



Mr Lee Hessey: 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 Lee Hessey

Teacher ref number: 0338287

Teacher date of birth: 14 September 1979

TRA reference: 22821

Date of determination: 13 July 2026

Former employer: The Forge Academy Trust, Nottingham

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ('the panel') of the Teaching Regulation Agency ('the TRA') convened from 6 to 8 July 2026 at Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT, to consider the case of Mr Lee Hessey. The hearing then moved to be conducted virtually on 9 – 13 July 2026, once oral evidence had been heard.

The panel members were Miss Louisa Munton (teacher panellist – in the chair), Mr Patrick Berry (teacher panellist) and Dr Louise Wallace (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Ms Abigail Trencher of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr Jim Olphert of Mountford Chambers instructed by Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Hessey was present and was represented by Mr Ian Wright, barrister of Five Paper chambers.

The hearing took place in public and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of proceedings dated 9 April 2026.

It was alleged that Mr Hessey was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst working as CEO of The Forge Academy Trust ('Trust'):

1. During the 2021/2022 academic year, he shouted at Pupil A and/or acted in an intimidating manner towards Pupil A.
2. On or around 8 February 2023, during a meeting with colleagues he stated he was going "to sort out one of the naughty boys" and/or stated "the need to rattle pupils, make them jump" or words to that effect.
3. During a phone call with Colleague B on a date between 8 February 2023 and 8 March 2023, he referred to "rattling a naughty boy" or words to that effect when discussing a pupil.
4. On or around 8 March 2023, he attended a meeting, and made the following comments
 - a. "rattle the naughty boys" or words to that effect;
 - b. "we need to make them jump or scare them" or words to that effect;
 - c. "raising the roof with him" or words to that effect;
5. On or around 22 March 2023, he made the following comments to Colleague B:
 - a. "had a list of five children that [he] wanted to get rid of" or words to that effect;
 - b. when discussing shouting at Pupil B stated "the child had pissed themselves, absolutely shit themselves. No not shit themselves, pissed themselves" or words to that effect;
 - c. in respect of Pupil B stated "proper rattled him" or words to that effect;
 - d. in respect of Pupil B stated he had "broken him" or words to that effect.
 - e. described parents as "scrotes, vermin and pond life" or words to that effect.

6. Between on or around 22 to 24 March 2023, he behaved in an intimidating manner towards parents and/or made aggressive comments to parents as described in Schedule A;
7. During a conversation with Colleague B on or around 29 March 2023, he referred to parents who had submitted complaints as “low life” or words to that effect.
8. Between on or around September 2022 and April 2023, he sent messages to Colleague A and/or Colleague B with language that was inappropriate and/or homophobic and/or misogynistic and/or racist and/or transphobic and/or which discriminated against disabilities, as described in Schedule B.

Schedule A

- i. In respect of Parent C on or around 23 March 2023 he shouted at her and/or stated “You are a racist, get off my site” or words to that effect;
- ii. In respect of Parent C on or around 23 March 2023 he shouted at her and/or stated “you are banned from School premises, this is my School, I’m in charge” or words to that effect;
- iii. In respect of Parent B on or around 23 March 2023, he shouted at her and/or stated “No, not good enough...I will fight you all the way” or words to that effect.
- iv. In respect of Parent I on or around 24 March 2023, he shouted at her and/or stated “and you can get out of school” or words to that effect.

Schedule B

- i. “Just got rid of a child. worst in School broke mum. she pulled him out. Didn’t need to do much. She broke down crying when I said, ‘a terms ban for verbally abusing our teachers.” or words to that effect;
- ii. “I am head now. That is word for word what I’m telling the fucking lot of en. My way. And I’ll show the fucking world how to do the fucking job. Get some balls. Drop the bullshit.” Or words to that effect;
- iii. “What does bonkio parent want? How long has she been at sdba? She needs to know she can’t waste our time...want me to fuck her off?? Stupid cow.” or words to that effect;
- iv. “Ruth spoke to me like ‘oh don’t you come in we don’t want to upset ‘em. So no faith in me as CEO so fuk it, she’ll have to go We’ve got to brief trustees on lines etc. My first gripe against Ruth. Better be good that is all I can say.” or words to that effect;

- v. "I am not a bloody illegal am I...get sorted straight away. Fucking country." or words to that effect;
- vi. "Sir Keir Starmer organising a celebratory garden party now with David Lammy as guest speaker. Plans to storm Buckingham Palace will be in place so they can house the thousands of immigrants they welcome every day. If ever a left vs right this is it. Right gutted. Left gutted. Including my mate Kev." or words to that effect;
- vii. "Sentence to death for me. Twats like him causing division." or words to that effect;
- viii. "Buckingham Palace will be a lim city soon." or words to that effect;
- ix. "Proper man. Got the full box det set. In sickness and in health." or words to that effect;
- x. "He wants extraditing back to Bongo Bongo land where he was born on planet Zog. Hope not. The scottish tourette shoulder twitching label loving jock. Thatcher would turn in her grave with nonsense like this" or words to that effect;
- xi. "A coloured character. Surprise, surprise. Should be sent to New York prison and put in Leroy's cell." or words to that effect;
- xii. "Dr Jeff a bumber. El fagarino. With Dr Christian." or words to that effect;
- xiii. "There's good news – he is getting people to write the curriculum for us!!! Can you imagine?!?!? Them's bender books." or words to that effect;
- xiv. "We'll have some fun. Even [Colleague B] wil. We'll corrupt him." or words to that effect;
- xv. "We should get on the kids to make some posters. 'Truss out.' 'anti-monarchy.' Ex-Lib Dem. Doesn't know whether she Arthur or Martha. Fall on your sword you swine dog. And you look like a horse's arse luv." or words to that effect;
- xvi. "I should have been a fucking jap." or words to that effect;
- xvii. "She like the pansexuals." or words to that effect;
- xviii. "Don't waste the oily rags. Stuff her with her own jam rags." or words to that effect;
- xix. "Hope the Germans batter us. Southgate OUT. It's been awful to watch for the last few games. Euros a fluke." or words to that effect;

xx. “Ofsted. I hope they all go under a fucking lorry in some black ice tomorrow morning just in time for Christmas. Complete set of shitbags” or words to that effect.

The panel noted Mr Hessey’s response to the allegations as set out in his written statement dated 5 June 2026. Mr Hessey admitted the facts of allegations 5(e), 7, and 8.

He provided a partial admission to the facts of allegation 3, in that he admitted to using such language with Colleague B but could not recall the exact phone call or date. Mr Hessey denied the facts of allegations 1, 2, and 6 and provided no admission to allegations 4(a), 4(b), 4(c), 5(a), 5(b), 5(c) and 5(d). Mr Hessey accepted that those admitted facts amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, as set out in his written statement.

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 pupil list – pages 6 to 9

Section 2: Notice of hearing and response – pages 11 to 20.

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 22 to 58

Section 4: TRA documents – pages 60 to 538

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 540 to 614

The panel members confirmed that they had read all 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:

Colleague B – [REDACTED]

Parent B – [REDACTED]

Witness A – [REDACTED]

Witness B – [REDACTED]; and

Mr Hessey was present at the hearing and gave oral evidence.

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 Hessey commenced employment at the Trust as a headteacher on 1 September 2012. On 1 September 2016, he became Chief Executive Officer of the Trust, responsible for managing 6 primary schools.

On 27 March 2023, the Trust received complaints about Mr Hessey's behaviour towards parents relating to incidents which took place at St Augustine's Primary Academy ('the School') on 22, 23 and 24 March 2023. Witness A [REDACTED] was appointed on the same day as an independent investigation officer.

