Teaching Regulation Agency

# Mr Anton Van Der Watt: Professional conduct panel outcome

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

## October 2026

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

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| **Teacher:** | Mr Anton Van Der Watt |
| **Teacher ref number:** | 0306132 |
| **Teacher date of birth:** | 6 May 1960 |
| **TRA reference:** | 25915 |
| **Date of determination:** | 9 October 2026 |
| **Former employer:** | Simply Education, Watford |

## Introduction

A professional conduct panel ("the panel") of the Teaching Regulation Agency ("the TRA") convened virtually via Microsoft Teams on 7 to 9 October 2026 to consider the case of Mr Anton Van Der Watt.

The panel members were Ms Sue Davies (lay panellist – in the chair), Ms Olivia Cole (teacher panellist) and Mr Ramandeep Rai (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mr Robin Havard of Blake Morgan LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Mr James Lloyd, of Mountford Chambers, instructed by Brabners LLP solicitors.

Mr Van Der Watt was neither present nor represented.

Save for certain parts where the hearing took place in private, the hearing took place in public and was recorded.

## Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the notice of hearing dated 16 July 2026.

The allegations were amended at the outset of the hearing for the reasons set out below.

It was alleged that Mr Anton Van Der Watt was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the teaching profession into disrepute in that, while employed as a teacher by Simply Education and providing supply cover at the Brine Leas School ('the School'):

1. During a lesson on 24 April 2025, he demonstrated aggressive behaviour in that he:

    a. in relation to Pupil A, he:

        i. placed his hand and/or fist on their neck;

        ii. pushed them into the chair using his fist; and

        iii. pinched their neck.

    b. in relation to Pupil B, he:

        i. placed his fist on their shoulder; and

        ii. applied pressure to their shoulder using his fist.

    c. In relation to Pupil D, he:

        i. punched them on the shoulder; and

        ii. used threatening language to them by saying "do you want to go home on crutches? I will break your leg."

    d. In relation to Pupil E, he:

        i. raised their hand; and

        ii. touched the pupil under their arm.

2. During a lesson on 24 April 2025, he demonstrated aggressive behaviour in that he:

    a. pressed his fists on the desk in front of pupils;

    b. hit a wooden ruler on the desk on one or more occasions;

c. threatened to hit pupils if they did anything wrong;

d. swung a chair above pupils heads;

e. told one or more pupils to “shut up”;

f. threatened pupils that he would “rip their vocal chords out and feed them to the lions”; and

g. said that he would write down on the register who needed to be hit.

3. During a lesson on 24 April 2025, he made inappropriate racial comments in that he:

   a. stated that when he was younger “people of colour would not be allowed on trains and buses”;

   b. said to a Pupil I, who is of African origin, that when Mr Van Der Watt was younger, he would not have been allowed in your classroom;

   c. In relation to Pupil G and H he;

      i. referred to them as “ching” and “chong”; and

      ii. said “we know what your real name is”.

4. The language as described at paragraphs 3. a. – c. above was discriminatory in nature.

Whilst in earlier responses Mr Van Der Watt had made certain admissions as to his conduct, to which further reference is made below, in his email dated 13 August 2026, Mr Van Der Watt had not formally responded to the allegations contained in the notice of hearing sent to him on 16 July 2026. The panel therefore approached each of the allegations on the basis they were denied.

## Summary of evidence

### Documents

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

Section A: Notice of hearing and response – pages 2 to 12

Section B: Teaching Regulation Agency witness statements and exhibits – pages 13 to 149

Section C: Teaching Regulation Agency documents – pages 150 to 155

Section D: Teacher documents – pages 156 to 158

The panel members confirmed that they had read all of the documents.

### Witnesses

The panel heard oral evidence from the following witnesses called by the presenting officer:

- Witness A, Simply Education; and
- Witness B, [REDACTED] at Brine Leas School.

## Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

The panel bore in mind throughout that the burden of proof rested with the TRA and the standard of proof to be applied was the civil standard, namely on the balance of probabilities.

### Findings of fact

Before outlining its findings of fact in relation to the particulars of the allegations, the panel has made the following observations and findings in order to provide background and context.

