



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**R**

**-v-**

**Jeremy Forrest**

**Lewes Crown Court**

**21 June 2013**

**Sentencing remarks of His Honour Judge Lawson QC**

It is a huge privilege for an adult to be permitted to teach children – to pass on not just what they know but how to discover more, to excite curiosity and to open new vistas. An inspiring teacher can lift a child to levels neither they, nor their parents, ever dreamt of. It appears that you had both the personality and the talent to do that for those whom you taught.

But you chose to ignore the cardinal rule of teaching – that you should do so in an environment that was utterly safe and with no hidden agendas. I say ‘ignored’ because the evidence showed clearly how concerned your fellow members of staff were for your reputation as a teacher. They responded to the reports from students of your behavior and their own observations. Time and time again between Feb and July 2012, they warned and advised you and offered you support. You lied to them as to the nature of your developing relationship and denied sending the messages and photos that pupils had seen.

You even complained that the rumours that were circulating were lies by X. You lied to her mother and complained that X’s silence in relation to those ‘false’ rumours was ruining your career and that she was harassing you. She felt mortified that her daughter was behaving in that way.

In reality you had by then already started an intimate relationship with X - her first - within days of her 15<sup>th</sup>. birthday and, as you spoke, you were preparing to spend

much of the summer holidays pursuing that relationship with her in your and your wife's home, in hotel rooms and in the back of your car.

I am satisfied that you deceived X, too, about the true nature of your relationship with your wife. You took her away with you when it was likely that you would be suspended and possibly even arrested.

When you first started teaching X in September 2011, you noticed her, and she responded to your care and concern about difficulties she was having. She developed an affection for you. For her it was a supportive relationship she should have been able to trust. Her attendance and performance at school improved. It was evident to others who went on the school trip to Los Angeles that by then she had become infatuated with you. She told you of her eating disorder and other insecurities. I have seen nothing in the evidence which shows that at any stage you tried to provide proper boundaries between yourself and her, to discourage her, or let other staff deal with the matter appropriately. Indeed all the evidence shows that you encouraged her infatuation and provided opportunities for her to communicate with you and be alone with you.

By her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday any thought of waiting until she was 16 had been abandoned, if ever that had been the plan, and you embarked upon a full sexual relationship soon after. Texts that we have heard of show that you were active in driving that relationship forward.

It is argued that she was willing for that to happen but to urge that argument is to ignore the rationale for the 'age of consent' rules. It was your duty as a teacher to stop her infatuation, not to fuel it. Your research into what might happen to you, if caught, is proof of the deliberate nature of your behavior.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September you took her to France. I suspect you went for your own purposes. In taking her with you, you subjected her family to appalling distress and concerns for her safety. You made no attempt to think of their welfare or let someone know she was safe. Since her return to this country X has had to endure the relentless spotlight on what should have been a very private matter at the mere age of

15. You have contested the abduction charge raising a spurious defense, so that she had to give evidence, evidence very different in content from her original account and designed to support it. She had clearly received assistance in relation to what she should say. Further publicity will follow today's hearing. Where is that genuine care for her welfare that is the hallmark of a truly loving relationship?

Your behavior over this period had been motivated by self interest and has hurt and damaged many people – her family; your family; staff and pupils at the School and respect for teachers everywhere. It has damaged you too, but that was something you were prepared to risk.

You now have to pay that price.

You have redeemed yourself to some very small degree by waving your right to full extradition, but not before you had repeatedly tried to avoid being brought back to this country for crimes you knew you had committed.

You know that the matters for which I have to sentence you demand an immediate sentence of imprisonment – as punishment for you and a clear signal to others. Other consequences automatically follow and they will prevent you being able to damage other vulnerable children.

I have to have regard to the total sentence and therefore each element is reduced slightly.

The total sentence is 5.5 years imprisonment.

Sex offences x 5 counts: 4.5 yrs on each concurrent.

Abduction: 1 yr consecutive.

Disqualified from working with children. Name given to Safeguarding Authority.

SOPO, as agreed: indefinitely.

Subject to notification requirements indefinitely.