

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Definition document for the board of governors of all grant-aided schools and special schools in Northern Ireland

This guidance is written for the use of schools in Northern Ireland that are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), including catholic maintained schools. If you integrate A-levels as part of your secondary level educational offer, you may also find useful the definition document for [colleges of further education](#), as appropriate to your constitution.

If you are a small school, you might find this guidance useful when developing your own guide to information. Alternatively, you can use the template guide to information for schools available on the [ICO website](#). You must make clear which document you are using.

This guidance gives examples of the kinds of information that the ICO expects you to provide routinely in order to meet your commitments under the model publication scheme.

The ICO expects you to make the information in this definition document available unless:

- you do not hold the information;
- the information is exempt under one of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) exemptions or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) exceptions, or its release is prohibited under another statute (eg UK GDPR);
- the information is readily and publicly available from an external website. Such information may have been provided either by you or on your behalf. You must provide a direct link to that information;
- the information is archived, out of date or otherwise inaccessible; or
- it would be impractical or resource-intensive to prepare the material for routine release.

If the information is held by another public authority, you should provide details of where to obtain it.

This guidance is not meant to give an exhaustive or definitive list of everything that should be covered by a publication scheme. The legal commitment is to the model publication scheme, and you should look to provide as much information as possible on a routine basis.

As a minimum, the ICO expects you to make available information that is required, for example:

- by statute;
- by the Northern Ireland Executive;
- by the Education Authority;
- by the Department of Education of the Northern Ireland Executive (DENI); or
- by virtue of a funding agreement, unless the disclosure is contrary to the provisions of the agreement.

Publishing datasets for re-use

As a public authority, you must publish under your publication scheme any dataset you hold that has been requested, together with any updated versions, unless you are satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so. So far as reasonably practicable, you must publish it in an electronic form that is capable of re-use.

If the dataset or any part of it is a relevant copyright work and you are the only owner, you must make it available for re-use under the terms of a specified licence. Datasets in which the Crown owns the copyright or the database rights are not relevant copyright works.

The [2018 Section 45 Code of Practice](#) recommends that public authorities make datasets available for re-use under the [Open Government Licence](#).

The term 'dataset' is defined in section 11(5) of FOIA. The terms 'relevant copyright work' and 'specified licence' are defined in section 19(8) of FOIA. The ICO has published guidance on [Datasets \(sections 11, 19 and 45\)](#). This explains what is meant by "not appropriate" and "capable of re-use".

Model publication scheme

The table below identifies the specific information the ICO expects the boards of governors of schools in Northern Ireland to publish under each of the seven classes of information set out in the [model publication scheme](#).

Class 1 – Who we are and what we do

Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.

Information in this class to be current information only.

- **Instrument of government**
- **School prospectus and curriculum**

The contents of the school prospectus, as required by the Northern Ireland Executive or by the Education Authority.

An outline of the school curriculum.

- **Annual report**

The contents of the governors' annual report to parents.

- **Board of governors**

Make available the names of the governors and the basis on which they have been appointed, along with details of how to contact them via the school.

- **School session times and term dates**

Provide details of school session times and dates of school terms and holidays.

- **Location and contact information**

The address, telephone number, email address and website address for the school together with the names of key personnel. Also provide the names and positions of all staff, and how they may be contacted via the school.

Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it

Financial information about projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit.

Make available financial information for the current and previous two financial years.

- **Annual budget plan and financial statements**

Provide details of your budget distributed by the education authority, and the school's local management of school's (LMS) outturn statement or equivalent.

- **Expenditures**

Provide details of items of expenditure over £5,000, including costs, supplier and transaction information. Publish this at least annually or, if practical for you to do so, on a quarterly or six-monthly interval.

- **Capital funding**

Provide information on plans for capital expenditure. Provide details of the capital funding allocated to or by you together with information on related building projects and other capital projects. Include any private finance initiative and public-private partnership contracts.

- **Financial audit reports**

- **Procurement and contracts**

Provide details of procedures used for the acquisition of goods and services, including details of contracts that have gone through a formal tendering process.

- **Staff allowances and expenses**

Provide details of the allowances or expenses that can be incurred or claimed for all staff. Include the total of the allowances and expenses paid to individual senior staff members by reference to categories. Produce this information in line with your policies, practices and procedures. You must at least include travel, subsistence and accommodation.

