



ASPIRATIONS

Rivers Academy West London

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY & PUBLICATION SCHEME

Version control	
Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme [2022-09-01]	Reviewed and no changes required.
Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme [2021-04-01]	Reviewed and updated previous version to align with new DPO appointment.

Date of next review:	September 2024	Owner:	Director of HR & Compliance
Type of policy:	Trust Template	Approving Body:	Executive Operational Board

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY & PUBLICATION SCHEME

1. SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This policy is based on the Aspirations Academies Trust template Freedom of Information Policy & Publication Scheme.
- 1.2. This is the Aspirations Academies Trust's publication scheme on information available under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as applicable to Rivers Academy West London.
- 1.3. The Freedom of Information Act 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. They are entitled to be told whether the Academy 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 2 of this policy.
- 1.4. 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 3 of this policy.
- 1.5. This policy does not form part of any individual's terms and conditions of employment with the Academy and is not intended to have contractual effect.
- 1.6. This policy should be used in conjunction with the Academy's Data Protection Policy.

2. SECTION 2 – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

- 2.1. Requests under Freedom of Information should be made to Director of Operations. If any other staff member receives a FOI request, then they should forward this to the above post holder.

2.2. Requests for information that are not data protection or environmental information requests will be covered by the Freedom of Information Act: -

- **Data Protection enquiries (or subject access requests/SARs)** are requests where the enquirer asks to see what personal information the Academy holds about the enquirer. If the enquiry is a Data Protection request, the Academy's Data Protection Policy should be followed.
- **Environmental Information Regulations enquiries** are those which relate to air, water, land, natural sites, built environment, flora and fauna, health, and any decisions and activities affecting any of these. These could, therefore, include enquiries about recycling, phone masts, Academy 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.

2.3. 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.

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

2.5. 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 Academy¹ days (i.e. excluding Academy holidays) for responding to the request.

Information

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

2.7. Information in this context is the information that relates to the business of the Academy:

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

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

2.9. 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 will notify the enquirer that they do not hold the information and to whom they have transferred the request. The Academy will continue to answer any parts of the enquiry in respect of information it does hold.

2.10. When the Academy 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 has the information requested.

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

¹ The Academy has 20 working days in which to respond to a request. Working days exclude Saturdays, Sundays, bank holidays, school holidays and inset or training days where pupils are not present. The maximum period in which the Academy have to respond (counting school holidays and inset days) is 60 days.

2.12. The requester has the right to be told if the information requested is held by the Academy (subject to any of the exemptions). This obligation is known as the Academy's *duty to confirm or deny* that it holds the information. However, the Academy 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

2.13. There is no obligation on the Academy to comply with vexatious requests. A vexatious request is one which 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. However, this does not provide an excuse for bad records management.

2.14. In addition, the Academy 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

2.15. The Academy 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. At the time of establishing this Policy, the threshold is £450 with staff costs calculated at a fixed rate of £25 per hour (therefore 18 hours' work is required before the threshold is reached). *The threshold and hourly rate to be applied by the Academy will be adjusted in accordance with any future change to statutory provisions.*

2.16. If a request would cost less than the threshold, then the Academy 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).

- 2.17. When calculating costs/threshold, the Academy can take account of the staff costs/time in determining whether the information is held by the Academy, locating and retrieving the information, and extracting the information from other documents. The Academy will not take account of the costs involved with considering whether information is exempt under the Act.
- 2.18. If a request would cost more than the appropriate limit, (£450, subject to review as set out in 2.15) the Academy can turn the request down, answer and charge a fee or answer and waive the fee.
- 2.19. If the Academy is going to charge it will send the enquirer a fees notice. The Academy 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.
- 2.20. If planning to turn down a request for cost reasons, or charge a high fee, the applicant will be contacted 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.
- 2.21. Where two or more requests are made to the Academy 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

- 2.22. Compliance with a request must be prompt and within the time limit of 20 Academy days (see explanation on footnote page 3). Failure to comply could result in a complaint by the requester to the Information Commissioner's Office. 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 6th October the time limit would start from the next working day, Tuesday 7th October).

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

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

2.25. If a qualified exemption applies and the Academy needs more time to consider the public interest test, the Academy will reply in 20 Academy 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.

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

Third party data

2.27. 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.

2.28. 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 to determine if information is exempt from disclosure; or
- The views of the third party may assist the Academy to determine the public interest test.

2.29. 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 Board minutes) which contains personal information, the release of which to a third party would breach the

Data Protection Act, the document may be issued by blanking out the relevant personal information (redaction).

Exemptions

2.30. The presumption of the Freedom of Information Act is that the Academy 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.

2.31. The Academy 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.

2.32. 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 Academies.

2.33. 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.

Absolute exemptions

2.34. There are eight absolute exemptions set out in the Act. However the following are the only absolute exemptions which will apply to the Academy:

- Information accessible to the enquirer by other means (for example by way of the Academy's Publication Scheme);
- National Security/Court Records;
- Personal information (i.e. information which would be covered by the Data Protection Act);
- Information provided in confidence.

2.35. 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

2.36. 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.