Two further complaints were brought under the Trust's whistleblowing policy by two senior leaders in the Trust, [REDACTED] and Colleague B, in April and May 2023. In [REDACTED] complaint, it was alleged that Mr Hessey, whilst acting as interim headteacher at the School during the 2021/2022 academic year, acted in an aggressive and intimidatory way towards a pupil.

During the investigation, text messages between Mr Hessey and Colleagues A and B from September 2022 to April 2023 were disclosed in which it was alleged that Mr Hessey used inappropriate and discriminatory language.

The matter was referred to the TRA on 27 November 2023.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

- 1. During the 2021/2022 academic year, you shouted at Pupil A and/or acted in an intimidating manner towards Pupil A.**

The panel noted that Mr Hessey denied the allegation, as set out in his written statement dated 5 June 2026. Closing submissions made on his behalf by his representative confirmed that he accepted that he raised his voice, but this was in response to a serious situation, so this allegation was denied factually.

The panel considered the documentary evidence before it along with the oral evidence they had heard from Witness B and Mr Hessey. Witness B described an incident

involving a vulnerable SEN pupil, who was having behavioural issues in a room adjacent to the classroom and disrupting the class. Mr Hessey was asked to deal with the issue and in doing so entered the room and shouted at Pupil A. He then left the room, and after a short while re-entered it on a second occasion in which he repeatedly shouted at Pupil A. He repeated the same behaviour a third time. Witness B recalled that Mr Hessey had mentioned that he was doing it 'army style'. Witness B said that she believed Pupil A was distressed by the incident and that he was on the floor holding his head and crying.

Mr Hessey disputed her characterisation of events. He maintained that he had been called to the classroom to address Pupil A's behaviour. He accepts he raised his voice to Pupil A but no more than necessary to deal with his disruptive behaviour.

The panel also considered the absence of any formal incident report having been filed for the incident, by either Witness B, the classroom teacher or Mr Hessey. The panel was also minded that no action was taken in respect of this incident until it was investigated because of the parental complaints and whistleblowing complaints in the following academic year.

The panel did not consider the evidence sufficiently clear or consistent to establish either shouting or intimidation on the balance of probabilities. It noted the passage of time, the lack of contemporaneous evidence, uncertainty as to what was actually said and the fact that witnesses differed over whether Mr Hessey was shouting or merely projecting his voice in response to a behavioural incident. The panel ultimately concluded there was too much uncertainty to make a finding.

The panel found allegation 1 not proved.

2. On or around 8 February 2023, during a meeting with colleagues you stated you were going "to sort out one of the naughty boys" and/or stated "the need to rattle pupils, make them jump" or words to that effect.

The panel noted that Mr Hessey denied this allegation, as set out in his written statement dated 5 June 2026 and confirmed in submissions made on his behalf.

The panel considered a written complaint made under the Trust's whistleblowing policy by Colleague B. In his complaint, Colleague B described a Trust principals' meeting on 8 February 2023 during which Mr Hessey discussed how he would deal with "*naughty boys*". Colleague B stated that Mr Hessey offered to another principal, [REDACTED], that he could come to her school and deal with a "*naughty boy*" if she wanted. The panel noted that Colleague B felt "*very uncomfortable*" with what Mr Hessey was offering and his impression was that Mr Hessey was "*even excited about the prospect*".

The panel considered the Trust's investigation report prepared by Witness A, which included screenshots of a text conversation between Mr Hessey and Colleague B

referring to the offer made to [REDACTED]. The panel noted that Mr Hessey sent a message stating, “[REDACTED] spoke to me like ‘oh don’t you come in we don’t want to upset em’ So no faith in me as CEO so fuk it she’ll have to go”.

The allegation depended largely upon the recollection of Colleague B. The panel noted there were no contemporaneous notes and that other meeting attendees, including relevant principals, had not been interviewed as part of the Trust’s investigation. It also considered that Colleague A stated during the Trust’s investigation that he could not recall inappropriate comments.

The panel found Colleague B to be a compelling witness, and it accepted that the language alleged to have been used was consistent with language Mr Hessey was capable of using, on the basis of the evidence before it. However, it found there was insufficient evidence to establish that Mr Hessey had used the words attributed to him at that specific meeting. The lack of corroboration and shortcomings in the Trust’s investigation meant the allegation fell short of the evidential burden.

The panel found allegation 2 not proved.

3. During a phone call with Colleague B on a date between 8 February 2023 and 8 March 2023, you referred to “rattling a naughty boy” or words to that effect when discussing a pupil.

The panel noted that Mr Hessey provided a partial admission to this allegation, insofar as he does not remember the phone call but accepts the words are language which he would use.

The panel considered a written complaint made under the Trust’s whistleblowing policy by Colleague B, in which he described Mr Hessey speaking to him on the phone on an unknown date between 8 February and 8 March 2023 about the need to “*rattle some of these naughty boys*”. The panel noted that Colleague B stated in his complaint that he had tried to move the conversation onto safer ground by responding to Mr Hessey by mentioning the need to be sensitive to pupils’ circumstances.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Colleague B, who it considered had no ulterior motive for giving the evidence he did, and raised the issues in good faith, having reflected on Mr Hessey’s conduct when the parental complaints were made.

The panel also considered the oral evidence and written statement of Mr Hessey, who it found to be credible and persuasive. He stated that he could not recollect the phone call because he and Colleague B spoke on the phone several times a day, but that this was language he would use and which he regretted.

The panel considered Colleague B's account, the reference in his whistleblowing complaint and the fact that Mr Hessey accepted he commonly used phrases such as "rattle" children. The panel noted however that Colleague A, who was said to have been involved in the discussions, did not corroborate that the alleged words had been used by Mr Hessey when he was interviewed during the Trust's investigation.

Whilst the panel considered the evidence capable of supporting the assertion that Mr Hessey would have said the words attributed to him in the allegation, overall the panel found that the evidence relied essentially upon Colleague B's recollection and lacked sufficient corroboration. The panel accepted Colleague B was truthful but concluded the evidence did not sufficiently establish the allegation on the balance of probabilities.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found allegation 3 not proved.

4. On or around 8 March 2023, you attended a meeting, and made the following comments

- a. "rattle the naughty boys" or words to that effect;**
- b. "we need to make them jump or scare them" or words to that effect;**
- c. "raising the roof with him" or words to that effect;**

The panel noted that Mr Hessey asserts that he does not remember using these terms at this meeting although he accepts that he used such terms on occasion.

The panel considered a written complaint made under the Trust's whistleblowing policy by Colleague B, in which he described conversations with Mr Hessey after holding interviews at the School on 8 March 2023. Colleague B stated that Mr Hessey had discussed behaviour at the School with the interview panel, including [REDACTED], Colleague A and [REDACTED], and had spoken of the need to "*rattle naughty boys*" and that he needed to make them "*jump*" or "*scare*" them. The panel noted that Colleague B stated that Mr Hessey had appeared animated and stimulated by the conversation and that Colleague B had voiced his discomfort regarding these comments to the rest of the panel once Mr Hessey had left.

The panel considered Colleague B's evidence, together with references in witness statements and investigation material. It noted the absence of meeting notes and that a number of potentially relevant witnesses had not been interviewed during the Trust's investigation, including attendees who could have provided corroborative evidence. The panel also noted that Colleague B had no recollection of Mr Hessey making the comment attributed to him at 4(c).

The panel regarded Colleague B as a truthful and reliable witness who was not attempting to exaggerate matters. However, it found the evidential base too narrow. There was insufficient contemporaneous or supporting evidence to establish that the specific comments were made at the specific meeting alleged. The panel was critical of the quality of the investigation and the failure to obtain evidence from additional attendees. It therefore concluded that none of particulars (a), (b) or (c) was proved.

The panel found allegation 4(a), (b) and (c) not proved.

