

SPSO decision report

Case: 201203674, A Council
Sector: local government
Subject: primary school
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the council had unfairly prevented him from seeing his child during the school lunch hour and that their response to his complaint was confused and contradictory. Mr C said that this was particularly unfair as at the time this was his only opportunity to see his children as his estranged wife would not abide by the contact arrangements ordered by the court. Mr C also complained that the council's response to his complaint contained a number of errors and that he had not been properly involved in the investigation of his complaint. He felt that this showed a lack of care by the council and that his complaint had not been properly investigated.

We carefully considered all the information provided, including the council's policies about parental involvement in their children's education when parents have separated. Our investigation found that the council did not have a clear policy covering requests by parents to visit their children during the school day in these circumstances. As a result, council and school staff had given Mr C confusing and contradictory advice.

Although there were typographical errors in the council's response letter, these were relatively minor and did not affect the conclusion reached. We found the council's response inadequate, as it failed to acknowledge or apologise for the contradictory advice that Mr C had received. The council had already explained to us that they intended to change their complaints policy after reflecting on this investigation. We upheld Mr C's complaint and made recommendations to address this.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise in writing for the inconsistent information provided;
- provide us with evidence that they have reviewed and updated their 'Policy on the Contact between Parents and Schools including non-resident parents' as advised to us;
- provide us with evidence that the updated policy on parental contact has been disseminated to all head teachers, highlighting the changes to the document; and
- apologise in writing for failing to respond adequately to Mr C's complaint.