

Freedom of Information Policy

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This policy applies to :	Pinnacle Learning Trust Staff Members of the Public	
Related Documents/ Policies:	Data Protection Policy (MAT); Document Retention Policy (College?); Complaints Policy (College)	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) gives a general right of public access to all types of 'recorded' information held by public authorities and requires public authorities to respond to requests for information within 20 days. Anyone may request information for any reason. FOIA covers both old and new information and applies to information recorded in any format.

The Act requires public authorities to produce a 'Publication Scheme' to inform the public of information which is routinely made available and how they can access it.

The policy relates to all institutions currently belonging to the Pinnacle Learning Trust.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

The Pinnacle Learning Trust (the Trust) will ensure that appropriate systems, procedures and operational guidance are in place to ensure that the requirements of the FOIA are met. Documents/Information will be stored and retained in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection and Document Retention Policies.

2.1 Publication Scheme

OSFC has adopted the ICO's Publication Scheme for Further Education Colleges, which lists documents which are routinely published by the College under the following categories:

- 1 Who we are and what we do
- 2 What we spend and how we spend it
- 3 What our priorities are and how we are doing
- 4 How we make decisions
- 5 Our policies and procedures
- 6 Lists and registers
- 7 The services we offer

Hathershaw College has adopted the ICO's Publication Scheme for Schools.

2.2 Making Information Available

The publication scheme and many of the documents referred to within it, are available on the college website. Requests for information not available on the website must be made in writing to the Trust or individual College.

Anyone can ask for the College to provide information which is not otherwise published, by putting their request in writing (including email, social media, etc) and stating their name and address (or email address) and describing the information required.

The Trust/College will respond to the request within 20 working days to:

- provide the information; or
- seek clarification if it is unclear exactly what information is being requested; or
- confirm if there is a fee for providing the information; or
- communicate if the information will take longer to collate and when it will be available; or
- confirm that the information is exempt and explain the reasons why.

The Trust will provide advice and assistance, as far as is reasonable, to anyone seeking information about the Pinnacle Learning Trust or any of its Colleges.

2.3 Charges

The Trust/College will not charge for information that is routinely available from its website or in electronic format.

A minimum charge of £10.00 will be made for requests not available electronically, to cover printing, staff time and postage.

Where a significant amount of time or resources are needed to collate information to comply with a request, the Trust/College reserves the right to pass that cost to the customer. Any such charges will comply with the Information Commissioner's guidelines for charging and customers will be notified in writing of the cost, deadline for payment and acceptable methods of payment. Where a charge is payable, this must be paid before we send the information.

2.4 Exclusions

Information will not be disclosed if it meets the conditions for exemption or contravenes the Data Protection Act/Policy.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMPLIANCE

The **Director of MIS and HR** will act as 'Freedom of Information Manager' for the Trust and is responsible for ensuring that the policy and publication schemes are up to date and comply with most recent legislation. They are also responsible for the oversight and implementation of this policy, ensuring that staff are aware of the Freedom of Information policy and their responsibilities, and providing advice and guidance to staff regarding the compliance. The responsibility for staff training and awareness raising may be delegated to appropriate staff at each College.

The **Principal's PA** at each College will log all requests and ensure that a response is sent within the policy timescales. A copy of the log will be sent to the Director of MIS and HR annually.

Staff - Requests for information can be directed to any member of staff and therefore all staff need to know what to do if they receive a request for information from an organisation or member of the public:

- The request must be made in a recorded format e.g. email, letter, written telephone message;
- The person requesting the information does not need to tell you it is a Freedom of Information request. All they need to do is to request the information;

- You are not entitled to know why they want the information or to check whether the person requesting it is genuine;
- A request for information may come to any part of the college from anywhere in the world;
- By law the request for information must be answered within **20 working days** so staff must act quickly in order to comply with the Act.

How staff should handle the request depends on the nature of it and their role in the college.

If staff receive a request for information which:

- mentions Freedom of Information, or
- is **NOT** information which is routinely provided,

they should forward the request immediately to **Dee Campbell**, PA to the Principal at OSFC or Danielle Hunt, PA to the Principal at Hathershaw College, who will record the request and pass on to the relevant person.

Reasons including data protection, confidentiality, and the commercial interests of OSFC may still mean that the information is not covered by the Act and should not be released. Staff should be aware of and understand the principles of the Data Protection Policy and not disclose any information which contravenes them.

If in doubt about any request for information please contact Pamela McIlroy (PMY), Director of MIS and HR.

The policy will be routinely reviewed every three years unless legislation or college practice require changes to be made.

4 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Complaints can be made to the Freedom of Information Manager at the College or by contacting the Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.