



CEDARS ACADEMY TRUST

Cedars Academy: Low Fell

Cedars Academy: High Heworth

Freedom of Information

Policy and Publication Scheme

Policy owner	Gareth Kyle, Academy Business Leader
Approved by	Resources, Audit & Risk Committee
Version	0.2
Date approved	For approval by the Resources, Audit & Risk Committee, 7 October 2026. Previous version revised June 2024
Date written or last reviewed	September 2026
Next review due	October 2028
Status	Live
Published on	Trust website and National College
Applies to	The Trust as a whole, across both sites

Index

The Policy

1. Background	3
2. Scope.....	3
3. Legal framework.....	3
4. Dealing with requests	3
5. Adopting and maintaining the publication scheme	4
6. Relationship with data protection law	5
7. Responsibilities.....	5
8. Contact details	5
9. Publication scheme.....	6
10. Feedback, internal review and complaints.....	6
11. Monitoring and review.....	6

Appendices

Appendix 1: Publication scheme.....	7
Annex A: Linked policies, forms and systems.....	9

The Policy

1. Background

- 1.1** The Cedars Academy Trust is committed to complying with and implementing the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and related legislation. The Act gives any person a general right to access information held by the Trust, subject to exemptions and conditions laid down by law.
- 1.2** The Trust is a public authority under the Act. This policy applies across the Trust, at Cedars Academy: Low Fell and Cedars Academy: High Heworth.

2. Scope

- 2.1** This policy applies to all information held by the Trust, regardless of how it was created or received. It applies whatever the information is stored on, and whether it is recorded on paper or held electronically. The Act is fully retrospective, so information is accessible no matter how old it is. Information in draft form is also accessible under the Act.
- 2.2** A request from a person for their own personal information is a subject access request. It is handled under UK data protection law and the Trust's Data Protection Policy, not under this policy.
- 2.3** A request for environmental information is handled under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Environmental information includes information about land, buildings, air, water, energy, waste and anything affecting them. These requests can be made verbally, and different exceptions and time limits apply.
- 2.4** Where one request covers more than one type of information, each part is handled under the law that applies to it.

3. Legal framework

- 3.1** This policy rests on the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the Freedom of Information (Time for Compliance with Request) Regulations 2010, the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004, and the Freedom of Information Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Act (July 2018). Personal information is protected by the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.
- 3.2** From 30 September 2026 the Information Commissioner's Office is replaced by the Information Commission, which takes over all of its functions (Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, commenced by SI 2026/1015). The Commission continues to be known as the ICO. In this policy, the regulator means the Information Commission.

4. Dealing with requests

- 4.1** The Trust will offer advice and assistance to anyone who wants to make a request for information. Staff will help a person who asks for information verbally to put the request in writing if it needs to be handled under the Act.
- 4.2** Any request in writing, including by email, is a Freedom of Information request if it gives the requester's name and an address for reply and describes the information wanted. It does not

need to mention the Act or say why the information is wanted. All such requests are dealt with under this policy.

- 4.3** Any member of staff who receives a request must pass it straight away to the Academy Business Leader, so that the time limit can be met.
- 4.4 Time limits.** The Trust will respond promptly. For a Freedom of Information request, the response must be sent no later than 20 school days after the request is received, or 60 working days if that is sooner. A school day is a day on which there is a school session. Every attempt will be made to respond before the time limit expires.
- 4.5** Where the Trust needs more time to consider the public interest, it will tell the requester before the time limit expires and give an estimated date for a full response. The regulator's guidance is that this should not normally be more than a further 20 working days.
- 4.6** For a request under the Environmental Information Regulations, the response must be sent no later than 20 working days after the request is received. This can be extended to 40 working days where the request is complex and large. School holidays do not extend this limit.
- 4.7 Cost limit.** The Trust may refuse a request where the cost of finding out whether the information is held, and of locating, retrieving and extracting it, would exceed the statutory maximum of £450. Staff time is charged at £25 an hour, so the limit equals 18 hours of work. Time spent deciding whether an exemption applies, or removing exempt information, does not count. Where a request is refused on cost, the Trust will explain how it could be narrowed.
- 4.8 Vexatious and repeated requests.** The Trust may refuse a request that is vexatious, or that repeats a request it has already answered, unless a reasonable time has passed.
- 4.9 Exemptions and the public interest.** The Trust will claim exemptions where they apply, while keeping its commitment to openness, scrutiny and the public interest. Where a qualified exemption applies, the Trust will weigh the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in releasing it, and will release it unless the case for withholding is stronger. Where any information is withheld, the Trust will say which exemption applies and why, and explain the right to an internal review and to complain to the regulator.
- 4.10 Protecting records.** Once a request has been received, it is a criminal offence to alter, deface, block, erase, destroy or conceal any record held by the Trust with the intention of preventing its disclosure. Records that are the subject of a request must not be amended or destroyed until the request and any review or appeal are complete. Otherwise, records are kept and destroyed in line with the Trust's retention schedule, which follows the Information and Records Management Society (IRMS) Information Management Toolkit for Schools.
- 4.11** The Academy Business Leader keeps a log of every request, showing the date received, the date answered, the outcome and any exemption applied.

