

# 'There are no rules on trans pupils'

The teacher fired for misgendering a student talks exclusively to Camilla Tominey Features



## The Daily Telegraph

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ISSN 0307-1235



## Johnson accused of Covid rule breaches

Allies claim former PM is victim of political smear as fresh allegations referred to police

By Ben Riley-Smith POLITICAL EDITOR

BORIS JOHNSON has been referred to police over fresh allegations of breaking Covid lockdown rules, in a move described as a political "smear" by his allies.

The Metropolitan Police and Thames Valley Police confirmed yesterday that they were looking at allegations Mr Johnson attended – including receiving visitors – in Downing Street and Chequers while he was prime minister. The move was prompted by the Cabinet Office handing over diary entries uncovered by lawyers working on Mr Johnson's formal submission to the Covid public inquiry.

Cabinet Office sources said officials were obliged by the Civil Service code to hand the information to the police, given concerns that the entries detailed potential breaches of lockdown rules. However, a spokesman for Mr Johnson said the allegations were "totally untrue" and suggested that the claims had been made for a "political purpose".

The development triggered a fierce reaction from friends of the former prime minister, who claimed he was being targeted by a "political stitch-up" and a "smear".

One ally said: "This is ridiculous and it is a wilful attempt to misread diary entries in order to make something out of nothing."

Supporters noted that Oliver Dowden, the most senior minister in the Cabinet Office, is one of Rishi Sunak's closest friends in politics.

But Cabinet Office sources said that no government minister was involved in the decision, dismissing any accusation of politicking and saying officials were duty-bound to act.

It comes as the Government braces for confirmation that net migration has hit a record high, with projections that the total will be between 700,000 and one million.

The former prime minister's fall from power last year followed the partygate scandal, which led to Covid fines being issued over eight events in government buildings. Mr Johnson himself received one fine.

A linked investigation by the Commons privileges committee into whether Mr Johnson misled MPs over the events continues to overshadow his hopes of a political comeback, with a

report expected next month. The committee is understood to have been informed of the police referral.

Little is known about the gatherings at the heart of the latest development. One source said there were a "handful" of events. Another said "more than 10".

Police figures confirmed they occurred between June 2020 and May 2021, a period during which the country moved in and out of lockdowns to stop the spread of Covid.

The Daily Telegraph has been told one such event was a lunch in the No 10 garden for Mr Johnson and his mother, Charlotte Johnson Wahl, who died in September 2021.

Another, which Whitehall sources vehemently denied was a breach of the rules, is said to have involved Mr Johnson meeting the television presenter Kate Garraway to discuss her husband, who was left in a life-threatening condition after being diagnosed with Covid in March 2020.

The development comes amid enmity between supporters of Mr Johnson and Mr Sunak about the Tory rebellion last year that led to the former

'This is a wilful attempt to misread diary entries in order to make something out of nothing'

prime minister's ousting from Downing Street.

A Cabinet Office spokesman said: "Information came to light during the process of preparing evidence for submission to the Covid inquiry. In line with obligations in the Civil Service code, this material has been passed to the relevant authorities and it is now a matter for them."

A spokesman for Mr Johnson said: "The assertion by the Cabinet Office that there have been further Covid rule breaches is totally untrue."

"Lawyers have examined the events in question and advised that they were lawful. For whatever political purpose, it is plain that a last ditch attempt is being made ... to undermine Mr Johnson."

The Metropolitan Police said: "We are in receipt of information from the Cabinet Office, which we are currently assessing."

And when it is too high and too fast, it

## Chelsea winner's story of tragedy and triumph



Olivia Chapple is 'thrilled' that Horatio's Garden, her spinal injuries charity, set up in honour of her son who was killed in a polar bear attack in the Arctic, has won best in show at Chelsea. It is the show's first fully wheelchair-accessible garden. Reports: Page 7

## Equalities chief vows to fight trans row 'coup'

By Ewan Somerville

THE head of the equalities watchdog is "determined to fight" an attempted coup by civil servants over her trans stance, her allies have said.

Baroness Falkner of Margravine, 68, the chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), is at the centre of a vicious internal row after her own officials filed a dossier of complaints about her, alleging bullying and harassment.

It has plunged the watchdog, which is tasked with upholding equality law in Britain, into crisis and opened a schism between its expert board members and civil servants who implement their decisions.

An employment barrister, Gavin

Mansfield KC, of Littleton Chambers, has been drafted in to investigate the 40 complaints, costing taxpayers £100,000, but Lady Falkner is having to pay tens of thousands of pounds from her own pocket for lawyers to defend herself.

