



Woodchester Endowed Church of England (Aided) Primary School

‘Love, Learn and Flourish Together’

Our church school community seeks to inspire children and adults to love, learn and flourish together so we may become everything God has created us to be.

Freedom of Information Policy

September 2024

Written by:

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Ratified by Governors:

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Version	Date	Reason for change
2.0	Sept-24	Updated due to length of time since policy last reviewed.

The Ethos Statement contained within our Trust Deed states:

‘Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level. The school aims to serve the community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.’

Our Vision

‘Our church school community seeks to inspire children and adults to love, learn and flourish together so we may become everything God has created us to be’ - Our Christian vision is rooted in the desire to nurture the whole community, flourishing both now and in the future. It recognises that we are unique individuals, loved by God, each with our own strengths and talents to contribute and that by working together we can achieve more within our own community and beyond: *‘Love, Learn, and Flourish Together’*

All we do is underpinned by our Christian vision and values and this publication scheme is a means of showing how we are pursuing these aims.

Introduction

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 school. They are entitled to be told whether Woodchester Endowed CofE Primary School 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 1 of this policy.

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 2 of this policy.

This policy should be used in conjunction with our Data Protection Policy.

SECTION 1 – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

Requests under Freedom of Information should be made to admin@woodchester.gloucs.sch.uk.

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 school holds about the enquirer. If the enquiry is a Data Protection request, the School’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, school 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.

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.

If the request is ambiguous and the school require further information in order to deal with your request, they will request this further information directly from the individual making the request. Please note that the school do not have to deal with the request until the further information is received. Therefore, the time limit starts from the date that the school receives all information required in order to deal with the request.

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 school days (i.e. excluding school holidays) for responding to the request.

Information

Provided all requirements are met for a valid request to be made, Woodchester Endowed C of E Primary School will provide the information that it holds (unless an exemption applies).

Information means both hard copy and digital information.

When we do not hold the information, there is no duty to create or acquire it just to answer the enquiry; although a reasonable search will be made before confirming whether the school has the information requested. If the information requested is already in the public domain, for instance, through the school website, we will direct the enquirer to the information and explain how to access it.

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

There is no obligation on Woodchester C of E Primary School 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 school. However, this does not provide an excuse for bad records management.

In addition, the school do not have to comply with repeated identical or substantially similar requests from the same applicant unless a reasonable interval has elapsed between requests.

Fees

Woodchester C of E Primary School 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. The threshold is currently £450 with staff costs calculated at a fixed rate of £25

per hour (therefore 18 hours' work is required before the threshold is reached).

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

When calculating costs/threshold, Woodchester C of E Primary School can take account of the staff costs/time in determining whether the information is held by the school, locating and retrieving the information, and extracting the information from other documents. Woodchester C of E Primary School will not take account of the costs involved with considering whether information is exempt under the Act.

If a request would cost more than the appropriate limit, (£450) the school can turn the request down, answer and charge a fee or answer and waive the fee.

If Woodchester C of E Primary School are going to charge they will send the enquirer a fees notice, the school do not have to comply with the request until the fee has been paid. More details on fees can be found on the ICO website.

If planning to turn down a request for cost reasons, or charge a high fee, you should contact the applicant 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.

Where two or more requests are made to Woodchester C of E Primary School 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

Compliance with a request must be prompt and within the time limit of 20 school days (this does not include the school holidays or weekends). 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 May the time limit would start from the next working day, the 7th May).

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

Third Party Data

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

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 Body minutes) which contains personal information whose release to a third party would breach the Data Protection Act, the document may be issued by blanking out the relevant personal information.

Exemptions

The presumption of the Freedom of Information Act is that the school 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.

Woodchester C of E Primary School 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.

A series of exemptions are set out in the Act which allow the withholding of information in relation to an enquiry. Where the potential exemption is a qualified exemption, the school will consider the public interest test to identify if the public interest in applying the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

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

Refusal

If it is decided to refuse a request, the school 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 school complaints procedure.

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.

SECTION 2 – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PUBLICATION SCHEME

Introduction

This publication scheme follows a model approved by the Information Commissioners Office. This scheme is not a list of individual publications but rather a description of the classes of types of information. This list is not an exhaustive list of all of the types of information that we hold. We try to proactively publish as much information as we can where the information would have a wider public interest.

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

The classes of information that we undertake to make available are organised into four broad topic areas:

School Information (known as School Prospectus information) – information published on the school website

Governors' Documents – information published about the school profile (such as on 'Get Information About Schools') and in other governing body documents.

Pupils & Curriculum – information about policies that relate to pupils and the school curriculum including references to pupil records.

