# Primary school teacher banned for intoxication at work



A primary school teacher, Ashley Atkin, aged 38, has been banned from teaching in England following an incident at Horn's Mill Primary School in Helsby, Cheshire, on October 20, 2023. Atkin appeared at work inebriated, displaying symptoms of intoxication, including glazed eyes and a staggering gait. Colleagues reported that she emitted a strong smell of alcohol, prompting immediate concerns regarding her ability to supervise students effectively.

Witness accounts detailed Atkin's struggle to perform her duties during the morning assembly, where she was meant to present a 'Big Cheese' award to a Year 1 pupil. Instead, she reportedly sat in a darkened classroom and exhibited signs of distress, described as "fragile" with "watery and puffy eyes". A fellow staff member, referred to as Witness B, confronted Atkin in the staff room, where she initially denied drinking but later admitted to consuming a bottle of white wine and an additional small glass the previous night.

The Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) initiated a disciplinary investigation into the incident after concerns were raised during the assembly. Evidence submitted to the TRA included testimonies from multiple colleagues who noted the pungent odour of alcohol on Atkin's breath. One teacher, Witness B, described Atkin's state as “pungent”, “strong”, and “distinctive to drinking,” necessitating air circulation in the staff room to dispel the odour.

Atkin's behaviour on that day included failing to welcome children into her classroom and neglecting to prepare essential materials for the day's lessons. As detailed in the report, she could not even announce the recipient of the award, prompting another teacher to step in. Witness C stated that Atkin appeared unsteady when escorting the children to assembly, leading to increased concerns about their safety under her supervision.

After a collective decision was made regarding Atkin's fitness for duty, she was escorted from the school. Subsequently, she resigned from her position on December 8, 2023.

The TRA's professional conduct panel concluded that Atkin's actions constituted unacceptable professional conduct and could potentially damage the reputation of the teaching profession. A report released in February 2025 did not find evidence of extreme duress or a prior record of exceptional teaching from Atkin, who had only been employed at Horn's Mill Primary for one month.

The TRA report highlighted Atkin's lack of insight and genuine remorse regarding her actions. It indicated that she had also denied a previous drink-driving conviction from July 2023, a denial that was later disproven through court records.

Due to these findings, the TRA has prohibited Atkin from teaching in any school, sixth form college, or children's home in England, with a stipulation that she may not reapply for teaching roles for a period of two years. Although she retains the right to appeal the ruling within 28 days, the panel has set a review period, indicating that there will be provisions to reassess her application to return to teaching in the future. The report noted, "The panel was satisfied that the conduct of Ms Atkin fell significantly short of the standard of behaviour expected of a teacher.”

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

## References

* <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/uk/teacher-drunk-school-banned/> - This URL corroborates the details of Ashley Atkin's misconduct at Horn's Mill Primary School in Helsby, Cheshire, including her inebriation and inability to perform her duties during the morning assembly.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-misconduct-panel-outcome-ms-ashley-atkin> - This URL supports the outcome of the professional conduct panel regarding Ashley Atkin's case, including the prohibition from teaching in England and the reasoning behind this decision.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Since there is no direct link to an article on Noah Wire Services, this might have been the source of the original information about Ashley Atkin's misconduct, though no specific URL is given.
* <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-regulation-agency#disciplinary-panels> - This URL provides general information about the Teaching Regulation Agency and its disciplinary processes, which are relevant to Ashley Atkin's case.
* <https://www.education.gov.uk/contactus> - This website is a contact point for the UK Department of Education, where inquiries about teacher misconduct and regulatory matters can be directed.
* <https://www.horns-mill.co.uk/> - This is the website for Horn's Mill Primary School, where the incident occurred, though it may not directly address the specific incident.