5. On or around 22 March 2023, you made the following comments to Colleague B:

- a. “had a list of five children that [you] wanted to get rid of” or words to that effect;**
- b. when discussing shouting at Pupil B stated “the child had pissed themselves, absolutely shit themselves. No not shit themselves, pissed themselves” or words to that effect;**
- c. in respect of Pupil B stated “proper rattled him” or words to that effect;**
- d. in respect of Pupil B stated you had “broken him” or words to that effect.**
- e. described parents as “scrotes, vermin and pond life” or words to that effect.**

The panel noted that Mr Hessey provided no admission to allegations 5(a), 5(b), 5(c) and 5(d), insofar as he stated that he did not recollect using this language, but that they may well have been words that he used, as set out in his written statement dated 5 June 2026 and in submissions made on his behalf. Mr Hessey admitted allegation 5(e) as set out in his written statement and his submissions.

The panel considered the written complaint made under the Trust’s whistleblowing policy by Colleague B, in which he described a telephone conversation with Mr Hessey who told him that he had shouted at a child and *“the child had pissed themselves, absolutely shit themselves. No not shit themselves, pissed themselves”*. Colleague B further stated that Mr Hessey had said he had *“proper rattled”* the child and *“broken”* him. In the complaint, Colleague B stated that Mr Hessey had spoken about having a list of five children that he wanted to get rid of and had already lost two pupils to home education. The panel noted that in his written complaint Colleague B stated that Mr Hessey later referred to the parents who had brought complaints against him as *“vermin, scrotes, pond life and bottom feeders”*.

The panel considered the Trust's investigation report prepared by Witness A, which included screenshots of texts from Mr Hessey to Colleague B. The screenshots showed that Mr Hessey had sent messages stating, "*Sorted Pupil B, Sorted Pupil C*", and "*same boy I rattled jumped fence. Gone to uncles [laughing emoji]*" on 22 March 2023. The panel noted that on the same date Mr Hessey had sent a series of messages which stated, "*Pupil B gone. Dad very angry...*", "*1st casualty*", "*Announced the departure of our Pupil B to the year group... to which they all cheered*", and "*I want another 3 casualties by end of week. Strategic casualties.*"

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Colleague B, the oral evidence of Mr Hessey, and the documentation.

In relation to 5 (a), the panel considered Colleague B's evidence was clear and cogent and reflected his whistleblowing complaint made less than one month after the conversation was alleged to have taken place and was confirmed in the Trust's investigation report and corroborated by several of the text messages and also by Mr Hessey's during his interview with the Trust's investigator.

The panel considered there was clear triangulation between Colleague B's evidence, contemporaneous documents and admissions made by Mr Hessey. It was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the comment was made.

In respect of the comments attributed to Mr Hessey under 5(b) the panel considered Colleague B's whistleblowing complaint, his witness statement, the relevant messages, Mr Hessey's interview and his written submissions in which he accepted using the expressions referred to.

The panel found substantial documentary support for the allegation and considered the egregious language was likely to have remained memorable. There was direct corroboration from contemporaneous materials and admissions by Mr Hessey. The panel was again mindful that the comments were alleged to have been made fairly close to the date on which Colleague B submitted his whistleblowing complaint. For those reasons the panel was satisfied that Mr Hessey had made them.

In respect of 5(c), the panel again considered Colleague B's evidence, his whistleblowing complaint, the material of the electronic messages and Mr Hessey's interview during the Trust's investigation in which he accepted he would have used the word "rattled".

The panel considered there was sufficient documentary and oral evidence to establish that the comment had been made. It was a term Mr Hessey accepted he used, as was apparent from his messages.

In relation to 5(d), the panel was not satisfied that this comment was made. Having reviewed the documentary evidence, there was a notable absence of that reference.

One message refers “*Yes. Just got rid of a child. Worst in school broke mum*”, but there was no message that supported him having used the term “*broken him*” in reference to his treatment of a pupil. The panel considered the references in Colleague B's evidence, text messages and Mr Hessey's interview during the Trust investigation, and did not find sufficient evidence that Mr Hessey had said he had “broken” Pupil B. The distinction was material and the allegation was therefore not proved.

In relation to 5(e), the panel noted that in closing submissions it is accepted Mr Hessey used the words to describe a certain group of parents at the School as “*scrotes, vermin and pond life*”. The panel relied upon Colleague B's evidence, the whistleblowing complaint, the investigation material and admissions in Mr Hessey's written submissions. It considered the words used to be so grotesque as to be memorable to Colleague B, particularly given the proximity of when they were alleged to have been made and the date he submitted his whistleblowing complaint.

The panel found significant corroboration and considered that Mr Hessey had effectively accepted using the language. It was satisfied that the comments had been made.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found allegations 5(a), 5(b), 5(c) and 5(e) proved but that 5 (d) was not proved.

6. Between on or around 22 to 24 March 2023, you behaved in an intimidating manner towards parents and/or made aggressive comments to parents as described in Schedule A;

The panel noted that Mr Hessey denied this allegation, as set out in his written statement dated 5 June 2026 and his submissions.

In relation to the incident that occurred on 23 March 2023, which relates to i) and ii) of Schedule A, the panel considered Parent C's letter of complaint to the Trust. It also considered the other complaints that referred to the same incident made by Parents A and B and the interview notes taken during the Trust's investigation interviews with Parents A, B, C, D, E & F.

The panel also considered the minutes of the interviews with the two classroom teachers, Teacher A and Teacher B as part of the Trust's investigation. Teacher A stated that Parent C had said to Pupil H's mother on 22 March 2023 to “*speak fucking English*”. The panel noted that Teacher A stated that Parent C “*was being racist and it was quite clear that was what it was... Parent C wasn't telling the mum to repeat herself in English, she was being rude and I told her to stop*”.

Teacher A states that on 23 March she would not say that Mr Hessey was screaming. Rather that he was speaking loudly but could have raised his voice more. Teacher A confirmed that Parent C was being very loud and was shouting at Mr Hessey and that

she had shouted first. She then saw parents following Mr Hessey and Parent C in a huddle. Teacher B confirmed in her interview that Parent C started shouting at Mr Hessey and said, “*You’re a fucking prick, you’re a fucking joke*”. She confirmed that Mr Hessey was speaking loudly but that Parent C was not letting him talk, she was shouting and being aggressive.

The panel considered the only oral evidence before them – that given by Parent B and Mr Hessey.

Whilst the panel considered Parent B had come across well during her interview, and appeared truthful and clear, there were aspects of her overall evidence that caused the panel some concern. Regarding the incident on 23 March 2023, she maintained during oral evidence that she did not witness, or hear, the beginning of the conversation between Mr Hessey and Parent C. She only took notice of it when it became very loud, during which she heard Mr Hessey call Parent C a racist and saying that she must leave the School site.

Mr Hessey maintained that whilst he did use the words attributed to him, he did not shout at Parent C and was not acting in an intimidatory or aggressive manner towards her.

In respect of the incident on 24 March, to which iii) of Schedule A relates, during her oral evidence, Parent B explained the events of that day. She was clear that she had found Mr Hessey’s conduct towards her intimidatory, that he had shouted at her without cause, and that she had had to lean back against the railing as he was so close to her.

She explained that she was not ‘*pally pally*’ with Parent C, though she would speak to her around the School as she would other parents, and that she only made her complaint to the Trust following the interaction she had had directly with Mr Hessey on the 24 March, that relates to iii) of Schedule A. This was contrary however, to the complaint she had made to Ofsted on 24 March 2023, after the incident between her and Mr Hessey, in which she only complained about Mr Hessey’s conduct towards Parent C on 23 March 2023. The panel noted that this seemed at odds with her evidence. It also begged the question of why her in complaint to Ofsted she would not have also complained of Mr Hessey’s behaviour towards her, if it had been as serious as asserted, given it was directed at her, and was the closest in time.

