

SPSO decision report

Case: 201500112, West Lothian Council
Sector: local government
Subject: secondary school
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained on behalf of her daughter (Miss A) following the council's decision to terminate her cello lessons. Miss A received cello lessons from the council but these were terminated as her instructor had learnt that she was also receiving private lessons, which the instructor felt was a breach of the council's Instrumental Music Services (IMS) policy. However, Mrs C said that she had consulted the policy, and felt that it allowed short-term supplementary lessons, which was what her daughter was receiving. In the council's response to us, it was clear that a member of the IMS management staff agreed with this interpretation and, on review of the policy, so did we. We therefore agreed that Miss A's cello lessons were unreasonably terminated, and upheld the complaint.

Mrs C also complained about the way in which the decision was communicated. Miss A's instructor told Miss A verbally, and Mrs C felt that she and her husband should have been notified. The council confirmed in their response to us that they would expect a discussion to take place with parents before a decision was made, and that the parents should be notified directly of a decision to terminate lessons. As this did not happen, we upheld this complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Mrs C for the failings identified by our investigation;
- explain clearly to Mrs C their stance on whether it is appropriate for pupils to receive short-term supplementary lessons alongside authority lessons; and
- provide us with evidence of their stated commitment to provide guidelines to IMS staff regarding termination of lessons.