



Ms Rowena Henderson: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

August 2026

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

Teacher: Ms Rowena Henderson

TRA reference: 24916

Date of determination: 18 August 2026

Employer: Netherhall School, Maryport, Cumbria.

Introduction

A professional conduct panel (“the panel”) of the Teaching Regulation Agency (“the TRA”) convened on 17 to 18 August 2026 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Ms Rowena Henderson.

The panel members were Mr Paul Hawkins (lay panellist – in the chair), Mrs Bhaksho Raj (lay panellist) and Ms Julia Hyde (teacher panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Helen Kitchen of Blake Morgan LLP, solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Lucy Kinder of Kingsley Napley LLP, Counsel.

Ms Rowena Henderson was present and was represented by Jonathan Storey of Cornwall Street Barristers, Counsel.

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

Allegations

The panel considered the allegation set out in the notice of proceedings dated 15 May 2026.

It was alleged that Ms Rowena Henderson was guilty of having been convicted of a relevant offence, in that:

1. On 15 January 2025, she was convicted of driving a motor vehicle with excess alcohol on 11 December 2024.

Ms Henderson admitted the facts of the allegation.

Ms Henderson did not admit that she was convicted of a relevant offence.

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 5 to 6

Section 2: Notice of hearing and response – pages 8 to 14

Section 3: Teaching Regulation Agency Exhibits – pages 15 (being a cover page) to 52

Section 4: Teacher's documents – pages 53 (being a cover page) to 102.

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

No witnesses were called by the presenting officer on behalf of the TRA.

Ms Henderson gave oral evidence and called the following as a witness:

Witness 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.

On 1 September 2023, Ms Henderson commenced employment as a Science Teacher at Netherhall School ("the School").

On 11 December 2024, Ms Henderson was arrested and charged by Cumbria police.

On 16 December 2024, Ms Henderson told the Head Teacher at the School about her being arrested for drink driving and that she had been given a court date of 15 January 2025. [REDACTED].

On 17 December 2024, the matter was referred to the TRA by Cumbria Police.

On 15 January 2025, Ms Henderson was convicted of driving a motor vehicle with excess alcohol.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

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

1. On 15 January 2025, you were convicted of driving a motor vehicle with excess alcohol on 11 December 2024.

The facts of allegation 1 were admitted.

The panel had before it a certificate of conviction which recorded that Ms Henderson was convicted on 15 January 2025 at Barrow-in-Furness Magistrates' Court of driving on a public road after consuming so much alcohol that the proportion of it in her breath exceeded the prescribed limit. She was disqualified from holding or obtaining a driving licence for 19 months to be reduced by 19 weeks if she satisfactorily completed a course approved by the Secretary of State.

The panel noted that the teacher admitted the following facts relevant to the allegation in her written and oral evidence to the panel:

- That she made "a terrible mistake and drove ... her car after consuming excess alcohol".

- Due to where she lived most of the people she spoke to when on maternity leave worked in hospitality and worked on different days to her.
- That she had been drinking on the afternoon of the offence, (11 December 2024). She had met up with “some of the people ... [she] ... speaks[s] to in the village pub, and who were working there, to have some adult conversation and speak to other people who had had children for their advice. [REDACTED] Whilst...[she] was there she had more drinks than ... [she] should have”.
- While at the pub she remembered that she had to pick up her car from the garage following its MOT. She did not wish to leave it overnight as this would incur a fine (which she could not afford) and inconvenience the garage owner.
- She made a “terrible snap and stupid decision to go and pick up the car. There was no thought process other than the financial stress of not being able to afford the fine ... [she] would incur if ... [she] left the car. ... [REDACTED] was at work that day and could not pick up the car”.
- Ms Henderson picked up the car from the garage and drove away at 17.21. The person she had spoken to at the garage described her to the police as “presented drunk and smelt of alcohol”. The garage’s CCTV showed that she had experienced a “stumble” before getting into the car and driving off.
- Whilst Ms Henderson initially said that she drove for about 5 minutes she conceded that it could have been for longer than that, due to there being a one-way system that could get “snarled up”. She did not go above second gear as the speed limit in ... [the area] was 20mph” and her car would not go at such low speeds above second gear.
- At 17.33 the police received a call from a second member of the public who stated to the police that they had followed the car for about half a mile. They reported that the car had no lights on, was being driven “all over the road”, and at times had mounted the kerb. The person had spoken to the driver of the car, Ms Henderson, and could tell she was intoxicated. When Ms Henderson had gone to knock on a door the person had taken her keys to prevent her from leaving the area. In her oral evidence Ms Henderson conceded that she had been driving without her lights on, she thought they might have been taken off their automatic setting by the garage as part of the MOT. She did not remember driving all over the road but did accept that she had mounted the kerb at one point and that her keys had been taken from her car by the other person. Ms Henderson had thought that she must have dropped them down a drain.

