



Teaching
Regulation
Agency

Mr Thomas Ridgway: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

July 2026

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

Teacher: Mr Thomas Ridgway

Teacher ref number: 2237635

Teacher date of birth: 24 September 1994

TRA reference: 23248

Date of determination: 22 to 24 June 2026 and 24 July 2026

Former employer: Heathfield School, Berkshire

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 22 to 24 June by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Thomas Ridgway.

The panel members were Ms Aruna Sharma (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mr Patrick Berry (teacher panellist) and Mr Tony Coyne (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Delme Griffiths of Blake Morgan LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Lee Bridges of Kingsley Napley solicitors.

Mr Ridgway was present and was represented by Mr Brian Linfield, a lay representative.

The hearing took place in public save that portions of the hearing were heard in private and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 11 July 2025.

It was alleged that Mr Ridgway was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that having accepted a teaching role and/or whilst working as a Teacher of Photography at Heathfield School ("the School"):

1. In or around 2023, he did not disclose to the School that his fiancé, Person A, was being investigated by the Police for sexual offences against children.
2. Between 19 June 2023 and 14 December 2023, he did not disclose to the School that:
 - a) his fiancé, Person A, had been convicted on 19 June 2023, of sexual offences against children; and/or
 - b) Person A had been sentenced on 6 December 2023, to imprisonment and ordered to sign the Sex Offender Register
3. His conduct at paragraphs 1 and/or 2:
 - a) Was dishonest; and/or
 - b) Lacked integrity.

Mr Ridgway denied all of the allegations.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

Section 1: Chronology, list of key people and anonymised list – pages 4 to 7

Section 2: Notice of proceedings and response – pages 8 to 16

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements – pages 17 to 27

Section 4: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 28 to 196

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 197 to 205

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- Exhibit 9, appendix 1 which was inadvertently omitted from the bundle.
- The Court of Appeal judgment in *R v Linfield* [2024] EWCA Crim 1646.
- A timeline prepared by the TRA.

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

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

Witnesses

The panel heard oral evidence from:

- Witness A – [REDACTED], called by the presenting officer.

Mr Ridgway decided not to give oral evidence. He called the following witnesses to give evidence on his behalf:

- Mr Brian Linfield, who was also Mr Ridgway’s representative.
- Person A, [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.

Introduction

Mr Ridgway began working at Heathfield School (“the School”) in September 2019 as a photography technician.

In or around March 2023, Mr Ridgway was appointed as a photography teacher, commencing that role on 1 September 2023.

At the time, Mr Ridgway was engaged to Person A. On 19 June 2023, Person A was convicted in the Crown Court in Burnley of 10 offences of sexual activity with a boy. On 6 December 2023, Person A was sentenced to a term of imprisonment and was ordered to sign the Sex Offender Register for life.

On 15 December 2023, the School was notified of Person A's conviction by a member of the public by email, as a result of which the School made enquiries and sought LADO advice. On 30 January 2024, Mr Ridgway was suspended and the School commenced an investigation.

On 19 February 2024, Mr Ridgway resigned from his position with immediate effect.

On 23 February 2024, Mr Ridgway was referred to the TRA.

Evidence

The panel had careful regard to the oral and documentary evidence presented and the parties' submissions.

It accepted the legal advice provided.

The panel heard oral evidence from Witness A, [REDACTED], called by the presenting officer.

Mr Ridgway decided not to give evidence. He called Mr Brian Linfield, also his representative, and Person A to give evidence. Mr Ridgway denied all of the allegations.

It followed that Mr Ridgway's account was admitted as hearsay evidence.

It was very apparent that Mr Ridgway was incredibly [REDACTED] throughout the hearing. To that extent, the panel could understand his decision not to give evidence and there is no criticism of it.

Nonetheless, there was a consequence to that decision whereby Mr Ridgway was not cross-examined or subject to questioning by the panel. His evidence could not be tested. There were various issues, particularly areas of conflict between Mr Ridgway's witness statement and Person A's account, that could not be tested.

However, the panel did not go so far as to draw an adverse inference from Mr Ridgway's decision not to give evidence. He had put forward an explanation for the allegations, which the panel carefully considered. His decision not to give evidence, in the specific circumstances, could not be said to be unreasonable. The panel did not consider that Mr Ridgway was seeking to avoid scrutiny, rather that he was simply unable to subject himself to the process of giving evidence.

The panel also took account of Mr Ridgway's prior good character.

