

Document: Policy on the Freedom of Information Act and Publication Scheme



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Review Date: September 2021

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the Governors to ensure procedures are in place to ensure that the school handles information requests covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) in accordance with the provisions laid out therein and that the school satisfies the standards set out in the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on satisfying public authorities obligations under the FoIA, produced under section 45 of that Act.

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1 Introduction

Beech Green Primary School is committed to transparency in its dealings with the public and fully embraces the aims of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the access provisions of the Data Protection Act. The School will make every effort to meet its obligations under the respective legislation and will regularly review procedures to ensure that it is doing so.

The underlying principle of this policy is that the public have a right to access to recorded information held by the School and that the School should seek to promote an open regime regarding access to information, subject to the exemptions contained within the relevant legislation.

2 Background

The FoIA applies to all public authorities and came fully into force on 1st January 2005. It provides the public with a statutory right of access to recorded information held by authorities, subject to certain exemptions, within twenty working days. The Act is fully retrospective and applies to all information that falls within the scope of the Act, not just information created from 1st January 2005. Section 19 of the Act also obliges the School to make information pro-actively available in the form of an approved “publication scheme”.

In addition, individuals currently have a statutory right of access to their own “personal data” under the DPA. Individual access rights to personal data are extended by the FoIA through amendments to the access provisions of the DPA.

The EIR provides a statutory right of access to “environmental information”, as defined in these regulations. The EIR came into force on 1st January 2005 and replaces the existing 1992 Regulations. The EIR are also fully retrospective.

The Government’s Information Commissioner enforces these three information regimes.

Each regime contains certain categories of exempt information, where information can be withheld. Any decision to withhold information under an exemption can be referred by the applicant to the Information Commissioner, who can overturn any decision to withhold information. For the purposes of this policy, the “public” is defined as any individual or organisation anywhere in the world and an “information request” refers to any request for recorded information made under the FoIA, EIR or DPA.

3 Timescales

For schools the statutory timescale for compliance with FoIA and EIR Requests will be whichever is the shorter period;

- 20 working days following the date of receipt, excluding any day which is not a school day (this effectively equates to a period of 20 school days); **or**
- 60 working days following the date of receipt.

A ‘school’ day will be any day on which there is a session and the pupils are in attendance.

'Working days' exclude school holidays and 'inset' or training days where the pupils are not present.

Requests for Data Protection (subject access requests) should be dealt with within 1 calendar month.

Requests for pupil education records should be dealt with within 15 school days.

4 Delegated responsibilities

Overall responsibility for ensuring that the School meets the statutory requirements of the FoIA, EIR and DPA lies with the Governors and the Chair of Governors has overall responsibility for information management issues. They have delegated the day-to-day responsibility of implementation to the Head teacher.

The Head teacher is assisted by the School Business Manager. All School staff are responsible for ensuring that they handle requests for information in compliance with the provisions of the various Acts, taking advice from the FoI officer where necessary.

5 Scope

This policy applies to all recorded information held by the School that relates to the business of the School. This includes:

- Information created and held by the School
- Information created by the School and held by another organisation on our behalf
- Information held by the School provided by third parties, where this relates to a function or business of the School (such as contractual information) and
- Information held by the School relating to Governors where the information relates to the functions or business of the School

This policy does not cover personal written communications (such as personal e-mails sent by staff). The School's Data Protection Policy establishes the standards regarding the use of "personal data" (as defined in the DPA).

6 Requesting information

6.1 Procedures

Practical procedures for handling information enquiries in line with the relevant legislation will be produced and copies can be obtained from the School's FoI Officer.

The School has a duty under both the FoIA and EIR to provide advice and assistance to applicants making information requests. This includes assisting the applicant in making the application for information. Although no such duty exists under the DPA, the same level of care will be provided.

6.2 Charges

The three information regimes contain different provisions that permit charges to be made for responding to information requests. The Governing Body may charge a fee for complying with requests, as calculated in accordance with FoIA regulations.

If a charge is to be made, the School will give written notice to the applicant before supplying the information requested.

The School will only charge for the cost of copying and transmitting information, not for time taken in reaching decisions regarding whether information is covered by an exemption.

Where the School estimates that the cost of locating the information will exceed the statutory threshold of £450, it will consider whether or not to comply with the request. The School is not obliged to comply with such a request but may choose to do so.

There is a sliding scale of up to £50 for copies of educational records.

