

Eastern Learning Alliance

Freedom of Information Policy

(including Publication Scheme)

Approved by Trustees	October 2026
Review cycle	Every two years (October 2028)



Eastern Learning Alliance

Freedom of Information Policy

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Document Control

New Version Number	Key changes from previous version	Date of ratification by Trust Board
V2	Adapted SchoolPro template	October 2026

1. Introduction

Eastern Learning Alliance (ELA, the Trust) is committed to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and to the principles of accountability and the general right of access to information, subject to legal exemptions. This policy outlines our response to the Act and a framework for managing requests. The Trust will make every effort to meet its obligations under the respective legislation and will regularly review procedures to ensure that it is doing so.

The underlying principle of this policy is that the public have a right to access to recorded information held by the ELA and its Schools and that the Trust should seek to promote an open regime regarding access to information, subject to the exemptions contained within the relevant legislation.

2. Background

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) came fully into force on the 1st January 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 FOI can be addressed to anyone in the school; so all staff need to be aware of the process for dealing with requests – see point 10. 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 FOI enquiry. There is a time limit of 20 working days excluding school holidays for responding to the request.

3. Scope

The FOI Act joins the Data Protection Act (2018) and the Environmental Information Regulations (2004) as legislation under which anyone is entitled to request information from the school.

This policy applies to all recorded information held by the Trust that relates to the business of the Trust. This includes:

- Information created and held by the Trust and its Schools
- Information created by the Trust and its Schools and held by another organisation on our behalf
- Information held by the Trust and its Schools provided by third parties, where this relates to a function or business of the Trust and its Schools (such as contractual information) and
- Information held by the Trust and its Schools relating to Governors where the information relates to the functions or business of the Trust and its Schools

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 FOI, but unlike FOI requests, they do not need to be written and can be verbal.

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

4. Obligations and Duties

The trust 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.

5. Publication Scheme

Eastern Learning Alliance has adopted the Model Publication Scheme for Schools approved by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme commits our Trust and its Schools to:

- Proactively/ routinely publish information which is held by us falling within the “Classes” below in line with this scheme.
- Specify the information
- Explain how it will be made available
- Review and update information on a regular basis
- Explain any fees to be charged for the information
- Make this scheme publicly available

- Publish information held by the Trust that has been requested (unless not appropriate to do so)
- Publish information in a digital form that is capable of being re-used
- Make clear if any information is a relevant copyright work (under FOI Section 19(8)) and the Trust is the only owner

5.1. Information covered in this publication scheme

There are 7 classes of information we hold:

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

The scheme covers information already published and information which is to be published in the future. Much of this information is available via our websites.

5.2. Classes of information

Who we are and what we do

- The Trust's values and vision
- Organisational information, including staffing structure
- Contact information
- Term dates
- School Prospectus

What we spend and how we spend it

- Financial information relating to projected and actual income, grants and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts
- Financial information of specific funding streams and how they are spent

What our priorities are and how we are doing

- Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews
- Educational performance
- Ofsted reports

How we make decisions

- Constitutional and legal governance
- Trust Board governance meeting minutes (excluding minutes properly regarded as confidential)
- Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities
- Consultations relating to decision making in the Trust

Our policies and procedures

- Human Resources
- Finance
- Governance
- Information Technology and Data Protection
- Health and Safety
- Education
- Estates

Lists and registers

- Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the Trust

The services we offer

- The provision offered by the Trust
- Advice and guidance, booklets, newsletters and leaflets

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

5.3. [The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available](#)

The Trust will publish on its main website or on individual school websites (as appropriate) the information which it is required to publish, having regard to the guidance of the Department for Education.

Information requested under this scheme will be provided electronically in the first instance, alternatively hard copies can be made available. In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where an authority is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme

6. Exemptions

Certain information is subject to either absolute or qualified exemptions.

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.

7. 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.

8. Charging

The three information regimes contain different provisions that permit charges to be made for responding to information requests. The Trust may charge a fee for complying with requests, as calculated in accordance with FOI regulations. If a charge is to be made, the written notice will be given to the applicant before supplying the information requested.

The Trust will only charge for the cost of copying and transmitting information, not for time taken in reaching decisions regarding whether information is covered by an exemption.

Where the Trust estimates that the cost of locating the information will exceed the statutory threshold of £450, it will consider whether or not to comply with the request. The Trust is not obliged to comply with such a request but may choose to do so.

Further information with regards to charging can be found in Appendix 4.

9. Making a Freedom of Information Request

Freedom of Information enquiries should be sent in writing to hello@tela.org.uk or to an ELA schools office.

All FOI requests which come into the trust must be reported to the Company Secretary who, will be responsible for evaluating and co-ordinating the response.

10. Internal review

The requester has the right to ask for an internal review if they are dissatisfied with the handling of a request.

Internal review requests should be made within 40 working days of the initial response. This deadline should be communicated to the requester in that response. We are not obliged to provide a review if it is requested after more than 40 working days.

Requests for internal review must make clear why they are dissatisfied with the original decision, detailing why they feel that the School has not complied with Freedom of Information Law.

11. Complaints

Any comments or complaints will be dealt with through the school's normal complaints procedure.

If on investigation the trust's original decision is upheld, then the trust has a duty to inform the complainant of their right to appeal to the Information Commissioner's office.

Appeals should be to the Information Commissioner's office. They can be contacted at:
<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>

The appeal can be made via their website or in writing to:

Customer Contact
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF