Freedom of Information Policy
& Publication Scheme
Date: October 2026

Document Owner and Approval

St Bernadette's Governing Board is the owner of this document and is responsible for ensuring that this policy document is reviewed in line with the School's policy review schedule.

A current version of this document is available to all members of staff within a folder in the staffroom

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Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives individuals the right to access official information from public bodies. 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. While the Act assumes openness, it recognises that certain information is sensitive. There are exemptions to protect this information. Full details on how requests can be made are set out in section 1 of this policy.

Public authorities should be clear and proactive about the information they will make public. For this reason, a publication scheme is available and can be found at section 2 of this policy.

This policy does not form part of any individual's terms and conditions of employment with the school and is not intended to have contractual effect. This policy should be used in conjunction with the School's Data Protection Policy.

Section 1 – Freedom of Information Requests

Requests under Freedom of Information should be made to the Headteacher. However, the request can be addressed to anyone in the School. All staff need to be aware of the process for dealing with requests. If staff receive a FOI request in their inbox, it should be instantly forwarded to the Headteacher.

Requests for information that are not data protection or environmental information requests will be covered by the Freedom of Information Act.

Data protection enquiries (or Subject Access Requests/SARs) are requests where the enquirer asks to see what personal information the school holds about the enquirer. If the enquiry is a data protection request, the School's Data Protection Policy should be followed.

Environmental Information Regulations enquiries are those which relate to air, water, land, natural sites, built environment, flora and fauna, health and any decisions and activities affecting any of these. These could, therefore, include enquiries about recycling, phone masts, school playing fields, car parking etc. If the enquiry is about environmental information, follow the guidance on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) website.

Freedom of Information requests *must* be made in writing (including email) and should include the enquirer's name, correspondence address (email addresses are allowed) and state what information they require. There must be enough information in the request to be able to identify and locate the information. If this information is covered by one of the other pieces of legislation (as referred to above), they will be dealt with under the relevant policy/procedure related to that request.

If the request is ambiguous and/or the School require further information in order to deal with your request, the School will request this further information directly from the individual making the request.

Please note that the School do not have to deal with the request until the further information is received. Therefore, the time limit starts from the date that the School receives all information required in order to deal with the request.

The requester does 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 a time limit of 20 school days (i.e., excluding school holidays) for responding to the request.

Information

Provided all requirements are met for a valid request to be made, the School will provide the information that it holds (unless an exemption applies).

Holding information means information relating to the business of the school:

- That the school has created; or
- That the school has received from another body or person; or
- Held by another body on the school's behalf.

Information means both hard copy and digital information, including email.

If the information is held by another public authority (for example, the Local Authority), check whether they hold the information and if so, transfer the request to them. If this applies, the School will notify the enquirer that they do not hold the information and to whom they have transferred the request. The School will continue to answer any parts of the enquiry in respect of information it does hold.

When the School does not hold the information, it has *no duty to create or acquire it* just to answer the enquiry; although a reasonable search will be made before confirming whether the School has the information requested.

If the information requested is already in the public domain, for instance, through the Publication Scheme or on the School's website, the School will direct the enquirer to the information and explain how to access it.

The requester has the right to be told if the information requested is held by the School (subject to any of the exemptions). This obligation is known as the school's *duty to confirm or deny* that it holds the information. However, the school does not have to confirm or deny if:

- The exemption is an absolute exemption; or
- In the case of qualified exemptions, confirming or denying would itself disclose exempted information.

Vexatious Requests

There is no obligation on the School to comply with vexatious requests. A vexatious request is one which is designed to cause inconvenience, harassment or expense rather than to obtain information and would require a substantial diversion of resources or would otherwise undermine the work of the school. However, this does not provide an excuse for bad records management.

In addition, the School do not have to comply with repeated identical or substantially similar requests from the same applicant unless a reasonable interval has elapsed between requests.

Fees

The School may charge the requester a fee for providing the requested information. This will be dependent on whether the staffing costs in complying with the request exceeds the threshold. The threshold is currently £450 with staff costs calculated at a fixed rate of £25 per hour (therefore 18 hours' work is required before the threshold is reached).

If a request would cost less than the threshold, then the school can only charge for the cost of informing the applicant whether the information is held and communicating the information to the applicant (e.g., photocopying, printing and postage costs).

When calculating costs/threshold, the School can take account of the staff costs/time in determining whether the information is held by the School, locating and retrieving the information and extracting the information from other documents. The School will not take account of the costs involved with considering whether information is exempt under the Act.

