

Freedom of Information Policy & Publication Scheme

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Statement of Intent

As an educational provider, Advance Learning Partnership has an obligation to publish a freedom of information statement, outlining how we will meet our duties under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and associated regulations. The development and effective implementation of this policy fulfils that requirement.

More specifically, this policy outlines our school's policy and procedures for:

- The release and publication of private data and public records.
- Providing applicants with advice and assistance throughout the duration of their requests.

It also clarifies our position regarding the appropriate limit to the costs incurred by the school in obtaining any requested information, and on charging fees for its provision.

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to the following legislation:

- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004

This policy also has due regard to guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Cabinet Office (2018) 'Freedom of Information Code of Practice'
- ICO (2021) 'Definition document for the governing bodies of maintained and other state-funded schools in England'
- ICO (2015) 'Model publication scheme'
- ICO (2016) 'Duty to provide advice and assistance (Section 16)'
- ICO (2023) 'Time limits for compliance under the Freedom of Information Act (Section 10)'

This policy will be viewed in conjunction with the following other Trust policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy & Publication Scheme
- Information Management Policy & Data Retention

2. Accepting requests for information

The school will only accept a request for information which meets all of the following criteria:

- It is in writing; this includes requests sent to the school's official social media accounts
- It states the name of the applicant and an address for correspondence
- It adequately describes the information requested

A request will be treated as made in writing if it meets all of the following requirements:

- It is transmitted by electronic means
- It is received in legible form
- It is capable of being used for subsequent reference

3. General rights of access to information held by the school

Provided that the request meets the requirements set out in [section 2](#) of this policy, the school will comply with its duty to:

- Confirm or deny to any person making a request for information to the school, whether it holds information of the description specified in the request.
- Provide the documentation if the school confirms that it holds the requested information.

This will be completed no later than 20 school days, or 60 working days if this is shorter, from receipt of the request. Where a fee is charged, the timeframe within which the school has to respond to the request begins from the day the fee is received.

The school will not comply with this duty where:

- The school reasonably requires further information to meet a freedom of information request, has informed the applicant of this requirement, but was not subsequently supplied with that further information.
- The information is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage or is difficult to access for similar reasons.
- A request for information is exempt under section 2 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- The cost of providing the information exceeds the appropriate limit.
- The request is vexatious.
- The request is a repeated request from the same person made within 60 consecutive working days of the initial one.
- A fee notice was not honoured.
- The requested information is not held by the school for the purposes of the school's business.

Where information is, or is thought to be, exempt, the school will, within 20 school days, give notice to the applicant which:

- States that fact.
- Specifies the exemption in question.

If information falls within scope of a qualified exemption and the school needs additional time to consider the public interest test, the school may extend the deadline. The length of the extension will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Where a public interest test extension is required, the school will write to the applicant to inform them of this, stating the following information:

- Which exemption(s) the extension relies on and why
- A revised deadline for when the applicant will receive their response

Where a deadline has to be further extended, the school will write to the applicant again, stating the information outlined above.

Requests for information that is not recorded by the school (e.g. requests for explanations, clarification of policy and comments on the school's business) will not be considered valid requests. In these cases, the applicant will be provided with an explanation of why their request will not be treated under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the school will respond to the applicant through other channels as appropriate.

The information provided to the applicant will be in the format that they have requested, where possible. Where it is not possible to provide the information in the requested format, the school will assist the applicant by discussing alternative formats in which it can be provided. The information provided will also be in the language in which it is held, or another language that is legally required. If, under relevant disability and discrimination regulations, the school is legally obliged to provide the information in other forms and formats, it will do so.

In some cases, a request may be dealt with under more than one access regime, e.g. if the request involves both information about the school and personal information, it will be dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Staff are made aware that it is a criminal offence to alter, deface, block, erase, destroy or conceal any information held by the school with the intention of preventing disclosure following a request.

4. The appropriate limit

The school will not comply with any freedom of information request that exceeds the statutorily imposed appropriate limit of £450.