The panel considered the oral evidence and written statement of Mr Hessey, who denied this allegation and stated that his behaviour towards parents was not intimidatory and that he had not made aggressive comments. The panel noted that Mr Hessey stated that he regretted the way he handled the interaction in that he was not able to calm the parent down and wished he had just walked away. Mr Hessey further stated that it was Parent B who was aggressive from the outset. In relation to the comment at Schedule A(iii), Mr Hessey stated that this was in the context of Parent B’s child’s attendance after Parent B had stated that she would complain about him.

The panel considered all the evidence, particularly those submitted by the parents both in the form of their complaints to the School and Ofsted, and the minutes of their interviews with the Trust's investigator. However, the panel also considered the evidence of the two classroom teachers and Witness C, and the oral evidence given by Mr Hessey and Parent B. Overall, on balance whilst the panel was persuaded Mr Hessey had made the comments attributed to him in i) and ii) and either "*I will fight you*" or "*I will fine you*" to Parent C in relation to iii) of Schedule A, the panel was not satisfied that the evidence was sufficient to conclude on a balance of probabilities that Mr Hessey had acted in an aggressive and intimidatory manner.

The panel therefore found allegation 6 not proved.

7. During a conversation with Colleague B on or around 29 March 2023, you referred to parents who had submitted complaints as "low life" or words to that effect.

The panel noted that Mr Hessey admitted this allegation, as set out in his written statement dated 5 June 2026 and in his closing submissions Mr Hessey accepted using this term but his description (if not the language) was supported by colleagues and must be put into context.

The panel considered the written complaint made under the Trust's whistleblowing policy by Colleague B on 14 April 2023, in which he described a phone call from Mr Hessey on 29 March 2023 where Mr Hessey again spoke in disparaging terms about the parents who had submitted complaints against him and called them "*low-life*". Colleague B further stated in the complaint that Mr Hessey said the partner of one of the parents who had complained was involved in knife crime and county lines, and Mr Hessey "*was showing these people they were 'bad parents'*". The panel regarded this complaint as having been made very shortly after the events and therefore carrying significant evidential weight.

The panel considered Colleague B's witness statement where he records that during a telephone call on 29 March 2023 Mr Hessey described the parents who had submitted complaints as "low life". Colleague B gave a specific date, time and context for the conversation and explained that the call took place shortly after the parental complaints.

The panel further considered the investigation interview records and the whistleblowing complaint, both of which contained references to the same language. It also considered Mr Hessey's own evidence. The panel noted that in his witness statement and submissions he accepted using the expression "low life", although he sought to place the remark in context and denied that it amounted to unacceptable professional conduct. The panel specifically noted the admission recorded in paragraph 5.18 of his witness statement and the acceptance in closing submissions that he had used the term a few days after the parental complaints.

The panel was satisfied that there was compelling and consistent evidence that the comment had been made. It attached significant weight to:

- Colleague B's clear recollection of a specific conversation.
- The proximity in time between the conversation and Colleague B's whistleblowing complaint.
- The consistency between Colleague B's witness statement, whistleblowing complaint and the investigation evidence.
- Mr Hessey's own acceptance that he had used the term.

The panel considered that the various sources of evidence "married up" and therefore found the factual allegation proved on the balance of probabilities.

Accordingly, the allegation was found proved.

8. Between on or around September 2022 and April 2023, you sent messages to Colleague A and/or Colleague B with language that was inappropriate and/or homophobic and/or misogynistic and/or racist and/or transphobic and/or which discriminated against disabilities, as described in Schedule B.

The panel noted that Mr Hessey admitted this allegation, as set out in his written statement dated 5 June 2026. In his closing submissions it was confirmed that Mr Hessey accepted sending the twenty messages. His evidence is that the opinions and descriptions are not statements of his true beliefs but rather 'letting off steam' to two colleagues in a closed message group, sometimes outside of work hours and during a period of stress whilst performing a difficult and responsible role.

The panel first satisfied itself that the messages relied upon in Schedule B existed within the material contained in the bundle and that, with one limited exception, they had been sent by Mr Hessey. The panel reviewed each message against the screen shots of the messages in evidence, and the panel considered that the first part of allegation 8(xiii) ("There's good news – he is getting people to write the curriculum for us!!! Can you imagine?!?!?!") was not authored by Mr Hessey but by Colleague A. However, the panel found that the response "Thems bender books" was sent by Mr Hessey and was attributable to him. The panel also noted that there was an error in vi) in that the sub-allegation records the words "... *Right gutted. Left gutted.*" whereas it should state "*Right gutted. Left happy.*", being an accurate reflection of the screenshot of that message. The panel therefore proceeded on the basis that all Schedule B messages existed and were sent by Mr Hessey, save for the opening words of allegation 8(xiii).

The panel's principal task in respect of each allegation was to determine whether the language met the wording of the allegation, namely whether it was inappropriate and/or

homophobic and/or misogynistic and/or racist and/or transphobic and/or discriminatory towards disability. In determining this it considered each message in turn.

Schedule B(i)

The panel considered this message demonstrated gloating and triumphalism about a parent's distress and a pupil leaving the school. Particular weight was placed on the phrases "*just got rid of a child*", "*broke mum*" and "*didn't need to do much*". The panel considered the message contained vitriol and reflected an assertion of power and control over a parent. As a school leader, Mr Hessey was expected to model appropriate professional behaviour even in difficult circumstances. The language was inappropriate because it celebrated an outcome involving a child and distressed parent and portrayed that outcome as an achievement.

The panel was satisfied the language used was inappropriate.

Schedule B(ii)

The panel considered the overall tenor of the message was one of domination and authority, encapsulated by the repeated references to "*my way*" and showing others "*how to do the fucking job*". Although the panel did not ultimately characterise the message as bullying, it considered the language inappropriate because it asserted a power imbalance between Mr Hessey and more junior colleagues and conveyed an "either my way or the highway" attitude. The phrase "*get some balls*" was additionally regarded as sexist language.

The panel was satisfied the language used was inappropriate.

Schedule B(iii)

The panel considered the references to a parent as a "*stupid cow*" and "*bonkio parent*" were plainly derogatory and inappropriate. It noted that "*bonkio*" appeared to be a pejorative reference potentially impugning a person's mental health, without any proper basis for doing so. However, in the absence of any context as to the parent's potential mental health condition it could not take this further. Regardless of the precise context, the language was dismissive, insulting and unprofessional.

The panel was satisfied the language used was inappropriate.

Schedule B(iv)

The panel accepted the message existed and was sent by Mr Hessey. However, it was not satisfied that it met the stem of the allegation. Whilst the message was undoubtedly ill advised and involved discussion of a colleague behind her back, the panel considered there was insufficient context to determine whether it crossed the threshold into

inappropriate conduct of the kind alleged. It noted that Mr Hessey used similarly critical language about male colleagues and therefore did not regard the message as sexist. The panel concluded that the evidential basis was insufficient to establish that the language itself fell within the categories identified in the allegation.

This part of the allegation was not proven.

Schedule B(v)

The panel considered this was a complaint about immigration status and the treatment of so called "illegals". Whilst it was not prepared to conclude that the message was overtly racist because the context was unclear, it considered the use of "illegal" in a pejorative context rendered the language inappropriate. The panel also viewed the message in the context of other immigration related messages and concluded it was inconsistent with the standards expected of a headteacher.

The panel was satisfied the language used was inappropriate.

Schedule B(vi)

The panel recognised the political nature of the message but concluded that it went beyond mere political comment. It linked immigration with a named Black politician and described immigrants "*storming Buckingham Palace*". The panel considered the language derogatory and inappropriate. The panel concluded that it was inappropriate within the meaning of the allegation.

The panel was satisfied the language used was inappropriate.