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

It accepted the legal advice provided.

As stated, the panel had heard oral evidence from the [REDACTED] at Brine Leas (“the School”), Witness B, and Witness A, currently employed by Simply Education as [REDACTED].

In addition, the panel was presented with hearsay evidence from a number of pupils at the School who had given their account of the events that took place on 24 April 2025. Those accounts had been provided to the [REDACTED], Person C, who was also the [REDACTED]. Person C had not attended to give evidence, although she had provided

an undated written statement in the form of an email setting out the process she followed in contacting Simply Education, having recorded the events outlined by the pupils.

The panel was satisfied that the admission of such evidence did not give rise to any unfairness in the specific circumstances of this case.

Nevertheless, the hearsay evidence presented was considered with appropriate caution and this is addressed in the panel's reasons. In particular, the panel was very aware of the fact that Mr Van Der Watt had not responded substantively to the allegations having been furnished with them as part of the notice served on him on 16 July 2026. The panel accepted that, even though it had not been provided with any medical evidence, the reason for Mr Van Der Watt's lack of response was as a consequence of his poor health as described in his emails to the TRA.

The panel felt that it may have been of assistance if Person C had been invited to attend to give evidence. It transpired in the course of Witness B giving evidence that the handwritten accounts of the pupils prepared by Person C on 25 April 2025 under the title "Record of Concern" were based on handwritten accounts prepared by the pupils themselves, which had not been provided to the panel. The panel also noted that certain of the pupils who were the subjects of the alleged conduct on the part of Mr Van Der Watt had not provided their account. In particular, in respect of allegation 3, the accounts of Pupils G, H and I had not been provided to the panel.

Nevertheless, the panel noted that the accounts of the pupils had been recorded the day after the events on 24 April 2025 had taken place, and the initial response of Mr Van Der Watt was dated 28 April 2025.

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

For example, in relation to certain of the documents contained in the hearing bundle, certain persons or organisations had reached conclusions in respect of the conduct of Mr Van Der Watt. Whilst the panel had taken into account the investigation that had been undertaken leading to those conclusions, the panel had disregarded the conclusions themselves. It was mindful of the need to exercise its own independent judgement and not rely upon any opinions recorded. It was for the panel, not anyone else, to draw inferences and conclusions from proven facts in this case.

Finally, the panel had read carefully the email that Mr Van Der Watt had submitted dated 28 April 2025 sent to Simply Education, and his emails dated 20 February 2026 and 13 August 2026 in the course of the TRA's investigation and the notes of the meeting held by Witness A with Mr Van Der Watt on 21 July 2025.

The panel had set out these initial remarks in order to reinforce the care with which it had approached its assessment of the evidence.

Mr Van Der Watt was registered with Simply Education and undertook supply work through the agency between 7 January 2019 and 24 April 2025.

On 24 April 2025, Mr Van Der Watt attended the School as a supply teacher. It was the first occasion he had attended the School. On arrival, Witness B stated that he would have been provided with an induction. The School is a large School with 1,400 pupils. Consequently, Witness B confirmed that the School was well-versed in the instruction of new supply teachers regarding the classroom processes and pastoral systems. Behaviour management would have been discussed at the outset and there was an on-call process operated by permanent members of staff for whoever needed support in the course of the School day.

On 24 April 2025, following complaints being made by the pupils, Mr Van Der Watt was sent home early by the School.

Witness B confirmed that the pupils were each requested to provide a handwritten account of what they alleged to have happened on 24 April 2025.

On 25 April 2025, Person C completed a Record of Concern Form for each pupil who had come forward, setting out their accounts of the events of the previous day. It was apparent that such events had taken place during periods 2, 3 and 4.

Person C contacted Simply Education with regard to the initial allegation and also contacted the LADO on 25 April 2025.

On 6 May 2025, an initial allegation management meeting took place with the LADO at which Witness B and representatives from Simply Education attended.

The matter was reported to the Police but, following an investigation, no further action was taken. This was communicated on 18 July 2025.

