

Teacher's conduct and school's complaint handling process addressed following complaint

A parent approached their child's school after the child was left feeling intimidated because of the actions of the teacher. The teacher had shouted at the child and accused the child of being a liar in front of the class.

Despite having had meetings with the teacher and the principal, the parent was not happy, as the school was adamant that the teacher did nothing wrong and offered no apology.

The parent submitted a complaint to the school. This was put to the Board of Governors (BoG), and was investigated by a Complaints subcommittee and then an Appeals subcommittee of the BoG. The Complaints and Appeals subcommittees found that the teacher as acting Principal was within their rights to speak to the pupil in a firm manner; and recommended that the teacher should speak to the pupil about the incident and the issues arising from it.

Unhappy with the outcome, the parent approached this Office and requested that the teacher apologise to their child, and attends anger management. This solution was not within our capabilities, however we did offer remedy by seeking an apology from the BoG. The parent was content to proceed with this resolution.

We contacted the BoG. The Chair responded accepting that the teacher could have dealt with the incident in a better way, and that the use of negative language and the confrontational nature of the situation in the classroom in front of other members of staff and pupils must have left the child feeling intimidated. For that, the Chair apologised. Further, the Chair agreed to write to the parent offering a full and sincere apology.

The Chair also accepted that the Complaints Sub-Committee and Appeals Sub-Committee could have kept better records of their meetings and the rationale behind their decisions. The Chair addressed this issue with a senior officer of the Education Authority and a training session in 'Handling Complaints' for the governors involved in the relevant sub-committees has been arranged.