

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201809646, Fife Council  
**Sector:** Local Government  
**Subject:** policy / administration  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C has two children, one of whom attends nursery and the other attends primary school. C complained that the school failed to communicate with them appropriately about their children's poor attendance and that they failed to correctly implement and follow their attendance policy. The council provided details of the supports they put in place to manage the children's attendance.

We found that the school did not appear to have an up-to-date attendance policy in place as per the council's instructions. While the school took some appropriate action to address the children's poor attendance, some of these actions were delayed and were not documented. We also found that the school failed to respond to all of C's concerns in a timely manner, their communication with C overall was insufficient, and the council's response to C's complaint was inadequate as they failed to demonstrate that the attendance policy was followed, despite saying that it was. We upheld all of C's complaints.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to correctly implement and comply with their attendance policy; to communicate reasonably with C regarding their children's attendance; and to fully investigate and respond to their complaint. 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:

- A communications policy should be developed which sets out reasonable timescales for responding to correspondence from parents. The council may wish to consider introducing an automated response acknowledging receipt of information.
- Relevant staff should reflect on this case and review their communication with C and identify where communication could have been improved.
- The council should review their attendance policy and ensure the school has its own individual policy; it should be made available on the school's website; parents should be notified of the policy; and school staff should be trained in the policy.
- The council should seek clarification, if this has not been done already, on the information that can be shared with parents.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- School staff should receive training on the council's complaint handling procedure, with a particular focus on identifying complaints and ensuring that evidence is provided to support their position.

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.