



# Freedom of Information Policy

**Review Date: Nov 2024**

**Next review Date: Nov 2027**

**Adopted by the Governing Body on: 19<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024**

## Review

The governing body reviews this policy every three years. The governors may, however, review the policy earlier than this, if the government introduces new regulations, or if the governing body receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

### VERIFICATION CERTIFICATE

Document Title:	Freedom of Information Policy
Issue:	2
Reviewer:	Karl Turner
Position:	Business Manager
Approver: (on behalf of the Governing Body)	Jordon Barnett
Position:	Chair of Resources Committee
Signature:	<i>J. Barnett</i>
Date:	19th November 2024

### DOCUMENT ISSUE/AMENDMENT HISTORY

(previous versions not numbered nor amendments noted)

Issue	Date	Amendment
1	15 December 2020	Policy reviewed and updated for full governor ratification
2	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2024	Policy updated in with GCC recommendations and publication scheme added as appendix.

**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

Cirencester Primary School and Nursery [the 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.

Separate guidance, in the form of operating procedures, has been given to staff in the staff handbook on how to handle information requests received under the FoIA regime.

## 2 Background

The FoIA applies to all public authorities and came fully into force on 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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

Freedom of Information requests should be dealt with within 20 working days, excluding school holidays.

Requests for Data Protection (subject access requests) should be dealt with within 40 calendar days.

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 Headteacher is assisted by the Business Manager who currently fulfils the role of 'Fol Officer'. 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 Fol 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 Fol 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.

The Data Protection Act 1998 permits a charge of up to £10 to be made for responding to requests for personal data. 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”. 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: <https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.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 FoI officer 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 2018 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; or
- 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 1998 entitles an individual to his or her ‘personal data’, as defined in that Act, where the information is held on an automated system, such as a computer and also manual files, where they amount to what the DPA describes as an “accessible record” or in a structured filing system, defined in the DPA as a “relevant filing system”.

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 8 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 in 2027. Comments from staff, parents and members of the public on this policy and its implementation are welcome and can be addressed to:

School Business Manager  
Cirencester Primary School  
Victoria Road  
Cirencester  
GL7 1EX

## **APPENDIX - FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PUBLICATION SCHEME**

### **Introduction**

This publication scheme follows a model approved by the Information Commissioners Office.

This scheme is not a list of individual publications but rather a description of the classes of types of information. This list is not an exhaustive list of all of the types of information that we hold. We try to proactively publish as much information as we can where the information would have a wider public interest.

This scheme does not include information that we consider to be sensitive, such as personal information, information prevented from disclosure by law or information about security matters.

### **Classes of Information**

Classes of information that we hold: -

- Who we are and what we do
- What we spend and how we spend it
- What our priorities are and how we are doing
- How we make decisions
- Our policies and procedures

### **Making Information Available**

Information will generally be made available on the school website. Where it is not possible to include this information on the websites, or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the websites, the school will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means. This may be detailed in response to a request or within the scheme itself. This will usually be by way of a paper copy.

In some exceptional circumstances, some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where we are legally required to translate any information, we shall do so.

### **Charges for Information Published Under this Scheme**

Cirencester Primary School may charge individuals for information published under this scheme. The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at the minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the school for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on the website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by law.

Charges will be made to cover:

- Photocopying;
- Postage and Packaging; &
- The costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information.

Single copies of information requested which are covered by the publication scheme will be provided free unless otherwise stated within the scheme. If the request involved a large amount of photocopying, printing or postage, then this may be at a cost. If this is the case we will let you know as well as let you know the cost before fulfilling your request.

### **How to request information**

If you require a paper version of any of the documents within the scheme please contact the school office: [admin@cirencester-pri.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@cirencester-pri.gloucs.sch.uk)

**Guide to information available from Cirencester Primary School under the ICO model publication scheme**

Class 1 - Who we are and what we do (Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts) This will be current information only	
Information to be published.	How the information can be obtained (hard copy and/or website)
Who's who in the school	<a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/meet-the-staff/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/meet-the-staff/</a>
Who's who on the governing body / board of governors and the basis of their appointment	<a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/governors/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/governors/</a>
Instrument of Government	<a href="#">CPS Instrument of Government</a>
Contact details for the Head teacher and for the governing body.	Maria Miles – <a href="mailto:head@cirencester-pri.gloucs.sch.uk">head@cirencester-pri.gloucs.sch.uk</a> Nic Dowler – <a href="mailto:chair@cirencester-pri.gloucs.sch.uk">chair@cirencester-pri.gloucs.sch.uk</a>
Staffing structure	Hard copy. Contact school office
School session times and term dates	<a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/term-dates/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/term-dates/</a>
Address of school and contact details, including email address.	<a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/contact-us/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/contact-us/</a>

Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it (Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit) Current and previous financial year as a minimum	
<b>Information to be published.</b>	<b>How the information can be obtained (hard copy and/or website)</b>
Annual budget plan and financial statements	Contact school office
Capital funding	Contact school office
Financial audit reports	Contact school office
Details of expenditure items over £2000	Contact school office
Procurement and contracts the school	Contact school office
Pay policy	Contact school office
Staff allowances and expenses that can be incurred or claimed, with totals paid to individual senior staff members, (whose basic actual salary is at least £60,000 per annum) by reference to categories.	Contact school office
Staffing, pay and grading structure. As a minimum the pay information should include salaries for senior staff in bands of £10,000 and for junior posts, by salary range.	Contact school office
Governors' allowances	Contact school office

Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing (Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews) Current information as a minimum	
Information to be published.	How the information can be obtained (hard copy and/or website)
Performance data supplied to the Government	<a href="https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Establishments/Establishment/Details/135985">https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Establishments/Establishment/Details/135985</a>
The latest Ofsted report – Summary and full report	<a href="#">2022 Ofsted Report</a>
Post-inspection action plan	Contact School Office
Performance management policy (Appraisal policy) and procedures adopted by the governing body.	Contact School Office
The school's future plans; for example, proposals for and any consultation on the future of the school, such as a change in status	Contact school office.

Class 4 – How we make decisions (Decision making processes and records of decisions) Current and previous three years as a minimum	
Information to be published.	How the information can be obtained (hard copy or website)
Admissions policy/decisions (not individual admission decisions)	<a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/admission-arrangements/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/admission-arrangements/</a>
Agendas and minutes of meetings of the governing body and its committees. (NB this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meetings).	Hard copy – contact school office

Class 5 – Our policies and procedures (Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities) Current information only.	
Information to be published.	How the information can be obtained (hard copy or website)
School Policies e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Educational Needs and Disability</li> <li>• Behaviour</li> <li>• Anti-bullying</li> <li>• Child Protection</li> <li>• Health and Safety</li> <li>• Complaints</li> <li>• Attendance</li> </ul>	<p><a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/policies-and-procedures/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/policies-and-procedures/</a></p> <p>For other policies not listed on the school website, contact the school office.</p>
Records management and personal data policies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Records retention, destruction and archive policies</li> <li>• Data protection (including information sharing policies)</li> </ul>	<p>Data protection policy and retention schedule is available on the school website at the same link as above.</p>

Class 6 – Lists and Registers Currently maintained lists and registers only (this does not include the attendance register).	
Information to be published.	How the information can be obtained (hard copy or website; some information may only be available by inspection)
Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments	Contact school office
Any information the school is currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers (This does not include the Attendance register)	Contact school office

Class 7 – The services we offer (Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses) Current information only	
Information to be published.	How the information can be obtained (hard copy or website; some information may only be available by inspection)
Extra-curricular activities	<a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/extra-curricular-activities/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/extra-curricular-activities/</a>
Out of school clubs	<a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/breakfast-club/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/breakfast-club/</a> <a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/after-school-club/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/after-school-club/</a>
School publications, leaflets, books and newsletters	<a href="https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/newsletters-2/">https://www.cirencesterprimaryschool.co.uk/newsletters-2/</a>

## SCHEDULE OF CHARGES

This describes how the charges have been arrived at and should be published as part of the guide.

<b>TYPE OF CHARGE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BASIS OF CHARGE</b>
Disbursement cost	Photocopying/printing @ 4p per sheet (black & white)	6p per sheet
	Photocopying/printing @ 10p per sheet (colour)	15p per sheet
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2 <sup>nd</sup> class
Statutory Fee	We will comply in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act in particular section 12.	In accordance with the relevant legislation

### **Internal Review**

The requester has the right to ask for an internal review if they are dissatisfied with the handling of a request. Internal review requests should be made within 40 working days of the initial response. This deadline should be communicated to the requester in that response. We are not obliged to provide a review if it is requested after more than 40 working days.

Requests for internal review must make clear why they are dissatisfied with the original decision, detailing why they feel that the School has not complied with Freedom of Information Law. The internal review process will be undertaken by our DPO (Data Protection Officer), Gloucestershire County Council ([schoolsdpo@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsdpo@gloucestershire.gov.uk)).

### **Complaints and/or Appeals**

Any written (including email) expression of dissatisfaction should be handled through the school's existing complaints procedure. Wherever practicable the review should be handled by someone not involved in the original decision.

If the outcome is that the school's original decision or action is upheld, then the applicant can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The appeal can be made via their website or in writing to:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
SK9 5AF