Schedule B(vii)

The panel regarded it as inappropriate for a school leader to advocate a death sentence for an individual, irrespective of who that individual was. The additional description of the person as a "*twat*" reinforced the inappropriate nature of the message. The language was offensive, abusive and wholly unsuitable.

The panel was satisfied the language used was inappropriate.

Schedule B(viii)

The panel understood the term '*lim*' referred to Muslims as confirmed by Mr Hessey in his oral evidence. The panel regarded "*lim city*" as a derogatory reference to Muslims. It considered the message conveyed a pejorative suggestion that an area was being overrun by Muslims and reflected a discriminatory attitude towards people of the Muslim faith. The term itself was considered offensive and the overall message racist within the meaning of the allegation.

The panel was satisfied the language used was racist.

Schedule B(ix)

The panel accepted the message had been sent and that it referred to Alf Garnett. However, whilst it considered the message to be in poor taste, it did not find that it amounted to inappropriate, racist, homophobic, misogynistic, transphobic or disability discriminatory language as alleged. It therefore did not satisfy the terms of the allegation.

The panel was not satisfied, therefore, based on the stem, that this part of allegation 8 was proven.

Schedule B(x)

The panel considered the message contained several separate offensive references. "*Bongo Bongo land*" was regarded as an offensive and racist expression traditionally directed towards black or African people. The references to "*Tourette shoulder twitching*" were perceived as mocking a disability. The description of someone as a "*jock*" was additionally derogatory towards Scottish nationality. Taken as a whole, the panel found the message both racist and discriminatory towards disability.

The panel was satisfied the language used was racist and discriminatory against those with disabilities.

Schedule B(xi)

The panel considered the phrase "*coloured character*" was an offensive racial descriptor which should not be used in modern discourse. Anyone working within the school sector, receiving regular equality, diversity & inclusion (EDI) training, would know that this is an offensive term that absolutely should not be used. The subsequent references to prison and "*Leroy's cell*" reinforced the racial stereotyping implicit in the message. The panel regarded the language as overtly racist.

The panel was satisfied the language used was racist.

Schedule B(xii)

The panel found that "*bumber*" was likely to be a typo and was likely to have meant as '*bummer*' and that together "*El fagarino*" were plainly intended as derogatory references to homosexuality. The panel was similarly certain that anyone working within the school sector, receiving regular EDI training would know that these are offensive terms that should not be used. It considered the language offensive, degrading and homophobic. The fact that the words may have been intentionally misspelt did not alter their meaning or effect.

The panel was satisfied the language used was homophobic.

Schedule B(xiii)

The panel found that the initial words of the message were not written by Mr Hessey. However, it found that the response "*Thems bender books*" had been sent by him. The panel regarded "*bender*" as a plainly offensive and homophobic slur. It further considered the comment disparaged inclusive educational material relating to different family structures in the curriculum which was additionally concerning given Mr Hessey's senior role.

The panel was satisfied the language used was homophobic.

Schedule B(xiv)

The panel accepted the message existed but was not satisfied that it met the terms of the allegation. Whilst arguably dismissive of Colleague B and suggestive of bringing him round to Mr Hessey's way of thinking, the panel found insufficient context to conclude that it was inappropriate in the sense alleged.

This part of allegation 8 was not found proven.

Schedule B(xv)

The panel considered the phrase "*doesn't know whether she Arthur or Martha*" was derogatory and capable of referring both to gender identity and sexual orientation. It further regarded "*horse's arse luv*" as insulting language directed towards a woman. The message was therefore misogynistic and transphobic.

The panel was satisfied the language used was misogynistic and transphobic.

Schedule B(xvi)

The panel found that "*Jap*" is a pejorative term for a Japanese person and one that is widely understood to be offensive. The addition of the expletive that preceded it strengthened the derogatory nature of the remark. The panel also noted the inclusion of a photograph appearing to show Japanese kamikaze pilots to reinforce the fascist stereotype being presented.

The panel was satisfied the language used was racist.

Schedule B(xvii)

The panel considered the message implied that there was something objectionable about "pansexuals" and treated sexual identity as a subject for ridicule. Although the precise

meaning was unclear, the panel found the language inappropriate.

The panel was satisfied the language used was inappropriate.

Schedule B(xviii)

The panel regarded the phrase "*jam rags*" as a degrading and offensive reference to women. It considered the message, particularly the term "*don't waste the oily rags*", which the panel determined referred to using oil covered rags to set someone alight, trivialised violence towards a woman and used deeply offensive imagery. The panel considered the language as hateful, inappropriate and misogynistic.

The panel was satisfied the language used was misogynistic.

Schedule B(xix)

The panel accepted that the football comments itself were innocuous. However, it considered the accompanying image of Adolf Hitler transformed the overall message. Read in context, the panel interpreted the message as expressing sympathy with or admiration for Nazi Germany and was chilling, given that the image appeared out of the blue, devoid of apparent context. It therefore concluded that the message crossed the threshold into racist conduct.

The panel was satisfied the language used was racist.

Schedule B(xx)

The panel found it wholly inappropriate to express the hope that Ofsted inspectors would die in a road traffic incident and to describe them as a "*complete set of shitbags*". The language was abusive, offensive and far removed from the standards expected of a headteacher. It therefore constituted inappropriate language.

The panel was satisfied the language used was inappropriate.

Overall Schedule B findings

The panel found the following parts of allegation proved: 8(i), 8(ii), 8(iii), 8(v), 8(vi), 8(vii), 8(viii), 8(x), 8(xi), 8(xii), 8(xiii) in part, 8(xv), 8(xvi), 8(xvii), 8(xviii), 8(xix) and 8(xx).

The panel found the following parts not proved: 8(iv), 8(ix) and 8(xiv).

Given its conclusions, the panel found allegation 8 substantially proved.

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

Having found some 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 Hessey, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Hessey 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
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
 - not undermining fundamental British values, including individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- 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 concluded that the proven messages demonstrated repeated failures to show mutual respect and tolerance towards those with different backgrounds, beliefs, sexual orientations, ethnicities and disabilities. In particular, the racist, homophobic, transphobic and disability-related messages were plainly inconsistent with the obligation to demonstrate mutual respect and tolerance of others.

Whilst there was concern that there were messages advocating violence towards others which might engage the requirement concerning the rule of law, the panel ultimately did not rely upon that aspect of the Teachers' Standards. It did not find that the messages amounted to incitement of violence or opposition to democratic values. Instead, its focus was upon the repeated failures to demonstrate mutual respect, tolerance and professional behaviour.

The panel also considered whether the conduct of Mr Hessey, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Headteachers Standards. The panel found significant breaches of the Headteachers Standards.

In the section headed "Ethics and Professional Conduct", headteachers are required to:

- uphold public trust in school leadership and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour.
- show tolerance of and respect for the rights of others, recognising differences and respecting cultural diversity within contemporary Britain.

The panel considered that a substantial proportion of the Schedule B messages directly undermined these obligations because they contained racist, homophobic, transphobic and disability-related discriminatory language. Such communications were wholly inconsistent with respect for diversity and with the ethical leadership expected of a headteacher.

The panel also considered Section 2 of the Headteachers Standards, under "School Culture", which requires headteachers to:

- create a culture where pupils experience a positive and enriching school life.
- ensure a culture of high staff professionalism.

The panel concluded that the conduct found proved was fundamentally inconsistent with creating and maintaining a culture of high staff professionalism. Whilst acknowledging the positive evidence given about Mr Hessey's work in other respects, the panel concluded that a single serious departure from professional standards was sufficient to amount to a breach. The text messages, the comments made to Colleague B concerning children and parents, and the discriminatory language all undermined the professional culture expected from a CEO and interim headteacher.