- **Staff pay and grading structures**

You can provide this as part of your organisational structure. As a minimum, include the details of senior staff salaries in bands of £5,000. For all other posts, identify levels of pay by salary range.

- **Governors' allowances**

Provide details of allowances and expenses that can be incurred or claimed, and a record of total payments made to individual governors.

- **Premiums or other forms of financial support available**

Provide details of any premiums you receive, such as the newcomer pupil premium, or any other forms of financial support received such as free school meals, uniform grants or targeting special needs funding.

Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing

Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews.

As a minimum, information in this class to be current information only.

Provide details of any reports or recorded information showing your planned or actual performance.

- **Performance data supplied to the Northern Ireland Executive**
- **Latest education and training inspectorate report, including an executive summary and action plan**
- **Exam performance statistics**
- **Performance review and staff development information**

Provide details of your performance management policy and procedures as adopted by your board of governors.

- **Future plans**

Any major proposals for the future of the school such as a consultation on a change in school status.

- **Data protection impact assessments (in full or summary format) or any other impact assessments (eg health and safety impact assessments or equality impact assessments), as appropriate and relevant**

Class 4 – How we make decisions

Decision-making processes and records of decisions.

Make information in this class available at least for the current and previous three years.

- **Admissions policy or decisions**

Your admission arrangements and procedures, together with information about the right of appeal. You don't have to publish individual admission decisions. However, you should publish information on application numbers and patterns of successful applicants, including criteria on which applications were successful. If you are not responsible for your own admissions, you should provide a direct link to the relevant page of the authority responsible.

- **Minutes of meetings of the board of governors and its committees**

Publish the minutes, agendas and papers considered at such meetings, unless an exemption applies to the information or parts of it.

Class 5 – Our policies and procedures

Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities.

Information in this class to be current information only.

- **School policies and other documents**

Include policies such as your pastoral care, behaviour and anti-bullying policies. As a minimum, include policies, procedures and documents that you are required by statute or by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland. Include policies and procedures for handling requests for information and operating the publication scheme.

- **Records management, personal data and access to information policies**

Include information security policies, records retention, destruction and archive policies, and data protection (including data sharing and CCTV usage) policies.

- **Safeguarding and child protection**

Provide the details of the policies and procedures you have put in place to ensure you exercise your functions with a view to safeguarding and child protection, including by promoting the welfare of children, in compliance with legislation and any guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Executive or by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

- **Equality and diversity**

Include policies, schemes, statements, procedures and guidelines relating to equal opportunities. Include your equality scheme in accordance with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

- **Health and safety**

- **Pay policy**

- **Policies and procedures for human resources and the recruitment of staff**

Make readily available details of current vacancies if these are advertised as part of recruitment policies.

- **Charging regimes and policies**

Provide details of any statutory charging regimes, including charging for school activities. Include charging policies about charges made for information routinely published. As part of your charging policy, clearly state what costs you are recovering, the basis on which you make them, and how you calculate them.

If you charge a fee for licensing the re-use of datasets, state in your guide to information how you calculate it and whether the charge is made under the Re-use Fees Regulations or under other legislation. You cannot charge a re-use fee if you are making the datasets available for re-use under the Open Government Licence.

- **Customer service and complaints procedures, including for dealing with parental complaints**

Class 6 – Lists and registers

Information to be in currently maintained lists and registers only.

- **Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments**

Statutory instruments (for example regulations), departmental circulars and administrative memoranda sent to the head teacher or board of governors concerning the curriculum.

- **CCTV**

Details of the locations of any overt CCTV surveillance cameras operated by you or on your behalf. You should decide on the level of detail which is appropriate. This could be by building or more general geographic locations, eg postcodes or partial postcodes, depending on the security issues raised.

- **Disclosure logs**

If you produce a disclosure log indicating the information provided in response to FOIA and EIR requests, make this readily available. Disclosure logs are recommended as good practice.

- **Asset register**

Make available some information from capital asset registers, if you hold such registers.

- **Any other information you are currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers**

Class 7 – The services we offer

Information about the services the school provides including leaflets, guidance and newsletters.

Generally, this is an extension of part of the first class of information and may also relate to information covered in other classes.

As part of this class, you can include:

- **Extra-curricular activities**
- **Out of school clubs**
- **School publications**
- **Services for which you are entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees**
- **Leaflets, booklets and newsletters**