On 21 July 2025, a meeting took place via a Zoom call between Witness A and Person D of Simply Education and Mr Van Der Watt. Further reference to this meeting is made below.

On 1 August 2025, a further meeting with the LADO took place. At this meeting it was confirmed that, from the outset of his employment with Simply Education, Mr Van Der Watt had worked for 54 days within the period of six years and there were no reports of any concern. However, as a consequence of the events on 24 April 2025, he was suspended.

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

1. **During a lesson on 24 April 2025, you demonstrated aggressive behaviour in that you:**

    a. **in relation to Pupil A, you:**

        i. **placed your hand and/or fist on their neck;**

        ii. **pushed them into the chair using your fist; and**

        iii. **pinched their neck.**

Pupil B had provided an account which supported the particulars of this allegation. He stated that Mr Van Der Watt had put his fist on his, Pupil B's, shoulder and, "dug it in". Pupil B then stated that Pupil A said, "try it on me". Pupil B saw Mr Van Der Watt put his fist on Pupil A's shoulder and put two fingers on the back of his neck.

Pupil A said that he was looking at Mr Van Der Watt "in shock" and Mr Van Der Watt put his fist on Pupil A's neck and "dug me into the chair. I did not know what to do. He then pinched me in the neck. It did hurt. We were being pressed into the chair. I was having to lean forward as he pinched my neck with his fingers." Pupil A stated that there was a red mark on his neck where Mr Van Der Watt had placed his fingers.

When he was asked to provide an account of what had happened, Mr Van Der Watt responded in an email dated 28 April 2025 confirming that, "the incident took place as described, although I am unaware that it left a red mark on the student's neck". Mr Van Der Watt stated that he had been talking about his background and he stated that the students had asked him to demonstrate how to control boys who acted aggressively.

At the conclusion of his email, Mr Van Der Watt stated:

> "I am very disappointed and apologetic about the whole incident and feel that I let myself and the profession down by allowing the boys to convince me into demonstrating in a lighthearted manner a way to defuse a potential dangerous situation by using relationships, trust and humour.
>
> I definitely had no intention to harm a young person in any shape or form and want my sincere apology be communicated with the student involved."

The panel had also taken account of what had been said by Mr Van Der Watt in the meeting with Simply Education on 21 July 2025 when he accepted, and regretted, what he had done.

The panel was satisfied that the account provided by Pupil A was consistent with that of Pupil B. The panel had also taken account of the admission on the part of Mr Van Der Watt that the incident had taken place as described.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(a) proved.

**b. in relation to Pupil B, you:**

**i. placed your fist on their shoulder; and**

**ii. applied pressure to their shoulder using your fist.**

The panel relied on its findings of fact under allegation 1(a) above.

As stated above, Pupil B confirmed that Mr Van Der Watt had put his fist on Pupil B's shoulder and "dug it in". This was confirmed by Pupil A and the panel noted that the actions taken by Mr Van Der Watt towards Pupil A which he had admitted, were very similar to his conduct towards Pupil B.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(b) proved.

**c. In relation to Pupil D, you:**

**i. punched them on the shoulder;**

In his written account, Pupil D stated that Mr Van Der Watt came from behind them and punched them on the shoulder. In Pupil C's account, it stated that, "He hit Pupil D on the shoulder – fist".

Whilst Pupil D stated that it had not hurt them, the panel was satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that Mr Van Der Watt had punched them on the shoulder.

The panel had not received any direct comment from Mr Van Der Watt in respect of this particular.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(c)(i) proved.

**ii. used threatening language to them by saying "do you want to go home on crutches? I will break your leg."**

The panel had already accepted the evidence of Pupil D regarding Mr Van Der Watt punching them on the shoulder and that Pupil D's account was supported by Pupil C. The panel also took into consideration the fact that this account had been prepared the day after the events on 24 April 2025 had taken place and so would have been fresh in their mind. The particular words used were also consistent with other remarks made by Mr Van Der Watt on that day, and which form the basis of other allegations.

The panel found, on the balance of probabilities, the facts of this particular had been established.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(c)(ii) proved.