In considering the allegations, the panel formed its own, independent view based on the evidence presented to it.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

- 1. In or around 2023, you did not disclose to the School that your fiancé, Person A, was being investigated by the Police for sexual offences against children.**

There was no dispute regarding the fact that no disclosures were made by Mr Ridgway to the School, regarding Person A, prior to the School becoming aware of their conviction and sentence on 15 December 2023. That applied to the facts of allegation 1 and allegation 2.

The salient issue in dispute was whether Mr Ridgway's state of knowledge was such that he could and should have made relevant disclosures.

On the basis that Mr Ridgway was accused of acting dishonestly and without integrity, the panel considered it was appropriate to make specific findings in relation to salient events, with specific reference to what Mr Ridgway knew at the relevant time.

The panel understood that Mr Ridgway knew Person A since approximately 2018 and they had been living together since January 2022. At some point thereafter, they were engaged to be married.

Witness A gave evidence that the School was first notified of Person A's conviction upon receipt of an email from a member of the public at 11:11am on 15 December 2023. The email included a link to an online article published by the [REDACTED] and attached screenshots. The email was helpful contextually, insofar as it included details of the offences, referencing "*sexual assault against 3 boys*". It was not in dispute that the member of the public in question was known to Mr Ridgway and that their knowledge of these events derived from him.

Witness A stated that she met with Mr Ridgway straight away along with two other members of staff. Witness A stated that, during this conversation:

- Mr Ridgway told them that his fiancé had been convicted of sexual offences against children.
- Stated that the cases were historical and that, prior to Person A's remand, they had been living together.
- Indicated that a relative of Person A had been supporting Mr Ridgway and instructed him to wait to inform the School. Mr Ridgway said he had put significant faith and trust in this person's advice.

- Mr Ridgway was very co-operative and repeatedly apologised, which Witness A stated she interpreted as relating to the fact that he had not told the School and the potential impact upon it, being upset and distressed throughout.

The panel was referred to the contemporaneous note of this meeting and the email sent by Witness A immediately after it, referencing Mr Ridgway's knowledge of the criminal proceedings.

The panel was also referred to the notes of a meeting with Mr Ridgway and the School on 12 January 2024, which records Mr Ridgway stating, in particular:

"I have known since the start. We have always been open about things, even things he has not been proud about. I was not aware of all the ins and outs, but I was aware of things that had occurred previously. I was made aware of all the allegations against Person A in 2021..."

Witness A gave evidence that she regarded this as a disclosable matter, from the point at which the allegations were first known to Mr Ridgway, pursuant to Mr Ridgway's contract of employment and in accordance with the School's Code of Conduct, both of which were included in evidence.

Mr Ridgway denied the allegations. His position was that he was given no information as to what the actual allegations were, only that they were very serious [REDACTED] allegations. He relied upon, in particular, upon the fact that Person A:

- Was never arrested;
- Was not subject to a trial; and
- Refused to allow him to attend any court appearance, police interview or solicitor appointment.

Mr Linfield gave evidence that he was instructed by Person A not to tell Mr Ridgway about the allegations and he believed no other family member contacted Mr Ridgway.

Mr Linfield stated that it was only when he attended Burnley Magistrates Court with Person A on 19 June 2023 that it became known to him that Person A had previously admitted some offences and about an additional charge. Mr Linfield stated that he had tried but failed to persuade Person A to tell Mr Ridgway about the possibility of receiving a long custodial sentence.

Person A's evidence was that he never *"fully discussed the situation"* with Mr Ridgway and if asked, would just say that *"my solicitor was now on the case"*. He stated that when he travelled to Court on 19 June 2023, all he said on his return was *"it went OK"*. Person A also stated that he *"swore [Mr Linfield] to silence"* and that Mr Linfield *"couldn't disclose to [Mr Ridgway] anything I had not"*.

Having carefully considered the evidence before it, the panel made the following findings.

First, the precise chronology of events, in terms of the police investigation and prosecution, prior to June 2023, when Person A was convicted, was unknown.

To that extent, allegation 1 was unfortunately worded. On one, strict reading, there was no evidence regarding whether Person A continued to be investigated by the police in the period from 1 January 2023 to 18 June 2023. Plainly, Person A was prosecuted but the exact timeline was unknown. Accordingly, allegation 1 could have been pleaded in clearer terms.

Nonetheless, the panel interpreted the allegation broadly. It was clear, and understood by Mr Ridgway, that the mischief of the allegation was that, particularly at the time of his successful application to be a teacher at the School, Mr Ridgway knew that Person A either was or had been subject to police investigation for sexual offences against children.

