

## Teachers who view child pornography to be banned from the profession

Teachers who download child pornography will be barred from the profession, the Education Secretary has said.



Michael Gove has pledged to revise the current rules after Geoffrey Bettley, a 36-year-old RE teacher, was allowed to resume his career despite admitting that he viewed images of child abuse.

Bettley was given a police caution and ordered to sign the Sex Offenders register, but a professional conduct panel said he could return to the classroom because of his "excellent teaching".

After a furious reaction from MPs, schools campaigners and children's charities, Mr Gove has said he will revise the panel's guidance. However, the changes will not be retrospective meaning Mr Bettley will still be free to teach.

Robert Buckland, a Conservative MP, said: "There is a very legitimate public concern that cases are being dealt with so leniently.

"He should not be allowed to teach or be anywhere near children. I have grave concerns about this decision, it is an affront to common sense and to parents everywhere.

"I welcome Michael Gove's announcement but quite clearly in this particular case we still have a position that is unacceptable."

Bettley was a teacher at St Mary's Catholic High School in Menston, West Yorkshire, for a decade until he was sacked in December 2011.

The professional conduct panel of the National College for Teaching and Leadership disclosed that he initially visited an internet site in 2009 and viewed six images of child abuse.

By the time police seized his computer in December last year, he had viewed 143 images, assessed to be on the lowest "level one" on the scale for seriousness.

He downloaded another 46 more serious "level three" images, including scenes of child abuse, but they had not been viewed.

Instead of being taken to court, however, he was given the option of accepting a police caution.

The panel decided that while his actions were "unacceptable professional misconduct", his "excellent" teaching history meant he "should be allowed to continue teaching in future".

Its conclusions were forwarded to the Department for Education, where the official concluded "although the findings in the case are serious... I support the recommendation of the panel that a prohibition order should not be applied."

The Independent Safeguarding Authority had put Bettley on a "barred list", but his name was removed last year.

A Department for Education Spokesman said: "We want to ensure that in future anyone cautioned or prosecuted for offences related to child pornography is prohibited from teaching.

"We are taking steps to revise the guidance the independent panel uses to make a decision on whether a teacher should be barred."

The Telegraph - Steven Swinford