

SPSO decision report

Case: 201805923, North Ayrshire Council
Sector: local government
Subject: primary school
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the actions of his child's (Child A) school in relation to an incident that took place during a meeting. Mr C said that the council failed to act appropriately after the incident took place. The council stated that there was no agreement about what took place during the meeting.

We considered that it was clear that Mr C and the school had provided a different account of the incident. Therefore, we did not take a view on what exactly took place during the meeting. However, we did have concerns about the lack of recording and reporting that took place following the incident. We appreciate that there was an element of professional judgement involved in what incidents should be recorded, however, under the particular circumstances, we considered there to be a number of factors that suggested further recording and reporting of the incident was warranted. This included the fact that an animal was involved in the incident, that a risk assessment had previously been carried out and the circumstances matched some of the risks identified, and that there was a disagreement between the school and parent about what had taken place.

We concluded that it would have been appropriate for the school to have recorded the incident and an appropriate senior member of staff to consider what took place in line with the council's Electronic Incident Reporting Standard. Therefore, we did not consider the school to have taken appropriate actions after the incident and upheld Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for failing to take appropriate action after the incident involving Child A. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

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

- School staff should reflect on what happened and consider their responsibilities in relation to incident recording and reporting.
- In schools where animals are present for educational purposes, staff should be aware of what to do if something goes wrong and what should be recorded and reported.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.