**d. In relation to Pupil E, you:**

**i. raised their hand; and**

**ii. touched the pupil under their arm.**

Pupil E had provided a very short account of what had happened to them during period 2 on 24 April 2025. They stated that Mr Van Der Watt had “picked my hand and touched me under my arm open handed like a pat.”

The only other person to comment on Mr Van Der Watt’s interaction with Pupil E was Pupil C who suggested that Mr Van Der Watt had punched Pupil C in the stomach. The panel did not accept this account. Indeed, it went well beyond the account provided by Pupil E.

Nevertheless, again taking into consideration this account was provided by Pupil E very shortly after the event, the panel found, on the balance of probabilities, the facts of the particular proved.

The panel had not received any direct comment from Mr Van Der Watt in respect of this particular.

The panel therefore found allegation 1(d)(i) and (ii) proved.

Based on its findings in respect of each particular, the panel found that, during a lesson on 24 April 2025 Mr Van Der Watt demonstrated aggressive behaviour. It therefore found allegation 1 proved.

**2. During a lesson on 24 April 2025, you demonstrated aggressive behaviour in that you:**

**a. pressed your fists on the desk in front of pupils;**

As part of their account, Pupil A had stated that Mr Van Der Watt had his hands as fists pressing on the desk. This comment was made just before Pupil A outlined what had happened as described under allegation 1(a) above.

The panel had not received any direct comment from Mr Van Der Watt in respect of this particular.

The panel had accepted Pupil A’s account as credible and therefore found the facts of particular 2(a) proved.

**b. hit a wooden ruler on the desk on one or more occasions;**

The panel had considered the account provided by Pupil C. Whilst this had not been mentioned by any of the other pupils, it was nevertheless specific and the account had been provided at the time.

The panel had not received any direct comment from Mr Van Der Watt in respect of this particular.

On the balance of probabilities, the panel found the facts of particular 2(b) proved.

**c. threatened to hit pupils if they did anything wrong;**

The panel noted that this was evidence once again provided by Pupil C. The panel considered that it was consistent with the conduct alleged in particular 2(b).

The panel had not received any direct comment from Mr Van Der Watt in respect of this particular.

On the balance of probabilities, the panel found the facts of particular 2(c) proved.

**e. told one or more pupils to “shut up”;**

**f. threatened pupils that you would “rip their vocal chords out and feed them to the lions”;**

The panel considered particulars (e) and (f) together as both related to the account provided by Pupil B. The panel had already found Pupil B to be credible and consistent when making its findings in respect of allegations 1(a) and (b) for the reasons outlined above.

Furthermore, the record of what Pupil B had said was taken the day after the events of 24 April 2025 had taken place when matters would have been fresh in his mind and the words used as alleged in particular 2(f) are unusual to the extent that it was not credible to suggest that Pupil B would have made them up.

The panel had not received any direct comment from Mr Van Der Watt in respect of this particular.

The panel found, on the balance of probabilities, the facts of particulars 2(e) and (f) proved.

**g. said that you would write down on the register who needed to be hit.**

The evidence on which the TRA relied was provided by Pupil F. The panel had considered it unusual that Pupil F would have been present. Mr Van Der Watt was

teaching a Year [REDACTED] class whereas, as confirmed by Witness B, Pupil F was a Year [REDACTED] pupil. Nevertheless, the panel noted that there was no evidence to suggest that Pupil F was not present and their account was broadly consistent with the accounts provided by the other pupils.

Furthermore, in their evidence, Pupil F made reference to Mr Van Der Watt using what they described as "bad language towards two students. He called them "ching and chong" on the register."

Whilst this was directly relevant to allegation 3(c), as described below, it also added credibility to Pupil F's account of what was said as alleged in this particular. Firstly, there is reference to the register on both occasions. Secondly, in his meeting with Witness A on 21 July 2025, the "verbal abuse of two students of Chinese origin" had been raised with him and he acknowledged that his language with students could be construed in a way that he had not intended and he had apologised.

The panel had not received any direct comment from Mr Van Der Watt in respect of this particular.

On this basis, the panel found, on the balance of probabilities, the facts of particular 2(g) proved.

