

# Claregate Primary School Policy

## Freedom of Information and Data Protection Policy.

### Explanatory Notes

Governing bodies are responsible for ensuring that schools comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA).

Appendices 1 – 3 are taken directly from the DfES Guide for Maintained Schools (adapted as appropriate). Appendix 5, Standard Letters should be amended and used as appropriate.

### 1. Introduction

Claregate school is committed to the Freedom of Information Act 2000/ Data Protection Act 2008 and to the principles of accountability and the general confidentiality and right of access to information, subject to legal exemptions. This policy outlines our response to the Acts and a framework for managing requests.

### 2. Background

The Data Protection Act 2008 was introduced to control the way information kept is handled and gives people legal rights to information stored about them. It sets out principles of how an organisation deals with information and how information is used.

The DPA gives data subjects the right to know information held about them and to get data corrected where it is wrong.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Fol) came fully into force on January 1 2005. 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 the school holds the information, and to receive a copy, subject to certain exemptions.

The information which the school routinely makes available to the public is included in the Publication Scheme. Requests for other information should be dealt with in accordance with the statutory guidance. While the Act assumes openness, it recognises that certain information is sensitive. There are exemptions to protect this information.

The Act is fully retrospective, so that any past records which the school holds are covered by the Act. The DfE has issued a Retention Schedule produced by the Records Management Society of Great Britain, to guide schools on how long they should keep school records. It is an offence to wilfully conceal, damage or destroy information in order to avoid responding to an enquiry, so it is important that no records that are the subject of an enquiry are amended or destroyed.

Requests under Fol can be addressed to anyone in the school; so all staff need to be aware of the process for dealing with requests. Requests must be made in writing, (including email), and should include the enquirers name and correspondence address, and state what information they require. They do 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 no need to collect data in specific response to an Fol enquiry. There is a time limit of 20 days excluding school holidays for responding to the request. Wolverhampton Local Authority have requested that requests made

under the Freedom of Information Act especially those from the press are dealt with by the local authority and therefore schools will pass this on.

For further information and guidance, see the DfE “Freedom of Information Act 2000 – A Guide for Maintained Schools on Full Implementation from January 2005.” This can be found on [Teachernet](#), under Freedom of Information in the A-Z of School Leadership.

Information covered includes :-

1. Personal Details - name, address, date of birth and bank details.
2. Sensitive personal information – racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religion, membership of a trade union, health, lifestyle, criminal activity
3. Corporate information – Contracts for suppliers, minutes of meetings, finance details.
4. Educational information – pupil attainment and progress, assessment gathering records.

### 3. Scope

The FoI Act joins the Data Protection Act and the Environmental Information Regulations as legislation under which anyone is entitled to request information from the school.

Requests for personal data are still covered by the Data Protection Act. (DPA). Individuals can request to see what information the school holds about them. This is known as a Subject Access Request, and must be dealt with accordingly.

Requests for information about anything relating to the environment – such as air, water, land, the natural world or the built environment and any factor or measure affecting these – are covered by the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). They also cover issues relating to Health and Safety. For example queries about chemicals used in the school or on school land, phone masts, car parks etc. would all be covered by the EIR. Requests under EIR are dealt with in the same way as those under FoIA, but unlike FoIA requests, they do not need to be written and can be verbal.

If any element of a request to the school includes personal or environmental information, these elements must be dealt with under DPA or EIR. Any other information is a request under FoIA, and must be dealt with accordingly.

### 4. Obligations and Duties

The school is obliged under DPA to :-

- Only collect information we need for specific purposes
- Keep the information secure
- Ensure that the information is relevant and up to date
- Only hold it for as long as is necessary
- Let people know what information is kept about them or their children (those with parental rights)
- Allow people to see information held about them (with certain restrictions as detailed below)
- Notify the Information Commissioner Office that you process personal information
- Allow those with parental responsibility to see educational records
- Respond within 40 days to data requests

The school recognises its duty to

- provide advice and assistance to anyone requesting information. *We will respond to straightforward verbal requests for information, and will help enquirers to put more complex verbal requests into writing so that they can be handled under the Act.*
- tell enquirers whether or not we hold the information they are requesting (the duty to confirm or deny), and provide access to the information we hold in accordance with the procedures laid down in Appendix 1.

There are eight principles we have to follow that information is :-

### **1. Fairly and lawfully processed**

We will make it clear on the school prospectus that we collect and store personal data. We will make this policy available online. We will inform people if their information is passed on to third parties e.g. records to other schools. We will apply the principle of “in the public interest” when disclosing information.

### **2. Processed for limited and lawful purposes**

Staff will be made aware of this policy via Headteacher briefings. If requests are made, we will explain how and why we keep and use their data. We will make it a part of Home School Agreements that data is stored. We will notify the data commissioner of data stored via yearly disclosure.

### **3. Adequate, relevant and not excessive**

We will periodically check that the data we hold is sufficient bearing in mind our stated reasons for using it. We will question whether we need certain data and dispose of it securely if we don't. We will follow the checks and balances in part 7 and the appendices of this policy to ensure fairness.

### **4. Accurate and up to date**

We will periodically check that data is up to date and securely dispose of information that is no longer required. We will justify to those who ask why we keep certain data.

### **5. Not kept longer than necessary.**

See LA policy and recommended lengths of time on data retention – we will follow this. This will cover legal requirements. We will remove personal data when we no longer need it e.g. when information has been passed to another school.

### **6. Processed in line with legal rights**

The Headteacher is the Data Manager. We will follow data requests as detailed below in line with DPA and FoI Act..

### **7. Secure and not transferred to other countries without adequate protection**

We have detailed confidentiality and security arrangements to take account of personal information as an appendix to this policy. This reflects the sensitivity of data sets. All computers are password protected. Very sensitive data is encrypted. The server is kept behind a locked door. We have a secure e-mail address for exchanging sensitive data. We do not disclose to other countries outside of the EEA or on the EEA safe list.

## **5. Publication Scheme**

Claregate Primary School has adopted the Model Publication Scheme for Schools approved by the Information Commissioner.

The Publication Scheme and the materials it covers will be readily available from the School office.

## **6. Dealing with Requests**

We will respond to all requests in accordance with the procedures laid down in Appendix 1.

We will ensure that all staff are aware of the procedures. *(Note: A Powerpoint presentation is available on [Teachernet](#) to help in raising awareness. It can be found under Freedom of Information on the A-Z of School Leadership)*

## **7. Exemptions**

Certain information is subject to either absolute or qualified exemptions. The exemptions are listed in Appendix 2.

