Teaching Regulation Agency

Mr Richard Hill: Professional conduct panel hearing 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

Teacher:	Mr Richard Hill
Teacher ref number:	2067422
Teacher date of birth:	14 June 1978
TRA reference:	24072
Date of determination:	7 October 2026
Former employer:	Trafalgar School, Portsmouth

Introduction

A professional conduct panel ("the panel") of the Teaching Regulation Agency ("the TRA") convened on 5 October 2026 to 7 October 2026 by way of a virtual hearing, to consider the case of Mr Richard Hill.

The panel members were Dr Louise Wallace (lay panellist – in the chair), Mr Suhel Ahmed (teacher panellist) and Mr Tony Coyne (lay panellist).

The legal adviser to the panel was Mrs Rebecca Utton of Birketts LLP solicitors.

The presenting officer for the TRA was Ms Alecsandra Manning-Rees of Kingsley Napley LLP solicitors.

Mr Hill was not present and was not represented.

The hearing took place in public by way of a virtual hearing and was recorded.

Allegations

The panel considered the allegations set out in the Notice of Hearing dated 13 July 2026.

It was alleged that Mr Hill was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst working as a Teacher at Trafalgar School ("the School"):

1. Between approximately 14 June 2024 and 25 June 2024, he exchanged emails on his school account of an unprofessional and/or over-familiar nature with Pupil A;

2. On or around 25 June 2024, he provided Pupil A with his personal contact details;

3. Between approximately 14 June 2024 and 30 June 2024, he exchanged WhatsApp and/or email messages with Pupil A, that were:

    a. from his personal rather than professional email address and/or phone; and/or

    b. unprofessional and/or overfamiliar in nature; and/or

    c. sent outside of working hours; and/or

    d. considerable in number.

4. His conduct at paragraph 1, and/or 2, and/or 3, was:

    a. A breach of professional boundaries, and/or

    b. Sexually motivated

Mr Hill admitted allegations 1, 2, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d) and allegation 4(a) but denied allegation 4(b), as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025. In respect of those admitted facts, Mr Hill accepted that his conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Summary of evidence

Documents

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

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

Section 2: Notice of hearing and response – pages 7 to 13

Section 3: TRA witness statements – pages 14 to 24

Section 4: TRA exhibits – pages 25 to 497

Section 5: Teacher documents – pages 498 to 499

In addition, the panel agreed to accept the following:

- Late Evidence Bundle – pages 1 to 17
- Updated Service Bundle dated 30 September 2026 – pages 1 to 50

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

In the consideration of this case, the panel had regard to the Teacher misconduct: Disciplinary procedures for the teaching profession May 2020 ("the Procedures").

Witnesses

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

Pupil A - [REDACTED]

Witness B - [REDACTED]

Decision and reasons

The panel announced its decision and reasons as follows:

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

Mr Hill commenced employment at the School on 1 September 2021 as a science teacher.

It was alleged that during June 2024, Mr Hill had inappropriate contact with a [REDACTED] pupil at the School, communicating via a social media messaging platform, WhatsApp, and via School and personal emails.

On 2 July 2024, the School received a complaint from Pupil A's mother regarding Mr Hill's contact with her daughter. Mr Hill was subsequently suspended from his role at the School.

On 4 July 2024, Mr Hill was arrested however, no further action was taken by the police.

On 22 November 2024, a disciplinary hearing was held following which Mr Hill's employment at the School was terminated.

The matter was referred to the TRA on 19 December 2024.

Findings of fact

The findings of fact are as follows:

You are guilty of unacceptable professional conduct and/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute in that whilst working as a Teacher at Trafalgar School ("the School"):

1. **Between approximately 14 June 2024 and 25 June 2024, you exchanged emails on your school account of an unprofessional and/or over-familiar nature with Pupil A;**

The panel noted that Mr Hill admitted allegation 1, as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered the copies of email correspondence between Mr Hill and Pupil A via the School's IT system between 14 June 2024 and 25 June 2024. The panel noted the following messages from Mr Hill in particular:

- On Friday 14 June 2024 at 4:57pm, Mr Hill sent Pupil A an email stating, "*It was great to see you…. can't wait to see you* [REDACTED] *and can't wait to see you open those results. Hope you liked the gift!*"

- On Friday 21 June 2024, following a [REDACTED], Pupil A sent an email to Mr Hill to say thank you for his gift and apologised for not opening it with him as it would have made her emotional. In that email she stated she was going to make a new email account and send it to him. At 9:40pm Mr Hill responded to Pupil A saying: "*I wouldn't have liked to see you get upset as that would have made me emotional too and then following that, we'd have formed a vicious cycle and heavens knows the mess we'd end up in! I've attached the photo, hopefully you like it! It's less posed as my massive arms make for great selfie sticks! I'll keep an eye out for your email as I'm already looking forward to reading it."*

- On Saturday 22 June 2024, at 4:20pm Pupil A commented on the photo Mr Hill sent her stating she loved it and provided him with her new personal email address.

