

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300857, A Council
Sector: local government
Subject: secondary school
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C's child had suffered verbal abuse, physical assault and bullying on social media. Mrs C complained that the school did not follow anti-bullying policies, and that the council's policy did not provide adequate protection. She said that the school and the council had not taken enough steps to protect her child. The council responded that they were reviewing their policy, but that was a year after Mrs C had first raised her concerns.

We upheld Mrs C's complaint and made a number of recommendations, as our investigation found that policy and procedures were not followed, no action had been taken in relation to evidence of bullying on social media, and evidence of a serious incident had not been kept. We also found that the council had not taken reasonable steps to ensure the adequacy of their anti-bullying policy.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise for not ensuring that anti-bullying policy and procedures were followed;
- review anti-bullying staff training in light of the potential abuse of social media and actions that staff should take in such cases to ensure all staff are clear about their responsibilities when bullying is reported;
- consider how they could encourage schools to use specific incidents of bullying as learning opportunities for pupils within the curriculum;
- share the findings of our investigation with relevant staff; and
- consider the adequacy of their anti-bullying policy and their advice to schools.