Her allies told The Daily Telegraph she was "determined to fight this" and dismissed the complaints as "ideological", "vexatious", "trivial" and a "political chess game".

Insiders said she had been "close to tears on a few occasions" in recent weeks and had been heard to mutter under her breath: "Why would anyone want to go into public service?"

A senior EHRC source said: "She's defending herself against this investigation. She's engaging in good faith and is very clear that she wants to clear her

name." Another insider said the saga "overlaps" with separate recent cases of "kid-glove" Whitehall officials making grievances about Cabinet ministers.

The case coincides with the EHRC's latest attempt to defend gender-critical views in the transgender debate. Lady Falkner advised ministers to update the definition of "sex" in the 2010 Equality Act to make clear that it refers to biological sex, not any self-ascribed identity.

Among the staff complaints is that there is "a lack of psychological safety, i.e. the fear of who will be attacked next" and that they are "worried that the commission is becoming an unsafe place to work".

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## PM: uncontrolled migration would push services to brink

By Charles Hymas, Ben Riley-Smith and Dan Martin

RISHI SUNAK warns today that "uncontrolled" legal migration risks leading to unmanageable pressures on housing, schools and hospitals.

In an exclusive article for The Daily Telegraph, the Prime Minister said he was committed to bringing down migration because when it was "too high and too fast" it was difficult for migrants to integrate into communities. It came as the Government yesterday

day announced that all foreign students, except those carrying out postgraduate research, will be barred from bringing family members to the UK from January next year, a move that could reduce net migration by as much as 150,000.

Figures to be published tomorrow by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are expected to show net migration – the number of people entering minus those leaving – has hit a record high of between 700,000 and one million for last year. That figure is up from

504,000 in the year to June 2022 and nearly treble the pre-Brexit rate.

In his article, Mr Sunak said tightening restrictions on migration was not anti-immigrant. He said it was a charge that could not be levelled at the UK given its "proud history" of taking refugees such as 174,000 Ukrainians.

But he said Britain could not have "uncontrolled legal migration".

"That's unfair. It leads to unmanageable pressures on housing, schools and hospitals in many of our communities. And when it is too high and too fast, it

can make it difficult for communities to integrate new arrivals," he said. Mr Sunak said Britain remained committed to its target of allowing 600,000 foreign students to come to the UK but this could not come at the expense of the Government's manifesto pledge to lower net migration.

Ministers admitted yesterday net migration would only fall back to 2019 levels in the "medium term", which the Home Office sets as between 18 months and five years. It means the Government is likely to go into the next elec-

tion – expected next year – having failed to meet its manifesto pledge to bring down net migration from 2019 levels of 245,000.

Mr Sunak has pledged to close loopholes that have fuelled an eight-fold rise in the number of dependants brought into the UK by foreign students – up from 16,000 to 135,788 since 2019.

From next January, only students who

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### NEWS

#### Private health firms to run cancer checks

Health companies will run cancer check courts as part of efforts to clear NHS backlogs. The programme is to be announced next month under Rishi Sunak's plans to use the private sector to speed up access to healthcare.

Tomorrow he outlines expansions to patient choice, with the NHS app allowing people to select treatment in private hospitals. Efforts to promote choice were drawn up under Tony Blair's government but allowed to wither on the vine.

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### NEWS

#### 'Vengeful' killer whales learn how sink yachts

In a tale with echoes of *Moby-Dick*, a killer whale has been protecting attack yachts around Gibraltar, and has sunk two boats. Researchers believe that White Gladi, a female orca, is seeking revenge after being traumatised by a collision with a boat or being trapped in fishing nets. Its attacks are being copied by the rest of the nearby killer whale population, which has learned how to ram vessels. The matriarch is tutoring younger whales in the art of sinking boats.

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'At school today a teacher misgendered my imaginary friend'

### NEWS

#### An apple a day keeps fractures and falls away

Eating a medium-sized apple each day in your sixties can help protect against the frailty that comes with old age, scientists at Harvard University have found. The fruit contains a particularly beneficial flavanol called quercetin, and it reduces the odds of infirmity by 20 per cent, according to a study. Up to 15 per cent of older adults experience frailty, a geriatric syndrome that leads to a greater risk of falls, fractures, disability and death.

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### SPORT

#### Resolve disciplinary case, urges Guardiola

Pep Guardiola has implored Manchester City and the Premier League to resolve their disciplinary case as soon as possible for "the benefit of everyone". City clinched a fifth title in six seasons at the weekend, but a cloud continues to hang over the club after they were charged by the Premier League in February with 115 alleged rule breaches, three years after having a two-year European ban from UEFA for allegedly flouting Financial Fair Play regulations overturned on appeal.

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