- On Sunday 23 June 2024 at 6:40pm Mr Hill sent Pupil A an email stating: "*already used your new email so check there when you have a chance*".

- On Tuesday 25 June 2024 at 8:11pm, Mr Hill sent Pupil A an email in which he informed her he was watching the football, commented on the school trip he had attended that day, detailed his movements for the rest of activities week and provided Pupil A with his personal email address stating "*Try emailing me from it using my main account. I get notifications on this account so won't have to keep refreshing to see if you reply! Lol".*

The panel noted that contact between Mr Hill and Pupil A via the School's IT system ceased on 25 June 2024 and transferred to personal email accounts and/or WhatsApp.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Pupil A, who stated that around the time of her [REDACTED] in June 2024, she and Mr Hill started corresponding via their School email addresses. Pupil A stated that she had initiated the conversation, as she had told Mr Hill and a few other teachers that she would like to send them updates after her exams and over the summer. Pupil A said that they would communicate via their School email accounts several times a day, from around midday to late evening. She stated that after their initial correspondence, Mr Hill continued sending her emails and that the conversation turned from the topic of school and college and they became more casual on their personal email accounts.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness B. Witness B stated that during her investigation Mr Hill acknowledged that Pupil A was vulnerable, and he stated that he wanted to be there for her as a means of support. Witness B asserted that Mr Hill encouraged contact outside of school by telling Pupil A that he was looking forward to receiving contact from her.

The panel noted particularly in Witness B's oral evidence she stated that it was not unusual for pupils to contact teachers following the pupils leaving school. Ordinarily this would be to seek references or provide an update as to their progress. Witness B stated such contact would not be considered inappropriate provided the communication was via the teacher's work email address for the purpose of maintaining professional contact. Having reviewed the contact between Mr Hill and Pupil A via the School's IT system, Witness B stated she considered that it had gone beyond the scope of professional contact.

The panel considered Mr Hill's written response to the allegations in which he stated that the communication with Pupil A began when he sent an email to Pupil A's mother, to thank both her and her daughter for a thank you card he had received from them. He stated that Pupil A then emailed him to say she had seen his email to her mother, which he submitted gave him the impression that Pupil A was open with her mum regarding their communication.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found the emails exchanged from Mr Hill's School email account with Pupil A to be both

unprofessional and over-familiar in nature. The panel therefore found allegation 1 proved on the balance of probabilities.

2. On or around 25 June 2024, you provided Pupil A with your personal contact details;

The panel noted that Mr Hill admitted allegation 2, as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered the email correspondence between Mr Hill and Pupil A on 25 June 2024. This showed that at 8:11pm Mr Hill sent his personal email address to Pupil A stating that he received notifications on this account so he "*won't have to keep refreshing*" to see if Pupil A had replied.

The panel further considered screenshots of email correspondence between Mr Hill and Pupil A in which Mr Hill provided Pupil A with his *"number/WhatsApp"* details. Mr Hill provided this following Pupil A enquiring how long after she has left the School is she allowed to have him on Messenger or WhatsApp.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Pupil A. Pupil A stated that as [REDACTED], her School email account was due to be disabled, so she and Mr Hill exchanged personal email addresses in order to continue their correspondence. She stated that they corresponded like this, via personal email addresses, until she asked him what the rules were around a teacher giving a former pupil their personal contact details. Pupil A said that she asked Mr Hill if they were allowed to exchange telephone numbers yet and he told her that they could do so now. Pupil A went on to state that the only thing Mr Hill seemed concerned about was her telling people that she had his contact number.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness B. Witness B confirmed that on 25 June 2024, Mr Hill sent an email from his School email address providing Pupil A with his personal email address.

The panel considered Mr Hill's written response to the allegations, whereby he accepted providing his personal contact details to Pupil A and stated that he did not instigate the personal messaging nor did he request Pupil A's WhatsApp contact details.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found allegation 2 proved on the balance of probabilities.

3. Between approximately 14 June 2024 and 30 June 2024, you exchanged WhatsApp and/or email messages with Pupil A, that were:

a. from your personal rather than professional email address and/or phone; and/or

The panel noted that Mr Hill admitted allegation 3(a), as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered screenshots of email correspondence, from Mr Hill's personal email account, and WhatsApp messages exchanged between him and Pupil A. These communications followed Mr Hill providing Pupil A with his personal email contact details on 25 June 2024 at 8:11pm and subsequently his *"number/WhatsApp"* information.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Pupil A. Pupil A stated that as she was a school leaver, her School email account was due to be disabled, so she and Mr Hill exchanged personal email addresses to enable them to continue their correspondence. Pupil A details how she and Mr Hill exchanged emails, via their personal email addresses, until "*some point at the end of June"* when she asked him if they were allowed to exchange telephone numbers. Pupil A states that Mr Hill provided her with his mobile telephone number and from that point they messaged via WhatsApp.

