

# **CHANCERY EDUCATION TRUST**

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY AND PUBLICATION SCHEME**

**JUNE 2023**

Next Review Date: June 2024

*Staff should make themselves aware of all policies and amendments or updates to policies and adhere to the same, which will be made available on relevant websites and internal data and computer systems.*

# **CHANCERY EDUCATION TRUST**

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY AND PUBLICATION SCHEME**

### **Introduction**

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 gives individuals the right to access official information from public bodies. Under the Act, any person has a legal right to ask for access to information held by the Academy School. They are entitled to be told whether the Academy School holds the information, and to receive a copy, subject to certain exemptions. While the Act assumes openness, it recognises that certain information is sensitive. There are exemptions to protect this information. Full details on how requests can be made are set out in section 1 of this policy.

Chancery Education Trust recognises its duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone requesting information and will work in partnership with all its stakeholders in the spirit of the Act to ensure openness and transparent operation and communication in all its dealings.

Public Authorities should be clear and proactive about the information they will make public. For this reason, a publication scheme is available and can be found at section 2 of this policy.

This policy does not form part of any individual's terms and conditions of employment with the Academy School and is not intended to have contractual effect.

### **Section 1 – Freedom of Information Requests**

This policy should be used in conjunction with the Academy School's Data Protection & Subject Access Request (SAR) Policy.

The Local Governing Board (LGB) of the Academy School is a presented public body for the purposes of the Act. In principle, therefore, anyone may ask the LGB for a copy of information which it holds. However, the request can be addressed to anyone in the Academy School; so all staff need to be aware of the process for dealing with requests.

Requests for information that are not data protection or environmental information requests will be covered by the FOIA: -

**Data Protection enquiries (or Subject Access Requests)** are requests where the enquirer asks to see what personal information the Academy School holds about the enquirer. If the enquiry is a data protection request, the Academy School's Data Protection & SAR Policy should be followed.

**Environmental Information Regulations enquiries** are those that relate to air, water, land, natural sites, built environment, flora and fauna, and health, and any decisions and activities affecting any of these. These could therefore include enquiries about recycling, phone masts, playing fields, car parking etc. If the enquiry is about environmental information, follow the guidance on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) website.

Freedom of Information requests must be made in writing, (including email), and should include the enquirer's name, correspondence address (email addresses are allowed), and state what information they require. There must be enough information in the request to be able to identify and locate the information. If this information is covered by one of the other pieces of legislation (as referred to above), they will be dealt with under the relevant policy/procedure related to that request.

If the request is ambiguous and/or the Academy School require further information in order to deal with your request, the Academy School will request this further information directly from the individual making the request. Please note that the Academy School do not have to deal with the request until the further information is received. Therefore, the time limit starts from the date that the Academy School receives all information required in order to deal with the request.

The requester does not have to mention the Act, nor do they have to say why they want the information. There is a duty to respond to all requests, telling the enquirer whether or not the information is held, and supplying any information that is held, except where exemptions apply. There is a time limit of 20 school days (i.e. excluding school holidays) for responding to the request.

## Information

Provided all requirements are met for a valid request to be made, the Academy School will provide the information that it holds (unless an exemption applies).

"Holding" information, means information relating to the business of the Academy School:

- That the Academy School has created; or
- That the Academy School has received from another body or person; or
- Held by another body on the Academy School's behalf

Information means both hard copy and digital information, including email.

If the information is held by another public authority, such as the Local Authority, first check with them they hold it, then transfer the request to them. If this applies, the Academy School will notify the enquirer that they do not hold the information and to whom they have transferred the request. The Academy School will continue to answer any parts of the enquiry in respect of information it does hold.

When the Academy School does not hold the information, it has no duty to create or acquire it; just to answer the enquiry, although a reasonable search will be made before confirming whether the Academy School has the information requested.

If the information requested is already in the public domain, for instance through the Publication Scheme or on the Academy School website, the Academy School will direct the enquirer to the information and explain how to access it.

The requester has the right to be told if the information requested is held by the Academy School (subject to any of the exemptions). This obligation is known as the Academy School's "duty to confirm or deny" that it holds the information. However, the Academy School does not have to confirm or deny if;

- The exemption is an absolute exemption; or
- In the case of qualified exemptions, confirming or denying would itself disclose exempted information

### **Vexatious Requests**

There is no obligation on the Academy School to comply with vexatious requests. A vexatious request is one that is designed to cause inconvenience, harassment or expense rather than to obtain information, and would require a substantial diversion of resources or would otherwise undermine the work of the Academy School. This however does not provide an excuse for bad records management.

In addition, the Academy School does not have to comply with repeated identical or substantially similar requests from the same applicant unless a "reasonable" interval has elapsed between requests.

### **Fees**

The Academy School may charge the requester a fee for providing the requested information. This will be dependent on whether the staffing costs in complying with the request exceeds the "threshold." The threshold is currently £450 with staff costs calculated at a fixed rate of £25 per hour (therefore 18 hours' work is required before the threshold is reached).

If a request would cost less than the threshold, then the Academy School can only charge for the cost of informing the applicant whether the information is held, and communicating the information to the applicant (e.g. photocopying, printing and postage costs).

When calculating costs/threshold, the Academy School can take account of the staff costs/time in determining whether the information is held by the Academy School, locating and retrieving the information, and extracting the information from other documents. The Academy School will not take account of the costs involved with considering whether information is exempt under the Act.

If a request would cost more than the appropriate limit, (£450) the Academy School can turn the request down, answer and charge a fee or answer and waive the fee.

If the Academy School is going to charge they will send the enquirer a fees notice. The Academy School does not have to comply with the request until the fee has been paid. More details on fees can be found on the ICO website.

If planning to turn down a request for cost reasons, or charge a high fee, you should contact the applicant in advance to discuss whether they would prefer the scope of the request to be modified so that, for example, it would cost less than the appropriate limit.

Where two or more requests are made to the Academy School by different people, who appear to be acting together or as part of a campaign the estimated cost of complying with any of the requests may be taken to be the estimated total cost of complying with them all.

## **Time Limits**

Compliance with a request must be prompt and within the time limit of 20 school working days (excluding Academy School holidays) or 60 working days if this is shorter. Failure to comply could result in a complaint by the requester to the Information Commissioner. The response time starts counting as the first day from the next working day after the request is received (so if a request was received on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October the time limit would start from the next working day, the 7<sup>th</sup> October).

Where the Academy School has asked the enquirer for more information to enable it to answer, the 20 school working days start time begins when this further information has been received.

If some information is exempt this will be detailed in the Academy School's response.

If a qualified exemption applies and the Academy School need more time to consider the public interest test, the Academy School will reply in 20 school working days stating that an exemption applies but include an estimate of the date by which a decision on the public interest test will be made. This should be within a "reasonable" time.

Where the Academy School has notified the enquirer that a charge is to be made, the time period stops until payment is received.

## Third Party Data

Consultation of third parties may be required if their interests could be affected by release of the information requested, and any such consultation may influence the decision.

Consultation will be necessary where:

- Disclosure of information may affect the legal rights of a third party, such as the right to have certain information treated in confidence or rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- The views of the third party may assist the Academy School to determine if information is exempt from disclosure; or
- The views of the third party may assist the Academy School to determine the public interest test

Personal information requested by third parties is also exempt under this policy where release of that information would breach the Data Protection Act. If a request is made for a document (e.g. Governing Body minutes) that contains personal information whose release to a third party would breach the Data Protection Act, the document may be issued by blanking out the relevant personal information as set out in the Redaction Procedure Appendix 1.

## Exemptions

The presumption of the FOIA is that the Academy School will disclose information unless the Act provides a specific reason to withhold it. The Act recognises the need to preserve confidentiality and protect sensitive material in certain circumstances.

The Academy School may refuse all/part of a request, if one of the following applies:

- 1) There is an exemption to disclosure within the act;
- 2) The information sought is not held;
- 3) The request is considered vexatious or repeated; or
- 4) The cost of compliance exceeds the threshold

A series of exemptions are set out in the Act, which allow the withholding of information in relation to an enquiry. Some are very specialised in their application (such as national security) and would not usually be relevant to a School/an Academy.

There are two general categories of exemptions:

- 1) Absolute:** where there is no requirement to confirm or deny that the information is held, disclose the information or consider the public interest; and
- 2) Qualified:** where, even if an exemption applies, there is a duty to consider the public interest in disclosing information.

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## **Absolute Exemptions**

The absolute exemptions that will apply to the Academy School:

- Information accessible to the enquirer by other means (for example by way of the Academy School website and by the Academy's Publication Scheme)
- National Security/Court Records; If there are any requests for information made by persons who may be subject to a court order and/or restraint of access to a child, or the person receiving the information for request for information is unsure as to the standing of the applicant, then the responsible person will either deal with the request or find out further information as appropriate before disclosure
- Personal information (i.e. information which would be covered by the Data Protection Act); No requests for information about other children will be acceded to according to policies already in place relating to data protection
- Information provided in confidence

If an absolute exemption exists, it means that disclosure is not required by the Act. However, a decision could be taken to ignore the exemption and release the information taking into account all the facts of the case if it is felt necessary to do so.