Based on its findings in respect of each particular, the panel found that, during a lesson on 24 April 2025, Mr Van Der Watt demonstrated aggressive behaviour. It therefore found allegation 2 proved.

3. **During a lesson on 24 April 2025, you made inappropriate racial comments in that you:**

    a. **stated that when you were younger "people of colour would not be allowed on trains and buses";**

    b. **said to a Pupil I, who is of African origin, that when you were younger, he would not have been allowed in your classroom;**

The panel decided it was appropriate to consider particulars 3(a) and (b) together. In respect of both, the evidence on which the TRA relied was from Pupil C. The panel had already accepted the evidence of Pupil C in relation to other particulars. More particularly, the comments made by Mr Van Der Watt had been raised by Witness A in his meeting with Mr Van Der Watt on 21 July 2025. Mr Van Der Watt had acknowledged that his language used towards pupils could be misinterpreted and he apologised.

On this basis, the panel found, on the balance of probabilities, the facts of particulars 3(a) and (b) proved.

**c. In relation to Pupil G and Pupil H you;**

**i. referred to them as “ching” and “chong”; and**

**ii. said “we know what your real name is”.**

The TRA relied on the evidence of Pupil F. The panel referred to its findings under allegation 2(g) above.

As stated, this related to circumstances surrounding the completion of the register.

The panel was satisfied that Mr Van Der Watt used the language specified in the particulars. The panel has already referred what was raised with Mr Van Der Watt at the meeting with Simply Education on 21 July 2025 and his acceptance that his language may have been misinterpreted.

The panel found, on the balance of probabilities, the facts of particulars 3(c)(i) and (ii) proved.

Based on its findings in respect of each particular, the panel found that, during a lesson on 24 April 2025, Mr Van Der Watt made inappropriate racial comments. It therefore found allegation 3 proved.

**4. The language as described at paragraphs 3. a. – c. above was discriminatory in nature.**

For the same reasons as outlined above under allegation 3, the panel was satisfied that the language used by Mr Van Der Watt was discriminatory. His remarks in respect of Pupils I, G and H were related to their race and made to an audience, namely the class. In this way, they were singled out and could have been made to feel undermined. A pupil had been sufficiently concerned about it to conclude that it was necessary to report it.

The panel found allegation 4 proved.

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

**2. d. swung a chair above pupils heads;**

Pupil C stated that Mr Van Der Watt “picked up a chair (science stool) and swung it over other people’s heads almost hitting them.” Whilst the panel had accepted the evidence of Pupil C in respect of particulars 2(b) and (c) on the basis that they represented a consistent account, the panel was not satisfied that this particular reflected an accurate account of what had happened. The panel appreciated that it was important to avoid

speculation but considered that this part of Pupil C's account may have been exaggerated and was not supported by any other evidence.

The panel had not received any direct comment from Mr Van Der Watt in respect of this particular.

The panel found the facts of this particular not proved.

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

Having found all allegations proved save for allegation 2(d), 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 was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Van Der Watt, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards. The panel considered that, by reference to Part 2, Mr Van Der Watt was in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside School, by
    - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position;
    - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions;
    - not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel first considered its findings in relation to allegations 1 and 2. Both related to Mr Van Der Watt demonstrating aggressive behaviour towards pupils. Such behaviour engaged the first two standards identified above.

However, the panel bore in mind that, for there to be a finding of unacceptable professional conduct, it had to find that the misconduct was of a serious nature, falling significantly short of the standard of behaviour expected of a teacher.

With regard to conduct which may bring the profession into disrepute, 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.

Therefore, in addressing each particular of each allegation, the panel had to be satisfied that the necessary threshold in respect of unacceptable professional conduct had been met. In carrying out this exercise, the panel applied the same approach to its finding of whether Mr Van Der Watt's conduct may bring the profession into disrepute.

