

# FOI Publication Scheme Guidance

We have produced this document to provide schools with guidance on ensuring you meet the requirement in the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act to adopt and maintain a publication scheme.

## What is a publication scheme?

A publication scheme is a short document setting out your high-level commitment to proactively publish information. It is designed to increase transparency and allow members of the public to routinely access information relating to the functions of a public authority.

## Is it mandatory?

Yes, section 19 of the FOI Act requires all public authorities to adopt and maintain a publication scheme approved by the ICO and to publish information covered by the scheme.

## Are all schools public authorities?

Maintained schools and academies are public authorities and are therefore covered by the FOI Act.

Independent schools are not public authorities and therefore not covered by the Act. Independent schools are not required to have a publication scheme, although they still may wish to publish information for transparency purposes.



## How do we adopt a publication scheme?

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has produced a model publication scheme which schools should adopt. It describes the seven types (classes) of information you should publish.

The model publication scheme is available on our portal for download or is available on the ICO's website [here](#). You should adopt this model by publishing or linking to it on your website. **You do not need to make any amendments to it.**

## What information do we have to make publicly available?

The seven 'classes' of information included in the ICO's model scheme are:



- **Who we are and what we do.**

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

- **What we spend and how we spend it.**

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement, and contracts.

- **What our priorities are and how we are doing.**

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

- **How we make decisions.**

Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

- **Our policies and procedures.**

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

- **Lists and registers.**

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

- **The services we offer.**

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions, and media releases. A description of the services offered.



## **How do we tell people about it?**

The school must make it clear where the above information will be published or how it can be obtained, and any costs involved. The school does this by producing a Guide to Information document which informs members of the public of these details.

The ICO have published a template Guide to Information document which schools can utilise to fulfil this obligation. To assist you, we have amended this template to also align with guidance issued by the Department of Education about what must be published.

Our template Guide to Information is available on the portal [here](#). You should complete the document to ensure it accurately reflects your school and publish it on your website.



## Disclosing information

In the Guide to Information document, you must indicate whether the information is available on the website or by request. Please remember that you should still consider whether the documentation should be disclosed in its entirety or whether you need to redact or withhold some information.

Certain parts of the information may be subject to an exemption under FOI. For example, DPIAs may be available by request, but you would need to ensure that you aren't releasing security control information that could make a system vulnerable to cyber criminals. If you have any concerns or questions about disclosing information, please get in touch with us.

## Further information

The ICO have also published 'definition documents' which are written for specific sectors and go into further detail about what type of information would fall into each of the 'classes' outlined above.

- The definition document for maintained schools and academies is [here](#).
- The definition document for colleges of further education is [here](#).

You can also see the ICO's own publication scheme [here](#).

## Checklist for compliance with FOI publication scheme

Checklist item	Complete?
We have published the ICO's Model Publication Scheme on our website unedited.	
We have completed and published the Guide to Information document on our website.	
We have published all information on our website as per our Publication Scheme.	
We ensure that information on our website is checked regularly and updated as necessary.	
We have implemented a process for making information available upon request, and this is followed by relevant staff.	

