



Freedom of Information Policy

Learning for Life

Reviewed by: Board

Date of Policy: September 2018

To be reviewed: September 2019

Background

Our MAT and all the schools and academies within the MAT are committed to complying with and implementing the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and related legislation. This provides a general entitlement to any person to be able to access information held by MAT/school/academy, subject to exemptions and conditions laid down by law.

Scope

This policy applies to all information held regardless of how it was created or received. It applies irrespective of the media on which the information is stored and whether the information is recorded on paper or held electronically. The Act's powers are fully retrospective and thus information is accessible no matter how old it may be. Similarly, information in draft form will also be accessible under the Act.

It should be noted that access to personal information (that is information from which a living individual can be identified) is still governed under the Data Protection Act 2018. Requests for access to such information will be governed in line with the requirements of this legislation.

Dealing with Requests

The MAT/school/academy will offer advice and assistance to anybody wishing to make a request for information. We are committed to dealing with requests within statutory guidelines, which means that a response will be made no more than 20 school days from the date of request and more speedily if possible. This will be extended in specific circumstances on legal advice in connection with the public interest test. However, we are committed to providing a prompt service and every attempt will be made to provide the information earlier than the expiry of the 20 school/academy day period. Repeated or vexatious requests for information will be refused. The MAT/school/academy will claim exemptions as appropriate whilst maintaining a commitment to openness, scrutiny and the public interest. The MAT will put in place an appropriate procedure for measuring the public interest when considering a qualified (also known as "non-absolute") exemption which requires such a test.

Any request in writing will be considered a Freedom of Information request including those received by email and fax. There is no need for requests to indicate that they are made under the Act and all requests will be dealt with under this policy. The MAT reserves the right to refuse requests where the cost of locating, retrieving and editing (where necessary) the information would exceed the statutory maximum (currently £450).

The MAT recognises that requests for environmental information may be made over the telephone and that different exemptions apply.

Adopting and Maintaining Publication Schemes

The MAT has adopted a Publication Scheme in accordance with Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act and is committed to updating and maintaining it to keep it current and relevant. The Publication Scheme contains many of the documents, policies, plans and guidance which are regularly asked for. Material contained within

the publication scheme, and a copy of the scheme itself, will be readily available. Where charges are applied these will be stated in the Scheme. The scheme can be accessed on request. All staff will give advice and assistance on how to use the scheme as appropriate.

Relationship with the Data Protection Act 2018

The MAT is under a legal duty to protect personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018. We will carefully consider our responsibilities under this Act before releasing personal information about living individuals, including current and former employees and pupils.

Responsibilities

The MAT has a responsibility to make information available in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. Responsibility for compliance with this and related policies will rest with the Board who will delegate those responsibilities as appropriate. Complaints regarding the use of this policy should be directed to the Executive Headteacher

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that any request for information they receive is dealt with under the Act and in compliance with this policy. They are also responsible for good information handling practice and for implementing records management policies and procedures as appropriate to their post.

Contact Details

For advice and assistance please contact Sharon Lang – Chief Operating Officer.

Further advice and information about the Freedom of Information Act, including full details of exemptions and advice on the public interest test, is available from the Information Commissioner's website at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk