# Recent hearings shed light on teacher misconduct in UK schools



A series of recent hearings have highlighted significant and concerning cases involving teacher misconduct across various schools in the UK.

In a decision made by a professional conduct panel convened by the Teaching Regulation Authority, Matthew Chown, a 34-year-old physics teacher at Litcham School near Swaffham, received an indefinite ban from teaching due to a pattern of inappropriate behaviour towards students between November 2022 and November 2023. Notably, he made comments about one girl's skirt length, sent sexually inappropriate messages, and stated a desire to run away with her. He also communicated inappropriately with another student and provided pupils with pens featuring expletives. Chown, who began his tenure at the school in July 2019, did not attend the February 27 hearing but had previously acknowledged unacceptable professional conduct. Upon investigation after parental concerns regarding Chown’s comments emerged, he was suspended on January 10, 2024, following reviews of his emails, which included sexually suggestive innuendos and discussions about favouritism. Following the panel's findings, he can apply for the prohibition order to be lifted in two years.

In another case, Philip Coales, a 33-year-old teacher at the City of London Academy Highbury Grove, was cleared of any sexual motivation despite engaging in troubling conduct towards his students. This included telling one pupil he loved her, purchasing alcohol for students, and suggesting they meet outside of school. An email sent by Mr Coales to a pupil expressed sentiments such as, "I respect you and I love you," which the panel deemed inappropriate, though they concluded the conduct did not reflect sexual intentions. His behaviour was described as 'over-indulgent' and 'flippant', and he acknowledged the impropriety of his emotional communications. Ultimately, while cautioned about his behaviour, the panel determined he did not warrant a prohibition order, citing his remorse and the absence of sexual motivations.

A distinct case involved Glawdys Leger, a Christian teacher at Bishop Justus Church of England School in Bromley, who faced unprofessional conduct findings after expressing views about LGBT+ identities during a religious studies lesson. In February 2022, she told her Year Seven class that being LGBT+ was a sin and remarked that transgender individuals were "just confused". Following a pupil's complaint, which was supported by their mother, she was suspended and later dismissed. Despite her appeals to the High Court against the panel's finding and publication of the decision, Mrs Justice Lang dismissed her case, affirming it was lawful for the panel to publish its findings as a proportionate response to her conduct.

These cases reflect the ongoing scrutiny of teacher behaviours and the legal frameworks governing professional conduct within UK educational establishments, demonstrating the complexities involved when addressing misconduct allegations in schools.

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

## References

* <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/teacher-misconduct-cases-driven-up-by-parent-complaints/> - This article supports the claim that there has been a significant increase in teacher misconduct referrals, largely driven by parental complaints, which highlights the scrutiny on teacher behavior in the UK.
* <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/misconduct-agency-breaches-heads-human-rights-but-bans-her-anyway/> - This article corroborates the complexities and challenges in handling teacher misconduct cases, including delays and human rights breaches, which are relevant to the legal frameworks governing professional conduct.
* <https://www.edapt.org.uk/blog/2024/11/teacher-misconduct-hearings-what-impact-do-delays-have/> - This blog post explains the impact of delays in teacher misconduct hearings, which can have significant effects on teachers and schools, aligning with the complexities mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/teaching-regulation-agency> - This official government website provides information on the Teaching Regulation Agency, which is responsible for investigating teacher misconduct cases, supporting the context of the article.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education> - The BBC's education section often covers news related to teacher misconduct and educational policies in the UK, providing a broader context for the cases mentioned.
* <https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/> - Ofsted's website offers insights into educational standards and policies in the UK, which are relevant to the legal frameworks governing teacher conduct discussed in the article.
* <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25024882.litcham-teacher-matthew-chown-struck-off-sex-comments/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data