



WOODARD ACADEMIES TRUST

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

The Woodard Academies Trust recognises its responsibility and is committed to the principles of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Trust will offer a general right of access to the information it holds to promote a culture of openness and accountability.

This Policy has been developed to ensure that the Trust meets the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and upholds its principles. The Trust will ensure that:

- Information routinely published by the Trust regarding its activities will be made available through the Publication Scheme
- Information that is not included within the Publication Scheme will be made available upon request and dealt with in an efficient and timely manner
- In cases where information is covered by an exemption, due consideration will be given to the public interest

Status of Policy

The Trust's Executive has approved this policy and procedure. Any breach of the Freedom of Information Policy may result in the Trust's disciplinary procedures being instigated.

Responsibilities

The Trust has a responsibility to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Act, and has designated the CEO as the officer with overall responsibility for this policy

The Trust has appointed a Freedom of Information Officer to manage the process for all non-routine requests for information received by the Trust, and to provide members of the Trust with guidance on Freedom of Information issues

All staff are responsible for ensuring that the records they manage are accurate and complete, and that any requests are handled efficiently and promptly in accordance with Freedom of Information guidelines

Publication Scheme

The Trust's approved Publication Scheme is available from the Management Guidance area of the Staff Portal and can also be requested from the Freedom of Information Officer.

The Publication Scheme specifies:

- The classes of information the Trust is committed to making routinely available to the public
- How this information will be made available (e.g. hard copy, electronic)
- Whether or not the information will be available free of charge or on payment of a fee

Requests for Information

Information that is not made available via the Publication Scheme can be accessed on receipt of a specific written request. The Act provides the public with:

- The right to be informed whether the information exists
- The right to receive this information (subject to exemptions)

The Trust is not entitled to know why the applicant wants the information. If the request is for information that staff routinely supply in the course of their normal work, then the relevant staff member will handle this. The Freedom of Information Officer will deal with any non-routine requests, i.e. requests that mention Freedom of Information or are unusual. All Freedom of Information requests must be answered within 20 working days of receipt.

For any request for information to be valid, it must be made in writing (includes e-mails or fax) stating the name and address of the applicant and describing the information that is required.

The Trust may charge a fee for handling a request if the cost of servicing it exceeds the appropriate limit. This will be calculated in accordance with the provisions of the Fees Regulations.

Exemptions

There are 23 exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act. There will be occasions when the Trust has to claim one of these exemptions and will not be able to supply some or all of the information requested. A full list of the exemptions can be found on the Information Commissioner's website: www.ico.gov.uk. A statement indicating why an exemption was applied will be provided on the occasions when information is withheld.

Complaints

If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the response to their request, they should address any complaints to the Freedom of Information Officer in the first instance. If the applicant is not satisfied with the Officer's response, they can progress their complaint to the CEO and if they are still not satisfied they can seek an independent review with the Information Commissioner.

Records Management

All Trust departments are expected to manage Trust records in an orderly manner to ensure that information retrieval is easy and timely.

Steps in responding to an FOI request:

Step 1:

On receipt of an FOI request the Academy notifies the Central Office of the FOI and forwards the e-mail or letter to the FOI Officer (Anne Hudson anne.hudson@woodard.co.uk) and Office Manager foi@woodard.co.uk The Office Manger will notify the FOI officer of any new FOI request.

Step 2:

The Request is acknowledged, and the Request is logged in the Trust on the FOI Central Record by the Office Manager – Stuart Webb

Step 3:

FOI Officer determines the process for dealing with the request. This will require the provision of information from either the Central Office or an Academy or Academies, to enable a response to be co-ordinated, under the Direction of the FOI Officer.

Step 4. The reply must be agreed by the FOI/Central Office before it is submitted

Step 5: The FOI Central Record is completed with information regarding the date the response was sent to the person making the FOI request.

All FOI responses are sent from the Central Team using the FOI email address.

Current FOI role holders:

Freedom of Information Officer:

Stuart Webb: stuart.webb@woodard.co.uk

Agreed: April 2018

Review: April 2021

Note: This document is published on all Websites.