Having done so, the panel determined that, in respect of allegations 1(d), 2(a), 2(e) and 3(a), whilst the facts had been found proved, and whilst the conduct of Mr Van Der Watt may not have been appropriate, the panel was not satisfied that the conduct was of such a serious nature that it met the threshold of seriousness so as to amount to unacceptable professional conduct or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

However, in respect of the remaining particulars of allegation 1, the panel was satisfied that the conduct found proved, which involved physical contact with pupils with hands clenched in a fist, as well as a very threatening comment, was very serious. It was a breach of the first two standards of Part Two of the Teacher Standards.

In respect of particulars 1(a), (b) and (c), therefore, the panel found Mr Van Der Watt guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct which may bring the profession into disrepute.

As for allegation 2, again this related to a finding that Mr Van Der Watt demonstrated aggressive behaviour. Taking particulars 2(b), (c), (f) and (g) together, each of them related to behaviour which pupils would find threatening and the language used by Mr Van Der Watt was clearly unacceptable and could be properly categorised as serious. Such conduct represented a breach of the first two standards of Part Two of the Teacher Standards.

In respect of particulars 2(b), (c), (f) and (g), therefore, the panel found Mr Van Der Watt guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct which may bring the profession into disrepute.

Turning to allegations 3(b) and (c), and 4, the fact that Mr Van Der Watt had considered it was appropriate at the time to speak to individual members of the class in this way represented a very serious lack of judgement and was highly inappropriate and, for the pupils concerned, undermining. Again, the panel found it significant that another pupil had been sufficiently concerned that they had to report it. The panel was satisfied that

this conduct was sufficiently serious to reach the necessary threshold such that it amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute. It represented a breach of the third standard of the Teacher's Standards listed above.

In summary, the panel made a finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct which may bring the profession into disrepute in respect of allegations 1(a), 1(b), (c), 2(b), 2(c), 2(f), 2(g), 3(b), 3(c) and 4.

## Panel's recommendation to the Secretary of State

Given the panel's findings in respect of unacceptable professional conduct and of conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

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

The panel had regard to the particular public interest considerations set out in the Advice and, having done so, found a number of them to be relevant in this case, namely: the protection of pupils, the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct; the panel also considered the interest of retaining Mr Van Der Watt in the profession.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Van Der Watt, which involved a serious failure to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with pupils and the use of threatening and discriminatory language, the panel found that, in this case, all three public interest considerations are engaged.

There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the protection of pupils, given the serious findings of aggressive behaviour towards pupils, both physically and verbally.

Similarly, the panel considered that public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Van Der Watt 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 Van Der Watt was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

The panel also considered whether there was a public interest consideration in retaining Mr Van Der Watt in the profession, as, other than the events on 24 April 2025, no doubt had been cast upon his abilities as an educator.

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 Van Der Watt.

In carrying out the balancing exercise, the panel had regard to the public interest considerations both in favour of, and against, prohibition as well as the interests of Mr Van Der Watt. The panel took further account of the Advice, which suggests that a prohibition order may be appropriate if certain behaviours of a teacher have been proved. In the list of such behaviours, those that were relevant in this case were:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;

- The panel had already found this to be the case in reaching its decision in relation to whether the facts found in respect of the allegations amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute.

- misconduct seriously affecting the education and/or safeguarding and well-being of pupils, and particularly where there is a continuing risk;

- Again, having found the facts of the allegations to be proved, the panel was satisfied that Mr Van Der Watt's misconduct had a serious effect in respect of safeguarding and the well-being of pupils over a period of three classes on 24 April 2025.

- failure in their duty of care towards a child, including exposing a child to risk or failing to promote the safety and welfare of the children

The panel considered that this was engaged for the reasons outlined above.

- Violation of the rights of pupils;

When reaching its decision that this factor applied, not only were all pupils entitled to attend school knowing that they are in a safe environment, but also the panel had in mind its findings under allegations 3 and 4 above. The panel felt it was important to emphasise that the dignity of all pupils should be respected.

Even though some of the behaviour found proved in this case indicated that a prohibition order would be appropriate, the panel went on to consider the mitigating factors. Mitigating factors may indicate that a prohibition order would not be appropriate or proportionate.

The panel noted that, other than the events on 24 April 2025, Mr Van Der Watt had no previous regulatory history and Witness A had stated that there had been no previous complaints.

