



# FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Adapted from the latest WSCC model policy (May 2020)

Approved: 27 April 2022 by a committee delegated by the governing body

Next review: 1 Mar 2024 by SLT and IT governors

**The designated member of staff for freedom of information requests is the business manager, Jane Wilkinson:**

Email: [business.manager@dvsf.w-sussex.sch.uk](mailto:business.manager@dvsf.w-sussex.sch.uk)

Tel: 01730 892126

## Introduction

1. The Downland Village Schools Federation (DVSF) and its school are “public authorities” within the meaning of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), which provides public access to information held by public authorities.
2. The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) provides public access to environmental information as defined in the Regulations.
3. FOIA and EIR promote openness and transparency.
4. Information is provided in two ways:
  - a. It is mandatory to publish certain information (publication scheme); and
  - b. Any person is entitled to request information which subject to the application of any exemptions must be provided free of charge.
5. The Act does not give people access to their own personal data. ‘Subject access requests’ are dealt with in accordance with the *data protection policy*.

## Aim

6. This policy will ensure:
  - a. DVSF complies with its duties under the FOIA and EIR and handles requests under the correct regime.
  - b. We have systems in place which will result in proactive publication of what information is available.
  - c. Any person knows they can make a request and who to contact.
  - d. All appropriate staff will be able to recognise and respond appropriately to a valid request for information.
  - e. That there is awareness amongst staff, contractors or others having contact with DVSF that the duties under FOIA and EIR may impact on the ability to guarantee confidentiality of information

## Scope

7. This policy applies to:
  - a. All recorded information held by the school or by a third party on the school’s behalf.
  - b. Recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, and sound or video recordings.

## Roles and responsibilities

8. The governing body of DVSF has overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. The executive headteacher has day-to-day responsibility for FOI /EIR compliance and the school office managers are the points of contact for enquiries.
9. All staff will be trained on recognising a request for information under the Act.
10. All information requests should be made to the designated member of staff shown at the top of this policy.

## Publication scheme

11. The school has adopted the ‘model publication scheme for schools’ as approved by the information commissioner.

## Requests handling

12. The school will ensure that:
  - a. Advice and assistance is provided to the requestor if required.
  - b. Responses will be provided promptly and within the statutory time limit of 20 school days. A 'school' day will be any day on which there is a session and the pupils are in attendance. In the alternative we will respond within 60 working days if that is shorter.
  - c. Information will only be withheld in accordance with the exemptions specified by legislation. The reasons for applying the exemption will be provided to the requestor.
  - d. Care will be taken to ensure that personal data is not unlawfully disclosed in response to a request for information made under FOIA or EIR.
  
13. Information provided to us from third parties may be the subject of a request for information. In considering whether exemptions apply, we will seek to consult with the third party but the legal responsibility for deciding whether or not the information should be released rests with the school.
  
14. Any requests for internal reviews will be dealt with in accordance with our complaints policy and will be responded to within twenty school days as recommended by the information commissioner.
  
15. If the school's original decision is upheld, then the school has a duty to inform the complainant of their right to appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office.
  
16. Appeals should be made in writing to the information commissioner and addressed to:  
Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF