted there was evidence of emails which showed Mr Laurent asking for Pupil A's input or responding to Pupil A's queries regarding which sport the class would do in PE the next day. The panel considered that this was within the realms of a normal teacher/pupil discussion, especially at GCSE level, and did not amount to Mr Laurent allowing Pupil A to direct lesson content, as alleged.

The panel also noted a chain of emails which appeared to show Mr Laurent discussing an invite for another pupil to play cricket, which was queried by Pupil A on 16 January 2022. However, the panel considered that there was no evidence available to support a finding that Mr Laurent had allowed Pupil A to direct which pupils would be included in certain sports teams.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(o) not proved.

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

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

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

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

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Laurent 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 Laurent, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Keeping Children Safe In Education, 2021 and 2022 ("KCSIE"). In particular, Part One, point 2: *"Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child"*.

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

The Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with such an offence exist, a panel is likely to conclude that an individual's conduct would amount to unacceptable professional conduct. The panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

In respect of Mr Laurent's conduct as found proven at allegation 1, the panel considered it all involved a failure to maintain appropriate professional boundaries and/or to adequately safeguard Pupil A. In addition, in respect of Mr Laurent's conduct at allegation 2, the panel found that he failed to follow a management instruction which posed a safeguarding risk. The panel considered this failure indicated a disregard for the School's policy and practice and showed a lack of understanding or dismissiveness regarding the School's investigation and the serious concerns that had been raised about him.

For these reasons, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Laurent as found proven at allegations 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d), 1(e), 1(f), 1(g), 1(i), 1(j), 1(k) and allegation 2 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 Laurent was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Mr Laurent's actions amounted to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, the panel took into account the way the teaching profession is

viewed by others. It considered the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The panel also took account of the uniquely influential role that teachers can hold in pupils' lives and the fact that pupils must be able to view teachers as role models in the way that they behave.

In considering the issue of disrepute, the panel also considered whether Mr Laurent's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences in the list that begins on page 12 of the Advice.

As set out above in the panel's findings as to whether Mr Laurent was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

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

The panel considered that Mr Laurent's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Laurent's actions as found proven at allegation 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 1(d), 1(e), 1(f), 1(g), 1(i), 1(j), 1(k) and allegation 2 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.

The panel found there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious findings against Mr Laurent,

which involved repeated failures to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Pupil A, failing to take adequate steps to safeguard Pupil A including not keeping formal records and not reporting concerns to the School's DSL and a failure to comply with a management instruction to stay away from the School whilst an investigation was being undertaken.

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

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Witness B, who stated that Pupil A had requested for a member of the Physical Education department to counsel her and that Mr Laurent undertook some of this additional support. Witness B clarified in his oral evidence that, although it was an informal arrangement, [REDACTED]. Regardless, the panel did not find that any such informal arrangement provided any mitigation or justification for Mr Laurent's unacceptable professional conduct involving Pupil A.

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 Laurent 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 Laurent in the profession. The panel had no evidence before it to suggest that Mr Laurent had exceptional ability as an educator, and therefore the panel considered that the public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Laurent in the profession, since his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.

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

The panel noted that a teacher's behaviour that seeks to exploit their position of trust should be viewed very seriously in terms of its potential influence on pupils and be seen as a possible threat to the public interest.

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 Laurent.

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;
- 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);
- failure to act on evidence that indicated a child's welfare may have been at risk e.g. failed to notify the designated safeguarding lead...; 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 Laurent's actions were not deliberate.

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

Mr Laurent did not provide evidence to demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel did not accept that the incident was out of character.

The panel considered there was limited evidence relating to Mr Laurent's professional competence and contribution to the education sector. Having heard from Witness B, the panel accepted that Mr Laurent was a competent classroom practitioner during his time teaching GCSE-level pupils. There was evidence of sound pedagogy, although Witness B noted that some aspects of his practice required support and improvement. The panel did not find evidence of exceptional contribution to the profession or to the wider education sector.

The panel saw evidence that showed Mr Laurent was previously subject to warnings regarding his inappropriate communications with Pupil A.

The panel was provided with two character references which pertained to Mr Laurent's good character, but these could only be given limited weight as there was no confirmation that the referees were aware of the allegations against Mr Laurent at the time of providing the references. The panel noted the following:

- [REDACTED], former colleague of Mr Laurent:

“His lessons were well planned and I was pleased with what I saw as part of my formal observations. Students were seen to make real progress throughout, through relevant resources being used in conjunction with good questioning and an openness that makes every child feel confident enough to contribute... Between the natural athleticism, the coaching, the caring attitude to his tutees and his dedication to his classroom teaching he would be a great addition to any team.”

- [REDACTED], cricket coach:

“Aside from his coaching abilities, Sammy's trustworthiness, efficiency, and loyalty are commendable qualities that set him apart. He has consistently shown integrity in all his interactions and has earned the respect and admiration of his colleagues and players alike... I wholeheartedly endorse Sammy for any coaching or teaching position within the cricketing community or education sector.”

