



Freedom of Information Policy

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1.0	17/06/2020	Initial version
2.0	25/06/2026	Full Review

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Introduction

All public authorities, including schools, are required under the Freedom of Information Act to adopt a publication scheme that has been approved by the Information Commissioner. There is currently one approved model publication scheme, which has been produced by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Schools must adopt the ICO's model scheme and make it publicly available.

The Publication Scheme

The scheme provides information on the following:

- 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
- Lists and Registers
- The services we offer
- The information is published on the schools website in various formats and is also available in hard copy where indicated in the publication scheme.
- The publication scheme adopted by the school is included at Appendix 1.

Requests for Information

Information held by the school that is not listed in the publication scheme can be requested in writing and will be considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Please mark all such requests clearly with the words Freedom of Information Request and send to:

Information, Compliance and Governance Officer

Cotham School
Cotham Lawn Road
Cotham
Bristol
BS6 6DT

Or by email to info@cotham.bristol.sch.uk.

Response Times

The school will respond to FOI requests within 20 working days of receipt, as required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This timeframe may be extended only in specific circumstances permitted by the Act, such as when we need to consider the public interest test for qualified exemptions. We will inform requestors if an extension is needed. For the purposes of this policy, 'working days' refers to days on which the school is open for students, excluding school holidays, inset days, weekends, and bank holidays.

Exemptions and Refusals

The Freedom of Information Act permits the school to refuse to provide information where exemptions apply to the information requested. Exemptions include requests that are commercially sensitive or are vexatious or repeated requests. In these circumstances, the school will outline the reasons for the refusal of information.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 contains a number of exemptions that may allow us to withhold information. These include both:

Absolute exemptions (where we do not need to consider the public interest):

- Information accessible by other means
- Information relating to security matters
- Court records
- Personal information protected under data protection legislation

Qualified exemptions (where we must consider whether the public interest in disclosure outweighs the public interest in maintaining the exemption):

- Information intended for future publication
- Information that would prejudice law enforcement
- Commercial interests
- Information covered by legal professional privilege

We may also refuse requests that are:

- Vexatious
- Repeated requests for the same information
- Where the cost of compliance exceeds £450

In all cases where we refuse a request, we will:

- Explain which exemption applies
- Provide reasons for our decision
- Inform you of your right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office
- Provide details of our internal complaints procedure

Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)

Requests for environmental information (such as information about emissions, waste, energy use, or the state of the school site) are handled under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 rather than the Freedom of Information Act. These regulations have different exemptions and a presumption in favour of disclosure. Such requests will still be processed through the same contact point.

Fees

The Freedom of Information Act allows the school to recover its costs for processing some elements of the request, including communication costs, photocopying, printing and postage. If the school intends to recover such costs a fees notice will be issued to the requestor.

Internal Reviews and Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with our response to your FOI request, you have the right to request an internal review. Your request should be made in writing to the Headteacher within 40 working days of receiving our response.

In line with Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) guidelines, we aim to conduct the internal review within 20 working days. In exceptional circumstances where a case is complex, this may be extended up to a maximum of 40 working days, and we will keep you informed.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):

- Website: www.ico.org.uk
- Telephone: 0303 123 1113
- Address: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner should there be a statutory reason to do so. The policy will be approved by the Headteacher.

Any incidents occurring during the school year will be evaluated and where necessary appropriate action will be taken to amend the policy accordingly.

Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Notices (staff, students, parents)
- Records Management and Retention Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Charging and Remissions Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- CCTV Policy

These policies should be read in conjunction with this FOI policy as they govern related aspects of information management and disclosure.

Appendix 1 - Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme

Introduction

This document has been produced as a requirement of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and introduces a Model Publication Scheme in response to Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Model Publication Scheme provided by the ICO for schools and academies has been adopted by Cotham School with effect from June 2020.