The panel considered Mr Hill's written response to the allegations, whereby he accepted exchanging WhatsApp messages and emails from his personal rather than professional email address with Pupil A.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found allegation 3(a) proved on the balance of probabilities.

b. unprofessional and/or overfamiliar in nature; and/or

The panel noted that Mr Hill admitted allegation 3(b), as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered screenshots of the personal email address and WhatsApp correspondence between Mr Hill and Pupil A. The panel noted the following messages, among many others, from Mr Hill in particular:

- *"you are the absolute exception in terms of contact details. I wouldn't even entertain the idea of giving my contact details to anyone else!"*
- During messages relating to football teams each support Mr Hill states to Pupil A "*Tottenham shirt will not be burned! Don't make me have to punish you!"*
- When Pupil A had confirmed that Mr Hill's WhatsApp notifications did not show his name on her lockscreen, he replied*: "Ah that's good to know! I might message you a bit more knowing that although it seems strange as you keep calling me sir!"*

- *“Cause I’m 6’5?!? With a hand span that can cover an entire dinner plate”*
- *“I guess that means I’ve got you to myself!”*
- When Pupil A stated during a conversation that if Mr Hill needs to leave the chat to do other things he can go, he replied, *“Don’t be silly, there’s nothing else I’d rather be doing.”*

The panel noted that in several screenshots of the communications, Mr Hill shared personal information with Pupil A, including reference to his family and [REDACTED]. In addition, he made comments in relation to another child known to Pupil A, Pupil A’s boyfriend, some of his colleagues and the behaviours of other pupils at the School. Further, the panel considered the use of emojis by Mr Hill on his WhatsApp messages to Pupil A, which included use of the red love heart emoji.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Pupil A, who stated that for approximately two to three days she and Mr Hill messaged via WhatsApp. She submitted that they messaged from morning through to night, and although it was only a few days, the volume of messages was quite substantial. Pupil A stated that her communication with Mr Hill via WhatsApp was more friendly and personal than their communication via email. She submitted that she felt Mr Hill crossed a line when he sent her photos of different outfits to get her opinion on what to wear [REDACTED]. Pupil A stated that there was one occasion where Mr Hill had sent her a heart emoji at the end of a message, after they had said “*morning*” to each other which made her feel so uncomfortable she deleted the message. When giving her oral evidence in relation to the “*Don’t make me have to punish you!”* message, Pupil A stated this made her feel both uncomfortable and “*Icky”*.

The panel considered the School’s investigation report dated 21 October 2024. The investigation report found that Mr Hill used informal language in his messages to Pupil A for example “*FFS*” along with the use of emojis. When Mr Hill was asked about the content of some of the messages he had sent Pupil to A, he said he could see how they could be *"taken out of context, yes, it is a problem"* and he was *"not going to sugar coat it - taking a single sentence out of an email -without context, you could interpret it differently".*

The panel considered minutes from the investigation meeting with Mr Hill held on 8 October 2024. Mr Hill stated that the use of emojis was a "*Lighter way to communicate"*, he also clarified that he would not use terms like “*FFS”* on Google classroom with students. When asked*: “Could it be interpreted by others that there was a level of secrecy to these messages?"*” Mr Hill responded that he, *"certainly could see why it could be interpreted that way.”*

The panel considered Mr Hill's written response to the allegations, in which he stated that the messages were sent "*at a conversational level in a polite, open manner*" and submitted that the extracts in the bundle could be distorted and misinterpreted.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found the emails and WhatsApp messages Mr Hill exchanged with Pupil A to be both unprofessional and over-familiar in nature. The panel therefore found allegation 3(b) proved on the balance of probabilities.

c. sent outside of working hours; and/or

The panel noted that Mr Hill admitted allegation 3(c), as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered all the email and WhatsApp correspondence between Mr Hill and Pupil A and noted that it showed frequent contact between them, with conversations starting in the early morning and ending just after midnight.

The panel considered the School's investigation report dated 21 October 2024. The findings of the report showed that more than 160 messages were sent by Mr Hill to Pupil A via WhatsApp. Over 140 of those messages were found to have been sent after 6pm and approximately 100 of these were sent after 8pm.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness B, in which she stated that there were core hours, 8am to 3.30pm, when staff were expected to be at the School. Witness B stated that there was no expectation for any staff member to work beyond 6pm or at weekends. Witness B confirmed to the panel that Mr Hill did not have daily set working hours and that it would not be unusual for teachers, including Mr Hill, to work late and/or into the evening to undertake tasks such as training, mark pupils' work or plan lessons. It would however be unusual, and deemed inappropriate, for any member of staff to be communicating with a child at these times.