When we wish to apply a qualified exemption to a request, we will invoke the public interest test procedures to determine if public interest in applying the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

We will maintain a register of requests where we have refused to supply information, and the reasons for the refusal. The register will be retained for 5 years.

## **8. Public Interest Test**

Unless it is in the public interest to withhold information, it has to be released. We will apply the Public Interest Test before any qualified exemptions are applied.

For information on applying the Public Interest Test see Appendix 3.

## **9. Charging**

Most requests will be provided free of charge. We reserve the right to refuse to supply information where the cost of doing so exceeds the statutory maximum, currently £450

Fees charged for requests will be calculated according to FoI regulations, (see Appendix 4) and the person notified of the charge before information is supplied.

Costs will be calculated, taking account of staff time, as well as direct costs, but if the total is less than the statutory maximum, you can only charge the direct costs (e.g. printing, postage etc.) If the cost exceeds the statutory maximum you do not have to respond, but may choose to do so, either charging for time and direct costs or not. It is good practice to contact the enquirer, and see if they wish to reduce the request, thus reducing the time and costs to below the maximum.

## **10. Responsibilities**

Governors delegate the day-to-day responsibility for compliance with the FoIA to the Head Teacher. **We will deal with information securely and confidentially, fairly and efficiently, effectively and ethically, accurately and reliably and share information appropriately and lawfully.**

## **11. Complaints**

See school complaints procedure. The school will maintain records of all complaints and their outcome.

If on investigation 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.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Information Commissioner's office. They can be contacted at:

FOI/EIR Complaints Resolution  
**Information Commissioner's Office**  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

# Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## Claregate Primary School

### Appendix 1

### Procedure for Dealing with Requests

*Note: This Appendix is adapted from the DfES Guide for Maintained Schools on Full Implementation from January 2005, with the exception of paras 17 – 21 which have been changed to reflect amended guidance.*

1. To handle a request for information the governing body or delegated person will need to ask themselves a series of questions. These are set out below and shown on pages 12 - 13 as process maps.

#### Is it a FOI request for information?

A request for information may be covered by one, or all, of three information rights:

- Data Protection enquiries (or subject access requests) are ones where the enquirer asks to see what personal information the school holds about the enquirer. If the enquiry is a Data Protection request, follow your existing school DPA guidance.
- Environmental Information Regulations enquiries are ones which relate to air, water, land, natural sites, built environment, flora and fauna, and 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 IC's website [here](#) or the DEFRA website [here](#).
- FOI enquiries are concerned with all other information and the reasoning behind decisions and policies. The request does not have to mention the FOI Act. All requests for information that are not data protection or environmental information requests are covered by the FOI Act.

#### Is this a valid FOI request for information?

2. An FOI request should:

- be **in writing**, including email or FAX;
- **state the enquirer's name and correspondence address** (email addresses are allowed);
- **describe the information requested** - there must be enough information to be able to identify and locate the information<sup>1</sup>; and
- not be covered by one of the other pieces of legislation.
- **be able to prove identity if this is questioned e.g. passport or driving license or marriage certificate, or P45 / P60 along with recent utility bill with current address or credit card or mortgage statement.**

3. Verbal enquiries are not covered by the FOI Act. Such enquiries can be dealt with where the enquiry is relatively straightforward and can be dealt with satisfactorily. However, for more complex enquiries, and to avoid disputes over what was asked for, you should ask the enquirer to put the request in writing or email, when the request will become subject to FOI.

#### Does the school hold the information?

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<sup>1</sup> In cases where the enquiry is ambiguous assist the enquirer to describe more clearly the information requested. Where possible, establish direct contact. The aim is to clarify the nature of the information requested and not to determine the aims or motivation of the enquirer. If you notify the enquirer that you need further information to enable you to answer, you do not have to deal with the request until the further information is received. The response time limit starts from the date this is received.

4. “Holding” information means information relating to the business of the school:
  - the school has **created**, or
  - the school has **received from another** body or person, or
  - **held by another** body **on the school’s behalf**.
5. Information means both hard copy and digital information, including email.
6. If the school does not hold the information, you do not have to create or acquire it just to answer the enquiry, although a reasonable search should be made before denying that you have got information the school might be expected to hold.

#### **Has the information requested already been made public?**

7. If the information requested is already in the public domain, for instance through your Publication Scheme or on your website, direct the enquirer to the information and explain how to access it.

#### **Is the request vexatious or manifestly unreasonable or repeated?**

8. The Act states that there is no obligation to comply with vexatious requests. This is taken to mean a request 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<sup>2</sup>. This however does not provide an excuse for bad records management.

#### **Can the school transfer a request to another body?**

9. If the information is held by another public authority, such as your local authority, first check with them they hold it, then transfer the request to them. You must notify the enquirer that you do not hold the information and to whom you have transferred the request. You should answer any parts of the enquiry in respect of information your school does hold.

#### **Could a third party’s interests be affected by disclosure?**

10. 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. You do not need to consult where you are not going to disclose the information because you will be applying an exemption.

11. 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 you to determine if information is exempt from disclosure, or
- the views of the third party may assist you to determine the public interest.

#### **Does an exemption apply?**

12. The presumption of the legislation is that you will disclose information unless the Act provides a specific reason to withhold it. There are more than 20 exemptions. They are set out in Appendix 2 and are mainly intended to protect sensitive or confidential information.

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<sup>2</sup> It is not intended to include otherwise valid requests in which the applicant may make complaints or vent frustrations. In addition, you do not have to comply with repeated identical or substantially similar requests from the same applicant unless a “reasonable” interval has elapsed between requests.

13. Only where you have real concerns about disclosing the information should you look to see whether an exemption might apply. Even then, where the potential exemption is a qualified exemption, you need to consider the public interest test to identify if the public interest in applying the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. Therefore, unless it is in the public interest to withhold the information, it has to be released. Appendix 3 contains guidance on conducting a public interest test.

### **What if the request is for personal information?**

14. Personal information requested by the subject of that information is exempt under the FOI Act as such information is covered by the Data Protection Act. Individuals must, therefore, continue to make a 'subject access request' under the Data Protection Act if they wish to access such information.

### **What if the details contain personal information?**

15. Personal information requested by third parties is also exempt under the FOI Act 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 as set out in the redaction procedure. The procedure for redaction is here<sup>3</sup>.

### **How much can we charge?**

16. The Act allows governing bodies to charge for providing information. For further information, see Appendix 4

17. The first step is to determine if the threshold (currently £450) would be exceeded. Staff costs should be calculated at £25 per hour. You can take account of the costs of determining if the information is held, locating and retrieving the information, and extracting the information from other documents. You cannot take into account the costs involved in determining whether information is exempt.

