

Vanguard Learning Trust



As a group of local primary and secondary schools, Vanguard Learning Trust's mission is to serve its local community by providing outstanding, inclusive education. We have a collective purpose and responsibility to provide effective teaching, through a curriculum based on equality of opportunity and entitlement that allows our students to shine both in and out of the classroom. Each school in the Trust has its own ethos, which also complements the Trust's vision and values, and the common aspiration that all students can achieve their potential.

Freedom of information policy Autumn 2024

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Scope of policy

This policy covers requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”). It also covers enquiries relating to matters under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (“**EIR**”), namely enquiries about air, water, land, natural sites, built environment, flora and fauna, and health, and any decisions and activities affecting any of these. This policy does not cover enquiries or subject access requests under the Data Protection Act 2018 or the UK General Data Protection Regulation, eg. where the enquirer asks to see what personal information (the “**Trust**”) holds about them. These enquiries will be dealt with under the Data Protection Policy which can be found on the Trust’s website ([click here](#)).

1.2 Accountability and responsibilities

The board of trustees is accountable for the implementation of this policy. They delegate responsibility for compliance with the FOIA and the release of information to individual headteachers and the Trust’s chief executive officer. This policy is designed to set out the ways that persons can access their rights to information.

1.3 Publication scheme

Each school and the Trust have adopted the Information Commissioners’ Office model publication scheme ([click here](#)). Further details on what information the Trust and its schools provide access to can be found on each school’s and the Trust’s website.

Section 2: Rights of access

2.1 Person making a request for information

Any person can make a freedom of information request for information that the Trust holds; this includes parents, members of the local community, people living abroad, non-UK citizens, journalists, political parties, lobby groups and commercial organisations. The request must be in writing (which can include email) and state the requestor’s name and correspondence address (including email address). It should clearly describe the information being requested with enough detail to enable the Trust or school to identify and locate the information. Where a request is for environmental information, which can be released under the EIR, this request can be made orally.

2.2 Guidance on requests for information

Requests for information under the FOIA should:

- be made in writing;
- be legible;
- include the name and contact details of the individual making the request; and
- contain a clear description of the information requested.

A request may be made to supply the information in one of the following ways:

- A permanent copy of the information (in paper or electronic form)
- The provision of a reasonable opportunity to inspect the information
- A digest or summary of the information in permanent form (either paper copy or electronic)

Section 3: Dealing with a request

3.1 Response and record keeping

Unless the information is subject to an absolute exemption under the terms of the FOIA, individual schools will confirm or deny that the information requested exists. The Trust and its schools are not obliged to create or acquire information if it is not already in their possession. Schools will, as far as is reasonably practicable, supply the information in the preferred format. The Trust and its schools will keep a copy of all formal requests for information, along with a copy of the information provided.

3.2 Timescale

If the freedom of information request is seeking information from the Trust or one of its schools, a response will be provided as soon as possible but in any event within 20 working days (which excludes public holidays) following the date of receipt. Where information is to be provided under the EIR this will be provided within 20 working days. A working day is when pupils are in attendance at school and any request received after 4pm will be considered as being received the following day.

3.3 Clarification

Where the original request is not clear and clarification is required, the time for responding to a request will be extended until a response is received. In the event that a further response or the clarification requested is not received within 2 months, it will be assumed that the requestor does not want to pursue their enquiry and therefore the matter will be closed.

Section 4: Exemptions and refusing request

4.1 Exemptions

Requested information may not be provided if one of the following applies:

- The Trust does not hold the information;
- There is a relevant exemption available;
- The request is above the cost limit (being £450, which is based on the financial conduct authority's fee statement, or 18 hours of a staff member's time).
- Where additional clarity or a fee has been requested but has not been provided in the time specified; or
- The request is considered vexatious or repeated.

The exemptions that may be relevant depend on the request that has been made, but common exemptions include data protection, prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs and information intended for future publication. There are other exemptions that may also be relevant, details of which can be found on the ICO website ([click here](#)).

4.2 Decision notice

If any of the exemptions apply, this will be outlined in a decision notice. Where the cost limit applies, it will be explained how to refine the request to bring it within the cost limit and why the costs limit has been exceeded.

Section 5: Internal review

5.1 Response to decision notice

Where a requestor is not happy with the response to a freedom of information request that has been made, they will be entitled to ask for an internal review of the decision. The internal review must be requested within two months of the decision notice being sent. The internal review will usually be dealt with by someone more senior than the member of staff who provided the initial response. A requester will in most cases receive the outcome of the internal review within 20 working days dependent on whether the review is a Trust or a school response.

5.2 EIR request

Where a requestor wishes to have an internal review of an EIR request, this should be requested in writing within 40 working days of any breach of a requirement under the EIR. Once an internal review request is received, the aim is to conclude the review and communicate the outcome of this within 20 working days.

5.3 Complaint to Information Commissioner

If a requestor is still not happy with the response following an internal review, they can complain to the Information Commissioner using a form on their website ([click here](#)).

Approval / Revision History

| Revision date | By | Summary of Changes Made |
|----------------------|-----------|--|
| October 2024 | BoT | |
| May 2020 | BoT | Date of new review |
| May 2018 | BoT | Change of Company name. Publication scheme updated for both schools and MAT publication scheme included (references MAT website) |
| March 2015 | BoT | Policy agreed |