



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

OVERVIEW

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) provides the public with a general right of access to recorded information held by public authorities.

Schools are public authorities for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and are therefore required to comply with the Act.

The school is committed to openness and transparency and will comply with its legal obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The school will make information available wherever possible and will respond appropriately to requests for recorded information.

This policy should be read alongside the school's **Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notices, Complaints Policy and Publication Scheme**.

The school will also have regard to the guidance issued by the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)** when dealing with Freedom of Information requests.

INTENT

The purpose of this policy is:

1. To provide the public with a right of access to recorded information held by the school, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
 2. To ensure that information held by the school is made available wherever the law permits.
 3. To ensure that Freedom of Information requests are dealt with consistently, fairly and within the statutory timescales.
 4. To ensure that information which is exempt from disclosure is appropriately identified and withheld where necessary.
 5. To promote openness and transparency in the school's activities.
 6. To ensure that the school complies with its responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and associated ICO guidance.
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IMPLEMENTATION

1. Making a Freedom of Information request

A request for information under the Freedom of Information Act must:

- be made in writing, including by email;
- include the name of the person making the request; and
- provide an address for correspondence.

The requester does not have to explain why they want the information.

Requests should be as clear and specific as possible to enable the school to identify and locate the information being requested.

Where a request is unclear or requires clarification, the school may contact the requester to seek further information to help identify the information required.

2. Information covered by the Act

The Freedom of Information Act applies to **recorded information** held by the school.

The school is not required to create new information, provide explanations or answer questions where the requested information is not already recorded.

Information may be held in a variety of formats, including paper records, electronic documents, emails, databases, photographs and other recorded material.

3. Timescale for responding

The school will deal with requests promptly and, where possible, within **20 school days**.

The statutory maximum response period for schools is **20 school days, or 60 working days if this is shorter**.

The school will aim to respond as quickly as reasonably practicable and will not unnecessarily delay its response.

4. Responding to a request

The school will :

- confirm whether it holds the information requested;
- provide the information, where it is appropriate to do so; or
- explain why the information cannot be provided, where an exemption or other provision of the Act applies.

Where information is withheld, the school will identify the relevant exemption where appropriate and explain the reasons for refusing the request.

Some exemptions are subject to the public interest test. Where applicable, the school will consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

5. Personal data and confidentiality

The Freedom of Information Act does not provide an automatic right to access personal information about other individuals.

Requests involving personal data will be considered alongside the requirements of the **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

The school will take particular care when a request could involve information relating to pupils, parents/carers, staff or other individuals.

Where appropriate, personal information will be redacted or withheld before information is disclosed.

An individual's request for their own personal information will normally be dealt with as a **Subject Access Request** under data protection legislation rather than as a Freedom of Information request.

6. Exemptions

There are circumstances in which the school may lawfully withhold information.

Examples include information where disclosure could:

- prejudice the commercial interests of the school or another organisation;
- prejudice health and safety;
- disclose personal data where disclosure would breach data protection legislation;
- prejudice legal proceedings or legal professional privilege; or
- fall within another exemption contained within the Freedom of Information Act.

The school will consider each request on its individual circumstances and will only withhold information where there is a lawful basis for doing so.

7. Charges and costs

The school will not normally charge for providing information in response to a Freedom of Information request.

However, the Freedom of Information Act contains a **cost limit**. Where the estimated cost of complying with a request would exceed the statutory limit, the school may refuse the request or provide advice and assistance to help the requester narrow or refine their request.

The school may also charge reasonable fees in circumstances where the legislation permits this.

Where a fee is applicable, the requester will be informed before the information is provided.

8. Vexatious and repeated requests

The school may refuse a request where it is considered to be **vexatious** or where it is a **repeated request** within the meaning of the Freedom of Information Act.

Each case will be considered on its individual circumstances and the school will ensure that any refusal is lawful and appropriately explained.

9. Advice and assistance

The school will provide reasonable advice and assistance to individuals making Freedom of Information requests.

Where a request is too broad, unclear or would exceed the appropriate cost limit, the school will, where appropriate, work with the requester to clarify or narrow the request.

The school will aim to help requesters obtain the information they require wherever this can reasonably be achieved.

10. Internal review

If the person making the request is not satisfied with the response, they can use the school's complaints procedure, and if they are still not satisfied after the complaint's procedures are exhausted, they may apply to the **Information Commissioner** for a review.

11. Complaints to the Information Commissioner

If a requester remains dissatisfied after the school's internal review process has been completed, they may complain to the **Information Commissioner**.

The ICO can investigate whether the school has complied with its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act and may issue a decision notice where appropriate.

Information about making a complaint to the ICO is available from the ICO website.

12. Responsibility for Freedom of Information requests

The school will ensure that Freedom of Information requests are appropriately recorded, considered and responded to.

All staff should be aware that information they hold on behalf of the school may be subject to a Freedom of Information request.

Staff who receive a request which may be a Freedom of Information request should pass it to the **Business Manager/Headteacher or the member of staff responsible for Freedom of Information** without delay.

Staff should not respond directly to a Freedom of Information request unless authorised to do so.

13. Record keeping

The school will maintain appropriate records of Freedom of Information requests, including:

- the date the request was received;
- the information requested;
- any clarification sought;
- the response provided;
- any exemptions relied upon;
- any fees charged;
- any internal review requested; and
- the outcome of any internal review.

Records will be retained in accordance with the school's **Data Retention and Disposal Policy**.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance or ICO guidance.

Policy adopted: 1 September 2026

Review date: 1 September 2029

Responsibility: Headteacher / Governing Body