In his email of 28 April 2025, Mr Van Der Watt had admitted the allegation made against him in respect of Pupil A as soon as he was asked for an explanation by his employer.

The panel also found that, at the meeting with Witness A on 21 July 2025, Mr Van Der Watt repeated his appreciation that his conduct towards Pupil A was, “a ‘stupid decision’ and he was apologetic and regrets the incidents.” At the same meeting, he was asked about his use of language which formed the basis of allegations 3 and 4; he accepted that such language was inappropriate and apologised, stating that he had not intended to cause offence.

In his email of 13 August 2026, Mr Van Der Watt stated as follows:

> “Please allow me again to offer my sincere apologies to anyone that experienced stress or hardship through my alleged actions. This not my style and I would not want it to be my legacy.”

The panel found that Mr Van Der Watt had shown a level of insight into his failings and the panel accepted that the remorse he had expressed for the consequences of his behaviour was genuine.

Nevertheless, by reference to the Advice, the panel found that Mr Van Der Watt’s actions were deliberate and he was not acting under extreme duress.

Furthermore, there was no evidence to support a finding that Mr Van Der Watt had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. Whilst Mr Van Der Watt had written two emails to the TRA on 20 February 2026 and 13 August 2026, both concentrated on his health. Nevertheless, the notes of the meeting on 21 July 2025 indicate that Mr Van Der Watt said the following:

> “AVDW expressed that he has always been proud to be a teacher and that over his long career he has helped many children and was upset that these incidents have occurred, and the potential impact this could have on his ability to continue to teach.”

However, for the panel to consider whether Mr Van Der Watt’s history and contribution as a teacher was so exceptional that it should be a factor in its determination, it would have expected to be provided with far more evidence from Mr Van Der Watt and also in the form of references and testimonials.

In terms of mitigation relating to Mr Van Der Watt personally, the panel had read his emails of 20 February 2026 and 13 August 2026. It was accepted by the panel that Mr Van Der Watt was suffering from significant medical conditions. It noted that these had not impacted the events on 24 April 2025. However, Mr Van Der Watt reported that these had worsened subsequently and the panel accepted that this may have impacted his ability to engage in the latter stages of this process [REDACTED]. Even though it had not been provided with any medical evidence, the panel was sympathetic to the fact that such illnesses were serious and ongoing. The panel also noted that, in his email of 20 February 2026, Mr Van Der Watt stated that, as a consequence of his health, he would never work again.

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

The panel appreciated that Mr Van Der Watt's professional reputation has already been blemished as a result of his conduct. In the particular circumstances of this case, the public findings of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute is a sanction in itself and will be with Mr Van Der Watt throughout the remainder of his career as a teacher.

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

The panel was of the view that prohibition was both proportionate and appropriate. The panel decided that the public interest considerations outweighed the interests of Mr Van Der Watt. Whilst the events occurred on one day in April 2025, such events took place over three separate periods. They also involved inappropriate physical contact, verbally aggressive behaviour, and discriminatory language. The fact that there was more than one factor identified in the list of behaviours identified in the Advice was a significant consideration in forming that opinion. Accordingly, the panel made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that a prohibition order should be imposed with immediate effect.

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

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

The panel was satisfied that none of the listed characteristics were engaged by its findings.

Taking account of all of its findings as set out above, the panel decided that they indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate. As such, the panel decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for Mr Van Der Watt to be able to apply for a review after a period of two years.

## Decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State

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

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

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

The panel has made a recommendation to the Secretary of State that Mr Anton Van Der Watt should be the subject of a prohibition order, with a review period of two years.

In particular, the panel has found that Mr Van Der Watt is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside School, by
    - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position;
    - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions;

- not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;

- 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 Van Der Watt fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a failure to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with pupils and the use of threatening and discriminatory language.

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 Van Der Watt, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

In this case, I have considered the extent to which a prohibition order would protect children and safeguard pupils. The panel offers this observation:

> “There was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the protection of pupils, given the serious findings of aggressive behaviour towards pupils, both physically and verbally.”