It considered the allegation on that basis.

In doing so, the panel was mindful of the fact that the burden of proof was on the TRA.

The panel considered that, in these proceedings, Mr Ridgway had sought to downplay what he knew. The panel concluded that it was more likely than not that he had a greater knowledge of events than he now sought to portray. Not least, he was full and candid in his admissions to the School in December 2023 and January 2024, which he now sought to resile from by providing a particular narrative in these proceedings.

The panel noted that in his witness statement, Mr Ridgway expressly stated that Person A *“refused to allow me to attend any court appearances, police interview or solicitor appointment”*. It followed that Mr Ridgway was plainly on notice that the matter was serious, that it necessitated the involvement of a solicitor and it involved one or more court appearances.

Person A also stated that he would be asked about matters by Mr Ridgway, in response to which he said that *“my solicitor was now on the case”*. That was a clear indication that Mr Ridgway would ask questions about these events and, again, referenced the involvement of a solicitor.

However, the panel accepted that some efforts were made to seek to insulate Mr Ridgway from the full details of the case. Whilst the panel’s decision was finely balanced, it concluded that the TRA had not proved that, in the period from 1 January 2023 to 18 June 2023, which was the period it considered for the purposes of this allegation, Mr Ridgway knew that the allegations specifically related to sexual offences against children.

Whilst allegation 1 was pleaded as a statement of fact, the panel determined it would be illogical to find it proved given Mr Ridgway could not disclose something the panel had found he did not know. On the basis of those findings, no allegation of unacceptable professional conduct or disrepute could be supported and allegation 1 was, therefore found not proved.

2. Between 19 June 2023 and 14 December 2023, you did not disclose to the School that:

a) your fiancé, Person A, had been convicted on 19 June 2023, of sexual offences against children; and/or

b) Person A had been sentenced on 6 December 2023, to imprisonment and ordered to sign the Sex Offender Register

The panel considered allegations 2(a) and 2(b) together.

Once again, there was no dispute as to the fact that no disclosures were made to the School regarding the conviction and sentence, the salient issue was whether Mr Ridgway's knowledge was such that he could and should have made a disclosure.

The panel repeats its findings in allegation 1 in relation to the background and chronology.

In addition, the panel noted that in his witness statement, Mr Ridgway stated:

"I believe his conviction was when he was sentenced! I am now aware after the fact that [Person A's] appearance at Magistrates court on 19 June 2023 stands as date convicted. I was not at all aware of that fact so could not disclose it.

...

Prior to conviction I had directly asked [Mr Linfield] if there was anything I needed to disclose as I worked at a school...

In December 2023 just before going back to Burnley [Person A] sat me down and explained that he may be going to prison....

Following conviction [Mr Linfield] travelled down and explained to me and [REDACTED] exactly what [Person A] had been convicted of. He explained the details of the offences admitted."

In relation to the final paragraph above, Mr Linfield similarly confirmed in his statement that he fully disclosed *"to [Mr Ridgway] and [REDACTED] the nature of the sentences and the sentence that [Person A] received"*. He said he did this in person at some point between 6 and 14 December 2023.

Person A was of course incarcerated following his sentence. He denied that he sat down with Mr Ridgway prior to sentence, such that their evidence conflicted on that point. The panel considered that his evidence had to be treated with some caution on the basis that it considered Person A was attempting to portray Mr Ridgway's knowledge of events as less than it was.

The panel did have regard to the inherent unlikelihood, particularly in the context of Mr Ridgway plainly having an accepted degree of knowledge about the matter and it involving a court process and solicitors, not asking and being told information regarding the precise nature of the matter. Particularly in the context of the nature of their relationship. However, there was no direct evidence to support the TRA's case that Mr Ridgway was expressly provided with full details of the prosecution prior to the point when Person A was sentenced. Whilst the panel had some concerns regarding the evidence presented as part of Mr Ridgway's defence, it was not countered by any evidence presented by the TRA regarding what Mr Ridgway was told and when.

The panel accordingly found that that Mr Ridgway knew on 6 December 2023 of Person A's conviction and sentence and did not disclose it to the School. It was also satisfied that at some point after 6 December 2023, he was aware of the full circumstances of the offences, including that they involved sexual offences against children, and did not disclose those details to the School.

Allegations 2(a) and 2(b) were found proved on that basis.

