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Freedom of Information Policy

Policy written	September 2024
Agreed by Governors	October 2024
Next Review	September 2026
Head teacher	 Mr S Wright
Chair of Governors	Mrs E Scorer 

1. Policy Statement

1.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 came into effect on 30 November 2000 and gives a general right of access to recorded information held by a public authority, including schools, subject to certain exemptions.

1.2 Whitby Heath Primary School and is committed to complying with the provisions of FOIA.

2. Definitions

2.1 "The School" means Whitby Heath Primary School.

2.2 "Appropriate Limit" means the limit set by the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 as amended from time to time.

2.3 "Fee Notice" means the amount the Requester will need to pay in order for the School to comply with the request for information.

2.4 "FOIA" means the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and amendments.

2.5 "GDPR" means the General Data Protection Regulation, [and the Data Protection Act 2018]

2.6 "Publication Scheme" means a list of information that will be routinely published via the School's website. (Appendix 1)

2.7 "Requester" means the person making a request for information from the School.

2.8 "Social Media" means websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking including Facebook, LinkedIn, X, Google+, and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of Social Media for School purposes as well as personal use that may affect the School in any way.

3. Procedure for making a request for information

3.1 The School requires requests for information pursuant to the provisions of FOIA to be made in writing. The School considers 'in writing' to mean communications by post, email and on the school's official Social Media sites.

3.2 Requests for information held by the School should be sent to either the school's postal address or email account.

3.3 A request for information made to the School should provide the name of the Requester and an address for correspondence and should clearly set out the information being requested from the School.

4. Duty to Assist

4.1 There may be circumstances where it is unclear to the School what information is being requested or where it appears that the request for information is such that responding will cause the School to exceed to Appropriate Limit.

4.2 In these circumstances the School will seek to provide advice and assistance to the Requester in order to enable the School to provide the requester with the information they are seeking to obtain or inform the requester as to why this is not possible.

5. Time Limit for responding to requests for information

5.1 The School will seek to respond to a request for information promptly and in any event no later than 20 School days or 60 working days from the date of the request whichever occurs first.

5.2 A School day is any day on which there is a School session. A working day means any other day other than a Saturday, a Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a day which is a bank holiday.

5.3 Where a fee is payable for responding to the request, the School will disregard any day between a Fee Notice being sent to the Requester and the correct fee being received by the School when calculating the time limit for responding.

5.4 The School may charge for requests where it incurs costs in photocopying, printing or otherwise reproducing the requested information and/or where the School will incur a significant fee for providing the requested information in the format requested by the Requester. There may also be a charge where the School has issued a Fee Notice and the Requester has agreed to pay the fee as set out in the Fee Notice.

5.5 In the event the School is unable to respond within the periods set out above, the School will write to the Requester advising it will be unable to comply and provide a new time scale for responding to the request.

6. Fees

6.1 The School will not charge for the provision of information which is requested subject to the provisions of FOIA.

6.2 The School is not obliged to comply with a request for information if the cumulative time spent on locating, retrieving or, if necessary, extracting the information requested is estimated to exceed the Appropriate Limit.

6.3 The School may decide to provide information requested in excess of the Appropriate Limit without charging a fee where it considers it reasonable and within the public interest to do so.

6.4 Where it appears that responding to a request for information will result in the School exceeding the Appropriate Limit and the School does not waive the fee for complying with the request, the School may provide the Requester with a Fee Notice. The School will also inform the Requester as to how it has estimated that the

Appropriate Limit will be exceeded, what information it could provide within the Appropriate Limit, and provide the Requester with the opportunity to narrow their request.

6.5 Where the School has issued a Fee Notice and the Requester indicates they are not prepared to pay the fee as set out in the Fee Notice or does not pay the fee as set out in the Fee Notice within three months, the School is not obliged to comply with the original request. The School will however consider any narrowed or amended request.

7. Exemptions

7.1 The right to be provided with information requested may be limited by the application of an exemption. Some exemptions are absolute and others are qualified. Where an exemption applies to information requested, the School may also be exempt from having to confirm or deny that the information exists as well as from disclosing the requested information.

7.2 Where a qualified exemption applies to information requested from the School, the School will consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

7.3 The absolute exemptions most relevant to the School are those that relate to:

- (a) Information accessible by other means (Section 21);
- (b) Personal Information (Section 40);
- (c) Confidential Information (Section 41);
- (d) Prohibitions on Disclosure (Section 44).

7.4 The qualified exemptions most relevant to the School are those that relate to:

- (a) Information intended for future publication (Section 22);
- (b) Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs (Section 36)
- (c) Health and Safety (Section 38)
- (d) Legal Professional Privilege (Section 42)
- (e) Commercial Interests (Section 43).

7.5 Where the School relies on an exemption in not complying with a request for information, the School will write to the Requester setting out the exemption relied on explaining the reason(s) the School considers that the exemption applies to the information requested and, where appropriate, why it has decided that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

8. Requests for Personal Data

8.1 A request by an individual for their own personal data made subject to the provisions of FOIA will be treated as a subject access request.

8.2 A request for the personal data of a third party will be refused where the provision of that information will contravene any of the principles of the GDPR, pursuant to Section 40(2) of FOIA.

8.3 For further detail please refer to the School's Subject Access Request Policy.

9. Repeat and Vexatious Requests

9.1 The School will not comply with a request for information which is considered to be vexatious.

9.2 In determining whether a request is vexatious, the School will consider whether the request is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress to the School, staff or governors. The School will also consider the burden on the School and any possible distress to its staff or board of governors in responding to the request, the motive of the Requester and the seriousness of the request.

9.3 The School will also not comply with a request for information which is identical or substantially similar to a previous request made by the Requester unless a reasonable time has elapsed between the current request and the previous request.

9.4 In considering whether a reasonable time has elapsed the School will take into account the time that has passed between the current request and the previous request and likelihood that the information requested will differ significantly from the information provided in the response to the previous request.

10. Complaints

10.1 Appeals against any decision not to supply information which the School considers exempt should be made to the Chair of Governors c/o school who will review the original decision.

10.2 A complaint about the School's Freedom of Information processes, procedures or how a request for information has been dealt with should be made to School DPO via schooldpo@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.

10.3 If a requester is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint or the way a request for information has been handled can complain to the Information Commissioner at:

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

Tel: 01625 545 700.

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1 This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or earlier if required and may be subject to change.