The panel considered the investigation meeting with Mr Hill held on 8 October 2024. Mr Hill stated that if Pupil A messaged, he would reply as he worked "*incredibly late hours*".

The panel considered Mr Hill's written response to the allegations, in which he stated that, whilst it was alleged that the WhatsApp conversations took place outside of working hours, he had been planning and preparing resources for School during the conversation.

The panel noted it was not presented with relevant information describing Mr Hill's working hours. Having considered the admitted facts and evidence presented, the panel concluded there was insufficient evidence before it as to what constituted Mr Hill's working hours to enable it to establish if Mr Hill exchanged messages with Pupil A

outside of working hours. The panel therefore found allegation 3(c) not proved on the balance of probabilities.

d. considerable in number.

The panel noted that Mr Hill admitted allegation 3(d), as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered all the email and WhatsApp correspondence between Mr Hill and Pupil A and noted that it showed frequent contact between them over a relatively short time period.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness B which drew upon the School's investigation report dated 21 October 2024. She found, over a two week period, Mr Hill sent in excess of 160 WhatsApp messages to Pupil A. The findings of the report showed that more than 160 messages were sent by Mr Hill to Pupil A via WhatsApp. Over 140 of those messages were found to have been sent after 6pm and approximately 100 of these were sent after 8pm. The findings showed that the last known contact between Mr Hill and Pupil A was Sunday 30 June 2024.

The panel noted, particularly in relation to the WhatsApp messages, there were several points during the message exchanges where the conversation could have been ceased by Mr Hill. However, he chose not to and either continued the conversation or introduced new topics.

The panel considered the investigation meeting with Mr Hill held on 8 October 2024, in which Mr Hill submitted that he had less than two weeks of contact with Pupil A and that he had never instigated the messages.

The panel considered Mr Hill's written response to the allegations, in which he stated that the WhatsApp messages constituted only two conversations with an "*inherent back and forth*".

The panel noted that whilst no scale had been provided as to what would ordinarily be classed as considerable in terms of WhatsApp messages, there had been in excess of 160 WhatsApp messages sent to Pupil A by Mr Hill over a short timeframe. These messages constituted two conversations covering multiple topics which were more than passing conversation or Mr Hill checking upon Pupil A's welfare. The panel further noted that Mr Hill did not at any point leave the conversation when Pupil A suggested he could.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found allegation 3(d) proved on the balance of probabilities.

4. Your conduct at paragraph 1, and/or 2, and/or 3, was:

a. A breach of professional boundaries, and/or

The panel noted that Mr Hill admitted allegation 4(a), as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025. Notwithstanding this, the panel made a determination based on the evidence available to it.

The panel considered the minutes from the School's investigation meeting on 8 October 2024. During the investigation meeting Mr Hill was asked if he was aware of what the School's code of conduct for staff says about contact with a child under the age of 18, to which he confirmed, "*Yes, not verbatim".*

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness B. Witness B submitted that during her investigation meeting with Mr Hill, he stated that he was aware of the School's Code of Conduct for staff and what it stipulated about contact with a child under the age of 18. She further stated that regular training was provided to all staff of the School alongside provision of advice which reiterated that anyone under the age of 18 was considered a child, staff should not have any contact with a pupil which may suggest a friendship, and there should be no contact with pupils via social media, including WhatsApp. If staff experienced contact on social media from pupils, they were to report it to the headteacher of the School.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Pupil A. She stated that when her mother made a complaint to the School and the police, she had initially felt guilty as she did not want Mr Hill to get into trouble, and at that stage she had not thought Mr Hill had done anything wrong. However, she stated that when she spoke to Child Protection Services, they had explained to her what grooming could look like, and this is when Pupil A stated that she realised their relationship and conversations may have been inappropriate.

The panel noted the contents of the extract of the School's Staff Code of Conduct provided in the hearing bundle, which under the heading 'Social Media' stated *"It is an expectation no staff have 'friends' on social media who are ex-students, under the age of 18….."*

The panel noted in several screenshots of the communications between Mr Hill and Pupil A that, in addition to Mr Hill mentioning his family, he also referred to other colleagues and pupils at the School, some of which may have had their own vulnerabilities.

The panel noted in Mr Hill's written response to the allegations, he referred to the fact he had worked in an education setting for twenty-five years. The panel therefore considered Mr Hill to be a very experienced teacher. However, despite his experience and being in a

position of trust, he still provided Pupil A with his personal contact details which amounted to a breach of professional boundaries.

