



THINKING SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

Freedom of Information Policy

Freedom of Information Policy



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Policy Statement:

This policy outlines Thinking Schools Academy Trust approach to The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) which came into effect on the 30th of November 2000 and gives a general right of access to recorded information held by a public authority, including Academies and Trusts, subject to certain exemptions.

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust is committed to ensuring consistency, transparency, and fairness in its practices across all schools within the Trust. The Thinking Schools Academy Trust is committed to complying with the provisions of the FOIA.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out how the Trust will meet its legal duties under The Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

- All staff (including permanent, temporary, and agency staff).
- Governors and Trustees
- Volunteers and contractors
- Pupils and parents/carers (where applicable)
- The Thinking Schools Academy Trust including all Academies of the Trust
- All Nurseries and Pre Schools of Little Thinkers Nursery & Pre School
- Any member of the public who submits an FOI request

Definitions:

Term / Acronym	Definition
“TSAT” or “The Trust”	“TSAT” or “The Trust” means Thinking Schools Academy Trust and all its Schools and This Policy applies to all Academies of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust and all Nurseries and Pre Schools of Little Thinkers Nursery & Pre School, a subsidiary of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust. When ‘The Thinking Schools Academy Trust’ is used within this policy; it applies to Little Thinkers Nursery and Pre School.
“Academy”	When ‘Academy’ is used within this policy it also applies to Nursery and Pre School settings.
“Headteacher” or “Principal”	When ‘Headteacher/Principal’ is used with this policy it applies to Nursery Managers.
Trust “Appropriate Limit”	Trust “Appropriate Limit” means the limit set by the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 as amended from time to time.
“Fee Notice”	“Fee Notice” means the amount the Requester will need to pay in order for the Trust to comply with the request for information.
“FOIA”	“FOIA” means the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and amendments.
“GDPR”	“GDPR” means the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and the Data Protection Act 2018.
“Publication Scheme”	“Publication Scheme” means a list of information that will be routinely published via the Trust’s website.
“Requester”	“Requester” means the person making a request for information from the Trust.
“Social Media”	“Social Media” means websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, TikTok, Google+, and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for Trust purposes as well as personal use that may affect the Trust in any way.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Board of Trustees: Ensures strategic oversight and approves the policy.
- Executive & Senior Leadership Team: Implements and monitors compliance across the Trust.
- Headteachers/Principals: Ensure effective local implementation and adherence within each school.
- All Staff and any member of the public who submits an FOI request: Must read, understand, and follow the policy.

Policy Principles / Procedures

Procedure for making a request for information

- Step 1: The Trust requires requests for information pursuant to the provisions of FOIA to be made in writing. The Trust considers 'in writing' to mean communications by post, and email and on the Academies official Social Media sites.
- Step 2: Requests for information held by the Trust should be sent to the addresses found in Appendix 1.
- Step 3: A request for information made to the Trust should provide the name of the Requester and an address for correspondence and should clearly set out the information being requested from the Trust.

Duty to Assist

- There may be circumstances where it is unclear to the Trust what information is being requested or where it appears that the request for information is such that responding with cause the Trust to exceed the Appropriate Limit.
- In these circumstances, the Trust will seek to provide advice and assistance to the Requester in order to enable the Trust to provide the requester with the information they are seeking to obtain or inform the requester as to why this is not possible.

Time Limit for responding to requests for information

- The Trust will seek to respond to a request for information promptly and in any event no later than 20 School days¹ or 60 working days² from the date of the request whichever occurs first.
- Where a fee is payable for responding to the request, the Trust will disregard any day between a Fee Notice being sent to the requester and the correct fee being received by the Trust when calculating the time limit for responding.
- In the event the Trust is unable to respond within the periods set out above, the Trust will write to the requester advising it will be unable to comply and provide a new time scale for responding to the request.

Fees

- The Trust will not charge for the provision of information which is requested subject to the provisions of FOIA³.

¹ A School Day is any day on which there is a School session.

² A working day means any other day other than a Saturday, a Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a day which is a bank holiday.