3. Your conduct at paragraphs 1 and/or 2:

a) Was dishonest; and/or

b) Lacked integrity.

Having found allegation 2 proved, the panel went on to consider whether Mr Ridgway's actions were dishonest and/or lacked integrity.

In determining whether his conduct was dishonest, the panel considered Mr Ridgway's state of knowledge or belief as to the facts, before determining whether his conduct was dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people.

As regards lack of integrity, the panel recognised that integrity denotes adherence to the standards of the profession and therefore considered whether, by his actions, Mr Ridgway failed to adhere to those standards.

The panel concluded, on the basis of the evidence available, that Mr Ridgway did not make a deliberate decision to conceal these matters from the School, consciously knowing that he should have done.

It was apparent that he was very badly affected by Person A's incarceration. The panel also concluded he was naïve and it was very apparent that he sought advice from, and was led by, Mr Linfield.

On that basis, the panel did not consider that Mr Ridgway was deliberately attempting to mislead the School. It did not, therefore, consider that Mr Ridgway's actions were dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people.

However, the panel concluded that Mr Ridgway's actions did lack integrity. Person A's conviction and sentence was materially relevant to the School. It had obvious reputational implications and the School needed to be in possession of all material information in order to undertake a risk assessment. The likely outcome of that risk assessment was immaterial, it was a matter solely within the School's remit to consider and determine. Person A's conviction and sentence should have been disclosed at the earliest opportunity, which was 6 December 2023 at the latest. Insofar as Mr Ridgway seemingly deferred to Mr Linfield, that was a derogation of duty on his part insofar as he had his own, professional obligations.

Further, Mr Ridgway did disclose matters to a friend, who in turn seemingly recognised the implications of Person A's conviction and sentence and did what Mr Ridgway did not. It was apparent that Mr Ridgway was working in the period from 6 December to 15 December 2023 and therefore had ample opportunity to disclose these matters, which he should have done immediately.

Insofar as Mr Linfield suggested they planned to disclose matters at the start of January 2024, whereby 15 December 2023 was the last day of term, that was plainly inappropriate in the circumstances. Mr Ridgway should have realised that at the time. The School's Code of Conduct and Mr Ridgway's obligations were clear and he had therefore shown a disregard for the duties and the responsibilities upon him as a teacher.

The panel therefore found allegation 3(b) proved in relation to allegations 2(a) and 2(b).

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

Having found allegations 2(a), 2(b) and 3(b) 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 Ridgway, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Ridgway 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.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.

The panel also considered whether Mr Ridgway'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 was relevant.

Over and above these matters, the panel took into account its finding that Mr Ridgway's conduct lacked integrity. He was in a position of trust as a teacher and as an employee and had a duty to act with integrity at all times. He did not comply with the School's Code of Conduct. He did not disclose these material matters to the School in circumstances where he remained in a relationship with a convicted sex offender.

However, whilst Mr Ridgway's conduct was serious, the panel concluded that Mr Ridgway's actions were not so serious as to amount to conduct which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

Accordingly, the panel was not satisfied that Mr Ridgway was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Mr Ridgway'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.

The nature and circumstances of Mr Ridgway's actions were sufficiently serious so as to have a negative impact on Mr Ridgway's status as a teacher. The public would rightly expect teachers to make disclosures to schools of matters of this nature, particularly in circumstances where Mr Ridgway maintained his relationship with someone who was, at that point, a convicted sex offender. As the panel had noted in its findings, Mr Ridgway did disclose matters to a friend, not to the School, who recognised the importance of these issues when Mr Ridgway, seemingly, did not.

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

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

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of 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 the following to be relevant in this case:

- the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils; and
- the maintenance of public confidence in the profession.

Given the panel was concerned with the non-disclosure of safeguarding matters, the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils was engaged by its findings.

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

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 Ridgway in the profession.

There was very limited evidence about Mr Ridgway's practice as a teacher. He was not an experienced practitioner and he had not presented any references or testimonials. However, no doubt had been cast upon his abilities as a teacher and he had a good record in the relatively limited time he had been in practice. The panel therefore considered there was a degree of public interest in retaining Mr Ridgway in the profession, but that was limited in the circumstances.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states 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 Ridgway.

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:

- a lack of integrity; and
- concealment.

Even though some of the behaviours 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.