18. If a request would cost less than the appropriate limit, (currently £450) 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).

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 it decides to charge a fee, and does not have other powers to do so, it can charge on the basis of the costs outlined in Appendix 4.

19. Schools will however wish to consider whether calculating the cost of the fee outweighs the cost of providing the information. In practice we recommend that schools respond to straightforward enquiries free of charge and charge where the costs are significant.

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<sup>3</sup> The procedure for redaction is:

i) mask the passages which are not to be disclosed and photocopy; (ii) annotate in the margin against each blank passage, the exemption and section of the Act under which this passage is exempt; iv) explain in the covering letter that the relevant exemptions are marked in the attachments and in the case of non-absolute exemptions, how the public interest test has been considered.

On no account must you use the computer to rewrite the document or email and simply delete the exempted passages so that the resulting document appears as though they did not exist. The one circumstance where this would be permissible would be where the only redacted parts are personal information such as people's names and the covering letter explains this.

20. If you are going to charge you must send the enquirer a fees notice and do not have to comply with the request until the fee has been paid. Appendix 4 gives more information on charging.

### **Is there a time limit for replying to the enquirer?**

21. Compliance with a request must be prompt and certainly within the legally prescribed limit of 20 working days, excluding school holidays.<sup>4</sup> Failure to comply could result in a complaint to the Information Commissioner. The response time starts from the time the request is received. Where you have asked the enquirer for more information to enable you to answer, the 20 days start time begins when this further information has been received.

22. If a qualified exemption applies and you need more time to consider the public interest test, you should reply within the 20 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 – in practice, it is recommended by the Department that normally this should be within 10 working days.

23. Where you have notified the enquirer that a charge is to be made, the time period stops until payment is received and then continues again once payment has been received.

### **What action is required to refuse a request?**

24. If the information is not to be provided, the person dealing with the request must immediately contact the person in the school with delegated responsibility for FOI to ensure that the case has been properly considered and the reasons for refusal are sound. If it is decided to refuse a request, you need to send a refusals notice, which must contain

- i) the fact that the responsible person cannot provide the information asked for;
- ii) which exemption(s) you are claiming apply;
- iii) why the exemption(s) apply to this enquiry (if it is not self-evident);
- iv) reasons for refusal if based on cost of compliance (see Appendix 4)
- v) in the case of non-absolute exemptions, how you have applied the public interest test, specifying the public interest factors taken into account before reaching the decision (see Appendix 3)
- vi) reasons for refusal on vexatious or repeated grounds
- vii) the internal complaints procedure.

25. 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. Records should be retained for 5 years. There are no requirements to keep records where you have supplied the information requested.

### **What do I do if someone complains?**

26. Any written (including email) expression of dissatisfaction - even if it does not specifically seek a review – should be handled through the school’s existing complaints procedure which should be fair and impartial. The procedure should be clear and non-bureaucratic. Wherever practicable the review should be handled by someone not involved in the original decision. The Governing Body should set and publish a target time for determining complaints and information on the success rate in meeting the target. The school should maintain records of all complaints and their outcome.

### **27. CCTV**

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<sup>4</sup> An order to this effect is to be made under section 10(4) of the Act and should take effect from 1 January 2005



The use of CCTV is covered by the Data Protection Act 1988. The data protection manager is currently the Headteacher and the Headteacher manages access to the images via a control panel in the Headteacher's office. Recorded images can only be gained via a security password and are not used on a wireless system.

CCTV images are not backed up to a central or remote server.

CCTV is declared under notification procedures re Data Protection Act.

Cameras are situated in areas where monitoring is most required i.e. where theft or anti- social activity is most likely to take place.

CCTV signs letting people know it is being used are at the two points of entry to the school site at the front and back gate. Periodic reminders will be put on newsletters about the use and it is on the school prospectus.

The purpose of using CCTV in school is :-

1. Monitoring

To watch the flow of pupil movement around the school and identify if there are any bottlenecks, potential Health and Safety issues or people in areas of the school where it is inappropriate for them to be.

2. Detecting

To know that someone is present even if you cannot see their face.

3. Recognising

Helping to recognise people at the front door who are requesting access to the school. Potentially denying access to those who we recognise as risky people or those whom the office staff or Headteacher does not want to enter the building.

4. Identifying

Gain images which may help to identify those committing a crime during or out of school hours. Or indeed the way a crime was committed if individuals are not identifiable.

Safeguard children and adults by providing a traceable image of those who may wish to harm children, or of incidents that are threatening.

Providing footage to the police of child protection agencies of criminal activity or safeguarding issues. These images could be used in a court of law.

Providing recorded images to trace the build up to and alleged incidents.

Matters of gross misconduct, risky behaviour or criminality on the part of staff i.e. matters that cannot be ignored.

CCTV is **not** for the purposes of :-

Infringing an individual's human rights, their privacy or to provide anyone external to the school with any images e.g. a TV company or the Internet.

Overlook private property not part of the school.

Recording conversations – there is no audio recording installed.

Routinely monitoring the capability of staff.

## Retention and Disclosure

There is no legal specific minimum or maximum time for footage to be stored. CCTV recordings are kept on our hard drive for 7 days and then automatically deleted. If data is passed onto other responsible agencies it will be put onto a disk for removal from site. It is then the responsibility of the other agency to safeguard the data provided under the DPA 1988.

Disclosure is a matter of discretion. Where a written request for disclosure is made e.g. a “subject access request” the data manager will decide to grant or refuse any request for disclosure. Where it is a matter of criminality or child protection / safeguarding and abuse or neglect is accused, it is highly likely that recordings will be disclosed to the police or child protection agencies. Where an individual is asking for copies of images of themselves only, there is little reason to refuse.