The panel considered the framework that operated within the Trust at which Mr Hessey worked.

The panel found that the conduct proved was inconsistent with the Trust's Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy. Section 9 provided:

- Staff members using a work device outside school must not use the device in any way which would violate the school's terms of acceptable use, as set out in Appendix 2

Appendix 2, required the following agreement from users:

- I will not use any improper language when communicating online, including in emails or other messaging services.

Many of the Schedule B messages involved profanity, discriminatory language, derogatory comments regarding individuals and offensive stereotypes. The panel had little difficulty concluding that those messages involved "improper language" and therefore breached the policy. It also noted that Mr Hessey had accepted in his interview during the Trust's disciplinary process that he had not complied with the policy.

The panel also considered the Trust's Smartphone Agreement, which required staff to comply with the Acceptable Use Policy and expressly recorded:

- I agree to read and follow The Forge Trust Acceptable Use Policy and smartphone User Agreement form.
- I will not use WhatsApp for any school communication.

The text communications forming allegation 8 were exchanged on work devices, through a group used for school-related communications, and concerned school business and school personnel. The panel considered that this further demonstrated a failure to adhere to the Trust's expectations.

The panel considered paragraph 4 of the Trust's Disciplinary Policy, which required employees to:

- maintain conduct in keeping with the interests and standards of the MAT (multi academy trust).
- maintain, at all times, a high standard of integrity and conduct.

The panel found that the conduct proved under allegations 5, 7 and 8 fell materially below these standards. It further noted that during the Trust's investigation Mr Hessey accepted that, viewed against those standards, he had not complied with them.

The panel attached particular weight to the Staff Code of Conduct. Paragraph 1.6 states:

- There is an expectation that all employees within The Forge Trust will conduct themselves in a manner commensurate with the highest standard in order to maintain public trust and confidence in themselves as employees and the school generally, so they are beyond reproach in the performance of their duties.

Paragraph 1.7 provides:

- Each member of school staff has a duty to ensure that the appropriate standards of conduct are upheld both by themselves and by colleagues.

Paragraph 2.4 states:

- Staff are expected to provide the highest possible standard of conduct and service.

Paragraph 7.1 provides:

- All employees should always act in a courteous, efficient and impartial manner towards all individual pupils, groups of pupils, staff, parents, governors, colleagues and other individuals. Staff must always treat pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect.

Paragraph 7.5 adds:

- Staff should be extremely cautious when using social networking sites outside of work and avoid publishing, or allowing to be published, any material, including comments or images which could damage their professional reputation, the reputation of the school, and/or bring the school into disrepute."

The panel concluded that the proven conduct represented a clear breach of these provisions. The discriminatory language, abusive references to parents and pupils, derogatory comments concerning colleagues and the repeated use of offensive language were incompatible with the requirement to maintain public trust, demonstrate courtesy, show respect to others and preserve the reputation of the Trust. The panel also noted Mr Hessey's acceptance in his interview with the Trust's investigator that his conduct conflicted with the standards expected of him.

The panel also considered whether Mr Hessey'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 concluded that the conduct found proved under allegations 5(a), 5(b), 5(c), 5(e), 7 and the proven particulars of allegation 8 demonstrated repeated and serious departures from the standards expected of a teacher and school leader. The conduct, including text messages and communications with Colleague B, involved discriminatory and offensive language, derogatory and demeaning references to pupils, parents and colleagues, breaches of multiple Trust policies and failures to meet both the Teachers' Standards and Headteachers' Standards. The panel found that the offence of intolerance and/ or hatred on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation or any of the other protected characteristics was relevant.

The conduct was therefore of a serious nature, which fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession, and amounted to unacceptable professional conduct.

For these reasons, the panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Hessey 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 Hessey was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

In relation to whether Mr Hessey'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 Hessey'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 Hessey was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the Panel found that the offence of intolerance and/or hatred on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation or any of the other protected characteristics was relevant.

The panel considered that 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 applied the guidance at page 10 of the Advice to Panels and considered whether a member of the public, informed of the facts found proved, would think less of the teaching profession as a consequence of the conduct. It concluded that they would. The panel regarded the proven conduct as wholly inconsistent with the standards expected of a teacher and, in particular, a CEO and interim headteacher responsible for leading schools, pupils and staff.

The panel attached particular significance to Mr Hessey's senior position within the profession. As CEO of a multi academy trust and acting headteacher, he occupied a position of considerable authority and influence. The language found proved was not confined to private personal conversations between friends. Much of it was communicated through work-related channels to other senior leaders within the Trust and concerned pupils, parents, staff and wider public issues. The panel considered that

members of the public would rightly expect significantly higher standards from a school leader occupying such a role.

The panel considered that allegations 5(a), (b), (c) and (e) were capable of bringing the profession into disrepute. The comments about wanting to "*get rid of*" children, having "*rattled*" a pupil, boasting about a pupil having "*pissed themselves*" and referring to parents as "*scrotes, vermin and pond life*" demonstrated a highly inappropriate attitude towards pupils and parents. The panel considered that members of the public would be shocked to learn that a senior educational leader had used such language about children and families. Even where behaviour problems existed or parents had been challenging, the public would expect a headteacher or CEO to respond with professionalism and restraint rather than using gloating, derogatory or demeaning language.

The panel considered Mr Hessey's oral evidence in which he said that he only made such remarks about a small group of parents, and that the majority of the local community might support a robust approach to behaviour management, the panel unanimously concluded that the language used went far beyond robust discipline. Whatever views members of the community might hold about school discipline, teachers and school leaders are held to higher professional standards. The proven language was therefore capable of lowering public confidence in the profession.

The panel further concluded that allegation 7 amounted to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute. The panel recognised that the allegation involved a single expression, namely referring to complaining parents as "*low life*". However, it considered the remark in its proper context. The language was used by a CEO and interim headteacher when discussing parents who had exercised their right to make complaints about school matters. The panel considered that the use of such terminology by a senior educational leader was liable to undermine public confidence in the professionalism and impartiality expected of teachers.

The panel considered that if parents became aware that an interim headteacher or CEO had referred to them in such terms, public confidence in both the individual and the wider profession would be damaged. The panel observed that such a comment, if reported publicly, would readily generate adverse publicity capable of reflecting poorly on the profession as a whole.

Finally, the panel found it was difficult to argue that the proven Schedule B messages did not amount to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

The panel noted that many of the messages contained racist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic or disability-related derogatory language. Others contained offensive comments about colleagues, parents, inspectors and members of the public. The panel accepted that individuals are entitled to hold private political and personal views. However, it considered that the issue was not the existence of views themselves, but the

language used to express those views and the discriminatory nature of many of the comments.

The panel considered that if the proven messages were published and attributed to a serving CEO and interim headteacher, members of the public would regard them as unacceptable and would be likely to think less of the teaching profession. The messages demonstrated attitudes and language fundamentally inconsistent with the values of inclusivity, equality, respect and professionalism which parents, pupils and society expect teachers and school leaders to uphold.

Particular weight was placed upon the racist, homophobic, transphobic and disability-related messages found proved under Schedule B. The panel considered that public confidence in the profession depends upon teachers demonstrating respect for individuals from all backgrounds. The use of discriminatory slurs and stereotypes by a senior school leader was therefore especially damaging to the standing and reputation of the profession.

The panel concluded that the conduct found proved under allegations 5(a), 5(b), 5(c), 5(e), 7 and the proved particulars of allegation 8 would be regarded by members of the public as unacceptable conduct by a teacher, and particularly by a CEO and interim headteacher. The language used was abusive, discriminatory, offensive and inconsistent with the standards expected of educational leaders. The conduct was therefore capable of diminishing public trust and confidence in the teaching profession and amounted to conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Hessey'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 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 two of them to be relevant in this case, namely: 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 Mr Hessey, which involved sending text messages and communications with a colleague containing discriminatory and offensive language and breaches of multiple Trust policies there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils and protection of the public.

