

SPSO decision report



Case: 202001793, South Lanarkshire Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: Secondary School
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C, parent of A, complained to the council that during A's time at school the council had failed to address bullying and racist incidents. The complaint raised a number of incidents which C considered had not been investigated or responded to appropriately, and that as a result A was unsafe and their education had been impacted.

C also complained that the council failed to offer any assistance as promised, from an educational psychologist, which was required to help A in response to the racist bullying, including the aftermath of an assault which occurred in school.

The council, in their response to the complaint, said that records demonstrated actions taken by staff to address bullying and racist incidents reported to them were timely, appropriate and in line with council policy. The educational psychologist met with C and a commitment was given that they would meet A in person. Two appointments were arranged but A was absent for one, and for the second A was in hospital. The council acknowledged follow-up was not offered, and identified a breakdown in communication in rearranging the meeting.

We found that the school in question had investigated and taken action with respect to incidents of bullying and racist bullying. We therefore did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

We found that there was evidence that the council had appropriately considered support for A involving an educational psychologist, however following an initial meeting the council failed to appropriately communicate subsequent appointments and failed to re-arrange the appointment for A to meet an educational psychologist. Therefore, we upheld this aspect of the complaint.

In accordance with our powers to consider complaints handling, we found that the council's response to C's complaint in relation to bullying should have been more detailed and specific and was therefore unreasonable. We made recommendations to the council in this regard.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failure to provide a full and detailed response to all issues of complaint, specifically those relating to incidents of bullying and racial harassment. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Relevant staff should be aware of the requirements of the complaints handling procedures, particularly with respect to identifying and responding to relevant issues in a complaint.

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.