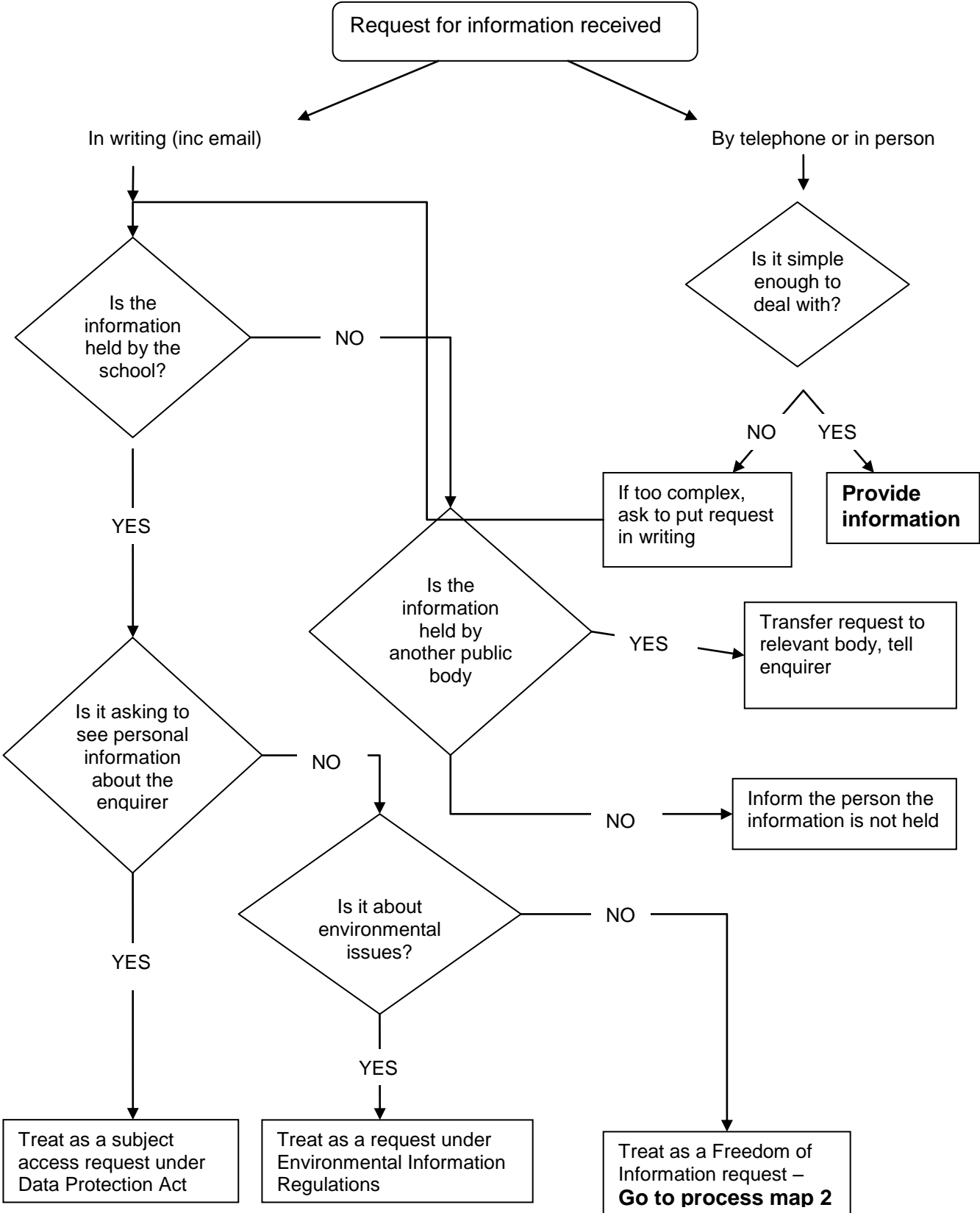
However being alone in a primary school is a rare occurrence and giving copies of recordings to parents, staff or some outside agencies may be refused as it may infringe the privacy rights of children and adults who are also part of that recording.

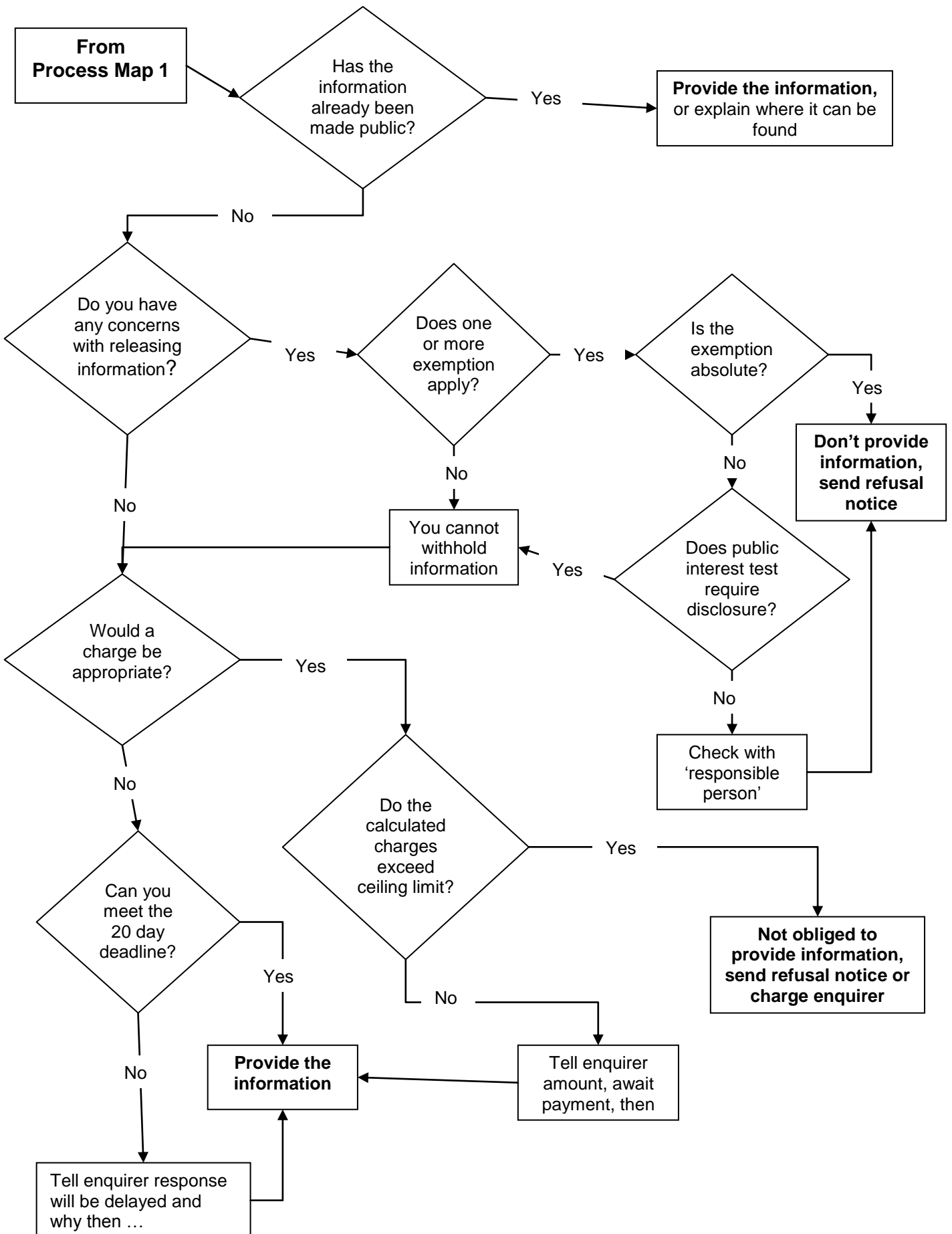
- It is unlikely to infringe privacy if there are innocuous occurrences e.g. people going about their daily business. Where it is a matter of factual accuracy, the data manager may decide to show a recording of an incident to a pupil or parent, without giving a copy. It is likely that this is to prove something their child has done.
- However it is likely to invade privacy if there is a controversial incident. It is unlikely that we will show footage to prove what somebody else’s child has done to their child as this may be a breach of privacy. In these circumstances the data manager will watch and report factually on what has been seen.
- Showing CCTV recording or images to children is not expected to be commonplace, but where it helps to clear up matters of factual accuracy in disputes of right or wrong it can be used selectively at the discretion of the data manager.
- Where a person insists on an image of themselves being disclosed, the school may ask for an external agency to make a copy where other people are anonymised or not shown on the recording. The full cost of this will be passed on to the person requesting this.
- Where the school is unsure about whether it is disclosable or not, the data manager will seek legal advice from the local authority.