The Model Publication Scheme provides a list of the information routinely published by academies which the ICO expects them to make available unless:

- They do not hold the information
- The information is exempt under one of the FOI exemptions or Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) exceptions, or its release is prohibited under another statute
- The information is archived, out of date or otherwise inaccessible, or, it would be impractical or resource-intensive to prepare the material for routine release.

Guide to the Information Available from the Federation under the Publication Scheme

The table at Annex 1 details the information routinely published. Next to each category of information we have indicated the manner in which the information described will be available.

In some circumstances for items not routinely available the school will make a charge. This will be calculated on direct labour costs based on the time spent in researching and collecting the information which will be charged at a flat rate of £25 an hour, regardless of the actual costs per hour, and these costs will be charged if applicable.

There is no obligation to disclose information if the total cost calculated in this fashion exceeds £450. We will also charge ten pence plus VAT per photocopy or scanned document and/or the direct cost of putting the information into other requested formats, plus postage if applicable. In certain circumstances the school may waive the fee at its absolute discretion.

Confirmation of any payment due will be given prior to the information being provided. Payment will generally be requested prior to the provision of the requested information.

Written Requests

Information held by the school that is not listed in the publication scheme can be requested in writing and will be considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. Please mark all such requests clearly with the words Freedom of Information Request.

Please address queries to:

Information, Compliance and Governance Officer
Cotham School
Cotham Lawn Road
Cotham
Bristol
BS6 6DT

Or by email to info@cotham.bristol.sch.uk

Annex 1 - Guide to information available from the school under the publication scheme

- This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if there is a statutory reason to do so and approved by the Headteacher.
- Any incidents occurring during the school year will be evaluated and where necessary appropriate action will be taken to amend the policy accordingly.

Information to be published	How the information can be obtained (hard copies will be provided on payment of a fee)	Cost (hard copies will be provided on payment of a fee)
Class 1 - Who we are and what we do (Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts) This will be current information only	Website: www.cotham.bristol.sch.uk Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Who's who in the organisation including the Governing Body	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Location and Contact Information	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Instrument of Government/Articles of Association	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Information about the Governing Body	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Contact details for the organisation	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free

Staffing structure	Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy)
School Prospectus and Curriculum	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Term Dates and times of the school day	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it		
Financial information for the current and previous two financial years		
Cotham School Annual Report and Accounts for the previous financial year	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Expenditure	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Capital Funding	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Financial Audit Reports	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Procurement and contracts	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Staff Allowances and expenses	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Staff pay and grading structures	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Governors Allowances	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Pupil Premium and Year 7 catch up funding	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Trade Union Faculty Time Reporting	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free

Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing (Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews)		
Cotham School Aims, Vision and Strategy	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
School ethos and vision	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Ofsted Reports	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Examination Performance	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Performance Management Information	Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy)
Class 4 – How we make decisions (Decision making processes and records of decisions)		
Approved Minutes of Full Governing Body (FGB) meetings	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Approved Minutes of the committees	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Admissions Policy and decisions	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures (Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities)		
HR Policies including Pay Policies	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Admissions Policy	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free

Behaviour Policy	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Charging and Remissions Policy	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Exclusions Policy	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Careers Information / Access to providers	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Equality Objectives	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
SEND policy / SEND information report	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Health and safety policy	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Complaints procedure	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Data Protection policy	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Freedom of Information policy/Publication Scheme	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Privacy Notice	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free

Careers Programme Information	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Class 6 – Lists and Registers		
Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments (for example regulations), departmental and administrative memoranda sent to the headteacher or governing body concerning the curriculum	Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy)
CCTV	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Disclosure Logs - Information provided in response to FOIA and EIR requests	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Asset Register	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Class 7 – The services we offer (Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses).		
Academies and Schools	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Alternative Provision	Inspection Only - Contact the school	
Post-16	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Maths Hub	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
School Publications, letters and newsletters	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free
Extra-curricular activities	Website Hard Copy: available upon request - contact school	5p per page (hard copy) website free