- The police had then attended. Ms Henderson had admitted to the police that she was the driver of the vehicle and was breathalysed and arrested on suspicion of drink driving.
- Ms Henderson was taken to the police station and found to have 78 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath, the legal limit being 35 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath.

In her TRA statement, and in her oral evidence, Ms Henderson told the panel that:

- [REDACTED] Ms Henderson had always had two or more jobs and was “not very good at sitting around”.
- After the birth of her child Ms Henderson received minimal support [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- Ms Henderson went to her GP on 7 August 2024 [REDACTED] and that “the health visitor had cancelled every appointment”. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The panel considered the admission to the allegation made by Ms Henderson to be consistent with the evidence before it and accepted that admission.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found allegation 1 proved.

Findings as to conviction of a relevant offence

The panel first considered whether the conduct of Ms Henderson, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers’ Standards.

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

A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct.

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
 - ...not undermining fundamental British values, including ... the rule of law, ...

The panel noted that Ms Henderson's actions were not relevant to teaching, working with children and/or working in an education setting as they took place outside an education setting and did not involve children.

The panel noted that the behaviour involved in committing the offence could have had an impact on the safety of members of the public. Ms Henderson ran the risk of causing harm to those in the community by driving whilst under the influence of alcohol with more than twice the legal limit of alcohol in her breath.

The panel also took account of the way the teaching profession is viewed by others. The panel considered that Ms Henderson's behaviour in committing the offence could affect public confidence in the teaching profession, given the influence that teachers may have on pupils, parents and others in the community. The public's confidence would be impacted by knowing that a teacher had driven a motor vehicle when she had twice the legal limit of alcohol in her breath and with her driving significantly compromised. However, the panel considered that as this was a first offence for Ms Henderson, [REDACTED] that the impact on public confidence was at a minor level.

The panel noted that Ms Henderson's behaviour did not lead to a sentence of imprisonment, which was indicative that the offence was at the less serious end of the possible spectrum.

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

This was a case concerning a serious driving offence that involved high levels of alcohol, the level of alcohol in Ms Henderson's breath being over twice the legal limit, which the Advice states is likely to be considered a relevant offence. The panel took into account the potentially serious risk that Ms Henderson's offence had caused to others. It noted that two members of the public had been sufficiently concerned at her conduct that one took the step of taking her keys from her and the other took the step of reporting the matter to the police.

The panel specifically rejected the suggestion that the offence involved in the case was a minor driving offence or a minor offence involving personal use of alcohol. Ms Henderson had chosen to drink sufficient alcohol that the level of alcohol in her breath was twice the legal limit. [REDACTED] this did not detract from the seriousness of her driving offence.

The panel considered that the offence of drink driving, involving the levels of alcohol that had been drunk by Ms Henderson, was extremely serious and put the public at serious, and unnecessary, risk.

The panel took into account:

- Ms Henderson's own account of her teaching;
- an undated general work reference from the [REDACTED] attesting to Ms Henderson's good record as a teacher;
- an undated reference from the parent of a tutee she had assisted over an 18-month period; and
- the reference and live evidence provided by Witness A.

The panel also took into consideration Ms Henderson's account of the personal [REDACTED] difficulties she was experiencing at the time of the offence including her struggle with isolation leading up to the events which formed the basis of the conviction.

Although the panel found that the evidence of Ms Henderson's teaching [REDACTED] and personal challenges were of note, the panel also found that the seriousness of the offending behaviour that led to the conviction was relevant to Ms Henderson's ongoing suitability to teach. The panel considered that a finding that this conviction was for a relevant offence was necessary to reaffirm clear standards of conduct so as to maintain public confidence in the teaching profession.

Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of conviction of a relevant offence, it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

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

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely:

- the protection of other members of the public;
- the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; and

- declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In the light of the panel's findings against Ms Henderson, which involved drink driving with over double the prescribed limit of alcohol in her breath after drinking in a local pub, public confidence in the profession could be significantly weakened if conduct such as that found against Ms Henderson were not treated with seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession. However, on the spectrum of seriousness, the panel did not consider this to be the most serious of cases.

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 Ms Henderson 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 Ms Henderson in the profession. The panel decided that there was a strong public interest consideration in retaining Ms Henderson in the profession, since no doubt had been cast upon her abilities as an educator and she was able to make a valuable contribution to the profession.

The panel considered carefully the seriousness of the behaviour, noting that the Advice states that the expectation of both the public and pupils, is that members of the teaching profession maintain a high 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 Ms Henderson.

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 elements of the Teachers' Standards;
- the commission of a serious criminal offence, including those that resulted in a conviction or caution, paying particular attention to offences that are 'relevant matters' for the purposes of the Police Act 1997 and criminal record disclosures; and
- actions or behaviours that ... undermine ... the rule of law.

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.

The panel noted that Ms Henderson's actions were deliberate and there was no evidence that she was acting under duress.

Ms Henderson had a previously good history, having demonstrated high standards in her personal and professional conduct and having contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel accepted that the incident was out of character.

The panel noted the following:

- That, in relation to her commission of the offence in the allegation, Ms Henderson had made admissions to the police, in the court proceedings and to the TRA at the earliest opportunity.
- The incident appeared to be a one-off event in an otherwise unblemished record at the School and with the TRA.
- [REDACTED]
- Ms Henderson had developed and demonstrated significant insight into the seriousness of her offending behaviour and the risk that it posed to others.
- Ms Henderson had demonstrated remorse for her offending behaviour and the impact that it had, or may have, on those around her, including the pupils at the School if she were to be unable to continue to teach.
- Ms Henderson had undertaken the drink driving course that reduced her period of disqualification from driving. She had also undertaken further learning, an NCFE Cache Level 2 Course in Understanding the Mental Health of Children and Young People, to help her to support pupils under her care.
- That Ms Henderson had been driving successfully since regaining her licence.
- Ms Henderson had developed strategies [REDACTED] such as running, including to raise funds for charity.
- The written, undated, general reference provided by Individual A, [REDACTED] in which she stated that she had *"the pleasure of working closely with Rowena, and can confidently say she is an exceptional educator both in and outside the classroom"*. She referred to Ms Henderson's *"ability to differentiate lessons for a range of abilities, particularly for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) ... [having] made her an invaluable member of the team"*. She went on to refer to Ms Henderson having taken on *"numerous leadership roles that had a lasting impact on the school"*. She gave as examples Ms Henderson's leadership on the school's sustainability initiative for four years and her

introduction and leading of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. In summary Individual A says;

- *“Rowena is an outstanding teacher and colleague. Her enthusiasm for her subject is contagious, and she fosters an inclusive, positive learning environment where all students feel supported and motivated to succeed. She has an incredible ability to balance her teaching duties with her extracurricular roles, always going above and beyond for her pupils”.*
- A written reference and oral evidence provided by Witness A, [REDACTED]. She told the panel that Ms Henderson continued to work part-time at the School. She referred to Ms Henderson as being *“a good classroom practitioner”* who *“delivers science lessons that are engaging and encourages students to become reflective practitioners.”* In her opinion Ms Henderson was a teacher who planned lessons well, provided feedback that encouraged pupils to understand what they needed to do to improve and who *“worked hard to develop resources which she shared with colleagues to further their own development”*. Ms Henderson *“always maintained positive relationships with all her colleagues, the pupils and the parents that she worked with during her time ... [at the School]”* and *“always maintained a professional attitude”*. Ms Henderson had an *“ability to engage with students especially those at KS3 and SEND students”*. Ms Henderson had developed whilst at the School, now being more willing to raise issues and ask for help and support, if needed. Witness A considered Ms Henderson to be *“a promising young teacher who should have a long career in front of her”*. Ms Henderson had already taken on additional responsibilities and was to take on the additional responsibility as manager of the KS4 Synergy course for science from September 2026. Witness A believed that if Ms Henderson was no longer able to work at the School, the students would miss her as *“they need and want to work with her”*, *“her engagement pushes them on”*, and *“the morale of the School would drop”*.