Having considered the admitted facts and the supporting evidence, the panel found allegation 4(a) proved on the balance of probabilities.

b. Sexually motivated

The panel noted that Mr Hill denied allegation 4(b), as set out in his response to the notice of proceedings dated 22 July 2025.

The panel's attention was drawn to section 78 Sexual Offences Act 2003 and to the cases of *Sait v The General Medical Council [2018], Basson v General Medical Council [2018] and The General Medical Council v Haris [2020] EWHC 2518*.

The panel considered whether the conduct was sexually motivated. It noted that in *Basson* it was stated that, *"A sexual motive means that the conduct was done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a sexual relationship"*.

The panel was also mindful of the Court of Appeal's conclusion in *General Medical Council v Haris [2021] EWCA Civ 763.* The court found in that case that, *"In the absence of a plausible innocent explanation for what he did, the facts spoke for themselves."*

The panel considered in detail the contents of all the messages and emails exchanged between Mr Hill and Pupil A. The panel noted that whilst a number of the messages sent by Mr Hill could be considered flirtatious and were wholly inappropriate, none of them contained sexualised language, references to sexual activity or request for a personal or intimate relationship. The panel found no evidence from the correspondence that there had been any attempt by Mr Hill to engage Pupil A in sexual conversation nor that, by his conduct, Mr Hill was in pursuit of a sexual relationship with Pupil A. The panel further noted that Mr Hill had not deleted any of the correspondence nor sought to try and cover it up.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Pupil A. The panel noted that Pupil A stated that there was one occasion where Mr Hill had sent her a heart emoji at the end of a message, after they had said "*morning*" to each other which made her feel so uncomfortable she deleted the message. When giving her oral evidence in relation to the "*Don't make me have to punish you!"* message, Pupil A stated this made her feel both uncomfortable and "*Icky"*.

The panel considered the oral evidence and witness statement of Witness B in which she stated that Mr Hill had acknowledged that Pupil A was vulnerable, and that he wanted to be there for Pupil A as a means of support.

The panel considered Mr Hill's written response to the allegations, in which he stated that the messages were not in any way sexually motivated and that, at the time of the allegations, he never thought that his "*supportive*" actions could be viewed as anything other than "*encouraging*".

The panel considered whether there was a "*plausible innocent explanation*" for Mr Hill's behaviour. The panel found that whilst the messages sent to Pupil A, clearly overstepped professional boundaries and were over-familiar, they were an attempt by Mr Hill to bolster Pupil A's self-esteem at a time when she was experiencing some personal difficulties. The panel also considered the possibility, from the evidence before it, that Mr Hill, as well as Pupil A, benefited from the communications and friendship. The panel did not however find that there existed any sexual motive by Mr Hill. The panel concluded his conduct was done neither in pursuit of sexual gratification nor in pursuit of a sexual relationship.

Accordingly, having considered the oral, written and documentary evidence, together with the submissions of the parties and the authorities to which it was referred, the panel found allegation 4(b) not proved on the balance of probabilities.

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

Having found allegations 1, 2, 3(a), 3(b), 3(d) and 4(a) 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 Hill, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of the Teachers' Standards.

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

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

- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach…..
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Hill, in relation to the facts found proved, involved breaches of Keeping Children Safe In Education ("KCSIE").

The panel considered that Mr Hill was in breach of the following provision of KCSIE:

Part four, Section one: *"Concerns or allegations that may meet the harm threshold"* specifically that Mr Hill *"behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child"*.

The panel noted that in her witness statement Pupil A stated, "*I now have some trust issues and anxiety, particularly with men."* In addition, the panel noted that Mr Hill acknowledged in his correspondence with the TRA, "*he is also very aware of the upset this ordeal may be causing subject A".*

The panel also considered whether Mr Hill's conduct displayed behaviours associated with any of the offences listed on pages 12 and 13 of the Advice. The Advice indicates that where behaviours associated with such an offence exist, a panel is likely to conclude that an individual's conduct would amount to unacceptable professional conduct. The panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

The panel considered Mr Hill messaging Pupil A from his personal email account and WhatsApp, at varying times of the night and day, amounted to conduct that took place outside of the education setting. The panel however noted that, whilst Pupil A had finished her exams and therefore no longer attended the School, she was still a pupil of the School until the end of the academic year. The panel considered Mr Hill's actions highly relevant to his fitness to be a teacher.

In determining whether Mr Hill's conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct, the panel had regard to the conduct found proved at allegations 1, 2, 3(a), 3(b), 3(d) and 4(a). The panel found that Mr Hill failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with a pupil who had some vulnerabilities. The panel noted that he engaged in considerable and over familiar communications, starting early in the morning and ending just after midnight, from his personal email address and contact number. In doing so, the panel concluded Mr Hill assumed a role that went beyond that of a teacher and encouraged Pupil A to look to him as a friend and source of support. The panel considered that this represented a significant departure from the professional boundaries and safeguarding expectations placed upon teachers.