The panel considered the following mitigating factors were present:

- Mr Ridgway had engaged with these proceedings and attended the majority of the hearing. Insofar as Mr Ridgway did not appear throughout and did not give evidence, the panel repeats its previous comments regarding his presentation.
- Mr Ridgway had a prior good record.
- It followed this was an isolated episode in the context of Mr Ridgway's career. There was also a specific context to his actions. Whilst his actions directly linked to and impacted on his professional status and obligations, the origin was events that occurred in his private life.
- Mr Ridgway was also a relatively inexperienced practitioner and his understanding of safeguarding and the School's processes was evolving. The panel had concluded he had been extremely affected by his partner's conviction. He was naïve and he sought advice from, and was led by, Mr Linfield, not altogether positively or helpfully in light of the panel's findings. The panel had concluded that Mr Ridgway had not deliberately set out to attempt to mislead the School and he cooperated with its enquiries and made disclosures to it once matters came to light.

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, on balance, a recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an appropriate response.

In the specific and unusual context in which it occurred, the panel concluded that the nature and severity of the behaviour, originating from Mr Ridgway's private life, was at the less serious end of the possible spectrum.

That context mitigated Mr Ridgway's conduct to an extent that the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. Mr Ridgway was, plainly, deeply affected by his partner's incarceration and sought advice. The panel had found this was a derogation of duty on his part and the advice and guidance he had received and followed was out of kilter with his professional obligations. However, he had not consciously set out to mislead the School.

The panel did take into account that Mr Ridgway had denied the allegations and not shown evidence of regret, remorse or insight through these proceedings. The focus, largely through his representative, was on himself rather than the implications of his actions with reference to the School. Insofar as it was suggested, in submissions, that Mr Ridgway had reflected and demonstrated insight, there was no evidence of that from Mr Ridgway directly.

Nonetheless, the panel concluded that the issue of future risk had to be viewed with reference to the specific context of this case. It was inherently unlikely that a similar set of circumstances would arise. Further, the specific matters that led to Mr Ridgway's partner's conviction were historic and specific. The School had not taken the view that there was a direct risk that would prevent Mr Ridgway from continuing to work. It was not the case that his actions posed a direct risk of harm to pupils in terms of safeguarding.

Further, whilst the conduct found proved could be said to reflect more broadly in terms of Mr Ridgway's understanding of safeguarding, the panel considered that, having gone through the School's disciplinary process and these proceedings, the need for Mr Ridgway to reflect and learn from these events will be all too apparent to him.

It was clear that Mr Ridgway had apologised to the School. He had been open with it when matters came to light and the panel considered he was not incapable of gaining full insight into the nature and implications of his actions.

The panel also had in mind that, having been through these events and the impact there has been upon him, it would be likely that Mr Ridgway would strive to avoid similar issues happening again, should he return to working in a position of trust.

In all the circumstances, whilst it was, inevitably, not possible to say that there was no risk of repetition, the panel was satisfied that the risk was sufficiently reduced in this case.

The panel also considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to Mr Ridgway as to the expectations upon him.

For these reasons and having weighed all relevant considerations, whilst fully recognising the seriousness of the conduct, the panel concluded that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate or proportionate in this case.

Having very carefully taken account of the public interest considerations the proven conduct gave rise to, the panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it has made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message as to the standards of behaviour that were acceptable, and the publication would maintain public confidence in the profession.

The panel considered this was a proportionate outcome, particularly in circumstances where the panel's published findings may have a residual impact in terms of Mr Ridgway's professional reputation and future employment prospects.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

In this case, the panel has found some of the allegations proven and found that those proven facts amount to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. In this case, the panel has found some of the allegations not proven. I have therefore put those matters entirely from my mind.

The panel has recommended that the findings of conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, in relation to Mr Thomas Ridgway's conduct, should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Ridgway 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.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a finding that Mr Ridgway failed to disclose to the School that his partner had been convicted of multiple sexual offences against children, and that his conduct lacked integrity.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself, whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Mr Ridgway, 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 safeguard pupils. The panel has observed, *“Given the panel was concerned with the non-disclosure of safeguarding matters, the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils was engaged by its findings.”*

The panel notes the implications of Mr Ridgway’s failure to promptly declare his partner’s conviction. The panel notes *“It had obvious reputational implications and the School needed to be in possession of all material information in order to undertake a risk assessment. The likely outcome of that risk assessment was immaterial, it was a matter solely within the School’s remit to consider and determine.”* I have placed considerable weight on the fact that Mr Ridgway’s conduct prevented the School from promptly considering the relevant risks in accordance with its safeguarding duty.