³ The Trust may charge for requests where it incurs a costs in photocopying, printing or otherwise reproducing the requested information and/or where the Trust will incur a significant fee for providing the requested information in the

- The Trust is not obliged to comply with a request for information if the cumulative time spent on locating, retrieving or, if necessary, extracting the information requested is estimated to exceed the Appropriate Limit.
- The Trust may decide to provide information requested in excess of the Appropriate Limit without charging a fee where it considers it reasonable and within the public interest to do so.
- Where it appears that responding to a request for information will result in the Trust exceeding the Appropriate Limit and the Trust does not waive the fee for complying with the request, the Trust may provide the Requester with a Fee Notice. The Trust will also inform the Requester as to how it has estimated that the Appropriate Limit will be exceeded, what information it could provide within the Appropriate Limit, and provide the Requester with the opportunity to narrow their request.
- Where the Trust has issued a Fee Notice and the Requester indicates they are not prepared to pay the fee as set out in the Fee Notice or does not pay the fee as set out in the Fee Notice within three months, the Trust is not obliged to comply with the original request. The Trust will however consider any narrowed or amended request.

Exemptions

- The right to be provided with information requested may be limited by the application of an exemption. Some exemptions are absolute and others are qualified. Where an exemption applies to information requested, the Trust may also be exempt from having to confirm or deny that the information exists as well as from disclosing the requested information.
 - Where a qualified exemption applies to information requested from the Trust, the Trust will consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.
 - The absolute exemptions more relevant to the Trust are those that relate to:
 - (a) Information accessible by other means⁴
 - (b) Personal Information⁴
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- (c) Confidential Information⁵
 - (d) Prohibitions on Disclosure⁶
 - The qualified exemptions most relevant to the Trust are those that relate to:
 - (a) Information intended for future publication⁷
 - (b) Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs⁸
 - (c) Health & Safety⁹
 - (d) Legal Professional Privilege¹⁰ (e) Commercial Interests¹¹
 - Where the Trust relies on an exemption in not complying with a request for information, the Trust will write to the Requester setting out the exemption relied on explaining the reason(s) the Trust considers

format requested by the Requester. There may also be a charge where the Trust has issued a Fee Notice and the Requester has agreed to pay the fee as set out in the Fee Notice. ⁴ Section 21

⁴ Section 40

⁵ Section 41

⁶ Section 44

⁷ Section 22

⁸ Section 36

⁹ Section 38

¹⁰ Section 42

¹¹ Section 43

that the exemption applies to the information requested and, where appropriate, why it has decided that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Requests for Personal Data

- A request by an individual for their own personal data made subject to the provisions of FOIA will be treated as a subject access request.
- A request for the personal data of a third party will be refused where the provision of that information will contravene any of the principles of the GDPR, pursuant to Section 40(2) of FOIA.
- For further details please refer to the Trust's Subject Access Request Policy.

Repeat or Vexatious Requests

- The Trust will not comply with a request for information which is considered to be vexatious.
- In determining whether a request is vexatious, the Trust will consider whether the request is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress to the Trust, staff or governors. The Trust will also consider the burden on the Trust and any possible distress to its staff or board of governors in responding to the request, the motive of the Requester and the seriousness of the request.
- The Trust will also not comply with a request for information which is identical or substantially similar to a previous request made by the Requester unless a reasonable time has elapsed between the current request and the previous request.
- In considering whether a reasonable time has elapsed, the Trust will take into account the time that has passed between the current request and the previous request and likelihood that the information requested will differ significantly from the information provided in the response to the previous request.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

- Records will be maintained in accordance with Trust data protection procedures.

Escalation and Reporting

- **Right to Review:** If a Requester is unhappy with the way their request for information has been handled or is dissatisfied with the decision to withhold information through the application of an exemption, they have the right to ask for an Internal Review.
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- **Submitting a Request:** Requests for an Internal Review should be submitted in writing within 40 working days of the date of the Trust's initial response. Requests must be sent to the Data Protection Officer at privacy@tsatrust.org.uk
 - **Conduct of the Review:** The Internal Review will be a fair and impartial assessment of the initial decision.
 - **Timescales:** The Trust aims to respond to all requests for Internal Review promptly. The standard response time is 20 working days from the date of receipt of the review request. Where a qualified exemption applies and additional time is required to consider the public interest, the Trust may extend the response deadline by a reasonable period (usually no more than a further 20 working days). The requester will be informed within the initial 20 working days if an extension is required.
 - **Outcomes:** Following the Internal Review, the Trust will write to the Requester to inform them of the outcome. The review will either:
Uphold the original decision in full.