5. Adopting and maintaining the publication scheme

- 5.1** Section 19 of the Act requires the Trust to adopt and maintain a publication scheme. The Trust has adopted the regulator's model publication scheme and publishes the classes of information set out in the definition document for schools in England (version 4.0, October 2021).

- 5.2** The Trust is committed to keeping the scheme current and relevant. It contains many of the documents, policies, plans and guidance that people regularly ask for. Appendix 1 sets out what the Trust publishes and where to find it. Staff will give advice and assistance on how to use the scheme.

6. Relationship with data protection law

- 6.1** The Trust has a legal duty to protect personal data under UK data protection law. It will carefully consider its responsibilities before releasing any personal information about living individuals, including current and former staff and pupils.
- 6.2** Every pupil at the Trust has an Education, Health and Care Plan, and much of what the Trust holds about pupils concerns their special educational needs, health and care. That information will not be released under this policy. Because pupil numbers are small, the Trust will also check that any figures it releases cannot be used to identify an individual pupil.
- 6.3** The Trust's Data Protection Officer, The School DPO Service, advises on any request that involves personal information.

7. Responsibilities

- 7.1** The Trust has a responsibility to make information available in line with the Act. The Trust Board is responsible for compliance with this policy. The Resources, Audit & Risk Committee approves the policy and oversees it on the Board's behalf.
- 7.2** The Academy Business Leader leads on Freedom of Information and environmental information for the Trust. They receive and coordinate requests, decide responses, keep the request log and maintain the publication scheme. They may delegate the day to day handling of requests to the Data and Office Manager, but remain accountable.
- 7.3** The co-headteachers make sure information held at their site is found and provided in time. Internal reviews are carried out by a co-headteacher who was not involved in the original response (see section 10).
- 7.4** All staff have a responsibility to make sure that any request for information they receive is dealt with under the Act and in line with this policy. They are also responsible for good information handling practice, and for following records management policies and procedures as appropriate to their post.

8. Contact details

- 8.1** Requests for information, and requests for advice and assistance, should be sent to the Academy Business Leader:
- by email: enquiries@cedarstrust.org.uk, with "Freedom of Information request" in the subject line
 - by post: The Cedars Academy Trust, Cedars Academy: Low Fell, Ivy Lane, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 6QD, or Cedars Academy: High Heworth, Colegate West, Gateshead NE10 9AH
 - by telephone, for advice or environmental information requests: Low Fell 0191 487 4595; High Heworth 0191 691 3581

- 8.2** Further advice about the Act, including exemptions and the public interest test, is available from the Information Commission (the ICO) at ico.org.uk.

9. Publication scheme

- 9.1** The publication scheme guides people to the information the Trust publishes, or will publish. It sets out the classes of information published, how each is published, and whether there is a charge. Some information the Trust holds is not made public, for example personal information. The scheme is in Appendix 1.
- 9.2** Most information in the scheme is on the Trust website, www.cedarstrust.org.uk, or the website for each site, to view, download and print. Anything marked "on request" can be obtained from the Academy Business Leader using the contact details in section 8. A paper copy of anything in the scheme is available on request.
- 9.3** **Paying for information.** Information published on the Trust website is free, although you may incur costs from your internet provider. If you do not have internet access, you can use the website at a local library. Single copies of information in the scheme are provided free. If a request means the Trust has to do a lot of photocopying or printing, or pay a large postage charge, the Trust will tell you the cost before fulfilling the request.

10. Feedback, internal review and complaints

- 10.1** The Trust welcomes comments or suggestions about the scheme. Comments, and requests for further assistance, should be sent to the Academy Business Leader using the contact details in section 8.
- 10.2** A person who is unhappy with how the Trust has handled their request may ask for an internal review. The request should be made in writing within 40 working days of the Trust's response. The review is carried out by a co-headteacher who was not involved in the original response.
- 10.3** The Trust aims to complete an internal review within 20 working days, and no later than 40 working days in exceptional cases. For environmental information, the review must be completed within 40 working days.
- 10.4** A person who is still not satisfied may complain to the Information Commission, the body that makes sure public authorities comply with the Act. The Commission continues to be known as the ICO. Its contact details are: website ico.org.uk; telephone 0303 123 1113; post: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

11. Monitoring and review

- 11.1** The Academy Business Leader reports once a year to the Resources, Audit & Risk Committee on the requests received, how quickly they were answered, and the outcome of any internal reviews or complaints.
- 11.2** The Academy Business Leader checks the links and content in Appendix 1 once a year. This policy is reviewed every two years by the Resources, Audit & Risk Committee, or sooner if the law changes, and is published on the Trust website.