6.3 Publication

Section 19 of the FoIA obliges the School to make information pro-actively available in the form of a “publication scheme”- See Appendix 1. This scheme will list categories, or “classes” of information that will routinely be made available without the need for a specific information request. The School will indicate in the scheme where it wishes to charge for providing particular categories of information. The scheme is published on the School’s website - www.beechgreenprimary.co.uk.

Whenever any information is provided in response to a recorded FoIA enquiry, the School will assess whether the information is suitable for wider publication. In general, there will be a presumption in favour of publishing such information on the School’s website.

7 Withholding Information

The Freedom of Information Act contains 23 exemptions whereby information can be withheld. There are two categories; absolute and non-absolute. The School will only withhold information if it falls within the scope of one or more of these exemptions.

Where an absolute exemption applies, the School can automatically withhold the information. However, where the exemption is non-absolute the information can only be withheld where the School decides that the public interest is best served by withholding the information. Certain exemptions also contain a “prejudice test”, which means that the exemption can only be claimed if disclosing the information would prejudice the interest protected by the exemption.

The School will only withhold information covered by the exemption. Complete files or documents will not be withheld just because part of the information is covered by an exemption.

The School will only apply an exemption where it has reason to believe that prejudice might occur to the interest protected by the exemption. In addition, wherever a “public interest” exemption is being considered, the School will only withhold that information which it can demonstrate that the public interest will be best served by withholding. When considering withholding information under a non-absolute exemption the School will take into account whether the release of the information would:

- promote further understanding of current issues of public debate;
- promote the accountability of decisions taken by the School and the spending and allocation of public money;

- bring to light matters of public safety;
- allows the public to understand and challenge decisions made by the School;
- be otherwise in the public interest.

Where information is withheld under an exemption in most cases the reason behind the decision will be made clear to the applicant, citing the exemption under which the information is being withheld. The applicant will also be given details of the right to challenge the decision through the School's Governing Body and the right of appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Where a staff member plans to apply an exemption, he/she will consider whether other schools hold similar information. If this is considered likely, he/she may contact the relevant school(s) to ensure that a consistent response is provided to the applicant.

The School will also refuse to supply information under the FoIA, where the request is considered "vexatious" or "repeated" and under the EIR, where the request is considered 'manifestly unreasonable'.

8 Releasing a third party's information

Where, in response to a request, information belonging to a third party (either an individual or other organisation) has to be considered for release, the staff member that received the request will seek input from the Headteacher prior to the release of the information.

The release of third party information will be considered carefully to prevent actions for breach of confidence or, in the case of living individuals, breaches of the DPA. Both the EIR and FoIA permit information to be withheld when its release would breach the provisions of the DPA.

When the requested information relates to a living individual and amounts to "personal data" as defined in the DPA, its disclosure could breach the DPA. Therefore, the release of third party personal information relating to living individuals will be considered in accordance with the data protection principles and, in particular, the "third party" provisions of the DPA.

Where appropriate, the School will contact the individual to ask for permission to disclose the information. If consent is not obtained, either because it was not considered appropriate to approach the third party or the third party could not be contacted or consent is refused. The School will then consider if it is reasonable to disclose the information, taking into account:

- any duty of confidentiality owed to the third party
- the steps taken to seek consent
- whether the third party is able to give consent and
- any express refusal of consent

The decision to disclose third party information will also take into account the impact of disclosure on the third party, relative to the impact on the applicant of withholding the information. Where the third party has been acting in an official, rather than private capacity, the School will be minded to disclose the information, although decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

Where the information relates to a staff member, the provisions of the DPA will still apply in many circumstances but the nature of the information will influence the School's

decision whether to release the information. Where the information relates to a matter clearly private to the individual, e.g. a disciplinary hearing, the information will almost certainly be withheld. However, where the information relates to the member of staff acting in their official capacity, e.g. an expenses claim, the information will normally be released. The exemption relating to the release of a third party's personal data will not be used to withhold information about administrative decisions taken by the School.

As the DPA only relates to living individuals, the exemption relating to Data Protection under both the EIR and FoIA will not apply to information held about the deceased. Where the request might be controversial, the staff member will seek input from the FoI officer who will take advice from the Governing Body where necessary.