28. When the original request has been reviewed and the outcome is that the information should be disclosed this should be done as soon as practicable. When the outcome is that procedures within the school have not been properly followed, the school should review procedures to prevent any recurrence. When the outcome upholds the school’s original decision or action, the applicant should be informed of their right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. The appeal should be made in writing to:

FOI Compliance Team (complaints)  
Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire. SK9 5AF

# Dealing with Requests





# Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## Claregate Primary School

### Appendix 2 Exemptions

*Note: This Appendix is taken from the DfES Guide for Maintained Schools on Full Implementation from January 2005.*

1. Although decisions on disclosure should be made on a presumption of openness, the FOI Act recognises the need to preserve confidentiality and protect sensitive material in some circumstances.
2. You cannot withhold information in response to a valid request UNLESS one of the following applies:-
  - an exemption to disclosure, or
  - the information sought is not held, or
  - the request is considered vexatious or repeated or
  - the cost of compliance exceeds the threshold (see Appendix 4)

#### The duty to confirm or deny

3. A person applying for information has the right to be told if the information requested is held by the school, and if that is the case to have the information sent (subject to any of the exemptions). This obligation is known as the school's "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 (see paragraph 6), or
  - in the case of qualified exemptions (see paragraph 8), confirming or denying would itself disclose exempted information

#### Exemptions

4. 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 schools. There are more than 20 exemptions but schools are likely to use only a few of them.
5. There are two general categories of exemptions:-

**Absolute:** where there is no requirement to confirm or deny that the information is held, disclose the information or consider the public interest; and

**Qualified:** where, even if an exemption applies, there is a duty to consider the public interest in disclosing information

#### What are the Absolute Exemptions?

6. There are 8 absolute exemptions listed in the Act. Even where an absolute exemption applies:-
  - it does not mean that you can't disclose in all cases; it means that disclosure is not required by the Act. A decision could be taken to ignore the exemption and release the information taking into account all the facts of the case
  - there is still a legal obligation to provide reasonable advice and assistance to the enquirer

7. The absolute exemptions in the Act are set out below. **Those which might be relevant to schools are marked with an \*:**

**7.1 Information accessible to the enquirer by other means\*** (Section 21)

If information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by another route than the Act, it is exempt information. This is the case even if the enquirer would have to pay for the information under that alternative route. This exemption includes cases where you are required to give information under other legislation, or where the information is available via the Publication Scheme.

**7.2 Information dealing with security matters** (Section 23) (see also qualified exemption under Section 24 on national security)

This applies to information directly or indirectly supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters such as GCHQ, MI5, MI6, Special Forces and the National Criminal Intelligence Service.

**7.3 Court records** (Section 32) – (see also the qualified exemption under Section 30 concerning investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities)

This applies to information related to proceedings in a court or tribunal or served on a public authority for the purposes of proceedings.

**7.4 Parliamentary Privilege** (Section 34)

This exempts information if it is required for the purpose of avoiding an infringement of the Parliamentary privilege. Parliamentary privilege is an immunity whereby MPs cannot be prosecuted for sedition or sued for libel or slander over anything said during proceedings in the House.

**7.5 Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs** (Section 36) - see also the qualified exemption part of Section 36

This relates to the maintenance of the collective responsibility of Ministers.

**7.6 Personal information\*** (Section 40) - see also the qualified exemption part of Section 40. Where enquirers ask to see information about themselves, this is exempt under the Act because it is covered by the Data Protection Act. Consult your existing school Data Protection guidance.

**7.7 Information provided in confidence\*** (Section 41)

This relates to information obtained from a person if its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that, or another, person.

**7.8 Prohibitions on disclosure\*** (Section 44)

Information is exempt where its disclosure is prohibited under any other legislation by order of a court or where it would constitute a contempt of court or where it is incompatible with any EC obligation.

**What are the Qualified Exemptions?**

8. With qualified exemptions, even if it is decided that an exemption applies, there is a duty to consider the public interest in confirming or denying that the information exists and in disclosing information. Guidance on carrying out the public interest test is at Annex C. The qualified exemptions in the Act are set out below. **Those which might be relevant to schools are marked with an \*:**

**8.1 Information intended for future publication\*** (Section 22)

If at the time the request was made, information is held with a view to publication, then it is exempt from disclosure if it is reasonable that it should not be disclosed until the intended date of publication. This could apply for instance to statistics published at set intervals, for example annually or where

information is incomplete and it would be inappropriate to publish prematurely<sup>5</sup>. Remember, you still have a legal duty to provide reasonable advice and assistance.

### 8.2 **National security** (Section 24) (see also absolute exemption 23)

Information is exempt for the purposes of safeguarding national security.

### 8.3 **Defence** (Section 26)

Information is exempt if its disclosure would prejudice the defence of the UK.

### 8.4 **International relations** (Section 27)

Information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to, prejudice relations between the UK and any other state, international organisation.

### 8.5 **Relations within UK** (Section 28)

Information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to, prejudice relations between any administration in the UK ie the Government, Scottish Administration, Northern Ireland Assembly, or National Assembly of Wales.

