

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204321, Dundee City Council
Sector: local government
Subject: secondary school
Outcome: upheld, with recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mrs C complained that an alleged incident of bullying involving their daughter was not handled according to procedure, and that the council failed to fully deal with their complaint. Mr and Mrs C said that neither the school nor the council had followed their own policy in handling the alleged incident. They also said that they had only been told about the incident five weeks after the alleged event, and their daughter said that it had not been discussed with her. An inaccurate letter about bullying had also been kept on their daughter's file.

We upheld Mr and Mrs C's complaints. Our investigation found that the alleged incident was not investigated, the parents were not informed promptly and evidence was not gathered as laid out in both the council's and the school's anti-bullying policies. The school had also not reviewed its policy, as set out in the council's policy. We found that the council's investigation into the matter was inadequate as, although they acknowledged there were significant faults in the process followed by the school, they upheld the decision to retain the disputed letter on file. The evidence provided by the school did not demonstrate that they had followed policy. Additionally the council did not refer Mr and Mrs C to their complaints process, nor explain the stages and timelines they would work to.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

apologise to Mr and Mrs C for failing to ensure that the anti-bullying policy was followed;

share the outcome of the investigation with the school;

review the decision to retain the letter about bullying on Mr and Mrs C's daughter's file;

consider how they monitor the implementation of council policies; and

apologise to Mr and Mrs C for the way in which their complaint was handled.