Where the third party is an organisation, rather than an individual, the provisions of DPA 1998 will not apply. The School will consider consulting the third party concerning the release of their information where:

- the views of the third party may assist the School to decide whether an exemption under the Act applies to the information and
- in the event of the public interest test being applied, where the views of the third party may assist the School to make a decision relating to where the public interest lies

Consultation will not be undertaken where:

- the School will not be disclosing the information due to some valid reason under the Act
- the School is satisfied that no exemption applies to the information and therefore cannot be withheld and
- the views of the third party will have no effect on the decision e.g. where there is other legislation preventing disclosure

Where input from a third party is required, the response time for the request remains the same. Therefore, it will be made clear to the third party at the outset that they have a limited time for their views to be provided and that where responses are not immediate, the decision to disclose may have to be made without their input in order for the School to comply with the statutory time limits dictated by the legislation.

The School will endeavour to inform individuals and organisations submitting information that the information might be released following an information request and, where appropriate, will provide the supplier of the information opportunity to request confidentiality or supply reasons as to why the information should be treated confidentially.

9 Information held within contracts with the School

Any contractual information, or information obtained from organisations during the tendering process, held by the School are subject to the provisions of the FoIA and EIR. Whenever the School enters into contracts, it will seek to exclude contractual terms forbidding the disclosure of information beyond the restrictions contained in the legislation. A standard form of wording will be included in contracts to cover the impact of FoIA and EIR in relation to the provision of information held in contracts.

The School can withhold contractual information where its disclosure under either the FoIA or EIR could be treated as actionable breach of confidence. Where the School intends to include non-disclosure provisions in a contract, it will agree with the contractor a schedule of the contract that clearly states which information should not be disclosed.

The School will only agree to enter into confidentiality clauses where the information is confidential in nature and that it is confident that the decision to restrict access to the information could be justified to the Information Commissioner.

Where information is not covered by the exemption relating to information accepted in confidence, a further exemption specifically under FoIA may be relevant, relating to commercial interests. This exemption is subject to a “public interest” test. Whenever the School has to consider the release of such information, it will contact the relevant organisation to obtain its opinions on the release of the information and any exemptions they may think relevant. However, the School will make the final decision relating to the disclosure of the information.

The School can also withhold information contained in contracts where any of the other exemptions listed in the FoIA or EIR are appropriate, although information will only be withheld in line with the School’s policy on the use of exemptions. All future contracts should contain a clause obliging contractors to co-operate fully and in a timely manner where assistance is requested in responding to an FoIA or EIR request.

10 Complaints procedure

Whenever the School withholds information under an exemption, or for any other reason, it will inform the applicant of their right to complain about the decision through the School’s complaints procedure and of the right of appeal to the Information Commissioner. Any complaint received will be dealt with in accordance with the School’s complaints procedure as detailed in its Complaints Policy. If the result of the complaints is that any decision to withhold information be overturned, this information will be supplied as soon as it is possible.

11 Requests made under the Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act entitles an individual to his or her ‘personal data’.

The parental right to receive information pertaining to the “educational record” of their child should continue to be administered under the Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2000. Whenever a request for personal data is received and is not covered by these regulations, the request will be administered in accordance with the relevant section of the School’s FoIA operating procedures.

Whenever a request is made under the DPA for personal data, the School will provide the applicant with the relevant information contained within files relating to that individual that is accessible under both the DPA and FoIA, subject to any exemptions.

Where it is not possible to remove third party information without rendering the response useless to the individual, the provision of third party information will be considered in line with section 7 of this policy regarding the disclosure of third party information.

The DPA contains the provision for numerous types of exemption. Therefore, whenever a member of staff is considering applying an exemption, he/she will seek the opinion of the FoI officer.

12 Illegal actions

It is a criminal offence under any of the three information regimes for members of staff to alter, deface or remove any record (including e-mails) following receipt of an information

request. Both the FoIA and EIR contain specific provisions to make such action a criminal offence.

13 Review of the Policy

This policy is scheduled for review by 2021. Comments from staff, parents and members of the public on this policy and its implementation are welcome and can be addressed to:

Mrs J Poulson
Headteacher
Beech Green Primary School

Beech Green Primary School

Publication Scheme

1. Introduction: what a publication scheme is and why it has been developed

One of the aims of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (which is referred to as FOIA in the rest of this document) is that public authorities, including all maintained schools, should be clear and proactive about the information they will make public.

To do this the governors must produce a publication scheme, setting out:

- The classes of information which we publish or intend to publish;
- The manner in which the information will be published; and
- Whether the information is available free of charge or on payment.

The scheme covers information already published and information which is to be published in the future. All information in our publication scheme is available in paper form with associated charges.

Some information which we hold may not be made public, for example personal information. This publication scheme conforms to the model scheme for schools approved by the Information Commissioner.