In light of all of these factors, the panel considered that the risk of repetition of the offending behaviour was very low.

The panel would encourage Ms Henderson to continue to develop managing strategies to assist her [REDACTED] and to take advantage of future support that may be available to her, [REDACTED].

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, the recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an

appropriate response. Given that the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum and, having considered the mitigating factors that were present, the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that are not acceptable, and the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

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

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Ms Rowena Henderson should not be the subject of a prohibition order. The panel has recommended that the findings of a relevant conviction should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Ms Henderson 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
 - ...not undermining fundamental British values, including ... the rule of law

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a finding of a conviction for a relevant offence involving driving with excess alcohol.

I have to determine whether the imposition of a prohibition order is proportionate and in the public interest. In considering that for this case, I have considered the overall aim of a prohibition order which is to protect pupils and to maintain public confidence in the profession. I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order in this case would achieve that aim taking into account the impact that it will have on the individual teacher. I have also asked myself whether a less intrusive measure, such as the published finding of a relevant conviction, would itself be sufficient to achieve the overall aim. I have to consider whether the consequences of such a publication are themselves sufficient. I

have considered therefore whether or not prohibiting Ms Henderson, 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 has observed:

“The panel noted that Ms Henderson’s actions were not relevant to teaching, working with children and/or working in an education setting as they took place outside an education setting and did not involve children.

The panel noted that the behaviour involved in committing the offence could have had an impact on the safety of members of the public. Ms Henderson ran the risk of causing harm to those in the community by driving whilst under the influence of alcohol with more than twice the legal limit of alcohol in her breath.”

I have also taken into account the panel’s comments on insight and remorse, which the panel has set out as follows:

“Ms Henderson had developed and demonstrated significant insight into the seriousness of her offending behaviour and the risk that it posed to others.

Ms Henderson had demonstrated remorse for her offending behaviour and the impact that it had, or may have, on those around her, including the pupils at the School if she were to be unable to continue to teach.”

I have therefore given this element some weight in reaching my decision.

I have gone on to consider the extent to which a prohibition order would maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel has observed:

“In the light of the panel’s findings against Ms Henderson, which involved drink driving with over double the prescribed limit of alcohol in her breath after drinking in a local pub, public confidence in the profession could be significantly weakened if conduct such as that found against Ms Henderson were not treated with seriousness when regulating the conduct of the profession. However, on the spectrum of seriousness, the panel did not consider this to be the most serious of cases.”

I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher being convicted of drink driving 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 a relevant conviction, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Ms Henderson herself. The panel has commented:

“Ms Henderson had a previously good history, having demonstrated high standards in her personal and professional conduct and having contributed significantly to the education sector. The panel accepted that the incident was out of character.”

The panel has noted positive written and oral evidence of Ms Henderson’s ability as a teacher including the comment that “Witness A considered Ms Henderson to be *“a promising young teacher who should have a long career in front of her”*.”

A prohibition order would prevent Ms Henderson from teaching. A prohibition order would also clearly deprive the public of her contribution to the profession for the period that it is in force.

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the panel’s comment that “the nature and severity of the behaviour were at the less serious end of the possible spectrum”. Although the panel has found that “Ms Henderson’s actions were deliberate and there was no evidence that she was acting under duress”, it also found that the “incident appeared to be a one-off event in an otherwise unblemished record”.

I have also placed considerable weight on the panel’s findings on the mitigating factors in this case including that Ms Henderson [REDACTED] had demonstrated remorse and significant insight, that she had undertaken a drink driving course, and that she had developed strategies to support her [REDACTED]. I have agreed with the panel’s assessment that “the risk of repetition of the offending behaviour was very low.”

For these reasons, I have concluded that a prohibition order is not proportionate or in the public interest. I consider that the publication of the findings made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that were not acceptable and that the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Oatley', with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Decision maker: David Oatley

Date: 19 August 2026

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