When determining whether the cost of complying with a freedom of information request is within the appropriate limit, the school will take account only of the costs we reasonably expect to incur in relation to:

- Determining whether it holds the information.
- Locating the information, or a document which may contain the information.
- Retrieving the information, or a document which may contain the information.
- Extracting the information from a document containing it.
- Costs related to the time spent by any person undertaking any of the activities outlined in this policy on behalf of the school, are to be estimated at £25 per person per hour.

The school is not required to search for information in scope of a request until it is within the cost limit. If responding to one part of a request would exceed the cost limit, the school does not have to respond to any other parts of the request.

Where multiple requests for information are made to the school within 60 consecutive working days of each other, either by a single person or by different persons who appear to be acting together, the estimated cost of complying with any of the requests is to be taken to be the total costs to the school of complying with all of them.

5. Charging fees

The school may, within 20 school days, give an applicant who has requested information from the school, a written notice stating that a fee is to be charged for the school's compliance.

Charges may be made for disbursements, such as the following:

- Production expenses, e.g. printing and photocopying
- Transmission costs, e.g. postage
- Complying with the applicant's preferences about the format in which they would like to receive the information, e.g. scanning

Fees charged will not exceed the total cost to the school of:

- Informing the person making the request whether we hold the information.
- Communicating the information to the person making the request.

Where a fee is to be charged, the school will not comply with the [General rights of access to information held by the school](#) section of this policy unless the requested fee is paid within a period of three months, beginning with the day on which the fees notice is given to the applicant.

Where a fee is paid by cheque, the school has the right to wait until the cheque is cleared before commencing work. Once a fee is received, the school will inform the applicant of the revised response deadline, i.e. an additional 20 school days (or 60 working days).

Where the school has underestimated the cost to be charged to an applicant, a second fees notice will not be issued; instead, the school will bear the additional costs.

When calculating the 20th school day in which to respond to a freedom of information request, the period beginning the day on which the fee notice is given to the applicant and ending with the day on which the fee is received will be disregarded.

6. Means of communication

Where, on making a request for information, the applicant expresses a preference for communication by any one of the following means, the school will, as far as is practicable, give effect to that preference:

- The provision to the applicant of a copy of the information in permanent form or in another form acceptable to the applicant.
- The provision to the applicant of a reasonable opportunity to inspect a record containing the information.
- The provision to the applicant of a digest, or summary of the information, in permanent form or in another form acceptable to the applicant.

Where a preference is not stated by the applicant, the school will communicate by any means which are reasonable under the circumstances.

7. Providing advice and assistance

The school will meet its duty to provide advice and assistance, as far as is reasonable, to any person who proposes to make, or has made, requests for information to the school.

The school may offer advice and assistance in the following circumstances:

- If an individual requests to know what types of information the school holds and the format in which it is available, as well as information on the fees regulations and charging procedures.
- If a request has been made, but the school is unable to regard it as a valid request due to insufficient information, leading to an inability to identify and locate the information.
- If a request has been refused, e.g. due to an excessive cost, and it is necessary for the school to assist the individual who has submitted the request.

The school will aid each individual on a case-by-case basis; examples of how the school will provide assistance include the following:

- Informing an applicant of their rights under the Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Assisting an individual in the focus of their request, e.g. by advising of the types of information available within the requested category
- Advising an applicant if information is available elsewhere and how to access this information
- Keeping an applicant informed on the progress of their request

Where the school wishes to ask a different public authority to deal with a request by transferring it to them, this will only be done with the agreement of the applicant.

To aid as outlined above, the school will engage in the following good practice procedures:

- Make early contact with an individual and keep them informed of the process of their request
- Accurately record and document all correspondence concerning the clarification and handling of any request
- Consider the most appropriate means of contacting the applicant, considering their individual circumstances

- Discuss with the applicant whether they would prefer to receive the information in an alternative format, in cases where it is not possible to provide the information requested in the manner originally specified
- Remain prepared to assist an applicant who has had their request denied due to an exemption

The school will consider what level of assistance is required for an applicant who has difficulty submitting a written request.