The panel further noted that Mr Hill did not report any concerns relating to Pupil A to the safeguarding team in accordance with the School's policies and procedures. The panel

considered that Mr Hill had ample opportunity to make such a report, which could have been done at any time of the day or night and would only have taken a matter of minutes, with the systems the School had in place.

The panel noted the evidence that Mr Hill was a very experienced teacher who had received regular safeguarding training. The panel therefore considered that Mr Hill should have understood the importance of following the School's safeguarding procedures.

The panel further found that Mr Hill engaged in discussions with Pupil A about personal matters, communicated with her in an over familiar manner, and made comments which disregarded the professional teacher-pupil relationship. The panel found that this created a risk of dependency and reliance on Mr Hill, rather than encouraging Pupil A to engage with the appropriate safeguarding channels and those responsible for her welfare and support. By this conduct, the panel considered that Mr Hill potentially increased the level of risk of harm to Pupil A.

The panel also noted, and viewed seriously, the fact that Mr Hill shared with Pupil A information about other pupils at the School and made comments to her in respect of some of his colleagues.

The panel considered that maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and safeguarding pupils are fundamental aspects of a teacher's role. The conduct found proved represented a significant departure from those standards.

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

In relation to whether Mr Hill'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 Hill'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 Hill was guilty of unacceptable professional conduct, the panel found that none of these offences were relevant.

The panel considered that members of the public, parents and pupils would expect teachers to maintain appropriate professional boundaries and to raise concerns regarding vulnerable pupils through the appropriate safeguarding channels. The panel noted that Mr Hill engaged in extensive and over familiar communications with a vulnerable pupil and placed himself in a position which disregarded the distinction between a professional teacher-pupil relationship.

The panel further considered that the content of the communications, including Mr Hill presenting himself as a friend and source of support and positioning himself as someone to whom Pupil A should turn rather than using the appropriate safeguarding channels, had the potential to undermine confidence in those systems. The panel considered that parents and members of the public would be deeply concerned by such conduct and would expect teachers to maintain clear professional boundaries at all times.

The panel concluded that the conduct found proved would be likely to undermine public confidence in the profession and in the standards expected of teachers.

The panel was satisfied that a member of the public, having considered the nature of the conduct found proved, would be likely to regard it as conduct falling below the standards expected of a teacher and as capable of adversely affecting the reputation of the profession. The panel considered that Mr Hill's conduct could potentially damage the public's perception of a teacher.

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.

For these reasons, the panel found that Mr Hill'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/or conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute it was necessary for the panel to go on to consider whether it would be appropriate to recommend the imposition of a prohibition order by the Secretary of State.

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

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

safeguarding and wellbeing of pupils; the protection of other members of the public; the maintenance of public confidence in the profession; and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

In the light of the panel's findings against Mr Hill, which involved providing Pupil A with his personal contact details and exchanging emails and WhatsApp messages with her, there was a strong public interest consideration in declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct.

Whilst the panel acknowledged that there was a strong public interest consideration in respect of the safeguarding and well being of pupils, the panel did not consider that there was a risk of repetition in respect of Mr Hill's conduct. This was particularly due to the panel's understanding that this was a lapse of judgement on Mr Hill's part, his intention was to act as a means of support to Pupil A rather than seek to exploit his position, and the level of insight and remorse which he appeared to have shown regarding his behaviour.

The panel also considered whether public confidence in the profession could be seriously weakened if conduct such as that found against Mr Hill 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 Hill was outside that which could reasonably be tolerated.

In addition to the public interest considerations set out above, the panel went on to consider whether there was a public interest in retaining Mr Hill in the profession. The panel noted that Witness B stated that Mr Hill was a well-regarded teacher. She described him in her statement as "*a brilliant teacher and the school held him in high regard"* and that he was "*vigilant, especially with safeguarding concerns."* Mr Hill had not provided any evidence as to his ability as an educator although the panel noted that he had had a lengthy career as a teacher which was otherwise without issue. The panel considered whether the adverse public interest considerations above outweighed any interest in retaining Mr Hill in the profession, and whether his behaviour fundamentally breached the standard of conduct expected of a teacher.

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

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 Hill.

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;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils).

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 considered on the evidence that Mr Hill's actions were deliberate. The panel particularly noted that there were several occasions during the message exchanges with Pupil A where Mr Hill could have ended the conversation, but he chose not to and either continued or introduced new topics.

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

Mr Hill did not provide any evidence that he had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector.