### 8.6 **The economy** (Section 29)

Information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the economic or financial interests of the UK

### 8.7 **Investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities\*** (Section 30)

Information is exempt if it has at any time been held by the school for the purposes of criminal investigations or proceedings, such as determining whether a person should be charged with an offence or whether a charged person is guilty, or investigations which may lead to a decision to institute criminal proceedings. The duty to confirm or deny does not apply to such information.

### 8.8 **Law enforcement\*** (Section 31)

Information which is not exempt under Section 30 Investigations and Proceedings, may be exempt under this exemption in the event that disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the following among others:-

- the prevention or detection of crime
- the apprehension or prosecution of offenders
- the administration of justice
- the exercise of functions such as ascertaining if a person has broken the law, is responsible for improper conduct, whether circumstances justify regulatory action, ascertaining a person's fitness or competence in relation to their profession, ascertaining the cause of an accident or protecting or recovering charities or its properties
- any civil proceedings brought by or on behalf of the school which arise out of an investigation carried out for any of the purposes mentioned above.

The duty to confirm or deny does not arise where prejudice would result to any of these matters.

### 8.9 **Audit Functions** (Section 33)

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<sup>5</sup> Note the following:-

- the intended publication does not have to be by the school, it can be by another person or body on behalf of the school
- the date of publication does not have to be known, it could be at some future date (although it is recommended that some idea of a likely date is given)
- the duty to confirm or deny does not apply if to do so would involve the disclosure of any of the relevant information

Information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the exercise of an authority's functions in relation to the audit of the accounts of other public authorities. It does not apply to internal audit reports.

#### **8.10 Formulation of government policy** (Section 35)

*Information held is exempt information if it relates to the formulation or development of government policy, ministerial communications, advice by Law Officers (eg Attorney General) and the operation of any Ministerial private office*

#### **8.11 Prejudice to the conduct of public affairs** (Section 36) (excluding matters covered by the absolute exemption part of Section 36)

*Information likely to prejudice the maintenance of the convention of the collective responsibility of Ministers or likely to inhibit the free and frank provision of advice or exchange of views*

#### **8.12 Communications with the Queen\*** (Section 37)

Information is exempt if it relates to communications with the Queen, the Royal Family or Royal Household or if it relates to the award of honours. The duty to confirm or deny does not arise where this exemption applies.

#### **8.13 Health and Safety\*** (Section 38)

Information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to endanger the safety or physical or mental health of any individual. The duty to confirm or deny does not arise where prejudice would result.

#### **8.14 Environmental information\*** (Section 39)

Information is exempt under FOI where it is covered by the Environmental Information Regulations. Environmental information can cover information relating to: air, water, land, natural sites, built environment, flora and fauna, and health. It also covers all information relating to decisions or activities affecting any of these.

#### **8.15 Personal information\*** (Section 40) – see also the absolute exemption part of Section 40

Where an individual seeks information about themselves Data Protection Act powers apply. Where the information concerns a third party, it is exempt if its disclosure would contravene the Data Protection Act, or the data protection principles; or if the person to whom the information relates would not have a right of access to it because it falls under one of the exemptions to the Data Protection Act. The duty to confirm or deny does not arise in relation to this information if doing so would be incompatible with any of the above.

#### **8.16 Legal professional privilege\*** (Section 42)

Legal professional privilege covers any advice given by legal advisers, solicitors and barristers. Generally such information will be privileged. A school wishing to disclose the information will need to seek consent from the provider of the advice. This exemption covers all such information where a claim to legal professional privilege can be maintained in legal proceedings. The duty to confirm or deny does not arise where to do so would involve the disclosure of such information.

#### **8.17 Commercial interests\*** (Section 43)

Information is exempt if it constitutes a trade secret or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person or body (including the school). The duty to confirm or deny does not arise where prejudice would result to commercial interests but not where the information constitutes a trade secret.

### **Protective Markings and Applying Exemptions**

9. When considering if an exemption to disclosure should apply, bear in mind that the presence of a protective marking (Restricted, Confidential or Secret, with or without descriptors such as Staff,



Management, Commercial etc) does not constitute an exemption and is not in itself sufficient grounds on which to prevent disclosure. Each case must be considered on its merits.

## **Timing**

10. Where information has previously been withheld, it must not be assumed that any subsequent requests for the same information will also be refused. Sensitivity of information decreases with age and the impact of any disclosure will be different depending on when the request is received. Therefore, for each request, it will be necessary to consider the harm that could result at the time of the request and, while taking into account any previous exemption applications, each case should be considered separately.

## **Next steps**

11. In all cases, before writing to the enquirer, the person given responsibility for FOI by the school governing body will need to ensure that the case has been properly considered, and that the reasons for refusal, or public interest test refusal, are sound.

**Freedom of Information Act 2000.  
Claregate Primary School**

**Appendix 3  
Applying the Public Interest Test**

*Note: This Appendix is taken from the DfES Guide for Maintained Schools on Full Implementation from January 2005.*

**Background**

1. Having established that a qualified exemption(s) definitely applies to a particular case, you must then carry out a public interest test to identify if the public interest in applying the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. Therefore, unless it is in the public interest to withhold the information, it has to be released. Although precedent and a developed case law will play a part, individual circumstances will vary and each case will need to be considered on its own merits.

**Carrying out the test**

2. It is worth noting that what is in the public interest is not necessarily the same as that which may be of interest to the public. It may be irrelevant that a matter may be the subject of public curiosity. In most cases it will be relatively straightforward to decide where the balance of the public interest in disclosure lies. However, there will inevitably be cases where the decision is a difficult one. Applying such a test depends to a high degree on objective judgement and a basic knowledge of the subject matter and its wider impact in the school and possibly wider. Factors that might be taken into account when weighing the public interest include:-

<b>For Disclosure</b>	<b>Against Disclosure</b>
Is disclosure likely to increase access to information held by the school?	Is disclosure likely to distort public reporting or be misleading because it is incomplete?
Is disclosure likely to give the reasons for a decision or allow individuals to understand decisions affecting their lives or assist them in challenging those decisions?	Is premature disclosure likely to prejudice fair scrutiny, or release sensitive issues still on the internal agenda or evolving?
Is disclosure likely to improve the accountability and transparency of the school in the use of public funds and help to show that it obtains value for money?	Is disclosure likely to cause unnecessary public alarm or confusion?
Is disclosure likely to contribute to public debate and assist the understanding of existing or proposed policy?	Is disclosure likely to seriously jeopardise the school's legal or contractual position?
Is disclosure likely to increase public participation in decision-making?	Is disclosure likely to infringe other legislation e.g. Data Protection Act?
Is disclosure likely to increase public participation in political processes in general?	Is disclosure likely to create a controversial precedent on the release of information or impair your ability to obtain information in the future?
Is disclosure likely to bring to light information affecting public safety?	Is disclosure likely to adversely affect the school's proper functioning and discourage openness in expressing opinions?
Is disclosure likely to reduce further enquiries on the topic?	If a large amount of information on the topic has already been made available, would further disclosure shed any more light or serve any useful purpose?

