

## **Jeremy Forrest abduction case: Judge's statement in full**

Teacher Jeremy Forrest has been sentenced to five and a half years for abducting and having sex with a 15-year-old schoolgirl.

The 30-year-old was convicted at Lewes Crown Court on Thursday and later admitted five charges of sexual activity with a child.

Before sentencing, the judge Michael Lawson QC summed up the case. That summing up is reproduced below:

"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 behaviour and their own observations.

"Time and time again between February 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.

### **'Deceived her'**

"You even complained that the rumours that were circulating were lies by the girl. You lied to her mother and complained that the girl's silence in relation to those false rumours were 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 the girl - her first - within days of her 15th birthday and, as you spoke, you were preparing to spend much of the summer holidays pursuing that relationship with her in you and your wife's home, in hotel rooms and in the back of your car.

"I am satisfied that you deceived her 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 the girl 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.

### **'Encouraged her infatuation'**

"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 15th 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 behaviour.

"On 20th 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 she 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 defence, 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?

### **'Pay the price'**

"Your behaviour 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 waiving 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."

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