School Policies and other information related to the school – information about policies that relate to the school in general.

Classes already published

Classes of Information Currently Published

School Information – this section sets out information published.

Class	Description
School (Prospectus) Information	• the name, address, website and telephone number of the school, and the type of school • the names of the head teacher and chair of governors • information on the school policy on admissions • a statement of the school's Vision, Values and Aims • details of any affiliations with a particular religion or religious denomination, the religious education provided, parents' right to withdraw their child from religious education and collective worship and the alternative provision for those pupils • information about the school's policy on providing for pupils with special educational needs • number of pupils on roll and rates of pupils' authorised and unauthorised absences • National Curriculum assessment results for appropriate Key Stages, with national summary figures • the arrangements for visits to the school by prospective parents • Latest Ofsted report • Latest SIAMs report

Governors' Documents

Class	Description
Instrument of Government	• The name of the school • The category of the school • The name of the governing body • The manner in which the governing body is constituted • The term of office of each category of governor if less than 4 years • The name of any body entitled to appoint any category of governor • Details of any trust • If the school has a religious character, a description of the ethos • The date the instrument takes effect

Minutes ¹ of meeting of the governing body and its committees	Agreed minutes of meetings of the governing body and its committees that are within the public domain.
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Pupils & Curriculum Policies - This section gives access to information about policies that relate to pupils and the school curriculum.

Class	Description
Home-school agreement	Statement of the school's aims and values, the school's responsibilities, the parental responsibilities and the school's expectations of its pupils for example homework arrangements.
Curriculum Policy	Statement on following the policy for the secular curriculum subjects and religious education and schemes of work and syllabuses currently used by the school.
Sex Education Policy	Statement of policy with regard to sex and relationship education.
Special Education Needs Policy SEND Local Offer	Information about the school's policy on providing for pupils with special educational needs.
Accessibility Plans	Plan for increasing participation of disabled pupils in the school's curriculum, improving the accessibility of the physical environment and improving delivery of information to disabled pupils.
Supporting Pupils with medical conditions Intimate Care Policy	Statement of policy with regard to children who are unwell and to clarify the responsibilities for the medical or wellbeing care of pupils.
Race Equality Policy	Statement of policy for promoting race equality.
Collective Worship	Statement of arrangements for the required daily act of collective worship.
Other documents	Many other policies and documents are available on request.
Safeguarding Policy and Procedures	Statement of policy for safeguarding and promoting welfare of pupils at the school.
Positive Behaviour Policy	Statement of general principles on behaviour and discipline and of measures taken by the head teacher to prevent bullying.
Attendance Policy	Statement of policy regarding pupil attendance at school.

School Policies and other information related to the school - This section gives access to information about policies that relate to the school in general.

Class	Description
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¹ Some information might be confidential or otherwise exempt from the publication by law – we cannot therefore publish this

Published reports of Ofsted referring expressly to the school	Published report of the last inspection of the school and the summary of the report and where appropriate inspection reports of religious education in those schools designated as having a religious character.
Charging and Remissions Policies	A statement of the school's policy with respect to charges and remissions for any optional extra or board and lodging for which charges are permitted, for example school publications, music tuition, trips.
School session times and term dates	Details of school session and dates of school terms and holidays.
Health and Safety Policy and risk assessments	Statement of general policy with respect to health and safety at work of employees (and others) and the organisation and arrangements for carrying out the policy.
Complaints procedure	Statement of procedures for dealing with complaints.
Appraisal Policy	Statement of procedures adopted by the governing body relating to the performance management of staff and the annual report of the head teacher on the effectiveness of appraisal procedures
Staff Conduct, Discipline and Grievance	Statement of procedure for regulating conduct and discipline of school staff and procedures by which staff may seek redress for grievance.
Whistleblowing Policy	Statement of policy regarding reporting unacceptable practice or behaviour where the welfare of children, staff or public may be at risk.
Allegations of abuse against staff	Procedures for allegations of abuse against staff.
Other documents	Many other policies and documents are available on request.

Making Information Available

Information will generally be made available on the school website. Where it is not possible to include this information on the websites, or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the websites, the school 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.

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.

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

Woodchester C of E Primary School 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 school for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on the website will be provided free of charge. Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by law. Charges will be made to cover:

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

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

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

- admin@woodchester.gloucs.sch.uk

To help us process your request quickly, please clearly mark any correspondence "PUBLICATION SCHEME REQUEST" (in CAPITALS please)

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 Clerk to the Governing Body.

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:

Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

or

Enquiry/Information Line: 01625 545 700

E Mail: publications@ic-foi.demon.co.uk.

Website : <https://ico.org.uk/>