If a request would cost more than the appropriate limit (£450), the school can turn the request down, answer and charge a fee or answer and waive the fee.

If the School are going to charge, they will send the enquirer a fees notice. The School do not have to comply with the request until the fee has been paid. More details on fees can be found on the Information Commission's Office (ICO) website.

If planning to turn down a request for cost reasons or charge a high fee, you should contact the applicant in advance to discuss whether they would prefer the scope of the request to be modified so that, for example, it would cost less than the appropriate limit.

Where two or more requests are made to the School by different people who appear to be acting together or as part of a campaign, the estimated cost of complying with any of the requests may be taken to be the estimated total cost of complying with them all.

Time Limits

Compliance with a request must be prompt and within the time limit of 20 school days (this does not include the school holidays or weekends) or 60 working days if this is shorter. 'School' days is defined by the ICO as any day on which there is a session, and the pupils are in attendance. Failure to comply could result in a complaint by the requester to the ICO. The response time starts counting as the first day from the next working day after the request is received (so if a request was received on Monday 6th October the time limit would start from the next working day, the 7th October). Where the School has asked the enquirer for more information to enable it to answer, the 20 school days start time begins when this further information has been received.

If some information is exempt this will be detailed in the School's response.

If a qualified exemption applies and the School need more time to consider the public interest test, the School will reply in 20 school days stating that an exemption applies but include an estimate of the date by which a decision on the public interest test will be made. This should be within a "reasonable" time.

Where the School has notified the enquirer that a charge is to be made, the time period stops until payment is received.

Third Party Data

Consultation of third parties may be required if their interests could be affected by release of the information requested and any such consultation may influence the decision.

Consultation will be necessary where:

- Disclosure of information may affect the legal rights of a third party, such as the right to have certain information treated in confidence or rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- The views of the third party may assist the School to determine if information is exempt from disclosure; or
- The views of the third party may assist the School to determine the public interest test.

Personal information requested by third parties is also exempt under this policy where release of that information would breach the Data Protection Act. If a request is made for a document (e.g., Governing Body minutes) which contains personal information whose release to a third party would breach the Data Protection Act, the document may be issued by blanking out the relevant personal information as set out in the redaction procedure.

Exemptions

The presumption of the Freedom of Information Act is that the School will disclose information unless the Act provides a specific reason to withhold it. The Act recognises the need to preserve confidentiality and protect sensitive material in certain circumstances.

The School may refuse all/part of a request, if one of the following applies: -

1) There is an exemption to disclosure within the Act;
2) The information sought is not held;
3) The request is considered vexatious or repeated; or
4) The cost of compliance exceeds the threshold.

A series of exemptions are set out in the Act which allow the withholding of information in relation to an enquiry. Some are specialised in their application (such as national security) and would not usually be relevant to schools.

There are two general categories of exemptions:-

1) *Absolute*: where there is no requirement to confirm or deny that the information is held, disclose the information or consider the public interest; and
2) *Qualified*: where, even if an exemption applies, there is a duty to consider the public interest in disclosing information.

Absolute Exemptions

There are eight absolute exemptions set out in the Act. However, the following are the only absolute exemptions which will apply to the School: -

- Information accessible to the enquirer by other means (for example, by way of the School's Publication Scheme);
- National Security/Court Records;
- Personal information (i.e., information which would be covered by the Data Protection Act);
- Information provided in confidence.

If an absolute exemption exists, it means that disclosure is not required by the Act. However, a decision could be taken to ignore the exemption and release the information taking into account all the facts of the case if it is felt necessary to do so.

Qualified Exemptions

If one of the below exemptions apply (i.e., a qualified disclosure), there is also a duty to consider the public interest in confirming or denying that the information exists and in disclosing information.

The qualified exemptions under the Act which would be applicable to the School are: -

- Information requested is intended for future publication (and it is reasonable in all the circumstances for the requester to wait until such time that the information is actually published);
- Reasons of national security;
- Government/international relations;
- Release of the information is likely to prejudice any actual or potential legal action or formal investigation involving the School;
- Law enforcement (i.e., if disclosure would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, the prosecution of offenders or the administration of justice);
- Release of the information would prejudice the ability of the School to carry out an effective audit of its accounts, resources and functions;
- For health and safety purposes;
- Information requested is environmental information;
- Information requested is subject to legal professional privilege; and
- For *commercial interest* reasons.