A prohibition order would therefore prevent such a risk from being present in the future.

I have also taken into account the panel’s comments on insight and remorse, which the panel sets out as follows, *“The panel did take into account that Mr Ridgway had denied the allegations and not shown evidence of regret, remorse or insight through these proceedings. The focus, largely through his representative, was on himself rather than the implications of his actions with reference to the School. Insofar as it was suggested, in submissions, that Mr Ridgway had reflected and demonstrated insight, there was no evidence of that from Mr Ridgway directly.”*

The panel has also commented that Mr Ridgway’s understanding of safeguarding was ‘evolving’. I have some difficulty with the panel’s view that as this conduct arose from a specific set of circumstances the conduct is unlikely to be repeated. I remain concerned that the evolving nature of Mr Ridgway’s understanding of his safeguarding obligations coupled with the panel’s finding that Mr Ridgway had submitted only limited evidence of

regret, insight and remorse may risk future instances where Mr Ridgway fails in his duty to disclose information. In my judgement, the lack of full insight means that there is some risk of the repetition of this behaviour, and this puts at risk the future wellbeing of pupils. I have therefore given this element considerable weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel observe “...*that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Ridgway were not treated with the utmost seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession.*”

I am particularly mindful of the finding of lack of integrity in this case and the impact that such a finding has on the reputation of the profession.

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

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of 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 Ridgway himself. I note the panel’s finding that Mr Ridgway did not deliberately set out to mislead the school. I also note that the panel record Mr Ridgway was deeply affected by his partner’s incarceration. However, the panel does not record that Mr Ridgway was under extreme duress.

The panel also comment “*There was very limited evidence about Mr Ridgway’s practice as a teacher. He was not an experienced practitioner and he had not presented any references or testimonials. However, no doubt had been cast upon his abilities as a teacher and he had a good record in the relatively limited time he had been in practice. The panel therefore considered there was a degree of public interest in retaining Mr Ridgway in the profession, but that was limited in the circumstances.*” As such the panel has not found that Mr Ridgway has demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both personal and professional conduct or has contributed significantly to the education sector.

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Ridgway 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 seriousness of the conduct, conjoined with the panel's comments concerning the lack of insight or remorse. The panel has said that Mr Ridgway is *"...not incapable of gaining full insight into the nature and implications of his actions."* The panel goes on to say that it was *"...not possible to say that there was no risk of repetition..."*

I have also placed considerable weight on the finding of the panel that Mr Ridgway's conduct lacked integrity, and that his actions meant that the School could not promptly assess the level of risk.

I have given less weight in my consideration of sanction therefore, to the contribution that Mr Ridgway has made to the profession, and the panel's finding that that there was only a limited public interest in retaining Mr Ridgway in the profession.

I have weighed the seriousness of the conduct, the panel's findings of the lack of evidence of insight on behalf of Mr Ridgway, the risk of repetition, and the impact a finding such as this has on the reputation of the profession against the impact on Mr Ridgway himself. In this case, I disagree with the panel's recommendation. In my view, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession. This is because there remains a risk of repetition of the conduct, for which Mr Ridgway has sown little evidence of insight and remorse, and the safeguarding impact future repetitions may have on pupils. A published decision, in light of the circumstances in this case, that is not backed up by full remorse or insight, does not in my view satisfy the public interest requirement concerning public confidence in the profession.

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. The minimum statutory review period is not less than two years. The Advice sets out factors which may weigh in favour of a longer review period or weigh against a review period at all. None of the listed factors are present.

The panel has formed a view that Mr Ridgway *"...was not incapable of gaining full insight into the nature and implications of his actions."* I am therefore of the view that a review period is appropriate in this case.

I have considered whether a two-year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, I am of the view that a two-year review period is sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession.

I consider therefore that a two-year review period is required to satisfy the maintenance of public confidence in the profession. This should provide sufficient time for Mr Ridgway,

should he wish to return to the profession, to take steps to fully develop his insight and remorse and therefore demonstrate that the risk of repetition is negligible.

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

This means that Mr Thomas Ridgway 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 06 August 2028, two years from the date of this order at the earliest. This is not an automatic right to have the prohibition order removed. If he does apply, a panel will meet to consider whether the prohibition order should be set aside. Without a successful application, Mr Ridgway remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Mr Ridgway 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 'S. Blomfield', written in a cursive style.

Decision maker: Stuart Blomfield

Date: 6 August 2026

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