3. Note also that:

- potential or actual embarrassment to, or loss of confidence in, the school, staff or governors is NOT a valid factor

- the fact that the information is technical, complex to understand and may be misunderstood may not of itself be a reason to withhold information
- the potential harm of releasing information will reduce over time and should be considered at the time the request is made rather than by reference to when the relevant decision was originally taken
- the balance of the public interest in disclosure cannot always be decided on the basis of whether the disclosure of particular information would cause harm, but on certain higher order considerations such as the need to preserve confidentiality of internal discussions
- a decision not to release information may be perverse i.e. would a decision to withhold information because it is not in the public interest to release it, itself result in harm to public safety, the environment or a third party?

4. You will need to record the answers to these questions and the reasons for those answers. Deciding on the public interest is not simply a matter of adding up the number of relevant factors on each side. You need to decide how important each factor is in the circumstances and go on to make an overall assessment.

### **For Disclosure**

5. Where the balance of the public interest lies in disclosure, the enquiry should be dealt with and the information required should be made available. Where the factors are equally-balanced, the decision should usually favour disclosure (but see 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point above).

### **Against Disclosure**

6. After carrying out the public interest test if it is decided that the exemption should still apply, proceed to reply to the request.

There will be occasions when it has been decided that a qualified exemption applies but consideration of the public interest test may take longer. In such a case, you must contact the enquirer within 20 working days stating that a particular exemption applies, but including an estimate of the date by which a decision on the public interest test will be made. This should be within a “reasonable” time – in practice, it is recommended this decision is made and communicated within the 20 days but where not possible it is suggested that no more than 10 working days beyond the 20 days should be allowed.

# Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## Claregate Primary School

### Appendix 4 Charging

*Note: This Appendix is based on the guidance from the DfES and the Department for Constitutional Affairs. A summary of the DCA guidance can be found at: [www.dca.gov.uk/foi/feeguidesum.htm](http://www.dca.gov.uk/foi/feeguidesum.htm)*

**Important:** Different charges apply for requests under the Data Protection Act

#### May I charge a fee?

FOI does not require charges to be made but schools have discretion to charge applicants a fee in accordance with the Fees Regulations (fees Regulations on the DCA website [www.dca.gov.uk/foi/secleg.htm](http://www.dca.gov.uk/foi/secleg.htm))

#### What steps should we take in considering whether to charge?

Step 1. Is the information exempt for the purposes of the FOI Act?

If information is exempt, then fees do not apply. You may not know if information is exempt until it has been located and checked. However, there are many instances, for example information in your publication scheme, when it is automatically exempt. If you wish to charge for information in your publication scheme, this should be made clear in the scheme itself. The school would need to contact the enquirer to inform them that the information is exempt, and how to obtain it.

Step 2. Do you wish to calculate whether the cost of the request would exceed the appropriate limit (currently £450)?

In many cases, it will be obvious that the request would cost less than the appropriate limit, so there would be little point in making the calculation.

Step 3. Calculate the appropriate limit

Staff costs are calculated at £25 per hour. When calculating whether the limit is exceeded, schools can take account of the costs of determining whether the information is held, locating and retrieving the information, and extracting the information from other documents. They cannot take account of the costs involved with considering whether information is exempt under the Act.

Step 4. Requests costing less than the limit

If a request would cost less than the limit, schools 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)

Step 5. Requests exceeding the limit

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

If you choose to comply with a request where the estimated cost exceeds the threshold you should calculate the charge as outlined in Step 3, plus the costs of informing the applicant whether the information is held, and communicating the information to them (e. printing and postage costs)

Step 6. For all requests, schools should have regard to the following two points:

- The duty to provide advice and assistance to applicants. 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.
- Maximum amount that can be charged. The Regulations set out the maximum amount that can be charged. However there is nothing to stop schools charging a lesser or no fee. Governing bodies should develop a consistent policy on charging.

## **May I aggregate the costs where there are multiple requests?**

Where two or more requests are made to the 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 is to be taken to be the estimated total cost of complying with them all, provided that:

- (a) the two or more requests referred to in that section are for information which is on the same subject matter or is otherwise related;
- (b) the last of the requests is received by the school before the twentieth working day following the date of receipt of the first of the requests; and
- (c) it appears to the school that the requests have been made in an attempt to ensure that the prescribed costs of complying separately with each request would not exceed the appropriate limit.

If you get multiple requests for the same information, it is good practice to include the information in your publication scheme.

## **How do I inform the applicant of the fee?**

1. Where you intend to charge a fee for complying with a request for information then the school must give the person requesting the information notice in writing (the “fees notice”) stating that a fee of the amount specified in the notice is to be charged for complying.
2. Where a fees notice has been given to the person making the request, you do not need to comply with the request unless the fee is paid within three months of the notice being received.

**Keeping Written or Printed Information Safe**

The school keeps a range of document in electronic, printed and written forms e.g. electronic registers of attendance.

Office manager’s office is on a security pad and has managed access only. Parents and pupils are not allowed into this area.

Headteachers office is on a security pad system and locked when not in use.

**Definitions**

Strictly confidential – VERY personal details about abuse or neglect. Access on a need to know basis only, access totally controlled.

Highly confidential – personal details about health, welfare, family details, addresses, financial records.

Access within a selected group of people but restricted.

Confidential – details of attainment or educational progress or gathering records.