Appendix 1: Publication scheme

This is the information the Trust publishes under its publication scheme, grouped into the seven classes set by the regulator. Everything listed is free. A paper copy of any item is available on request, on the terms in paragraph 9.3.

Information published	Where to find it
Class 1: Who we are and what we do (current information only)	
Articles of Association, Memorandum of Association and Funding Agreement	Trust website, Governance (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/governance)
Trust Board and committee membership, how trustees are appointed, and how to contact them	Trust website, Governance (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/governance). Trustees can be contacted through the Trust (section 8).
Leadership structure	Trust website, Statutory Governance Information (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/statutoryinfo)
Curriculum outline for each site	Each site's website (cedarslowfell.cedarstrust.org.uk and cedarshighheworth.cedarstrust.org.uk), Our Curriculum
Term dates	Trust website, Term dates (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/termdates)
School session times	Trust website, The School Day
Addresses and contact details	Section 8 of this policy, and the Trust website
Class 2: What we spend and how we spend it (current and previous two financial years)	
Annual report and audited financial statements	Trust website, Statutory Governance Information (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/statutoryinfo)
Annual budget plan, and sources of funding and income	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Items of expenditure over £5,000, with supplier and transaction details	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Capital funding and capital projects	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Procurement procedures, and contracts awarded through a formal tender	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Staff allowances and expenses	Expenses Policy: Trust website, Our Policies (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/policies). Totals paid to senior staff: on request from the Academy Business Leader
Pay and grading structure: senior staff salaries in bands of £5,000, and pay ranges for other posts	Number of employees paid £100,000 or more: Trust website, Statutory Governance Information (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/statutoryinfo). Pay bands and ranges: on request from the Academy Business Leader
Trustees' allowances and expenses paid	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Pupil premium strategy statement, and primary PE and sport premium report	Trust website, Statutory Governance Information (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/statutoryinfo)
Class 3: What our priorities are and how we are doing (current information)	
Latest Ofsted report	Trust website (cedarstrust.org.uk/ofsted), and the Ofsted website
Performance data supplied to the government, assessment and examination results, and performance tables	GOV.UK, Compare school and college performance. Results for each site: on request from the Academy Business Leader
Improvement plans and any proposals for the future of the Trust	On request from the Academy Business Leader

Information published	Where to find it
Appraisal policy and procedure	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Data protection impact assessments and other impact assessments, in full or in summary	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Class 4: How we make decisions (current and previous three years)	
Admissions. Places at the Trust are allocated by Gateshead Council through the Education, Health and Care Plan process. The Trust does not make admission decisions.	Admissions Policy: Trust website, Our Policies (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/policies). Gateshead Council website: SEND and Education, Health and Care Plans
Agendas, minutes and papers of the Trust Board and its committees, excluding confidential items	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Class 5: Our policies and procedures (current information only)	
Statutory and other policies, including safeguarding, behaviour, SEND, accessibility, equality, health and safety, complaints, charging, data protection, privacy notices and this policy	Trust website, Our Policies (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/policies). Any policy not published there: on request from the Academy Business Leader
SEND Information Report	Trust website, Our Policies (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/policies)
Careers programme information	Trust website, Our Policies (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/policies)
Current vacancies	Trust website, Current Vacancies (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/vacancies)
Class 6: Lists and registers (current information only)	
Register of trustees' pecuniary and other interests	Trust website, Governance (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/governance)
Locations of overt CCTV cameras at both sites	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Capital asset register (summary information)	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments received by the Trust	On request from the Academy Business Leader
Class 7: The services we offer (current information only)	
Extra-curricular activities, clubs, newsletters and letters to parents and carers	Each site's website (cedarslowfell.cedarstrust.org.uk and cedarshighheworth.cedarstrust.org.uk). Letters and newsletters are also sent to parents through the parent app.
Services the Trust charges for, and the charges	Charging and Remissions Policy: Trust website, Our Policies (www.cedarstrust.org.uk/policies)

Annex A: Linked policies, forms and systems

Linked policies

- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy notices for staff and for parents and carers
- Complaints Policy
- Charging and Remissions Policy

Forms and systems

- Freedom of Information request log, maintained by the Academy Business Leader
- Records retention schedule, based on the IRMS Information Management Toolkit for Schools