Having considered all the evidence before them, the panel accepted that the incident was out of character. The panel placed significant weight on Witness B's evidence of Mr Hill's vigilance and proactiveness as a teacher with regard to safeguarding matters which she stated made this behaviour with Pupil A "*even more surprising".*

The panel was not presented with any character evidence submitted on behalf of Mr Hill which pertained to his professional conduct, his contribution to the profession, and his history and ability as a teacher.

The panel concluded on the evidence of Mr Hill's response to the School's investigation and his response to the TRA's investigation that he had good insight into his actions, and it was clear that he was remorseful.

The panel noted that Mr Hill had been open and honest throughout the investigations that had taken place into his conduct. The panel considered that he had co-operated with the police, the School, and the TRA and had not sought to delete or conceal his communications with Pupil A. The panel placed significant weight on Mr Hill's admissions to his wrongdoing and acknowledgment with hindsight that he acted inappropriately.

The panel considered the submissions made by Mr Hill in his written response to the allegations, noting particularly:

- "*I have been open, honest and completely apologetic to all parties, something noted in each meeting held with the school…"*
- *"I can see how such a poor lapse in judgement, especially where Pupil A requested WhatsApp contact information has been interpreted and all the associated consequences that have resulted from this communication"*
- "*This dreadful, stressful experience has taught me a very valuable lesson and has done considerable harm to both* [REDACTED]*...I feel I have let my family and colleagues down and deeply regret not bringing this to the senior leaders attention at my earliest opportunity."*

The panel further noted email correspondence submitted on behalf of Mr Hill to the TRA in advance of the hearing by his representative:

- "*He recognises his actions as far as the communications between himself and* [Pupil A] *were not in line with school policy and deeply regrets his lapse of judgement…"*
- *"Importantly, he is also very aware of the upset this ordeal may be causing* [Pupil A] *and her family…."*

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

The panel was of the view that, applying the standard of the ordinary intelligent citizen, the recommendation of no prohibition order would be both a proportionate and an appropriate response. The panel concluded that the nature and severity of the behaviour was at the lower level of seriousness.

Having considered the mitigating factors that were present, namely: communication was over a relatively short period; Mr Hill's intention was an attempt to support Pupil A and bolster her self-esteem during a time when she had some personal difficulties rather than Mr Hill seeking to exploit his position of trust; the level of insight and remorse shown by Mr Hill; and the low risk of repetition, the panel determined that a recommendation for a prohibition order would not be appropriate in this case. The panel considered that the publication of the adverse findings it had made was sufficient to send an appropriate message to Mr Hill as to the standards of behaviour that are not acceptable, and the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.

The panel therefore recommended that a prohibition order should not be made.

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 Richard Hill is in breach of the following standards:

- Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by
    - treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
    - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach…..
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Mr Hill involved breaches of the responsibilities and duties set out in statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education'.

The panel finds that the conduct of Mr Hill fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

The findings of misconduct are serious as they include a teacher breaching professional boundaries with a pupil.

In considering the seriousness, I have placed weight on the panel's finding that Mr Hill behaved in a way that has, or may have, harmed a child. In considering this, I have also taken account of Pupil A's account which the panel quote "*I now have some trust issues and anxiety, particularly with men."* The panel go on to make a further observation that *"…Mr Hill potentially increased the level of risk of harm to Pupil A."*

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 Hill, and the impact that will have on the teacher, is proportionate and in the public interest.

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

> "The panel further noted that Mr Hill did not report any concerns relating to Pupil A to the safeguarding team in accordance with the School's policies and procedures. The panel considered that Mr Hill had ample opportunity to make such a report, which could have been done at any time of the day or night and would only have taken a matter of minutes, with the systems the School had in place.
>
> The panel noted the evidence that Mr Hill was a very experienced teacher who had received regular safeguarding training. The panel therefore considered that Mr Hill should have understood the importance of following the School's safeguarding procedures.
>
> The panel further found that Mr Hill engaged in discussions with Pupil A about personal matters, communicated with her in an over familiar manner, and made comments which disregarded the professional teacher-pupil relationship. The panel found that this created a risk of dependency and reliance on Mr Hill, rather than encouraging Pupil A to engage with the appropriate safeguarding channels and those responsible for her welfare and support. By this conduct, the panel considered that Mr Hill potentially increased the level of risk of harm to Pupil A."

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 concluded on the evidence of Mr Hill's response to the School's investigation and his response to the TRA's investigation that he had good insight into his actions, and it was clear that he was remorseful."

The evidence of Mr Hill's insight and remorse identified by the panel would appear to indicate that the risk of repetition is limited. However, in my view it is unfortunate that it had to rely on written submissions to make its assessment and did not have the opportunity to test that evidence directly with Mr Hill and/or a representative. I also note that there is no evidence that Mr Hill has taken any practical steps, for example further safeguarding training, to mitigate against the risk of a repetition of these events. I have therefore given this element limited weight in my considerations and cannot fully concur with the panel's assessment of the risk of repetition.