Where the potential exemption is a qualified exemption, the School will consider the public interest test to identify if the public interest in applying the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. In all cases, before writing to the enquirer, the person given responsibility by the School for dealing with the request will need to ensure that the case has been properly considered and that the reasons for refusal or public interest test refusal, are sound.

Refusal

If it is decided to refuse a request, the School will send a refusals notice, which must contain:

- The fact that the responsible person cannot provide the information asked for;
- Which exemption(s) apply;
- Why the exemption(s) apply to this enquiry (if it is not self-evident);
- Reasons for refusal; and
- The School's complaints procedure.

For monitoring purposes and in case of an appeal against a decision not to release the information or an investigation by the Information Commission, the responsible person must keep a record of all enquiries where all or part of the requested information is withheld, and exemptions are claimed. The record must include the reasons for the decision to withhold the information.

The School will get advice from their Data Protection Officer (DPO) prior to withholding data under an exemption or refusing the request in its entirety.

Section 2 – Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

This publication scheme follows a model approved by the Information Commission's Office.

This scheme is not a list of individual publications but rather a description of the classes of types of information that we are committed to publishing. This list is not an exhaustive list of all of the types of information that we publish. We try to proactively publish as much information as we can where the information would have a wider public interest.

This scheme does not include information that we consider to be sensitive, such as personal information, information prevented from disclosure by law or information about security matters.

Classes of Information

There are six classes of information that we hold:

- Who we are and what we do
- What we spend and how we spend it
- What our priorities are and how we are doing
- How we make decisions
- Our policies and procedures
- The services we offer

Making Information Available

Information will generally be made available on the school website. Where it is not possible to include this information on the school website, the school will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means. This may be detailed in response to a request or within the scheme itself. This will usually be by way of a paper copy.

In some 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 we are legally required to translate any information, we shall do so.

Charges for Information Published Under This Scheme

The school may charge individuals for information published under this scheme. The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at the minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the school for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on the website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by law.

Charges will be made to cover:

- Photocopying;
- Postage and packaging; and
- The costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information.

Single copies of information requested which are covered by the publication scheme will be provided free unless otherwise stated within the scheme. If the request involved a large amount of photocopying, printing or postage, then this may be at a cost. If this is the case we will let you know as well as let you know the cost before fulfilling your request.

<u>How to Request Information</u>

If you require a paper version of any of the documents within the scheme, please contact the school using the contact details below.

Telephone: 01908 692438

Email: Office@stbernadettesschool.com

Address: St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
Teweksbury Lane
Monkston Park
Milton Keynes
MK10 9PH

Please mark all correspondence *Publication Scheme Request* in order to help us process your request quickly. If the information you are looking for isn't available via the scheme, you can still contact the school to ask if we have this information.

Freedom of Information

Information available from St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School under the ICO's model publication scheme

Freedom of information: publication scheme

All public authorities, including schools, are required under the Freedom of Information Act to adopt the approved model publication scheme, which has been produced by the Information Commission's Office (ICO). St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School has adopted the ICO's model scheme which can be accessed following the link below. It should be read in conjunction with this Guide to Information.
https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/publication-scheme/#2

Information to be published	How you can obtain the information
Class 1 - Who we are and what we do	
Information about us; our structures, locations and contacts - current information only	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/school-contact/
Contact details for the school, postal and email address (if used). Where possible, named contacts with telephone number and email address	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/school-contact/ https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/staffing/
Headteacher's contact details	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/staffing/ https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/school-contact/
Who's who in the school	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/staffing/
Instrument of Government (current information only)	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/our-governing-board/
An outline of the school curriculum	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/our-curriculum/
School session times and term dates	**Website -**https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/term-dates/
Class 2 - What we spend and how we spend it (Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit - current and previous financial year)	
Annual budget plan and financial statements	**Hard copy available upon request - contact school**
Capital funding	**Hard copy** **available upon request - contact school**
Financial audit reports	**Hard copy** **available upon request - contact school**

Details of expenditure items over £5000	**Hard copy** **available upon request - contact school**
Staff pay and grading structures – details of senior staff salaries in bands of £5000. For all other posts, identify levels of pay by salary range.	**Hard copy** **available upon request - contact school**
Staff allowances and expenses that can be incurred or claimed, with totals paid to individual senior staff members	**Hard copy** **available upon request - contact school**
Governors' allowances that can be incurred or claimed, and a record of total payments made to individual governors.	**Hard copy** **available upon request - contact school**
Procurement and contracts the school has entered into	**Hard copy** **available upon request – contact school**
Details of any premiums we receive such as the Pupil Premium	**Website:** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/performance-tables-school-reports-and-inspection-r/
Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing (Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews)	
• The latest Ofsted and Section 48 inspection reports	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/performance-tables-school-reports-and-inspection-r/ **Hard copy available upon request – contact school**
Exam and assessment results	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/performance-tables-school-reports-and-inspection-r/
Performance data	https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/134318/st-bernadette's-catholic-primary-school/primary

