

SPSO decision report

Case: 201810121, Aberdeenshire Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: primary school
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained that the council failed to take appropriate action in response to reports of bullying of their children (Child A and Child B) at primary school. C said that the reports of bullying were not investigated appropriately and the council denied that many of them occurred.

We considered both C's and the council's records of events, the school incident book, copies of emails between C and the council, and the school's anti-bullying policies. Whilst we recognised that the case was one that had been difficult for all involved, we found that the council had not always appropriately logged incidents in the incident book in line with their policy. We also found that on some occasions, though the school investigated incidents, they did not communicate with C regarding the investigations. Finally, we found that there appeared to have been several reports of incidents where there was no evidence they were investigated. On this basis, we were unable to conclude that the council had taken action in line with their anti-bullying policy and we upheld this aspect of the complaint.

C also complained about the council's communication during the complaint process. Having reviewed the correspondence, we found that the council corresponded appropriately with C, and handled the complaints in line with the complaints process. We did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C, and Child A and B, for the failure to appropriately investigate and record allegations and incidents of bullying. 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:

- Allegations and incidents of bullying should be investigated and recorded in line with council policies.

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.