Modify the original decision (e.g., releasing some information while maintaining other exemptions).

Overturn the original decision and provide the requested information.

- **External Appeal:** If a Requester remains dissatisfied after the outcome of the Internal Review, they have the right to complain to the Information Commission (ICO). The ICO will generally not investigate a complaint until the Trust's Internal Review process has been exhausted.

ICO Contact Details: Information Commission, 4th Floor, No.3 Circle Square, 5 Hawkshaw Street, Manchester, M1 7BL

Monitoring and Compliance

- Regular audits, reviews, or spot-checks may be undertaken by the relevant Trust's service team.
- Local Governing Bodies and Headteachers must ensure compliance at school level.
- Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action.

Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed:

- Every 4 years or;
- In response to changes in legislation, guidance, or operational need.

The next scheduled review is due by 31st May 2030.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- The Freedom of Information Act 2000

Related Policies

The policy may be read in conjunction with the following related policies:

- Subject Access Request Policy
- Data Protection & Appropriate Policy

Appendix 1:

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme **Introduction**

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) requires all public authorities (including schools) to adopt and maintain a publication scheme. In 2008 the Information Commission (ICO) changed the emphasis on the approval and operation of publication schemes to a generic model, with effect from 1 January 2009.

The model commits a public authority to 'produce and publish the method by which the specific information will be available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public'.

Information to be published <i>This includes datasets where applicable</i>	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Class 1 – Who we are and what we do (Organisational information, structures, locations & contacts) Only current information will be made available		Free
Who's who in the school	Staff list/website	Free
Who's who on the governing body/board of governors and the basis of their appointment	Staff Handbook/Website/ Student/Parent/Staff Portals	Free
Instrument of Government / Articles of Association	Website	Free
Contact details for the Head teacher / Principal and for the governing body, via the school (named contacts where possible).	Website / Headed Paper/ Compliment Slips	Free
School Prospectus (if any)	Hard copy from school office On-line version on the website	Free
Annual Report (if any)	Website – Governor Section	5p per sheet
Staffing Structure	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
School session times and term dates	Website/Hard copy/Student planner Student/Parent/Staff Portals	5p per sheet
Address of school and contact details, including email address	Website/letter headed paper Student/Parent/Staff Portals	Free

A school will breach the FOIA if it has not adopted the model scheme or is not publishing in accordance with it by this date.

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust has adopted the ICO Model Publication Scheme in full, unedited. The Guide to Information below should be read together with the ICO Model Publication Scheme which can be found at: [model-publication-scheme.pdf](#)

The Local Governing Bodies are responsible for maintenance of this scheme and have delegated to the Head Teacher the day-to-day responsibility for FOI policy and the provision of advice, guidance, publicity and interpretation of the Trust's policy.

Information to be published <i>This includes datasets where applicable</i>	How the information can be obtained	Cost
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) Information from the current and previous financial year will be made available.	Trust	
Trust Annual Accounts	Website/Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Annual budget plan and financial statements	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Capital Funding	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Financial audit reports	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Details of expenditure items over £2000 – published at least annually but at a more frequent quarterly or six-monthly interval where practical.	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Procurement and contracts the school has entered, or information relating to / a link to information held by an organisation which has done so on its behalf (for example, a local authority or diocese).	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Pay policy	Website/Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Staff allowances and expenses that can be incurred or claimed with totals paid to individual senior staff members (Senior Leadership Team or equivalent, whose basic salary is at least £60,000 per annum) by reference to categories.	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Staffing, pay and grading structure. As a minimum the pay information should include salaries for senior staff (Senior Leadership Team or equivalent as above) in bands of £10,000; for more junior posts, by salary range.	Trust Annual Accounts – Website/Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Governors' allowances that can be incurred or claimed, and a record of total payments made to individual governors.	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Class 3 – What our priorities and how we are doing (Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews) Current information will be made available	(hard copy or website)	5p per sheet

