

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201304678, The Highland Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** primary school  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained to the council that her child's school had not reasonably addressed reports of bullying or provided support to her child. The council investigated and found that there was no evidence that bullying had taken place or that this was the cause of the anxiety and stress that her child was suffering from.

Mrs C was unhappy and brought her complaint to us. Our investigation found that the council did not consider the incidents to be bullying as the other pupil involved had significant additional support needs which caused their behaviour towards Mrs C's child. We considered that this was in line with the anti-bullying policy in place at the time. We also found that the school was small and that, although it was clear that steps had been taken to keep the children apart, this was difficult to achieve. There was evidence that support had been provided to Mrs C's child for his specific needs, including the difficult relationship with the other pupil.

However, we considered that the council had inappropriately made reference to Mrs C's relationship with the school in their complaint report rather than centring on her child. We found evidence of an incident between the children that had not been included in the Council's report and considered that this did not provide reassurance that all matters had been included when assessing Mrs C's concerns. We also considered that there was no evidence that the school had assessed the potential impact on Mrs C's child before proposing a strategy to inform visiting staff of the difficulties in the class. Finally, we found that the council's complaint investigation had not fully considered the impact of the situation at the school on Mrs C's child in terms of their anxiety and stress. On balance, we upheld Mrs C's complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Mrs C for the failings identified.