

SPSO decision report

Case: 201707404, North Lanarkshire Council
Sector: local government
Subject: primary school
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mrs C complained that primary school staff failed to follow procedures in relation to their reports of their child being bullied, and about the council's handling of their complaint.

We found that council policy required that if a bullying incident was reported, it should be investigated to establish whether bullying had occurred, and that school management would monitor and keep records of incidents from all classes, identifying possible patterns of behaviour. Class teachers would follow-up any complaint by a parent and report back promptly and fully on the action taken; investigate an incident if bullying was suspected or reported, with the incident being dealt with immediately by the teacher approached; and monitor and record conflicts on pastoral notes and advise the Senior Management Team of this. We were not provided with any records that investigations took place, in response to Mr and Mrs C's contact, to establish whether bullying had occurred. We upheld this aspect of the complaint.

Mr and Mrs C submitted a detailed complaint to the council. In our view, the council should have dealt with it at the investigation stage of the complaints handling procedure, rather than trying to deal with it at the frontline resolution stage. After this, the council carried out an investigation outside the complaints handling procedure and, after this, a second investigation as part of the complaints handling procedure. We found that the council's responses to Mr and Mrs C, in particular after the first investigation, did not deal with the complaints they had raised, or provide reasonable responses to key points. We upheld this part of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr and Mrs C for unreasonably failing to follow procedures in relation to their reports of their child being bullied. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- School staff should ensure that they follow the council's and the school's anti-bullying policies, and keep adequate records.