

Freedom of Information Policy

Author:	AspirePlus Educational Trust
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Background

The Trust and Governing Body is committed to implementing the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and related legislation. This provides a general entitlement to information that the school holds to any person subject to some exemptions.

Scope

This policy applies to all information the Trust holds regardless of how it was created or received. It applies no matter what media the information is stored in, generally speaking however, the information may be on paper or held electronically.

Principles

- The Trust and Governing Bodies of academies within the Trust are committed to openness and transparency.
- Information which is subject to a request will be provided where possible within the spirit of the Act.
- Advice and assistance will be offered to requesters when necessary.

Adopting and Maintaining Publication Schemes

The Governing Bodies within the Trust have adopted a Publication Scheme (see appendix A) and are 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 the Trust is regularly asked for. Where charges are applied these will be stated in the Scheme.

Dealing with Requests

The Trust will offer advice and assistance to anybody who wishes to make a request. The Trust is committed to dealing with requests within statutory guidelines. Requests will be dealt with within 20 school days (which can be extended in specific circumstances on legal advice). The Trust will claim exemptions as appropriate whilst maintaining a commitment to openness, scrutiny and the public interest. Any request in writing will be considered a Freedom of Information request and be dealt with under this policy. The Trust recognises that requests for environmental information may be made over the telephone and that different exemptions apply. The Trust reserves the right to



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charge for information requests in accordance with statutory guidelines, and implement statutory limitations on the amount of work a single request required in order to comply with a single request.

The Trust will refuse requests which it considers to be vexatious or repeated requests. This is a rare occurrence and further advice will be sought.

Whilst a request can be made in writing to any employee of the Trust, for monitoring purposes, the Trust would request that all requests are directed to the IG (Information Governance) Lead.

Relationship with the Data Protection Act 1998

The Trust is under a legal duty to protect personal data under the Data Protection Act. The Trust will carefully consider its responsibilities under the Data Protections Act before releasing personal data about individuals, including current and former staff members, students and parents. Personal information will not normally be provided in response to FOI requests. If you are requesting your own personal information, this must be requested under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Responsibilities

Each school's Governing Body has responsibilities to make information available in accordance with the Act. Responsibility for compliance with this and related policies will rest with the IG Lead.

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

Complaints about the handling of Freedom of Information requests will be dealt with under the Trust's complaints procedure.

Contact Details

Please direct all requests for information or questions about this policy to the IG Lead by emailing info@aspireplus.org.uk





Further advice and information about the Freedom of Information Act, including how to make requests and what you can expect from public authorities, is available from the Information Commissioner's Office: www.ico.gov.uk or by ringing the ICO helpline on 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113.



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Publication Scheme

This publication scheme has been prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner. It has been adopted without modification by The AspirePlus Educational Trust without further approval and will be valid until further notice.

This publication scheme commits The Trust to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the Trust. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme commits the Trust:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To specify the information which is held by the Trust and falls within the classifications below.
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the Trust makes available under this scheme.
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
- To make this publication scheme available to the public.
- To publish any dataset held by the Trust that has been requested, and any updated versions it holds, unless the Trust is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so; to publish the dataset, where reasonably practicable, in an electronic form that is capable of re-use; and, if any information in the dataset is a relevant copyright work and the public authority is the only owner, to make the information available for re-use under a specified license. The term 'dataset' is defined in section 11(5) of the Freedom of Information Act. The terms 'relevant copyright work' and 'specified license' are defined in section 19(8) of that Act.





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Classes of information

Who we are and what we do: Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

What we spend and how we spend it: Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing: Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions: Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures: Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and registers: Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

The services we offer: Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.



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The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available

All information covered by the scheme is available by visiting either <http://aspireplustrust.org.uk> or one of the individual academy websites. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, printed information can be requested by emailing info@aspireplustrust.org.uk or the individual academy contact addresses. In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person and 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. Should we be required to legally translate any information, we will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the Trust for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum. Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge. Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.





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Charges may also be made for making datasets (or parts of datasets) that are relevant copyright works available for re-use. These charges will be in accordance with either regulations made under section 11B of the Freedom of Information Act or other enactments.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

Written requests

Information held by the Trust that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing (see above), when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.



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