The panel was not provided with any statement from Mr Laurent which spoke to his insight and/or remorse into his conduct. The panel noted that Mr Laurent's union representative, who had been engaged earlier in the process, had submitted that Mr Laurent had been an inexperienced teacher at the time of the allegations and that his conduct in relation to Pupil A was motivated by *“good albeit misplaced intentions”*. The panel also noted that Mr Laurent's union representative had submitted that Mr Laurent had reflected on his practice and conduct and changed his conduct going forward to avoid placing himself and others at risk.

In considering insight and remorse, the panel took account of Mr Laurent's written submissions. Mr Laurent acknowledged that he had allowed Pupil A to become overly reliant on his support and accepted that he had placed both himself and Pupil A in vulnerable situations, albeit without malicious intent. He recognised, with the benefit of hindsight, that his actions exposed him to professional risk and were inappropriate.

However, the panel was not satisfied that Mr Laurent had demonstrated sufficient insight into the seriousness of his conduct or its underlying causes. In particular, the panel was concerned that his behaviour was not an isolated incident but took place over an extended period, during which Mr Laurent had been warned about maintaining appropriate professional boundaries on multiple occasions. Despite these repeated warnings, the conduct continued, including ongoing inappropriate communication and conduct with Pupil A. The panel was not satisfied that Mr Laurent fully understood the risks inherent in his actions or the importance of adhering to safeguarding protocols.

The panel further considered whether Mr Laurent had reflected adequately on his motivations. It noted that, whilst he expressed a belief that he was acting in Pupil A's best interests, he had not meaningfully articulated why he chose to engage in conduct such as contacting a pupil outside School hours or placing himself in situations where

professional boundaries were blurred. In the absence of Mr Laurent's attendance at the hearing, the panel was unable to explore these issues further and therefore could not be satisfied that he had developed sufficient insight into the drivers of his behaviours. Mr Laurent's absence limited the panel's ability to assess his current levels of insight, remediation, and risk.

The panel recognised certain mitigating factors. These included that Mr Laurent was relatively inexperienced, having trained during the COVID-19 pandemic, and may not have benefited from positive modelling of professional boundaries. The panel accepted that this may have affected his judgement to some extent. However, it concluded that these factors did not excuse his conduct. The panel considered that a teacher should nonetheless be able to exercise appropriate professional judgement and understand that certain behaviours, such as initiating contact with a pupil late at night to discuss personal matters, are not acceptable.

The panel found the absence of any direct evidence from Pupil A to be concerning and problematic. It noted that no evidence had been presented from Pupil A regarding the impact of Mr Laurent's conduct. The panel further noted that earlier and more robust monitoring and intervention into Mr Laurent's conduct may have curtailed some of his behaviours. However, the panel was clear that responsibility for maintaining appropriate professional boundaries rested with Mr Laurent.

The panel was particularly concerned that Mr Laurent continued to demonstrate poor judgement in respect of his communications and conduct with Pupil A, including in relation to physical boundaries when he was found to stroke Pupil A's hair and place his hand on her shoulders in May 2023, even after earlier warnings had been provided as far back as September 2021.

In light of these factors, the panel concluded that there remains a significant risk of repetition. The combination of limited insight and remorse and a failure to heed previous warnings, indicated that Mr Laurent had not yet developed a sufficient understanding of appropriate professional boundaries or safeguarding responsibilities.

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 Laurent 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 Laurent. Mr Laurent's failure to safeguard the wellbeing of Pupil A and document concerns was a significant factor 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 two 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.

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 was engaged by the panel's findings.

In considering the appropriate length of a review period, the panel concluded that the minimum period of two years would not be sufficient. Given the seriousness of the misconduct, the repeated nature of the behaviour, and the need for Mr Laurent to undertake meaningful reflection, the panel determined that a longer period would be required.

The panel concluded that a review period of three years would be appropriate. This would provide Mr Laurent with sufficient time to develop insight into his conduct, reflect on his motivations, and demonstrate that he has addressed the risks identified. At any future review, Mr Laurent would be required to provide evidence that he has used the intervening period to develop a clear understanding of professional boundaries, safeguarding responsibilities, and the impact of his behaviour on pupils, colleagues, and the reputation of the profession.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period of three 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 some of the allegations proven and found that 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 not proven. I have therefore put those matters entirely from my mind.

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Sammy Laurent should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of three years.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Laurent 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 Laurent 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 Laurent fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a teacher both failing to maintain proper professional boundaries and not following proper safeguarding practices.

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 Laurent, 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:

“The panel found there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils, given the serious findings against Mr Laurent, which involved repeated failures to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Pupil A, failing to take adequate steps to safeguard Pupil A including not keeping formal records and not reporting concerns to the School’s DSL and a failure to comply with a management instruction to stay away from the School whilst an investigation was being undertaken.”

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 statement from Mr Laurent which spoke to his insight and/or remorse into his conduct. The panel noted that Mr Laurent’s union representative, who had been engaged earlier in the process, had submitted that Mr Laurent had been an inexperienced teacher at the time of the allegations and that his conduct in relation to Pupil A was motivated by “*good albeit misplaced intentions*”. The panel also noted that Mr Laurent’s union representative had submitted that Mr Laurent had reflected on his practice and conduct and changed his conduct going forward to avoid placing himself and others at risk.

In considering insight and remorse, the panel took account of Mr Laurent’s written submissions. Mr Laurent acknowledged that he had allowed Pupil A to become overly reliant on his support and accepted that he had placed both himself and Pupil A in vulnerable situations, albeit without malicious intent. He recognised, with the benefit of hindsight, that his actions exposed him to professional risk and were inappropriate.

However, the panel was not satisfied that Mr Laurent had demonstrated sufficient insight into the seriousness of his conduct or its underlying causes. In particular, the panel was concerned that his behaviour was not an isolated incident but took place over an extended period, during which Mr Laurent had been warned about maintaining appropriate professional boundaries on multiple occasions. Despite these repeated warnings, the conduct continued, including ongoing inappropriate communication and conduct with Pupil A. The panel was not satisfied that Mr Laurent fully understood the risks inherent in his actions or the importance of adhering to safeguarding protocols.

The panel further considered whether Mr Laurent had reflected adequately on his motivations. It noted that, whilst he expressed a belief that he was acting in Pupil A's best interests, he had not meaningfully articulated why he chose to engage in conduct such as contacting a pupil outside School hours or placing himself in situations where professional boundaries were blurred. In the absence of Mr Laurent's attendance at the hearing, the panel was unable to explore these issues further and therefore could not be satisfied that he had developed sufficient insight into the drivers of his behaviours. Mr Laurent's absence limited the panel's ability to assess his current levels of insight, remediation, and risk."

In my judgement, the lack of evidence that Mr Laurent has developed full insight into his actions 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 comments as follows:

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

The panel considered that Mr Laurent's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher."

I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher failing to maintain proper professional boundaries with a pupil in this case and the negative 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 Laurent himself. The panel makes this observation:

“Mr Laurent did not provide evidence to demonstrate exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel did not accept that the incident was out of character.

The panel considered there was limited evidence relating to Mr Laurent’s professional competence and contribution to the education sector. Having heard from Witness B, the panel accepted that Mr Laurent was a competent classroom practitioner during his time teaching GCSE-level pupils. There was evidence of sound pedagogy, although Witness B noted that some aspects of his practice required support and improvement. The panel did not find evidence of exceptional contribution to the profession or to the wider education sector.”

The panel also notes having had the benefit of character evidence attesting to Mr Laurent’s qualities as a teacher and person.

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Laurent 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 serious nature of the panel’s findings, and in particular Mr Laurent’s failure to follow proper safeguarding practices. I have also placed considerable weight on the panel’s comments concerning the lack of evidence that Mr Laurent has developed full insight.

While I note that the panel references the existence of some mitigating circumstances in this case, I have also placed weight on its findings that there was no evidence that Mr Laurent’s actions were not deliberate or committed under extreme duress.

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Laurent 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 a three-year review period.

In doing so, the panel has referenced the Advice as follows:

“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.

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 was engaged by the panel’s findings.”

I have considered the panel’s concluding comments:

“In considering the appropriate length of a review period, the panel concluded that the minimum period of two years would not be sufficient. Given the seriousness of the misconduct, the repeated nature of the behaviour, and the need for Mr Laurent to undertake meaningful reflection, the panel determined that a longer period would be required.

The panel concluded that a review period of three years would be appropriate. This would provide Mr Laurent with sufficient time to develop insight into his conduct, reflect on his motivations, and demonstrate that he has addressed the risks identified. At any future review, Mr Laurent would be required to provide evidence that he has used the intervening period to develop a clear understanding of professional boundaries, safeguarding responsibilities, and the impact of his behaviour on pupils, colleagues, and the reputation of the profession.

The panel decided that the findings indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate and, as such, decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for a review period of three years.”

I have considered whether a three-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, and noting that the list of offences that the Advice states may weigh in favour of a longer review period is not exhaustive, factors mean that allowing a shorter review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the serious nature of the misconduct found as well as the lack of evidence of full insight and the consequent risk of repetition and future harm to pupils.

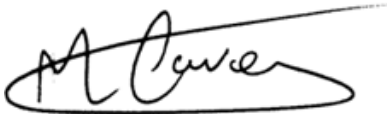
I consider therefore that a three-year review period is required to satisfy the maintenance of public confidence in the profession. I agree with the panel that such a period will also

afford Mr Laurent the time necessary, should he wish to return to the profession in the future, to demonstrate both that he has developed full insight into his behaviour and its possible impacts.

This means that Mr Sammy Laurent is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. He may apply for the prohibition order to be set aside, but not until 16 June 2029, 3 years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Laurent remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

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

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

Decision maker: Marc Cavey

Date: 16 June 2026

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