Performance Management Information policies and procedures	**Hard copy available upon request - contact school**
The school's future plans. Eg. Major proposals for and any consultation on the future of our school/academy, such as a change in status.	**Hard copy available upon request - contact school**
School profile and performance data supplied to the English Government (or a direct link to the data)	https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/134318/st-bernadette's-catholic-primary-school/primary
Data Protection impact assessments (in full or summary format) or any other impact assessment (eg Health & Safety Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessments etc), as appropriate and relevant	**Hard copy available upon request - contact school**
Class 4 – How we make decisions – Decision making processes and records of decisions	
Admissions policy/decisions (not individual admission decisions) – where applicable	**Policy – website https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/school-admissions/**
Minutes of meetings of the governing body and its committees. (NB this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meetings).	**Hard Copy** **available upon request - contact school**
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures **(Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities)**	
School policies and other documents, such as behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, eSafety, special educational needs etc.	**Website** https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/school-policies/ **Hard Copies on request**
Safeguarding and child protection, including protecting children's personal data	**As above**
Equality and Diversity	**As above**

Policies and procedures relating to recruitment and human resources	As above (within Child Protection Policy)
Complaints procedures, including for dealing with parental complaints	As above (Complaints and Suggestions Policy)
Pay Policy	Hard Copy on Request
Health & Safety Policy and Procedures	Website – as above
Records management (Information security policies Records retention, destruction and archive policies) Data protection (including information sharing and CCTV usage policies)	As above – Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices and CCTV Policy
Charging regimes and policies	As Above
Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments	Website https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/curriculum-newsletters/
CCTV – Details of locations of any overt CCTV surveillance cameras operated by us or on our behalf	Website https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/school-policies/ - Data Protection Policy All CCTV Cameras clearly signalled Hard Copies on request
Disclosure logs – ie information provided in response to FOIA requests	By inspection only – contact the school
Asset register and information Asset register	By inspection – contact the school
Any information the school is currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers	By inspection – contact the school
Class 6 – The services we offer (Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters)	
Extra-curricular activities	Hard Copy
Out of school clubs	Hard copy

Services for which the school is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees	**Website – charging policy**
Requests for paper copies of information	**This document - Website** **https://www.stbernadettesschool.com/school-policies/** **Hard Copies on request**
School publications, leaflets, booklets and newsletter	**Website**
Additional Information that is not itemised in the lists above	**Contact the school directly to request**

SCHEDULE OF CHARGES

TYPE OF CHARGE	DESCRIPTION	BASIS OF CHARGE	INFORMATION VIA THE WEBSITE
Disbursement cost	Photocopying/printing @ 4p per sheet (black & white)	Actual cost * 4p/sheet	**Where denoted, much of the information is available via the school website. Hard copies of the information on the website can be requested and will be charged in line with this Schedule of Charged** * the actual cost incurred by the school
	Photocopying/printing @ 6p per sheet (colour)	Actual cost 6p/sheet	
	Postage minimum 91p – increasing to cover actual costs	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2nd class (up to 100g)	
Statutory Fee	**In accordance with the relevant legislation (quote the actual statute)**		

How to request information: If you require a paper version of any of the documents within the scheme, please contact the school by telephone, email or letter. Contact details are set out below.

Headteacher
St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
Teweksbury Lane
Monkston Park
Milton Keynes
MK10 9PH
Tel: 01908 692438
Email: Office@stbernadettesschool.com

To help us process your request quickly, please clearly mark any correspondence "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PUBLICATION SCHEME

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.

Complaints and/or Appeals

Any written (including email) expression of dissatisfaction should be handled through the School's existing complaints procedure. Wherever practicable the review should be handled by someone not involved in the original decision.

The Governing Body should set and publish a target time for determining complaints and information on the success rate in meeting the target. The school should maintain records of all complaints and their outcome.

If the outcome is that the School's original decision or action is upheld, then the applicant can appeal to the Information Commission. The appeal can be made via their website or in writing to:

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