<b><u>Written Document Held</u></b>	<b><u>What form is the document in?</u></b>	<b><u>Who has access, where it is kept / accessed?</u></b>	<b><u>How do we keep it safe?</u></b>
Attendance register	OMR’s sent to school office daily. Electronic SIMS system from September 2012.	Office Manager’s office. Headteacher’s office. HT, DHT, AHT, LA EWO and Office Manager. Teachers laptops (not available off site).	SIMS is password protected. Any daily manual records removed weekly and stored in locked cabinet by office manager.
Late book	Hand written and transferred to a computer database.	Office Manager’s office. Headteacher’s office. HT, DHT, AHT, LA EWO and Office Manager.	Staff logon is password protected. Taken daily by secretarial assistant to the office manager’s office and locked away in a filing cabinet until the next day.
Attainment and pupil progress data.	Excel spreadsheets. SIMS data management system.	ALL SLT logon their laptops. Excel spreadsheets are kept on the server which is user accessed.	SIMS is password protected. Staff server logon is password protected.
Teachers educational gathering records.	Hand written or word processed notes.	All teachers and TA’s. Kept in files in class as they need to be accessed day to day but locked away when other adults in the class e.g. parents meetings. Some displayed on wall in Reception to log progress.	Locked when access open.
Reading logs.	Hand written on pro-forma.	All teachers and TA’s. Authorised parental helpers. n class and in individual book bags. Become responsibility of parents on transfer.	Brief helpers about confidentiality. Prevent other children / unauthorised parents from picking up and

			looking.
Individual Education Plans	Hand written on pro-forma.	All teachers and TA's. Individual teachers planning file kept on teacher's desk but locked in filing cabinet / desk overnight.	Locked away overnight. Unauthorised people denied access.
Pupil reports from external consultants, LA, social services etc.	Variety or written forms. Electronic copies – e-mail etc deleted.	Person specific information shared on a need to know basis. Social services or strictly confidential – HT office in locked filing cabinet file marked strictly confidential. SENCO records or confidential kept in locked filing cabinet marked confidential in SEN room (class room until September 2010).	Locking procedures. Not left lying around when being used so casual observers can see.
Pupil portfolios.	Variety of written and printed forms.	All staff.	Kept in locked filing cabinets.
Parental access records	Electronic	Office staff and SLT. Office shared area password protected on log in.	Behind PC logon and access to this area of the server restricted to authorised users only.
Parent contact and child medical details.	Hand written on pro-forma.	Files in office manager's office. All teachers and TA's. Can be accessed by staff in emergency on behalf of PTA.	Office locked when not used.
Internal mail / circulars / timetables.	Variety	In staff pigeon holes. Staff room from September 2010 to be strictly staff only – no work experience or parental helpers allowed in.	Use of staff room limited to staff only.
Staff references and personnel details. PM details.	Printouts. Electronic copies deleted.	Kept in staff personnel file in Office Managers locked filing cabinet. Ex members of staff or unsuccessful applicants details (with the exception of safeguarding documents) are shredded when not required any more.	Kept covered when in use to prevent casual glancing.
Notes about children to HT.	Written.	Left face down dealt with during the school day and disposed of overnight. Recorded on CCC if required.	Office shut when not being used.
Children causing concern logs	Electronic.	On HT PC and my documents backed up to server – only HT can access.	PC password protected. Data anonymised by initials. Strictly confidential items not recorded here – kept under lock and key in filing cabinet.
Y6 test papers.	Printed and plastic sealed.	HT distributes to staff with delegated roles e.g. DHT. Sealed until test. Kept in locked filing cabinet in HT office. Office locked when HT leaves it.	Compliance with statutory guidelines.
Letters to us from parents.	Written.	In register document to be filed by office staff.	Locked cabinets.
Pupil reports	Electronic.	Out in sealed envelopes via pupil post.	Instructions to pupils to give to parents only.
Emails	Electronic on WWW.	All staff in a variety of forms.	Secure LA e-mail to be used for confidential

			items.
Software licenses.	Paper and electronic	Locked in filing cabinet or behind logon passwords.	Access to loading software restricted by server access rights – ICT technician. Log of software licenses.
Power supplies and switches		ICT technician.	UPS fitted on server to prevent sudden loss. All switches in high locations to prevent accidental damage or in locked cupboard.
ICT Access levels.	ICT	All teachers and teaching assistants / HLTA's.	Virus protection automatic updates. Internet traffic monitored centrally by LA on broadband network, violation action if identified, User ID, password protection and protocols, acceptable use policy, time outs, screen lock outs set, logging off procedures. Access to server restricted to ICT technician and AHT.
ICT Backup systems.	ICT	Wolverhampton protocols followed.	Auto backup off site – ICT SLA.
ICT equipment security.	ICT	All areas of school.	Annual Inventory check. Pupil laptops in secure cupboards overnight. Staff laptops in locked cupboard or off site.
CCTV	Live viewing or recording on hard drive in Headteacher's office..	Data Manager and Deputy Data Manager (Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher).	Password protected for recordings. Office locked when HT leaves it. Alarmed overnight.





**{Applicant Address}**

**{Date}**

Dear **{Name}**,

Thank you for your request for information received on .

We have conducted a thorough search of our records and unfortunately we are unable to locate the information you requested. This may be because the school has never held this information or that the information is older than the statutory requirements for retention and has been legally destroyed in accordance with our retention schedules.

If you have any comments relating to how your request has been handled by our school, please contact me at school below.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr M Murphy**  
**Headteacher**



**{Applicant Address}**

**{Date}**

Dear **{Name}**,

Thank you for your request for information, received on . To the best of our knowledge the requested information is not held within the school. However, we believe that **{Name and address of organisation}** may hold the information you require. We will therefore need to transfer the request to them.

If you have an objection to this transfer you should let us know as soon as possible by writing to **{Address}** or telephoning 01902 558575 and asking for **Mr Murphy**.  
If you have any comments relating to how your request has been handled by our school, please contact Mr Murphy at the school.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr M Murphy**  
**Headteacher**



**{Applicant Address}**

**{Date}**

Dear **{Name}**,

Thank you for your request for information received on . From the information described, we have been unable to identify the information you require.

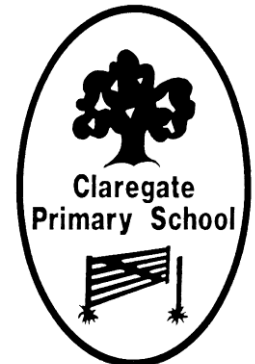
Could you please give us more information relating to: **{Include specific information you require, try to ensure that terms that may be unfamiliar to the requestor are explained}**.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires that we deal with requests such as this within 20 working days. We are not required to include any time whilst waiting for clarification of a request. We will endeavour to proceed with your request as soon as you supply the information required. If we have not received a reply within three months we will treat this request as cancelled.

If you have any comments relating to how your request has been handled by our school, please contact Mr M Murphy at the school.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr M Murphy**  
**Headteacher**



**{Applicant Address}**

**{Date}**

Dear **{Name}**,

Thank you for your request for information received on . It is estimated that the time to find this information will be hours. The cost of this search will exceed the statutory ceiling of £450.00 for free searching time allowed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004).

To proceed with your request we will require a fee of £ **{supply details of local address and payment details}**. We will continue with the search on receipt of payment, however if we have not received a reply within three months we will cancel the request .

If you have any comments relating to how your request has been handled by our school, please contact Mr M Murphy at the school.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr M Murphy**  
**Headteacher**