

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 202109366, West Dunbartonshire Council  
**Sector:** Local Government  
**Subject:** Secondary School  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C's child (A) was assaulted at school by other pupils. C complained that the council had failed to protect their child, failed to provide appropriate first aid and failed to provide a reasonable level of support to them following the incident. C also complained that the council failed to safeguard A from the bullying they subsequently experienced.

In their response to C's complaint, the council provided details of the first aid provided and the steps taken to notify C's spouse of what had happened. They said that the school had introduced a number of measures to help keep child A safe after the incident. The council initially said that C had refused to take part in restorative meetings, which they considered would have helped to resolve matters. After C complained about the council's response, the council conceded that C had not been invited to a restorative meeting and apologised for this inaccurate information in their response.

We reviewed the council's actions with reference to the relevant council policies. We considered that the assault had been taken seriously and acted upon swiftly. However, we found that although the council endeavoured to put in place a number of arrangements aimed at keeping A safe, these did not appear to have been fully implemented. We found that certain aspects of the council's policies were not followed, that the council acknowledged that no restorative meetings took place and that counselling was not available to child A. We found that the council failed to ensure A was sufficiently supported after the incident and we also found shortcomings in the council's complaints handling. We therefore upheld this complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C and C's family for the reliance on inaccurate information when reaching conclusions in the stage one response, with an acknowledgement of the impact this had on them. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).
- Apologise to C for the issues highlighted in this decision notice. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).

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

- That the council consider creating a structured procedure and guidance for dealing with serious unacceptable behaviour and ensuring that the parties involved receive a full suite of support if required.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Information contained within complaint responses should be accurate. In terms of good practice, complaint

responses should be person-centred and non-confrontational.

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.