

SPSO decision report

Case: 201604101, Aberdeenshire Council
Sector: local government
Subject: communication, staff attitude, dignity and confidentiality
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained on behalf of his former wife (Mrs B) and his son (Mr B) about a letter Mr B's head teacher sent to Mrs B, in relation to alleged disciplinary issues in the school. Mr C also complained about the council's investigation of and response to Mrs B's complaint.

We found that the head teacher's letter included very emotive language, rather than factual information about specific incidents. Such factual information could have helped to engage Mrs B with the school's concerns in light of the facts.

We also identified a number of failings with the council's investigation and response to Mrs B, and noted that the council failed to send us all relevant information in response to our enquiry. The council's investigating officer made a recommendation following their investigation but the council was not able to provide information on the investigating officer's meetings or findings, therefore we concluded that notes were either not taken or not retained. We upheld Mr C's complaints.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Mr C, Mrs B and Mr B for the inappropriate language included in the head teacher's letter;
- send a copy to this office of the policy they developed in response to the investigating officer's recommendation;
- ensure that investigating officers make and keep records of interviews and advice received as part of the complaint file; and
- remind investigating officers of the need to comply with the complaints procedure.