# Teachers banned for alcohol-related misconduct amid calls for clearer legal rules



Allegations of misconduct involving teachers and alcohol have sparked significant concern within educational settings, as evidenced by the recent case of Jon Downs. Downs, a 36-year-old religious studies teacher at Westhoughton High School in Bolton, has been banned from teaching following an incident on 3 July 2023, where he admitted to consuming alcohol on school premises. Witnesses reported a detectable smell of alcohol emanating from him as he navigated the school grounds, culminating in an embarrassing moment where he collided with a door he frequently used.

The disciplinary panel of the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) was informed by several witnesses that Downs’ behaviour that day was notably uncharacteristic, indicating a potential impairment. One staff member noted how his unsteady gait and difficulty recalling the direction to her office raised concerns. Ultimately, a discreet search of his classroom revealed three empty cider cans, which Downs confessed to having consumed while alone in the classroom. The findings prompted the panel to determine that his actions posed a risk to students under his care, leading to an indefinite prohibition from teaching. According to Marc Cavey, CEO of the TRA, although Downs expressed remorse, his lack of complete insight into the gravity of his actions left room for concern regarding future behaviour.

This incident is not isolated within the teaching profession. In a similar instance, Liam Knight, a swimming teacher at Drayton Junior School near Norwich, faced an indefinite ban after being found intoxicated during a lesson, with witnesses describing his slurred speech and the presence of a wine bottle in the staff toilets. The TRA deemed his conduct far from acceptable for a professional educator, reinforcing the expectation of alcohol-free environments for teachers.

Contrastingly, the case of Wendy Munson, a second-grade teacher in California, illustrates a significant gap in legal accountability. Munson performed duties while suspected of intoxication, with her blood alcohol content measured at twice the legal limit. However, Sutter County District Attorney Jennifer Dupre asserted that teaching while drunk is not illegal, resulting in no charges against her. This raises troubling questions about the regulatory frameworks surrounding teacher conduct, especially as public sentiment increasingly calls for stringent measures in safeguarding student welfare.

Adding to the discourse, Alison Atkins, a primary school teacher in Gravesend, Kent, similarly faced disciplinary action for drinking wine in her car during a lunch break. She openly admitted to consuming multiple miniature bottles of wine daily while on school property, which the TRA classified as unacceptable professional conduct.

These cases spotlight the broader implications of alcohol consumption by educators and its impact on student safety and behaviour. While many regulatory bodies are taking decisive actions against educators like Downs and Knight, the apparent lack of legal repercussions in Munson's situation exemplifies a critical area that may require legislative revision.

As schools remain a cornerstone for student development and safety, the expectation for teachers is to uphold the highest standards. The ongoing discussions surrounding these incidents, coupled with the varying responses from disciplinary panels and legal authorities, will likely shape future policies and regulations aimed at preventing such occurrences and ensuring that the integrity of the educational environment is maintained.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraphs 5
3. Paragraphs 6, 7, 8
4. Paragraph 9
5. Paragraph 9
6. Paragraph 10
7. Paragraph 10

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/teacher-ban-cider-jon-downs-westhoughton-school-bolton-b2750765.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4g3518p5v5o> - A swimming teacher at Drayton Junior School near Norwich, Liam Knight, was banned from teaching after being found intoxicated during a swimming lesson. Witnesses reported his slurred speech and unsteady movements, and a bottle of rosé wine was discovered in the staff toilets. The Teaching Regulation Agency panel concluded that Knight's conduct fell significantly short of professional standards, leading to his indefinite ban from the profession, with a review period of two years.
3. <https://www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/news/sutter-teacher-dui-child-endangerment-no-charges/> - Wendy Munson, a second-grade teacher at Nuestro Elementary in Live Oak, California, was arrested in October 2023 for DUI and child endangerment after being suspected of teaching while intoxicated. Despite her blood alcohol content being twice the legal limit, Sutter County District Attorney Jennifer Dupre stated that 'it is not illegal to teach drunk,' leading to no charges being filed against Munson.
4. <https://www.breitbart.com/crime/2024/06/12/not-illegal-to-teach-drunk-california-prosecutors-drop-charges-against-intoxicated-elementary-school-teacher/> - In October 2023, Wendy Munson, a second-grade teacher at Nuestro Elementary in Live Oak, California, was arrested for DUI and child endangerment after being suspected of teaching while intoxicated. Despite her blood alcohol content being twice the legal limit, Sutter County District Attorney Jennifer Dupre stated that 'it is not illegal to teach drunk,' leading to no charges being filed against Munson.
5. <https://www.kcra.com/article/sutter-county-2nd-grade-teacher-no-charges-teaching-intoxicated/61063305> - Wendy Munson, a second-grade teacher at Nuestro Elementary School in Live Oak, California, was arrested in October 2023 after showing signs of intoxication while teaching. Investigators found her blood alcohol content was twice the legal limit. However, the Sutter County District Attorney's Office stated that while it is highly inappropriate to teach while intoxicated, it is not illegal, leading to no charges being filed against Munson.
6. <https://premium.kentonline.co.uk/gravesend/news/teacher-caught-drinking-wine-in-car-on-lunch-break-banned-309268/> - Alison Atkins, a primary school teacher at Copperfield Academy in Gravesend, Kent, was banned from teaching after being caught drinking wine in her car during a lunch break. Fellow staff members observed her drinking from a long-neck bottle in her car on May 12, 2023. Atkins admitted to consuming four miniature bottles of wine per day and to further instances of drinking during the school day. The Teaching Regulation Agency panel found her conduct amounted to unacceptable professional conduct, leading to her indefinite ban from teaching, with a review period of two years.
7. <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article289164589.html> - In October 2023, Wendy Munson, a second-grade teacher at Nuestro Elementary School in Live Oak, California, was arrested on suspicion of DUI and child endangerment after being suspected of teaching while intoxicated. Despite her blood alcohol content being twice the legal limit, Sutter County District Attorney Jennifer Dupre stated that 'it is not illegal to teach drunk,' leading to no charges being filed against Munson.