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

> "The panel considered that members of the public, parents and pupils would expect teachers to maintain appropriate professional boundaries and to raise concerns regarding vulnerable pupils through the appropriate safeguarding channels. The panel noted that Mr Hill engaged in extensive and over familiar communications with a vulnerable pupil and placed himself in a position which disregarded the distinction between a professional teacher-pupil relationship.
>
> The panel further considered that the content of the communications, including Mr Hill presenting himself as a friend and source of support and positioning himself as someone to whom Pupil A should turn rather than using the appropriate safeguarding channels, had the potential to undermine confidence in those systems. The panel considered that parents and members of the public would be deeply concerned by such conduct and would expect teachers to maintain clear professional boundaries at all times."

I am particularly mindful of the finding of a teacher breaching professional boundaries with a vulnerable pupil in this case, and the negative impact that such a finding may have on the reputation of the profession.

I have had to consider that the public has a high expectation of professional standards of all teachers and that the public might regard a failure to impose a prohibition order as a failure to uphold those high standards. In weighing these considerations, I have had to

consider the matter from the point of view of an "ordinary intelligent and well-informed citizen."

I have considered whether the publication of a finding of unacceptable professional conduct and conduct likely to bring the profession into disrepute, in the absence of a prohibition order, can itself be regarded by such a person as being a proportionate response to the misconduct that has been found proven in this case.

I have also considered the impact of a prohibition order on Mr Hill himself. The panel records the following:

> "The panel noted that Witness B stated that Mr Hill was a well-regarded teacher. She described him in her statement as "*a brilliant teacher and the school held him in high regard"* and that he was "*vigilant, especially with safeguarding concerns."* Mr Hill had not provided any evidence as to his ability as an educator although the panel noted that he had had a lengthy career as a teacher which was otherwise without issue."

However it also makes this comment:

> "Mr Hill did not provide any evidence that he had demonstrated exceptionally high standards in his personal and professional conduct or that he had contributed significantly to the education sector."

A prohibition order would prevent Mr Hill 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 nature of the misconduct found by the panel which involved an experienced teacher with good knowledge of safeguarding procedures demonstrating conduct towards a vulnerable pupil that breached professional boundaries. As the panel itself notes, the Advice, 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 the panel found to be relevant in this case were:

- serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards;
- abuse of position or trust (particularly involving pupils).

I have also placed significant weight on the panel's findings that Mr Hill's behaviour was deliberate and committed free of extreme duress. In respect of the deliberate nature of Mr Hill's conduct, the panel makes this comment:

> "The panel considered on the evidence that Mr Hill's actions were deliberate. The panel particularly noted that there were several occasions during the message

> exchanges with Pupil A where Mr Hill could have ended the conversation, but he chose not to and either continued or introduced new topics."

The deliberate nature of Mr Hill's conduct is, in my judgment, reinforced by the panel's findings that he was a very experienced teacher who had received regular safeguarding training.

In light of the above, I am not satisfied that publication alone is an adequate response to the misconduct found in this case. In my view, publication alone is not sufficient to address the risk of future detriment to the safety and wellbeing of pupils or to uphold the reputation of the profession. This, in my view, is based on the seriousness of the findings, incomplete insight, limited character evidence, and on the risk of repetition.

In my view, therefore, it is necessary to impose a prohibition order in order to maintain public confidence in the profession.

I have gone on to consider the matter of a review period. The Advice sets out that a review period may not be less than two years. It also provides examples of types of misconduct that may lead to no review period or a longer review period. None of these are engaged by the misconduct found by the panel in this case.

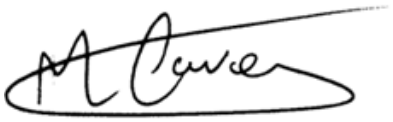
In making my determination, I have considered the mitigating factors found by the panel. Specifically, I have given weight to the presence of some evidence of insight and remorse, the findings that these events took place over a relatively short period of time, and that this appears to have been an isolated incident within the context of Mr Hill's career. I have also given some weight to the panel's assessment that the nature and severity of the behaviour was at the lower level of possible seriousness, while also taking account of the potential harm done to Pupil A.

I consider therefore that a two-year review period is necessary and sufficient to satisfy the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and to uphold its reputation. It will also afford Mr Hill the opportunity, should he wish to return to the profession, to provide to a future panel fuller evidence that he has developed full insight into his behaviour, its causes and potential impact on others in order to render the risk of repetition negligible.

This means that Mr Richard Hill 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 23 October 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 Hill remains prohibited from teaching indefinitely.

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

Mr Hill 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.