

1. Other relevant policies and documents

- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Suffolk County Council's " Information Sharing Agreement between Suffolk County Council & Schools Reported incidents of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)"

2. Explanation of terms used in the scheme

'Trust' = Seckford Education Trust
'School(s)' = schools within the Trust

3. Purpose of the scheme

This document outlines the Trust's freedom of information publication scheme. This document covers the Trust and all its Schools and as such there is no need for each School to have its own scheme.

4. Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 was introduced to promote greater openness and accountability across the public sector. It establishes a general right of access to information held by all public authorities, including schools and is intended to promote a culture of openness and accountability amongst public sector bodies, and therefore facilitate better public understanding of how public authorities carry out their duties.

The aim of this scheme is to ensure the Trust and its Schools comply with the 2000 Act (implemented full on 1 January 2005) and to ensure that the spirit of the act is reflected in the practice of the Trust and its Schools.

The Trust has adopted the model publication scheme as approved by the information commissioner.

5. The publication scheme

5.1 Commitments under the scheme:

The scheme commits the Trust and its Schools to:

- proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the Trust and its Schools and falls within the classifications in section 5.3;
- specify the information which is held by the Trust and its Schools and falls within the classifications in section 5.3;
- proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line

with the statements contained within this scheme;

- produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public;
- review and update on a regular basis the information the Trust and its Schools make available under this scheme'
- produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available;
- make this publication scheme available to the public;
- publish any dataset * held by the Trust and its Schools that has been requested, and any updated versions it holds, unless the Trust and its Schools is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so; to publish the dataset, where reasonably practicable, in an electronic form that is capable of re-use; and, if any information in the dataset is a relevant copyright work ** and the public authority is the only owner, to make the information available for re-use under a specified licence **.

* *The term 'dataset' is defined in section 11(5) of the Freedom of Information Act.*

** *The terms 'relevant copyright work' and 'specified licence' are defined in section 19(8) of that Act.*

5.2 FOI exemptions:

The FOI Act states that public authorities have the ability to withhold information requested if it is covered by one of the following exemptions:

- Section 21: the requested information is already in the public domain
- Section 22: the requested information is intended for future publication
- Section 36: the requested information would inhibit advice, a frank debate or prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs
- Section 42: the requested information includes legal advice
- Section 43: the requested information is commercially sensitive

In the event of receiving an FOI request, it is necessary to consider these exemptions as they may afford the Trust and our Schools the ability to refuse an FOI request based solely on these grounds.

5.3 Classes of information:

Who we are and what we do

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

What we spend and how we spend it

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions

Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and registers

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the Trust and its Schools.

The services we offer

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure;
- Information in draft form;
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

5.4 Making information available:

The primary method by which all information on the Trust and its Schools will be made available will be through the Trust and School websites:

<http://www.seckfordeducation.org.uk>

<http://www.beccleschool.org.uk>

<http://www.ixworthschool.org.uk>

<http://www.saxmundhamschool.org.uk>

All financial information that is to be published statutorily will be done through the Trust website only.

Where information is not published on the websites, there are two further access methods. The first is to make an information request in writing (by email or letter) to the Trust or its Schools. This is outlined in section 5.6.

The second: in 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 the Trust and its Schools are legally required to translate any information, we will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

5.5 The process:

1. Any person can submit a written request for information held by the Trust or its Schools;
2. There is a time limit of 20 working days (excluding school holidays) to respond to requests;
3. There is a right of appeal if an enquirer is unhappy with the way the request has been handled, initially through the Trust Complaints Policy and then to the Information Commissioner;
4. The Trust and its Schools will charge at the current rate for photocopying, with an additional administration charge for requests requiring extensive staff time and costs;
5. The Trust and its Schools will operate by the safeguard in the Act whereby any 'manifestly unreasonable' request or one where the information is already in the public domain or the cost in time or labour is excessive need not to be complied with;
6. Requests for information can be received by any member of staff;
7. Decisions relating to items 4 and 5 above will be taken by the Principal of the Trust;
8. Where requests for information relate to professional activity (e.g. academic research) the school will attempt to be supportive; where a request seems to stem from dissatisfaction with the work of the Trust or any of its Schools the attempt will be made to conduct a constructive discussion with the person(s) concerned (see Complaints Policy);
9. Staff will be reminded that the 2000 Act makes it important that documentation is carried out appropriately.

5.6 How to request information:

If you require paper versions of documents within the scheme, please contact the Trust by telephone, email or letter. Contact details are set out below:

Email: **freeschools@seckford-foundation.org.uk**
Tel: **01394 615100**
Contact Address: **The Seckford Education Trust, Marryott House, Burkitt Road, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 4JJ**
Website: **<http://www.seckfordeducation.org.uk>**

To help us process your request quickly, please clearly mark any correspondence "Freedom of Information Request". If the information you're looking for isn't available via our websites, you can still contact the Trust to ask if we have it.

5.6 Paying for information:

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the Trust for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Information published on our website is free, although you may incur costs from your Internet Service Provider. If you don't have internet access, you can access our website using a local library or an internet café.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

Charges may also be made for making datasets (or parts of datasets) that are relevant copyright works available for re-use. These charges will be in accordance with either regulations made under section 11B of the Freedom of Information Act or other enactments.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

6. Feedback and complaints

We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have about the scheme. If you want to make any comments about this publication scheme or if you require further assistance or wish to make a complaint then initially this should be addressed to the Headteacher.

If you are not satisfied with the assistance that you get or if we have not been able to resolve your complaint and you feel that a formal complaint needs to be made then this should be addressed to the Information Commissioner's Office. This is the organisation that ensures compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and that deals with formal complaints. They can be contacted at:

Address: Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF
Telephone: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) *or 01625 545 745 if you prefer to use a national rate number*
Fax: 01625 524510
Website : <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>

7. Compliance and performance monitoring

The Trust Board will review this policy every two years and ensure that practice across all schools is in line with this policy. Any review will take into account the most up-to-date legislation.

The Trust has identified a range of Assurance Methodologies as tools by which compliance with policies can be tested. Those most relevant to this policy include:

- Internal Audit
- Random testing by line managers