Micklehurst All Saints CE Primary School

Freedom of Information Policy

September 2026

Micklehurst All Saints CE Primary School Aims:

- To help children develop a sense of respect for themselves and others
- To ensure a secure, caring and supportive environment
- To provide an atmosphere of trust co-operation and understanding between home, school and the community
- For all children to be happy, enquiring and motivated learners
- To inspire a love for learning
- To develop Christian values
- To nurture self-respect and respect for others
- To celebrate achievement

Our Vision Statement

Our roots are firmly anchored in Christian values to enable children to grow and blossom.

'Micklehurst All Saints is committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of all children, and expects our staff and volunteers to share this commitment'.

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1. Purpose and legal framework

Micklehurst All Saints CE Primary School is committed to openness, accountability and protecting personal information. This policy explains how it makes recorded information available and deals with information requests, refusals and reviews. It applies to staff, governors and people handling school information on its behalf.

The relevant frameworks are the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR), UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, as amended, including by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025. The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005 apply to the separate parental educational-record right where the school is maintained. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) regulates FOIA, EIR and data protection.

This policy sets the route for each type of request. Detailed subject access handling must also follow the school data protection procedures. Staff must use the correct legal framework even if the requester uses a different label or does not name any legislation.

2. Scope and responsibility

The policy covers recorded school business information in any format, including emails, messages, minutes, photographs, recordings, electronic systems, paper files and information held by contractors on the school's behalf. It covers existing records regardless of when they were created. It does not require the school to create new opinions or explanations, although existing information may need to be extracted.

Purely private communications unrelated to school business are outside scope. School business held in personal email accounts, messaging services or on private devices may be in scope and must not be excluded merely because of where it is stored.

The responsible body oversees compliance and retains legal accountability. The Governing board is responsible for FOIA and EIR compliance across school. The policy owner implements this policy. The FOI officer logs requests, coordinates searches, monitors deadlines and maintains the publication scheme. The DPO advises independently on personal information and data protection. All staff, governors and trustees must forward requests promptly, preserve records and assist searches.

3. Making and recognising requests

Requests may be sent to the FOI contact email or postal address in the adoption record or through the school office. Personal information requests and data protection complaints may also be directed to the named DPO. These are preferred routes; a valid request

received elsewhere in the school must still be recognised and forwarded promptly. The school remains responsible for responding when it uses an external service.

An FOI request must be in writing, give the requester's real name and an address for correspondence (an email address is sufficient), and describe the information sought. Email and other recorded electronic communications can qualify. A special form, explanation of purpose or reference to FOIA is not required.

EIR requests and subject access requests can be verbal or written. Staff must record verbal requests accurately and forward them promptly. The school will provide advice and assistance, including help to describe information, reasonable adjustments and support to put an FOI request in writing.

The requester may ask for a particular format, such as an electronic copy, paper copy, inspection or an accessible format. The school will consider the applicable legal requirements and explain any justified alternative. Identity checks must be proportionate and are not a routine requirement for ordinary FOI requests.

4. Policy

4.1 FOI Requests

The school will respond promptly and no later than the earlier of 20 school days or 60 working days following receipt of a valid request. A school day is a day with a session attended by pupils. Working days exclude Saturdays, Sundays and public or bank holidays. The clock runs from receipt by the school, not onward receipt by the FOI officer.

If clarification is reasonably needed to identify and locate information, the school will ask promptly and explain what is needed; the statutory response period runs from receipt of sufficient clarification. Where a qualified exemption requires further public interest consideration, any lawful extension must be explained in a timely notice identifying the exemption and expected response date. The extension must be reasonable and follow current ICO guidance; it is not extra time for searches or general workload.

4.2 Environmental information

EIR requests must be answered as soon as possible and within 20 working days; school holidays do not suspend this period. Where volume and complexity make compliance within that period impracticable, the deadline may extend to 40 working days. The requester must be told of the extension and reasons within the initial 20 working days. Staff must seek advice before treating clarification as affecting an EIR deadline.

4.3 Personal information and educational records

A subject access request is normally answered without undue delay and within one calendar month, including during school holidays. A lawful extension of up to two further months may apply for complexity or number of requests, with reasons notified within the initial

month. Necessary identity checks and any lawful pause for reasonably required clarification must be recorded and explained under the current UK GDPR rules; clarification must not be used routinely to delay a response.

Where the separate parental educational-record right applies, respond within 15 school days. In England that right applies to maintained schools. It is distinct from the pupil's subject access right; staff must check the parent's authority to act and the pupil's competence when handling a SAR.

5. Handling and recording requests

The FOI officer will maintain a secure log recording receipt, the applicable access regime, the scope, response deadline, searches, decisions, correspondence and any review. Requests containing different categories of information must be handled under the relevant regimes without applying one regime's deadline or charging rules to all parts.

Staff must identify relevant locations and custodians, including contractors, and document the searches undertaken and their results. Subject access searches must be reasonable and proportionate. Staff must refer uncertainties about scope, exemptions or personal data to the FOI officer and, where appropriate, the DPO.

The response will normally confirm whether the school holds the information and supply the information that can lawfully be released. If information is not held, say so and provide useful advice about another authority where appropriate. Before release, check the correct recipient, remove exempt content securely, and check hidden data, attachments and redactions. Keep a record of what was sent and why any information was withheld

6. Charges and cost limits

6.1 FOI

The appropriate cost limit for the school is £450, equivalent to 18 hours at the statutory rate of £25 per person per hour. A reasonable estimate may include determining whether information is held, locating it, retrieving it and extracting it. It must not include time spent deciding exemptions or redacting exempt content. Related requests may be aggregated only where the statutory conditions are met.

If the limit would be exceeded, the school may refuse under section 12, explaining its estimate and helping the requester narrow the request where practicable. Below the limit, the school will charge only permitted and reasonable communication costs, such as copying and postage, if it chooses to charge. Any fee will be notified in writing before supply. Any decision to supply above the limit for a fee must be agreed with the requester in advance and follow the applicable fees rules. The FOI officer will record any lawful effect of a fees notice on the response period.

6.2 EIR and personal information

The FOI £450 limit does not apply to EIR requests. Any EIR charge must be reasonable, supported by a published charging schedule and comply with regulation 8. Inspection on the premises and access to public registers or lists are free. Any proposed advance payment and effect on timing must follow EIR rules. A burdensome request must be assessed under the relevant EIR exception, not refused automatically at the FOI limit.

Subject access is normally free. Any exceptional fee or refusal must meet UK GDPR requirements and be explained. Separate educational-record charges, where applicable, must follow the education regulations. FOI charges must not be applied to a SAR.

7. Publication scheme

The school will maintain the ICO model publication scheme and an up-to-date guide to the information it publishes, using the ICO definition document for schools in England. The guide will identify what is available, how to obtain it, relevant contacts and any charges. It will be accessible through the school website and school office.

The seven classes are who we are and what we do; what we spend and how we spend it; what our priorities are and how we are doing; how we make decisions; our policies and procedures; lists and registers; and the services we offer. The FOI officer will review the guide at least annually and consider publishing useful responses more widely after checking confidentiality and personal data.

8. Withholding information

Disclosure is the starting point. Information may be withheld only where the applicable law permits it. Each decision must identify the relevant FOIA exemption or EIR exception and apply its actual tests. Some exemptions depend on the class of information; others require evidence of prejudice. A prejudice test must not be added to exemptions that do not require one.

For qualified FOIA exemptions, the school will assess whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. EIR exceptions must be interpreted restrictively with a presumption in favour of disclosure, applying the public interest test where required. Different rules apply to personal information. Reasons must be specific to the information and circumstances, not general assertions of sensitivity.

Release non-exempt information where it can be separated. The school may rely on section 14 for a vexatious or qualifying repeated FOI request only after an evidenced assessment. Under EIR, manifestly unreasonable requests require the relevant exception and public interest assessment. These are distinct tests; inconvenient requests or criticism are not automatically grounds for refusal.

A refusal will explain the legal basis, reasons and any required public interest balance, as far as this can be done without disclosing protected information. It will explain how to request an internal review and complain to the ICO. Any refusal to confirm or deny whether information is held requires its own lawful basis. Refusal notices must meet the applicable deadline.

9. Personal information and third parties

A request for the requester's own personal information must be considered under subject access rules, rather than disclosed publicly under FOIA or EIR. For someone else's personal information, apply FOIA section 40 or EIR regulation 13, as appropriate, with DPO advice where needed.

FOI and EIR disclosure is effectively disclosure to the public. Assess the relevant data protection requirements, including lawfulness, fairness and transparency, and any additional conditions for special category or criminal offence information. Consider the person's reasonable expectations, the context, potential harm and the public interest in accountability. Consent is not the only possible lawful basis, and refusal of consent does not itself decide the outcome.