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

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

“The panel also found that, at the meeting with Witness A on 21 July 2025, Mr Van Der Watt repeated his appreciation that his conduct towards Pupil A was, “a ‘stupid decision’ and he was apologetic and regrets the incidents.” At the same meeting, he was asked about his use of language which formed the basis of allegations 3 and 4; he accepted that such language was inappropriate and apologised, stating that he had not intended to cause offence.

In his email of 13 August 2026, Mr Van Der Watt stated as follows:

> "Please allow me again to offer my sincere apologies to anyone that experienced stress or hardship through my alleged actions. This not my style and I would not want it to be my legacy."

The panel found that Mr Van Der Watt had shown a level of insight into his failings and the panel accepted that the remorse he had expressed for the consequences of his behaviour was genuine."

In my judgement, the evidence of some insight means that there is a reduced risk of repetition and future harm to pupils. I have therefore given this element some weight in making my decision.

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

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

I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher using threatening and discriminatory language towards pupils in this case and the 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 Van Der Watt himself. The panel makes this observation:

> "Furthermore, there was no evidence to support a finding that Mr Van Der Watt had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in both his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector. Whilst Mr Van Der Watt had written two emails to the TRA on 20 February 2026 and 13 August 2026, both concentrated on his health. Nevertheless, the

> notes of the meeting on 21 July 2025 indicate that Mr Van Der Watt said the following:
>
> "AVDW expressed that he has always been proud to be a teacher and that over his long career he has helped many children and was upset that these incidents have occurred, and the potential impact this could have on his ability to continue to teach."

However, for the panel to consider whether Mr Van Der Watt's history and contribution as a teacher was so exceptional that it should be a factor in its determination, it would have expected to be provided with far more evidence from Mr Van Der Watt and also in the form of references and testimonials."

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Van Der Watt from teaching. A prohibition order would also clearly deprive the public of his contribution to the profession for the period that it is in force.

In this case, I have placed considerable weight on the serious nature of the misconduct found by the panel which had the potential to cause harm to pupils.

I have also placed weight on the panel's findings that, while these events appear to constitute an isolated incident and Mr Van Der Watt had not previously been subject to regulatory action, his actions were deliberate and committed free of extreme duress.

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

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

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. In this case, the panel has recommended a two-year review period.

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

> "The Advice indicates that there are certain types of case where, if relevant, the public interest will have greater relevance and weigh in favour of not offering a review period.
>
> The panel was satisfied that none of the listed characteristics were engaged by its findings."

The Advice also indicates that there are types of misconduct that might weigh in favour of a longer review period. One of these is:

- intolerance and/or hatred on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation or protected characteristics;

The panel's findings include Mr Van Der Watt using what it describes as "discriminatory" language and that he made "inappropriate racial comments". I therefore consider this type of misconduct to be engaged.

I have considered the panel's concluding comments:

> "Taking account of all of its findings as set out above, the panel decided that they indicated a situation in which a review period would be appropriate. As such, the panel decided that it would be proportionate, in all the circumstances, for the prohibition order to be recommended with provisions for Mr Van Der Watt to be able to apply for a review after a period of two years."

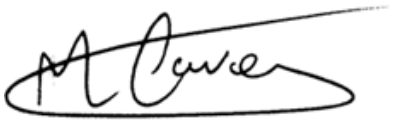
I have considered whether a two-year review period reflects the seriousness of the findings and is a proportionate period to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. In this case, factors mean that, in my judgment, allowing a two-year review period is not sufficient to achieve the aim of maintaining public confidence in the profession. These elements are the serious nature of the misconduct found, which involved inappropriate physical contact, verbally aggressive behaviour, and discriminatory language, as well as the likely injury to the reputation of the profession done by Mr Van Der Watt's actions. In particular, I do not consider that the panel has given sufficient weight in its determination to the discriminatory language directed at pupils by Mr Van Der Watt.

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

**This means that Mr Anton Van Der Watt 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 28 October 2029, three 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 Van Der Watt remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

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



**Decision maker: Marc Cavey**

**Date:  19 October 2026**

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