

Eastwood Park Academy Trust (EPAT)

EPAT

Believe Succeed Together

Freedom of Information Policy

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1.0 Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Trust is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) as a public authority, and as such, must comply with any requests for information in accordance with the principles laid out in the Act.

1.1 What is a request under FOI?

Any request for any information from the Trust is technically a request under the FOI, whether or not the individual making the request mentions the FOI. However, the ICO has stated that routine requests for information (such as a parent requesting a copy of a policy) can be dealt with outside of the provisions of the Act.

When considering a request under FOI, any release is treated as a release to the general public, and so once it has been released to an individual, anyone can then access it.

All requests should be referred in the first instance to the Principal of the academy.

1.2 Time limit for compliance

The Trust must respond as soon as possible, and in any event, within **20** working days of the date of receipt of the request. For an academy, a 'working day' is one in which pupils are in attendance, subject to an absolute maximum of **60** calendar days to respond.

1.3 Procedure for dealing with a request

When a request is received that cannot be dealt with by simply providing the information, it should be referred in the first instance to the Principal who may re-allocate to an individual with responsibility for the type of information requested.

The first stage in responding is to determine whether or not the academy 'holds' the information requested. The academy will hold the information if it exists in computer or paper format. Some requests will require the academy to take information from different sources and manipulate it in some way. Where this would take minimal effort, the academy is considered to hold that information, but if the required manipulation would take a significant amount of time, the requestor should be contacted to explain that the information is not held in the manner requested, and offered the opportunity to refine their request.

The second stage is to decide whether the information can be released, or whether one of the exemptions set out in the Act applies to the information. Common exemptions that might apply include:

- Section 40 (1) – the request is for the applicant’s personal data. This must be dealt with under the subject access regime in the DPA, detailed in paragraph 9 of the DPA policy above;
- Section 40 (2) – compliance with the request would involve releasing third party personal data, and this would be in breach of the DPA principles as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the DPA policy above;
- Section 41 – information that has been sent to the Academy (but not the Academy’s own information) which is confidential;
- Section 21 – information that is already publicly available, even if payment of a fee is required to access that information;
- *Section 22 – information that the Academy intends to publish at a future date;*
- *Section 43 – information that would prejudice the commercial interests of the academy and / or a third party;*
- *Section 38 – information that could prejudice the physical health, mental health or safety of an individual (this may apply particularly to safeguarding information);*
- *Section 31 – information which may prejudice the effective detection and prevention of crime – such as the location of CCTV cameras;*
- *Section 36 – information which, in the opinion of the chair of governors of the Academy, would prejudice the effective conduct of the Academy. There is a special form for this on the ICO’s website to assist with the obtaining of the chair’s opinion.*

The sections mentioned in italics are qualified exemptions. This means that even if the exemption applies to the information, the Trust also has to carry out a public interest weighting exercise, balancing the public interest in the information being released, as against the public interest in withholding the information.

1.4 Responding to a request

When responding to a request where the academy has withheld some or all of the information, the academy must explain why the information has been withheld, quoting the appropriate section number and explaining how the information requested fits within that exemption. If the public interest test has been applied, this also needs to be explained.

The letter should end by explaining to the requestor how they can complain through the Trust’s Complaints Policy and/or by writing to the ICO.