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

The panel was of the view that a strong public interest consideration in declaring proper standards of conduct in the profession was also present as the conduct found against Mr Hessey was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

The panel also considered whether there was a public interest in retaining the teacher in the profession, having regard to his long career, his previous contribution to education and the mitigation relied upon on his behalf.

The panel considered that the conduct found proved was serious. The teacher was not only a teacher but a CEO and interim headteacher. In that role, he was expected to demonstrate exemplary ethical standards and to set the tone for staff, pupils and parents. The panel found that his language, particularly in allegations 5, 7 and 8, fell significantly short of those standards. The panel considered that the discriminatory, offensive and derogatory nature of the language used meant that the public interest in maintaining confidence in the profession and in declaring proper standards was strongly engaged.

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

In view of the clear public interest considerations that were present, the panel considered carefully whether or not it would be proportionate to impose a prohibition order, taking into account the effect that this would have on Mr Hessey.

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;

- actions or behaviours that undermine fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

It concluded that the conduct found proved did engage the category of behaviour involving serious intolerance or discriminatory attitudes. The panel had found a number of Schedule B messages proved which were inappropriate and/or racist, homophobic, misogynistic, transphobic or discriminatory in relation to disability. The panel considered that such language was fundamentally inconsistent with the standards expected of teachers and school leaders.

The panel also considered whether the behaviour could properly be characterised as bullying or off-rolling. Having considered the evidence carefully, the panel did not proceed on that basis. Although allegation 5 included comments about wanting to “*get rid of*” children and the panel regarded that language as serious and offensive, it had not found evidence that the teacher had in fact taken steps amounting to off-rolling. The panel also noted that the allegations concerning direct intimidating behaviour towards parents had not been found proved. The panel therefore considered it would be unsafe to treat bullying or off-rolling as aggravating features for the purpose of sanction. The panel's assessment was therefore focused on the findings actually made, namely the serious use of inappropriate, discriminatory and derogatory language in a professional context.

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 Hessey's actions were not deliberate.

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

The panel accepted that the teacher had worked in education for many years and that there was substantial evidence of previous positive contribution to schools serving deprived communities. The panel noted the evidence that he had worked in challenging school environments and that he had, at points in his career, achieved significant improvements.

The bundle included evidence that a school which had been “bottom performing” in 2011 had, by 2015, become the “highest performing school in [REDACTED]”, and that this had led to recognition from senior public figures. He had received positive Ofsted comments, including references to “inspirational leadership” and “very positive relationships with the overwhelming majority of parents”.

The panel also took into account evidence that he had been a National Leader of Education and had been nominated as a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching because of his achievements in the profession. In addition, he had been invited to sit on the Department of Education's Coal board group to improve the life chances for children who live in ex-coal mining areas. These examples strongly indicated his work in the schools within the Trust was having a positive impact and was worthy of sharing.

The panel accepted that this was meaningful mitigation. It demonstrated that the teacher had made a significant contribution to education over a long period and that the misconduct occurred during a comparatively short period of that career. The panel also took into account that there was no evidence of previous disciplinary findings or similar conduct over the many years in which he had worked in education.

The panel also considered the teacher's personal mitigation. It accepted that the period in question was stressful. The teacher had been working as CEO and interim headteacher, and the panel accepted that this carried considerable pressure. The panel also noted the evidence about pressures in his personal life, [REDACTED]. However, the panel did not consider that the evidence established extreme duress. There was no medical evidence before the panel to suggest that the teacher's judgement or conduct was impaired to such an extent that it materially reduced his responsibility. The panel considered that senior leaders are expected to have appropriate strategies for managing stress and that using offensive and discriminatory language in communications with colleagues could not be justified as a coping mechanism.

The panel considered whether the conduct was deliberate. It concluded that the messages were deliberately sent and that the teacher deliberately chose the language he used. Even if the tone of the messaging group was, at times, encouraged by others or reflected a culture of inappropriate "banter", Mr Hessey was the most senior person in the group. He was the CEO and interim headteacher and was expected to set the standard. The fact that others did not challenge him did not lessen his own responsibility.

The panel considered a number of character references submitted on behalf of Mr Hessey, which pertained to his professional conduct, his contribution to the profession, and his history and ability as a teacher. The panel noted the statement made by Individual A, [REDACTED] and Individual B, [REDACTED] and Individual C, [REDACTED] and Individual D, [REDACTED].

The panel had regard to Mr Hessey's written statement dated 5 June 2026 which included a reflective statement. Mr Hessey stated that, on reflection, he accepted that aspects of his conduct fell below the standards expected of a senior leader. The panel noted that he acknowledged that certain language used towards parents and colleagues was inappropriate and unprofessional, and accepted that some of his behaviour management practices and communications demonstrated poor judgement. Mr Hessey

stated that he was experiencing significant professional and personal pressures at the relevant time, including workload demands, staffing issues and [REDACTED]. Whilst relying on these matters as context, he accepted that they did not excuse his conduct. He expressed remorse for any offence, concern or upset caused and accepted that personal and professional pressures did not excuse his conduct.

The panel considered insight, remorse and the risk of repetition. It accepted that the teacher had expressed remorse on a number of occasions. In his written evidence he referred to “deep regret” towards colleagues, parents, pupils and the wider school community, and to a “profound sense of personal responsibility”. The panel also noted that he had made admissions to a number of matters and had accepted that some of his language was wholly inappropriate.

However, the panel considered that his insight was not complete. At times, he appeared to minimise the seriousness of some of the language and to place weight on context, stress, or the conduct of others in the messaging group. The panel was concerned that he had not fully demonstrated an understanding of the impact which such language could have on colleagues, parents, pupils and public confidence in the profession.

The panel also noted that since his dismissal he had not undertaken any relevant training such as equality, diversity or inclusion training or other formal means of reflection, which might have assisted in demonstrating a developed understanding of the discriminatory nature of the language used. Instead, Mr Hessey relied upon having had regular informal meetings with former senior colleagues but produced no evidence as to their frequency or content.

Against that, the panel considered that the risk of repetition was low. The conduct occurred over a limited period within a long career. There was no evidence that the teacher had used such language directly towards pupils or parents. The panel accepted that the teacher had suffered significant professional consequences, including dismissal and the loss of his senior role. It also accepted that the publication of the panel's findings would have a continuing adverse impact on his reputation and employability in the teaching profession.

The panel balanced the seriousness of the misconduct against the mitigating factors. It considered carefully whether the public interest required the imposition of a prohibition order. The panel concluded that, although the conduct was serious and plainly required a published finding, prohibition was not necessary or proportionate in all the circumstances. In reaching that conclusion, the panel placed weight on the limited period of the misconduct, the absence of previous disciplinary findings, the teacher's long and otherwise positive contribution to education, the evidence of remorse and developing insight, the low risk of repetition, and the fact that publication of the adverse findings

would itself serve the public interest by declaring and upholding proper standards and maintaining public confidence.

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 was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, it would be a proportionate and appropriate response to recommend no prohibition order. 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 that publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

The panel noted Mr Hessey's acceptance of responsibility, his expressions of regret, and his acknowledgement that his conduct amounted to professional misconduct. The panel considered that Mr Hessey had demonstrated a developing level of insight into his misconduct and had shown an understanding of why his actions were inappropriate.

Publication would make clear that the teacher's conduct was unacceptable, discriminatory and capable of bringing the profession into disrepute. It would also mark the seriousness of the misconduct and uphold proper professional standards. The panel was satisfied that, in the particular circumstances of this case, a prohibition order would go further than was necessary to meet the public interest and would be disproportionate.