School profile (if any) And in all cases: Performance data supplied to the English Government, or a direct link to the data	Website	Free
The latest Ofsted / Estyn / Education and Training Inspectorate report - Summary - Full Report	Website	If copies are required, 5p per sheet
Performance management policy and procedures adopted by the governing body.	Website/Hard Copy	5p per sheet

Performance data or a direct link to it.	Website/Prospectus	Free
The school's future plans; for example, proposals for and any consultation on the future of the school, such as a change in status.	3 yr plan – Hard Copy Website Student/Parent/Staff Portals	5p per sheet
Safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures.	Website Student/Parent/Staff Portals	Free
Class 4 – How we make decisions (Decision making processes and records of decisions) Current and previous three years as a minimum.	Hard Copy/website	5p per sheet
Admissions policy/decisions (not individual admission decisions) – where applicable	Hard Copy/website	5p per sheet
Agendas and minutes of meetings of the governing body and its committees.	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures (Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities) Current information will be made available only.	Hard Copy/website	Free
School Policies	Website	5p per sheet
Records management and personal data policies	Hard Copy	5p per sheet
Charging regimes and policies	Website/Hard Copy See Charging and Remissions Policy	5p per sheet
Class 6– Lists and Registers Currently maintained lists and registers will be made available only (this does not include the attendance register).	(hard copy or website; some information may only be available by inspection)	5p per sheet
Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments	Website	Free
Disclosure logs	Unnamed statement	5p per sheet
Asset register	Viewing only	Free

above		
Any information the school is currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers (this does not include attendance registers).	Website	Free
Class 7– The services we offer (Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses) Current information will be made available only	(hard copy or website; some information may only be available by inspection)	Free
Extra-curricular activities	Website Student/Parent/Staff Portals	Free
Out of school clubs	Website Student/Parent/Staff Portals	Free
Services for which the school is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees	Website	Free
School publications, leaflets, books and newsletters	Website Student/Parent/Staff Portals	Free
Additional Information This will provide schools with the opportunity to publish information that is not itemized in the lists		

How to request information

You can request a copy of the information you want from the contact details in Appendix 2.

If the information you are looking for is not available via our publication scheme and is not on our website, you may still ask if we have it. Please contact the school in writing, by email, fax or letter. Please state that this is a Freedom of Information Request.

Paying for information

Information published on our website is free (apart from any connection costs payable to your internet service provider). If you do not have Internet access, you can access our website using a local library or an Internet café.

Single printed copies of information covered by this publication are provided free unless stated otherwise. If your request means that we have to do a lot of photocopying or printing, or pay a large postage charge, or is for a priced item such as some printed publications or DVDs we will let you know the cost before fulfilling your request.

Schedule of charges

This describes how the charges set out in the Guide to Information above have been arrived at.

Type of charge	Description	Basis of charge
Disbursement cost	Photocopying/printing @ 5p per sheet (black and white)	Actual cost 5p

	Photocopying/printing @ 8p per sheet (colour)	Actual cost 8p
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2 nd class
Statutory Fee		In accordance with the relevant legislation (quote the actual statute)
Re-licensing the use of datasets (No personal data will be disclosed)	If the dataset is a relevant copyright work, the school will provide it under the terms of a specified licence. A relevant copyright work is one for which the school owns the copyright and database rights, and which is not a Crown copyright or Parliamentary copyright work. The Open Government Licence (OGL) is the default licence for datasets that can be re-used without charge; other licences (the Non-Commercial Government Licence and the Charged Licence) are available where that is not appropriate. The school may charge a fee for communicating the information and a fee for making the dataset available for reuse if this requires cost and effort in publishing this in a reusable form.	There is no re-use fee if the dataset is provided under the OGL or the Non-Commercial Government Licence.
	Under our publication scheme the school will publish datasets that have been requested, and any updated versions it holds, unless it is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so. Factors that can be taken into account when deciding whether it is not appropriate include whether the information is exempt and the cost and effort of publishing in a re-usable form. Complaints that the school has not met its duties under the dataset provisions will be dealt with by the Information Commission, in consultation with the National Archives as appropriate.	
Other	£2 which includes research for each item.	

Appendix 2:

Academy & Trust Contact Details

The contact details of our Academies and the Trust can be found on our website at: www.tsatrust.org.uk

The Trust central office address is: Park Crescent, Chatham, Kent, ME4 6NR