Information about staff acting officially is not automatically releasable; private information is not automatically exempt without applying the proper test. Consider role, seniority, sensitivity and necessity on a case-by-case basis. Personal data within administrative decisions must still be assessed. Information about deceased people is outside data protection law, but other exemptions, exceptions or confidentiality obligations may apply.

Consult third parties when their views would assist the legal assessment. Explain the response deadline and that the school makes the final decision. Consultation does not give a third party a veto and does not itself extend the deadline. Do not share requester details unnecessarily when seeking advice from another organisation.

10. Contracts and information held by suppliers

Information held in connection with procurement and contracts, including information held on the school's behalf by suppliers, is subject to the applicable access regime. Contracts must support timely searches and disclosure decisions. They should require suppliers to cooperate with requests and distinguish information held on the school's behalf from information held solely for the supplier's own purposes.

Confidentiality clauses must not promise secrecy beyond what the law permits. Identify genuinely sensitive information and the reasons for sensitivity, but assess any later request on its circumstances. For FOIA, consider the actual requirements of section 41 or section 43 where relevant. For EIR, apply the relevant regulation 12 exception and required public

interest test. A confidentiality label or commercial objection alone does not justify withholding.

11. Internal reviews and complaints

11.1 FOI internal review

A requester who is dissatisfied with a response, a refusal, the information located or the handling of a request may ask for an internal review using the review contact in the adoption record or through the school office. No special wording is needed. The school asks for review requests within 40 working days of its response and will consider later requests where there is good reason.

The school will acknowledge the review, give a target response date and arrange a fresh assessment by someone not involved in the original decision where possible. This is a single-stage information rights review, separate from the school's general complaints stages. The school's normal target is 20 working days, extended to no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases with an explanation. These are the school's review commitments, reflecting ICO good practice, rather than a statutory FOIA review deadline.

11.2 EIR internal review

Under regulation 11, a requester may make written representations within 40 working days of the date on which they believe the school failed to comply. The school will reconsider its handling, notify its decision and reasons as soon as possible and within 40 working days of receiving the representations, and state any corrective action. This is a statutory review requirement.

11.3 ICO and data protection complaints

Review outcomes will explain the right to complain to the ICO at https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/ or through its helpline, 0303 123 1113. Where a decision is changed, release the information promptly and explain when any outstanding disclosure will follow.

Data protection and subject access complaints follow the school or trust data protection complaints procedure and may be raised with the school or DPO using the contacts in section 3. Provide an accessible route, acknowledge within 30 days of receipt, investigate appropriately without undue delay, keep the complainant informed and communicate the outcome without undue delay. The acknowledgement period does not extend a subject access deadline. Explain the right to complain to the ICO; do not require completion of the general school complaints stages first.

12. Preservation of records

On receipt of a request, preserve potentially relevant records and suspend routine deletion where needed, including deletion by suppliers. Maintain relevant material during any review

or complaint and follow records management advice before releasing the hold. Retain request records securely under the school's retention schedule and access controls.

Under section 77 FOIA and regulation 19 EIR, altering, defacing, blocking, erasing, destroying or concealing requested records with the intention of preventing disclosure of information to which the requester is entitled can be a criminal offence. Relevant data protection offences may also apply. Staff must report any suspected loss, deletion or interference immediately to the policy owner and FOI officer, involving the DPO where personal data is affected.

13. Training monitoring and review

The policy owner will ensure staff and governors know how to recognise requests, forward them promptly, protect information and preserve records. Arrangements must cover school closures and staff absence so EIR, SAR and complaints deadlines are monitored throughout holidays.

The FOI officer will report at least annually to the responsible body on request volumes, timeliness, refusals, reviews and learning, using anonymised information where possible. The DPO will advise on data protection issues independently. Any missed deadline or significant compliance concern will be escalated promptly.

The responsible body will review this policy by the next review date in the adoption record, normally annually, and earlier where legal changes, ICO guidance, school status or operational arrangements require it. Read it alongside the school or trust data protection, records retention, information security and complaints procedures and its publication scheme.

14. Key guidance and references

Legislation: FOIA 2000; EIR 2004; Freedom of Information (Time for Compliance with Request) Regulations 2004 as amended; Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004; UK GDPR; DPA 2018 as amended by DUAA 2025; Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005 where applicable. Guidance checked on 18 September 2026. Links below are live references for implementation.

ICO school FOI guidance

ICO FOI cost limits

ICO environmental information requests

ICO personal information exemptions

ICO subject access guidance

ICO FOI internal reviews

ICO EIR internal reviews

ICO data protection complaints

ICO education information

Revised and adopted by the Governing Body

Date: 5.10.26

To be Reviewed Annually