2. Aims and Objectives

Through the publication of information, the school aims to:

- enable every child to fulfil their learning potential, with education that meets the needs of each child,
- help every child develop the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed for life and work,

3. Categories of information published

The publication scheme guides you to information which we currently publish (or have recently published) or which we will publish in the future. This is split into categories of information known as 'classes'. These are contained in Appendix 1.

4. How to request information

If you require a paper version of any of the documents within the scheme, please contact the school by telephone, email, fax or letter. Contact details are set out below.

Email: admin@beechgreen.gloucs.sch.uk

Tel: 01452 722363 Fax: 01452 723617

Contact Address: Beech Green Primary School, St James, Quedgeley, Gloucester GL2 4WD

To help us process your request quickly, please clearly mark any correspondence **“PUBLICATION SCHEME REQUEST”** (in CAPITALS please). If the information you’re looking for isn’t available via the scheme you can still contact the school to ask if we have it.

5. Paying for information

Information published on our website is free, although you may incur costs from your Internet service provider. If you don’t have Internet access, you can access our website using a local library or an Internet café.

Single copies of information covered by this publication are provided free unless stated otherwise in section 6. If your request means that we have to do a lot of photocopying or printing, or pay a large postage charge, or is for a priced item such as some printed publications or videos we will let you know the cost before fulfilling your request. Where there is a charge this will be indicated in the cost box.

6. Feedback and Complaints

We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have about the scheme. If you want to make any comments about this publication scheme or if you require further assistance or wish to make a complaint then initially this should be addressed to The Headteacher at Beech Green Primary School.

If you are not satisfied with the assistance that you get or if we have not been able to resolve your complaint and you feel that a formal complaint needs to be made then this should be addressed to the Information Commissioner’s Office. This is the organisation that ensures compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and that deals with formal complaints.

They can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

or

Enquiry/Information Line: 01625 545 700

E Mail: publications@ic-foi.demon.co.uk.

Website : www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Beech Green Primary School – Freedom of Information Policy & Publication Scheme 2018

Publication Scheme 2018 – 2021

Class of Information	Information to be published.	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Class 1 - Who we are and what we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact details of the school • Contact details for the Head teacher and for the governing body • Our ethos and values • Our specific year group Topic plans • Overviews of the Curricular Themes being taught term by term in all year groups • Our approach to teaching reading and phonics • Governor List • Staff List • School term dates 	Website: www.beechgreen.gloucs.sch.uk Hard copy: Contact the school office	Nil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The names of the governors, their responsibilities, their attendance record and any conflict of interests 	Website: www.beechgreen.gloucs.sch.uk Hard copy: The Clerk to the Governors (c/o the school)	Nil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instrument of Government / Articles of Association 	Hard copy: The Clerk to the Governors (c/o the school)	Nil
Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual budget plan and financial statements • Capital funding • Financial audit reports • Details of expenditure items over £2000 (within Governor Budget Plan) • Procurement and contracts the school has entered into, or information relating to / a link to information held by an organisation which has done so on its behalf (for example, a local authority or diocese). • Pay policy and grading structure • Staff allowances and expenses that can be incurred or claimed, with totals paid to individual senior staff members (Senior Leadership Team or equivalent, whose basic actual salary is at least £60,000 per annum) by reference to categories. • Governors' allowances that can be incurred or claimed, and a record of total 	Hard copy: The School Business Manager (c/o the school)	Charge 10p per sheet

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	payments made to individual governors.		
Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's future plans; for example, proposals for and any consultation on the future of the school, such as a change in status The school improvement plan School SATs Performance data as required by the DFE The latest Ofsted report Post-inspection action plan 	Website: www.beechgreen.gloucs.sch.uk Hard copy: The Headteacher	Charge 10p per sheet
Class 4 – How we make decisions (Decision making processes and records of decisions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How admissions to the school are prioritised The strategic organisation of the school – who is who How we charge for things in school (Charging and Remissions Policy) 	Website: www.beechgreen.gloucs.sch.uk Hard copy: the school office	Charge 10p per sheet
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures (Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory policies Parent guidance notes The Local offer Safeguarding SEN and inclusion 	Website: www.beechgreen.gloucs.sch.uk Hard copy: the school office	Charge 10p per sheet
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records management and personal data policies, including: Information security policies, Data protection (including information sharing policies) 	Hard copy: the school office	Charge 10p per sheet
Class 6 – Lists and Registers Currently maintained lists and registers only (this does not include the attendance register).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Register (The Inventory) Class registers against class name 	Hard copy: the school office	Charge 10p per sheet