The panel therefore recommends to the Secretary of State that no prohibition order should be imposed.

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 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 the findings of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute should be published and that such an action is proportionate and in the public interest.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Lee Hessey 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
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
 - not undermining fundamental British values, including individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- 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 finds that the conduct of Mr Hessey fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a Headteacher using language that was inappropriate and/or racist, homophobic, misogynistic, transphobic or discriminatory in relation to disability.

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 Hessey, 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. While the panel does not record having considered any evidence indicating that Mr Hessey's behaviour had a direct negative impact on the wellbeing or safety of pupils, it does make this comment:

“The panel attached particular significance to Mr Hessey's senior position within the profession. As CEO of a multi academy trust and acting headteacher, he occupied a position of considerable authority and influence. The language found proved was not confined to private personal conversations between friends. Much of it was communicated through work-related channels to other senior leaders within the Trust and concerned pupils, parents, staff and wider public issues. The panel considered that members of the public would rightly expect significantly higher standards from a school leader occupying such a role.”

The panel also comments as follows:

“Even if the tone of the messaging group was, at times, encouraged by others or reflected a culture of inappropriate “banter”, Mr Hessey was the most senior person in the group. He was the CEO and interim headteacher and was expected to set the standard.”

In my judgment, instances of a figure of such seniority within an education setting acting in the manner found by the panel risks fostering a culture of intolerance that could pervade more junior colleagues and adversely affect pupils. Therefore, a prohibition would remove such a risk from arising 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 had regard to Mr Hessey's written statement dated 5 June 2026 which included a reflective statement. Mr Hessey stated that, on reflection, he accepted that aspects of his conduct fell below the standards expected of a senior leader. The panel noted that he acknowledged that certain language used towards parents and colleagues was inappropriate and unprofessional, and accepted that some of his behaviour management practices and communications demonstrated poor judgement. Mr Hessey stated that he was experiencing significant professional and personal pressures at the relevant time, including workload demands, staffing issues and [REDACTED]. Whilst relying on these matters as context, he accepted that they did not excuse his conduct. He expressed remorse for any offence, concern or upset caused and accepted that personal and professional pressures did not excuse his conduct.

The panel considered insight, remorse and the risk of repetition. It accepted that the teacher had expressed remorse on a number of occasions. In his written evidence he referred to “deep regret” towards colleagues, parents, pupils and the wider school community, and to a “profound sense of personal responsibility”. The panel also noted that he had made admissions to a number of matters and had accepted that some of his language was wholly inappropriate.

However, the panel considered that his insight was not complete. At times, he appeared to minimise the seriousness of some of the language and to place weight on context, stress, or the conduct of others in the messaging group. The panel was concerned that he had not fully demonstrated an understanding of the impact which such language could have on colleagues, parents, pupils and public confidence in the profession.

The panel also noted that since his dismissal he had not undertaken any relevant training such as equality, diversity or inclusion training or other formal means of reflection, which might have assisted in demonstrating a developed understanding of the discriminatory nature of the language used. Instead, Mr Hessey relied upon having had regular informal meetings with former senior colleagues but produced no evidence as to their frequency or content.

Against that, the panel considered that the risk of repetition was low. The conduct occurred over a limited period within a long career. There was no evidence that the teacher had used such language directly towards pupils or parents. The panel accepted that the teacher had suffered significant professional consequences, including dismissal and the loss of his senior role. It also accepted that the publication of the panel's findings would have a continuing adverse impact on his reputation and employability in the teaching profession."

I have noted the panel's comments regarding the remorse and insight that Mr Hessey has demonstrated, and its assessment that the risk of a repetition of his behaviour is low. However, I have also taken account of its findings that his insight and remorse is not yet fully developed and that he has yet to take any formal practical steps to demonstrate a developed understanding of the discriminatory nature of the language used. Therefore, in my judgment and in light of the seriousness of the misconduct found, the risk of repetition remains at an unacceptable level. 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 offers this observation:

"The panel considered that the conduct found proved was serious. The teacher was not only a teacher but a CEO and interim headteacher. In that role, he was expected to demonstrate exemplary ethical standards and to set the tone for staff, pupils and parents. The panel found that his language, particularly in allegations 5, 7 and 8, fell significantly short of those standards. The panel considered that the discriminatory, offensive and derogatory nature of the language used meant that the public interest in maintaining confidence in the profession and in declaring proper standards was strongly engaged."

I am particularly mindful of the finding in this case of a teacher using language that was inappropriate and/or racist, homophobic, misogynistic, transphobic or discriminatory in relation to disability and the very negative impact that such a finding is likely to have on the reputation of the profession.

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

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of 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 Hessey himself. The panel offers this observation:

“The panel accepted that the teacher had worked in education for many years and that there was substantial evidence of previous positive contribution to schools serving deprived communities. The panel noted the evidence that he had worked in challenging school environments and that he had, at points in his career, achieved significant improvements.

The bundle included evidence that a school which had been “bottom performing” in 2011 had, by 2015, become the “highest performing school in [REDACTED]”, and that this had led to recognition from senior public figures. He had received positive Ofsted comments, including references to “inspirational leadership” and “very positive relationships with the overwhelming majority of parents”.

The panel also took into account evidence that he had been a National Leader of Education and had been nominated as a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching because of his achievements in the profession. In addition, he had been invited to sit on the Department of Education’s Coal board group to improve the life chances for children who live in ex-coal mining areas. These examples strongly indicated his work in the schools within the Trust was having a positive impact and was worthy of sharing.

The panel accepted that this was meaningful mitigation. It demonstrated that the teacher had made a significant contribution to education over a long period and that the misconduct occurred during a comparatively short period of that career. The panel also took into account that there was no evidence of previous disciplinary findings or similar conduct over the many years in which he had worked in education.”

The panel also records that it considered a number of character references submitted on behalf of Mr Hessey, which pertained to his professional conduct, his contribution to the profession, and his history and ability as a teacher

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Hessey 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.

The misconduct found in this case was undoubtedly serious and involved a headteacher using language in communications over a period of some months in dialogue with colleagues that was inappropriate and/or racist, homophobic, misogynistic, transphobic or discriminatory in relation to disability. It also included comments made about parents and pupils that were completely unacceptable, including describing a group of parents as "*scrotes, vermin and pond life*".

It is clear to me that Mr Hessey has made a valuable contribution to the teaching profession. However, it is also my judgment that such behaviour as has been found by the panel being committed by such a senior and experienced figure is likely to magnify its serious and very negative impact on the standing of the teaching profession and the public's confidence in it. I am also mindful of the negative impact that such behaviour may have on more junior members of the profession in terms of the acceptable use of language and particularly when talking about parents and pupils.

Given the likely serious negative impact of Mr Hessey's behaviour on the standing of the profession, and the finding that he is still to fully demonstrate an understanding of the impact his language could have on colleagues, parents and pupils, I therefore disagree with the recommendation of the panel that the publication of its findings is a sufficient sanction and consider that a prohibition is a necessary and appropriate measure to uphold 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 not offering a review period. None of the listed factors are present.

The Advice also lists those factors which may mean that 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. One of these factors is intolerance and/or hatred on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation or protected characteristics.

I have considered whether a two-year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings, which included the use of racist language, and is a proportionate period to

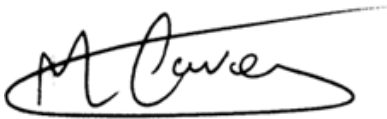
achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, and having taken account of Mr Hessey's contribution to the education sector and his developing insight I am of the view that a two-year review period is sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in 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 Hessey, 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.

This means that Mr Lee Hessey 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 04 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 Hessey remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Mr Hessey 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 large, loopy oval stroke.

Decision maker: Marc Cavey

Date: 4 August 2026

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