

Multiple school failings identified after primary school girl was inappropriately touched by fellow pupil

Parents of a four-year-old girl approached their daughter's school after learning that a boy inappropriately touched her in her class. The complaint was put to the attention of the teacher, and the boy apologised stating that it would not happen again, but it did the following day.

The parents complained to the school stating that both instances had not been brought to their attention. They also highlighted concerns with the school's management of the investigation, in its communications to them following the incident, and in the Board of Governor's (BoG) handling of the complaint. Throughout this case, the parents experienced both frustration and uncertainty due to the lack of communication and action that the school took to address the matters.

Investigators from this Office approached the school to try to resolve the complaint. They found that the school failed to complete adequate records when it sought advice on the matter from the Education Authority. The investigation also found that the school failed in informing the parents about the second incident and in the BoG's handling of the complaint.

Following our investigation, the school issued an apology to the parents and reviewed its Complaints Procedure, which is now aligned with the procedure used by other schools within the sector. The Department of Education Northern Ireland's guidance has also been updated to include a 'note of concern' proforma to ensure that child protection related incidents are recorded. A number of actions were also put in place by the school following the complaint to include a child awareness course for children via the NSPCC, a review of all staff training and a review of school procedures.