



## Freedom of Information policy

Author, date and title	Reviewed on	Next review due date	Statutory Requirement
Paula Creighton, v.0.1 March 2020	September 2020	September 2022	N
Reviewed by Sarah Woodham	September 2022	September 2023 (delayed as new policies due Spring 2024)	N
Paula Creighton, revised policy	June 2024 (revised policy issued April 2024 by DPO)	June 2026	N

***As Values Schools, Shillington Lower and Stondon Lower ensures that all its policies, principles and practices adhere to the Values Education ethos.***

***We are committed to recognising, valuing and respecting the diversity of our schools' communities. We adhere to the Local Authority's Equal Opportunities Policy and the Equality Duty 2010. We welcome all members of the schools' communities irrespective of race, ethnic or national origins, religious and political beliefs, gender, disability, sexuality, age, marital status and linguistic ability. We will ensure equality and value diversity, and address any unfair treatment, discrimination and prejudice.***

***All our schools' policies include the Pixie class (Shillington) and the before and after school clubs.***

Head Teacher: .....

Date: .....

Chair of Governors:.....

Date: .....

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Schools are committed to complying with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI).
- 1.2 The FOI Act 2000 gives the public the right of access to all recorded information held by all public authorities including schools, subject to exemptions.
- 1.3 Access to information can only and will only be denied if there is an absolute exemption which applies to its disclosure or if a conditional exemption applies so that the information should not be disclosed.
- 1.4 The FOI is regulated by the Information Commissioner.
- 1.5 The Freedom of Information Act complements or supports the following legislation:
  - The General Data Protection Regulation 2018, Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Act 2021, which give individuals rights over the data held on them, including a right of access to personal information held about them.
- 1.6 In complying with its duty, the schools must take account of the Code of Practice in relation to Freedom of Information issued by the Ministry of Justice under Section 45 of the Act. The schools will abide by the terms of Code of Practice whenever this is possible or appropriate.

## 2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Schools will comply with all the relevant provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 2.2 Schools will provide advice and assistance to help people make requests under the FOI. Schools will aim to respond to all requests promptly and within the statutory response period of 20 working days following receipt of a valid request.
- 2.3 In cases where information is covered by a conditional exemption or other legislation, consideration is given as to whether it is in the public interest to disclose the information, regardless of the exemption.
- 2.4 Schools are committed to conducting its affairs in a transparent manner and enabling public access to its information whenever this is appropriate. Schools will act in as open and transparent a manner as possible, whilst ensuring the integrity of its information and protecting the privacy of its students and staff.

## 3 Scope

- 3.1 This Policy informs recipients of school services, members of the public and external parties of the processes the schools have established for complying with the FOIA.
- 3.2 This Policy operationally applies to all employees of the schools, governors, contractors, agents, and temporary staff working for or on behalf of the schools.

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3.3 This Policy does not cover Subject Access Requests (requests for access to information about a living individual which could identify them). These requests are exempt from the FOI under section 40 and should be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) as amended.

#### **4 Relationship with the Data Protection Act 1998/GDPR**

4.1 Schools are under a legal duty to protect personal data as required by the Data Protection legislation. The schools will carefully consider its responsibilities under the DPA before disclosing personal data about living individuals, including current and former members of staff, governors and pupils.

#### **5 Roles and Responsibilities**

5.1 All employees are responsible for ensuring that any request for information they receive is dealt with in line with the requirements of the FOI and in compliance with this policy and procedures. They must know how to recognise a request as they can be made verbally, and how to process such requests.

All staff must recognise that all recorded information may be provided to the public, and that the law requires that there will be full and unconditional disclosure in every case unless one of the statutory exemptions applies.

5.2 Senior Management / Head Teachers are required to ensure that the schools have in place adequate guidance on Freedom of Information and effective measures to comply with this policy.

Third parties who are users of information supplied by the schools will be required to confirm that they will abide by the requirements of the FOI; and indemnify the schools against any prosecutions, claims, proceedings, actions or payment of compensation or damages, without limitation.

5.3 The schools will ensure that:

- Everyone managing and handling information understands that they are responsible for following good information management practice;
- Staff who handle information are appropriately supervised and trained;
- Methods of handling information are regularly assessed and evaluated;
- Any disclosure of data will be in compliance with approved procedures;
- All necessary steps will be taken to ensure that data is kept secure at all times against unauthorised or unlawful loss or disclosure; and
- All contractors who are users of information supplied by the schools will be required to confirm that they will comply with the requirements of the Act with regard to information supplied by the schools.
- It will abide by any Code of Practice on the discharge of the functions of Public Authorities which is issued by the Ministry of Justice. In addition, the schools will take account of any guidance which is issued by the Information Commissioner to promote good practice.

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## 6 Right to refuse a request:

- 6.3 The schools reserve the right to refuse requests whose total administrative cost exceeds the appropriate limit of 18 hours based on an average flat rate of £25 per hour (£450), as stated in the Freedom of Information Act.
- 6.4 Refuse any vexatious or repetitious request
- 6.5 Where the schools already publishes the information requested, enquirers will be directed to the public resource where they may find the information they require
- 6.6 Withhold information if it is subject to an exemption under the Freedom of Information Act 2000
- 6.7 Not provide copies of items subject to copyright restrictions, although these will still be open for inspection under the Act.

## 7 Review and Complaints

- 7.3 If you are not satisfied with the response to your request, you have the right to ask for a review. You should make this request in 20 working days of receipt of our response and set out what you are not satisfied with, sending it to the address below.
- 7.4 The schools have a Complaints Process and any complaints about the general handling of a request under, or the Freedom of Information Act may be dealt with by clearly marking your correspondence 'Complaint' and addressing it to:

The Headteacher  
Stondon Lower School  
Hillside Road  
Lower Stondon  
SG16 6LQ

The Headteacher  
Shillington Lower School  
Greenfields  
Shillington  
SG5 3NX

- 7.5 If you are not content with the outcome of the review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:-

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)  
Tel: 01625 545 745

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7.6 The schools will maintain a record of all complaints and their outcomes.

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