2.37. The qualified exemptions under the Act which would be applicable to the Academy 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;
- 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 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; and
- For *Commercial Interest* reasons.

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

2.39. In all cases, before writing to the enquirer, the person given responsibility by the Academy 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.

2.40. Refusal

2.41. If it is decided to refuse a request, the Academy will send a refusals 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's complaints procedure.

2.42. 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.

3. SECTION 3 – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PUBLICATION SCHEME

Introduction

- 3.1. This publication scheme follows a model approved by the Information Commissioner's Office.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. 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

- 3.4. 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

- 3.5. Information will generally be made available on the Academy's website. Where it is not possible to include this information on the Academy's website, or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website the Academy 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.
- 3.6. 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.
- 3.7. 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

- 3.8. The Academy 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 Academy for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.
- 3.9. Material which is published and accessed on the website will be provided free of charge.
- 3.10. Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by law.
- 3.11. Charges will be made to cover:
- Photocopying;

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

3.12. 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

3.13. If you require a paper version of any of the documents within the scheme please contact the Academy using the contact details below.

Telephone: 0208 890 0245
 Email: advice@rivers-aspirations.org
 Address:
 Rivers Academy West London
 Tachbrook Road
 Feltham
 Middlesex
 TW14 9PE

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 Academy to ask if we have this information.

The publication schedule

3.14. The publication schedule is set in the following tables.

Classes of information currently published

Class 1 – who we are and what we do – current information only

	How it can be obtained	Schedule of charges
Instrument of Government <i>A record of the name and category of the Academies and the name and constitution of its Trust Board</i>	Hard copy- contact Company Secretary	£charge
Trust Board <i>The names and contact details of the Directors</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	Free
Individual Academy Session Times and Term Dates	Individual Academy websites	Free
Location and contact information <i>The address, telephone number and website for the individual academies with the names of key personnel</i>	Individual Academy websites	Free

Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it (financial information about projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit. **Current and previous two financial years as a minimum.**

	How it can be obtained	Schedule of charges
Trust Budget <i>- Budget distributed by the DoFE - Annual income and expenditure returns</i>	Hard copy- contact Company Secretary Companies House	£charge
Capital funding and information on related building projects and other capital projects	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Additional Funding <i>Income generation and other sources of funding</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Procurement and Contracts <i>- Procedures for procuring goods and services - Details of contracts that have gone through a formal tendering process</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Staffing Structure	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Governors/Trustees Allowances <i>Allowances and expenses that can be claimed or incurred</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge

Class 3 – What are our priorities are and how we are doing (*Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews.*) **Current information as a minimum: -**

	How it can be obtained	Schedule of charges
Academy Profile <i>- Government supplied performance data</i> <i>- Latest Ofsted reports</i>	Individual Academy websites	Free
Performance Management <i>Policy and procedures adopted by the Trust</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Future Plans <i>Any major proposals for the future of the Trust/Academies</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Every Child Matters/Child Safeguarding <i>Policies and procedures that are in place to ensure that functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in compliance with any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge

Class 4 – How we make decisions. Current and previous three years as a minimum:-

	How it can be obtained	Schedule of charges
Admissions policy/decisions <i>Individual academy admissions arrangements and procedures together with information about the right of appeal.</i>	Individual Academy websites	Free
Minutes of the Local Academy Councils and the Trust Board <i>Minutes, agendas and papers considered at such meetings with the exception of information that is properly considered to the private to the meeting</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge

Class 5 – Our policies and procedures. (Written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities.) **Current information only.**

	How it can be obtained	Schedule of charges
Trust Policies e.g. - Charging and remissions policy - Health and safety - Complaints procedure	Hard copy- contact Company Secretary	£charge
Student and Curriculum Policies - Home-Academy Agreement - Sex Education - SEND Policy - Student Discipline	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Records Management and Personal Data Policies	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Equality and Diversity Policies, schemes, statements, procedures and guidelines relating to equal opportunities	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Policies and Procedures for the Recruitment of Staff	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Charging Regimes and Policies	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge

Class 6 – Lists and registers (Currently maintained list and registers only).

	How it can be obtained	Schedule of charges
Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments <i>Statutory Instruments (for example Regulations)</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Disclosure logs <i>Logs of information provided in response to requests</i>	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Assets register	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
Any information the Trust is currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers. NOT INCLUDING ATTENDANCE REGISTERS	Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	£charge
The services individual Academy's offer e.g. - Extra-curricular activities - Academy publications	Individual Academy websites Hard copy – contact Company Secretary	Free £charge

Complaints and/or Appeals

3.15. Any written (including email) expression of dissatisfaction should be handled through the Academy's Complaints Policy.

3.16. If, on exhaustion of the Complaint Policy, the outcome is that the Academy's original decision or action is upheld, then the applicant can appeal to the Information Commissioner (ICO). The appeal can be made via their website or in writing to: **Customer Contact, Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF**. The ICO's Enquiry Information Line is 01625 545700 and they may be contacted by email at : publications@ic-foi.demon.co.uk. The ICO website is: <https://ico.org.uk/> .