## **Qualified Exemptions**

If one of the below exemptions apply (i.e. a qualified disclosure), there is also a duty to consider the public interest in confirming or denying that the information exists and in disclosing information.

The qualified exemptions under the Act that would be applicable to the Academy School are:

- Information requested is intended for future publication (and it is reasonable in all the circumstances for the requester to wait until such time that the information is actually published)
- Reasons of National Security
- Government/International Relations
- Release of the information is likely to prejudice any actual or potential legal action or formal investigation involving the Academy School
- Law enforcement (i.e. if disclosure would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, the prosecution of offenders or the administration of justice)
- Release of the information would prejudice the ability of the Academy School to carry out an effective audit of its accounts, resources and functions
- For Health and Safety purposes
- Information requested is Environmental information
- Information requested is subject to Legal professional privilege
- Commercial Interest reasons

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Where the potential exemption is a qualified exemption, the Academy School will consider the public interest test to identify if the public interest in applying the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

In all cases, before writing to the enquirer, the person given responsibility by the Academy School for dealing with the request will need to ensure that the case has been properly considered, and that the reasons for refusal, or public interest test refusal, are sound.

## **Refusal**

If it is decided to refuse a request, the Academy School will send a refusal notice, which must contain

- The fact that the responsible person cannot provide the information asked for;
- Which exemption(s) apply;
- Why the exemption(s) apply to this enquiry (if it is not self-evident);
- Reasons for refusal; and
- The Academy School's complaints procedure

For monitoring purposes and in case of an appeal against a decision not to release the information or an investigation by the Information Commissioner, the responsible person must keep a record of all enquiries where all or part of the requested information is withheld and exemptions are claimed. The record must include the reasons for the decision to withhold the information.



## Appendix 1 – Redacting Documents

When redacting released documents:

- Mask the passages that are not to be disclosed and photocopy
- Annotate in the margin against each blank passage, the exemption and section of the Act under which this passage is exempt; iii) explain in the covering letter that the relevant exemptions are marked in the attachments and in the case of non-absolute exemptions, how the public interest test has been considered
- On no account must you use the computer to rewrite the document or email and simply delete the exempted passages so that the resulting document appears as though they did not exist. The one circumstance where this would be permissible would be where the only redacted parts are personal information such as people's names and the covering letter explains this

### Links to other policies and statutory guidance:

- CCTV Policy
- Personal Data Breach Policy
- Data Protection & Subject Access Request (SAR) Policy
- [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)
- [www.Gov.uk](http://www.Gov.uk) -Freedom of Speech Act
- [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – How to make a freedom of information (FOI) request

## **SECTION 2 – 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 that we are committed to publishing. This list is not an exhaustive list of all of the types of information that we publish. 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**

There are six 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
- The services we offer

### **Making Information Available**

Information will generally be made available on the school website. Where it is not possible to include this information on the school website, or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website 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**

The 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.

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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:

Chancery Education Trust  
Pickhurst Lane, West Wickham, Kent, BR4 0HL  
Telephone: 020 8462 5867  
Email: office@chanceryeducation.com

Please mark all correspondence *Publication Scheme Request* in order to help us process your request quickly. If the information you are looking for isn't available via the scheme, you can still contact the school to ask if we have this information.

### **The Publication Schedule**

<b>Who we are and what we do</b>	<b>Description</b>
Information relating to the Local Governing Board (LGB)	<p>Information contained in official LGB documents including the governor's annual report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is who</li> <li>• Basis of governor's appointment</li> <li>• The manner in which the LGB is constituted</li> <li>• Category of the school</li> <li>• A statement on progress in implementing the action plan drawn up following an inspection</li> <li>• Agreed minutes from LGB and committee meetings</li> <li>• A financial statement – including gifts made to the school and amounts paid to the governors for expenses</li> <li>• Information about the implementation of the LGB's policy on pupils with special educational needs and any changes to the policy during the last year</li> <li>• A description of arrangements for the admission of pupils with disabilities, including details of the steps to prevent disabled students being treated less favourably than other pupils, details of existing facilities to assist access to the school by pupils with disabilities, the accessibility plan covering future policies for increasing access by those with disabilities to the school</li> <li>• A statement of policy on whole staff development identifying how teacher's professional development impacts on teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Number of pupils on roll and rates of pupils authorised and unauthorised absence</li> <li>• National curriculum assessment results for appropriate key stages with national summary figures</li> <li>• Instruments of government, including the date it takes effect</li> <li>• The term of office of each category of governor if it lasts less than 4 years and the name of anybody entitled to appoint any category of governor.</li> </ul>

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School prospectus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The name, address, website and telephone number of the school and the type of school</li> <li>• The name of the school Headteacher/Principal</li> <li>• The school's staffing structure</li> <li>• Information about the school's policy on providing for pupils with special educational needs</li> <li>• Statement on the schools aims and values</li> <li>• Information on the school policy on admissions</li> <li>• School term dates, times and attendance</li> <li>• Uniform</li> <li>• Number of pupils on roll and rates of student absence</li> <li>• Details of any affiliations with a particular religion or religious denomination, the religious education and collective worship and the alternative provision for these pupils.</li> </ul>
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<b>What we spend and how we spend it</b>	<b>Description</b>
Financial statement for the current and previous financial year	Relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit. Includes budget plans, financial statements and financial audit reports
Details of expenditure	Sets out details of items of expenditure over £5,000 including the cost, name of supplier and information about the transaction
Procurement and contracts	Details of the procurement and contracts the school has entered into or details relating to the organisation who has carried out this process on the school's behalf (for example the local authority).
Pay policy	A copy of the pay policy that the school uses to govern staff pay.
Allowances	Details of allowances and expenses that can be incurred by staff and governors.
Pupil Premium	How the school uses pupil premium.
Utilities and school running expenditure	Details of the school's overheads and running costs.

<b>What our priorities are and how we are doing</b>	<b>Description</b>
Ofsted report	A published report of the outcome of our latest Ofsted inspection.
Performance management Policy	Statement of procedures adopted by the LGB relating to the performance management of staff.
Charging and remissions policies	A statement of the school's policy with respect to charges and remissions for any optional extra or board and lodging for which charges are permitted, for example school publication, music tuition, trips.
Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessment	Statement of general policy with respect to health and safety at work of employees (and others) and the organisation and arrangements for carrying out the policy.
Staff Conduct, Discipline and Grievance	Statement of procedure for regulating conduct and discipline of school staff and procedures by which staff may seek redress for grievance.
Curriculum circulars and Statutory Instruments	Any statutory instruments, departmental circulars and administrative memoranda sent by the Department of Education to the CEO/Headteacher/Principal or LGB relating to the curriculum.

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<b>How we make decisions</b>	<b>Description</b>
Admissions Policy/ Decisions (not individual)	This does not include individual decisions. This is a statement of our policy with regards to admissions and how we make decisions regarding admissions.

<b>Our policies and procedures</b>	<b>Description</b>
Home-School Agreement	Written statements of the schools aims and values, the schools responsibilities, the parental responsibilities the schools expectations of its pupils for example homework arrangements.
Curriculum Policy	Statement on following the national curriculum subjects, including any syllabus used by the school.
Complaints Policy	Statement of procedures for dealing with complaints
Equality and Diversity Policy	Statement on ensuring that the school follows and promotes equality and diversity.
Child protection and safeguarding policy	Statement of policy for safeguarding and promoting welfare of pupils at the school.
Relationships and Sex Education Policy	Statement of policy with regard to sex and relationship education
Inclusion Policy	Information about the school's policy on providing for pupils with special educational needs.
Behaviour Policy	Statement of general principles on behaviour and discipline and of measures taken by the Headteacher/Principal to prevent bullying.
Collective Worship	Statement of arrangements for the required daily act of collective worship.

<b>The services we offer</b>	<b>Description</b>
Extra-curricular Activities and out of school clubs	Details of these are contained in our newsletter, leaflets, and school website

### **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 Academy School has not complied with Freedom of Information Law.

## **Complaints and/or Appeals**

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

The Governing Body should set and publish a target time for determining complaints and information on the success rate in meeting the target. The Trust should maintain records of all complaints and their outcome.

If the outcome is that the Academy 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:

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

## **Monitoring and Implementation Policy**

The policy is reviewed annually, although the Trust may vary or amend it periodically to ensure that we fulfil our obligation around the Freedom of Information Policy. All proposed changes to this policy would be made following the approval from the Committee.

	Name	Date
Policy written by	CET Board	May 2023
Review by Committee	CET Board	May 2023
Approved by Committee	CET Board	June 2023
Adopted by Governing Board	CET Board	October 2023
To be reviewed every annually		
Review by	June 2024	