

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201909305, East Dunbartonshire Council  
**Sector:** Local Government  
**Subject:** Secondary School  
**Decision:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C complained about the council's handling of their complaints about their child (A) being bullied at their local secondary school. They referred to a number of incidents which they reported to the school. They complained that the school failed to investigate these incidents adequately. They also complained that the council failed to investigate their complaint about the handling of the reports of bullying appropriately.

We found that the school took steps to investigate the incidents in line with the relevant guidance and were helpful and supportive. However, in some instances it appeared that the school failed to speak to the pupils being accused of the bullying, failed to keep records of the steps taken in this regard and to provide C with follow-up contact in line with the relevant guidance. We also found that the council failed to respond to C's complaint about the handling of the bullying allegations in line with their complaints handling procedure. Therefore, we upheld these aspects of C's complaint.

C also complained that the council failed to appropriately handle administrative aspects of their appeal against the council's decision, following C's placing request for A to attend another school. We did not find evidence of any failings in this regard and did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C and A for failing to handle C's complaints about bullying in accordance with their guidelines. Additionally, apologise for failing to acknowledge and respond to C's complaint timeously and address all the issues raised by C in their complaint and identify emails from C to the school as complaints and deal with them under the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP), or escalate the matter to the council to deal with under the CHP. 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:

- Complaints about bullying should be handled in line with council guidance. In particular, where appropriate, pupils accused of bullying should be spoken to, records made of the steps taken in this regard kept and parents who reported the incidents provided with follow-up contact, in accordance with the guidelines.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The council should acknowledge and respond to complaints in line with the timescales set out in the CHP, address all the issues raised in complaints and demonstrate that each element was fully investigated, in line with the CHP and correctly identify emails from pupils' parents which are complaints to be dealt with

under the CHP, or escalate the matter to the council to deal with under the CHP.

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.