# Former assistant headteacher dismissed for gross misconduct after controversial award at Blue Coat School



The recent dismissal of Nick Barends, an assistant headteacher at The Blue Coat School in Liverpool, highlights the complex and often troubling dynamics of safeguarding within educational environments. Barends, who faced serious allegations during his tenure, has now lost his claim for unfair dismissal — marking the second time he has left the institution amid concerns about his conduct.

In July 2023, after a comprehensive tribunal, Barends was dismissed following incidents that included handing out an inappropriate award at a school prom that referenced a student’s sexual assault claim. Reports suggest that this award was presented to a male pupil accused of sexually assaulting a female student while they were in a taxi, with the alleged victim in attendance. This blatant disregard for the severity of the situation raised significant ethical concerns regarding Barends' professional judgment.

Barends had a troubled history with the school. In 2010, he was initially dismissed over allegations of an inappropriate relationship with an A-Level student. Despite the findings of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) — who concluded that he posed a continued risk to children — a panel of governors controversially reinstated him after a successful appeal. This reinstatement did not merely reflect on Barends but also prompted critical discussions regarding the school's governance and safeguarding measures.

The Blue Coat School has been grappling with a series of internal crises in recent years. Following Barends’ dismissal, headteacher Scilla Yates announced her intention to step back amid a separate investigation by the Teaching Regulation Agency. This instability has provoked staff unrest, and plans for industrial action have emerged, highlighting widespread dissatisfaction with the school’s leadership and management. Observers argue that the trajectory of events underscores a systemic failure in the school’s protocols for safeguarding both students and staff.

During the tribunal, Barends’ representative attempted to downplay the significance of the award by claiming it was merely a light-hearted joke about a taxi driver, a defence that the school's lawyer dismissed as disingenuous. Simon Gorton asserted that the context and timing of the joke indicated malicious intent tied to the serious allegations against the pupil who received it.

Judge Ainscough ultimately ruled that Barends' actions constituted gross misconduct, stating that the school could no longer trust him to fulfil his duties. The tribunal's findings have been welcomed by The Blue Coat School, with a spokesperson expressing hopes that the resolution brings some closure to the affected individuals. They acknowledged the bravery of the former female pupil who stepped forward, allowing the troubling behaviour to be brought to light.

The challenges faced by The Blue Coat School serve as a poignant reminder of the importance of safeguarding within educational institutions. It raises questions not only about individual conduct but also about the policies and frameworks in place to protect vulnerable students. As the school seeks to restore confidence in its governance, the ongoing scrutiny of its management practices will be crucial in ensuring that past mistakes are not repeated and that students are afforded the safe, supportive environment they deserve.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraph 2
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 7
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 2

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14727917/Assistant-headteacher-secondary-school-sacked-giving-award-making-fun-students-sexual-assault-two-years-branded-risk-children-council-official.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/blue-coat-teacher-nick-barends-3432447> - In 2010, Nick Barends, an assistant headteacher at Liverpool's Blue Coat School, was suspended after allegations of a sexual relationship with an A-Level student. The school and council initiated an investigation into the claims, which were taken seriously due to the nature of the allegations. The incident prompted discussions about safeguarding and the responsibilities of educational institutions in handling such serious accusations.
3. <https://www.livpost.co.uk/exclusive-former-blue-coat-assistant/> - In April 2023, former Blue Coat School assistant headteacher Nick Barends was arrested on suspicion of rape and sexual activity in the presence of a child. The allegations, described as 'historic,' date back to 2008. This arrest followed a suspension in January 2023 related to a separate matter. The case has raised significant concerns about the school's handling of such serious allegations and the broader issue of safeguarding within educational institutions.
4. <https://www.livpost.co.uk/another-headteacher-down-staff-walking/> - The Blue Coat School in Liverpool has faced significant turmoil, including the resignation of headteacher Scilla Yates amid a formal investigation into her conduct. This follows the dismissal of assistant headteacher Nick Barends in July 2023 after an investigation into his conduct. The school has experienced staff unrest, with plans for industrial action due to dissatisfaction with governance and leadership. These events highlight ongoing challenges within the school's leadership and management.
5. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Strikes%2C%2Bfights%2Band%2Bsackings%3A%2B5%2Byears%2Bof%2BBlue%2BCoat%2Bchaos.%2BINSIDE...-a0793636294> - Over the past five years, The Blue Coat School in Liverpool has experienced significant turmoil, including the dismissal and reinstatement of assistant headteacher Nick Barends over allegations of an inappropriate relationship with a student. The school has also faced staff strikes, disputes, and leadership changes, leading to questions about its governance and management. Despite these challenges, the school continues to maintain high academic standards, ranking as one of the top-performing schools in the region.
6. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Blue%2BCoat%2Bhead%2Bto%2Bstep%2Bback%2Bfrom%2Brole%2Bas%2Bprobe%2Bconfirmed.%2Byates%2Bfaces...-a0781903561> - Scilla Yates, headteacher of The Blue Coat School in Liverpool, has announced plans to step back from her role amid a formal investigation into her conduct by the Teaching Regulation Agency. This decision follows the dismissal of assistant headteacher Nick Barends in July 2023 after an investigation into his conduct. The school is undergoing significant leadership changes, with staff unrest and potential industrial action due to dissatisfaction with governance and leadership.
7. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/SACKED%2BBLUE%2BCOAT%2BSIR%2BGETS%2BJOB%2BBACK%3B%2BA-level%2Bprobe%2Bteacher%2Bis...-a0236875587> - In 2010, Nick Barends, an assistant headteacher at Liverpool's Blue Coat School, was dismissed over allegations of an inappropriate relationship with an A-Level student. However, following an appeal, a panel of governors reinstated him, reducing the punishment from dismissal to a final written warning. Despite the reinstatement, the incident raised concerns about the school's handling of such serious allegations and the effectiveness of its disciplinary processes.