In circumstances where an applicant has difficulty submitting a written request, the school will:

- Make a note of the application over the telephone and then send the note to the applicant to confirm and return – the statutory time limit for a reply would begin here.
- Direct the individual to a different agency that may be able to assist with framing their request.

Please note: This list is not exhaustive, and the school may decide to take additional assistance measures that are appropriate to the case.

Where an applicant's request has been refused either because the information is accessible by other means, or the information is intended for future publication or research, the school, as a matter of good practice, will provide advice and assistance.

The school will advise the applicant how and where information can be obtained, if it is accessible by other means.

Where there is an intention to publish the information in the future, the school will advise the applicant of when this publication is expected. If the request is not clear, the school will ask for more detail from the applicant in order to identify and locate the relevant information, before providing further advice and assistance.

If the school believes the applicant has not provided their real name, the school will inform the applicant that the request will not be responded to until further information is received from the applicant.

If the school is able to clearly identify the elements of a request, it will respond following usual procedures and will provide advice and assistance for the remainder of the request. If any additional clarification is needed for the remainder of a request, the school will ensure there is no delay in asking for further information.

Applicants are given two months to provide any requested clarification. If an applicant decides not to follow the school's advice and assistance and fails to provide clarification, the school is under no obligation to contact the applicant again.

If the school is under any doubt that the applicant did not receive the advice and assistance, the school will re-issue it. The school is not required to help where an applicant's request is vexatious or repeated, as defined under section 14 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Where the school has already sent a refusal request in relation to a previous vexatious request, the school is not obliged to send another notice for future vexatious requests.

An ongoing evidence log is kept, recording relevant correspondence or behaviour that has been considered when a request has been classed as vexatious.

The school is not required to provide information where the cost of complying with a request exceeds the limit outlined in the Freedom of Information Act 2000. In such cases, the school will firstly provide the applicant with advice and assistance to help them reframe or refocus their request with a view of

bringing it within the cost limit. Then the school will consider whether any information can be provided free of charge if the applicant refuses to pay the fee.

If a request is refined, it will be treated as a new request.

A record will be kept by the Headteacher of all the advice and assistance provided.

8. Consultation with third parties

The school may need to consult third parties about information held in scope of a request to consider whether it would be suitable to disclose the information. Situations where third parties may need to be consulted include the following:

- When requests relate to persons or bodies who are not the applicant and/or the school
- When the disclosure of information is likely to affect the interests of persons or bodies who are not the applicant or the school

The school will consider if a third party needs to be directly consulted about a request, particularly, if there are contractual obligations that require consultation before information is disclosed.

Third parties will also be consulted where the school is proposing to disclose information relating to them or information that is likely to affect their business or private interests.

The views of third parties will be given appropriate weighting when deciding how to respond to a request. For example, if the third party created or provided the information, they may have a better understanding of its sensitivity.

It is ultimately the school's decision as to whether information in scope of a request will be released following any relevant consultation.

Where the school decides to release information following consultation with a third party, the third party will be informed in advance that the information is going to be disclosed.

Where the school intends to release information that relates to a large number of third parties, the school will consider whether it would be more appropriate to contact a representative organisation who can express views on behalf of the third parties, rather than contacting each party individually. If no representative organisation exists, the school may also consider only notifying or consulting a sample of the third parties relating to the disclosure. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

9. Internal reviews

When responding to requests for information, the details of the school's internal review process will be set out, including information about how applicants can request an internal review. Applicants will also be informed of their right to complain to the ICO if they are still dissatisfied following the outcome of the school's internal review.

Requests for an internal review should be made in writing to the school.

For a request for an internal review to be accepted, it must be made within 40 school days from the date the school issued an initial response to the request.

Upon receipt of an application, the school will acknowledge an application and inform the applicant of the intended response date. Responses will usually be delivered within 20 school days of receipt of the application.

If an internal review is complex, requires consultation with third parties or the relevant information is of high volume, the school may need to extend the usual response timeframe. In these cases, the school will inform the applicant and provide an alternative response date. In most cases, the extension will exceed no more than a further 20 school days; however, the actual length of the extension will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Where clarification is needed from an applicant regarding the review, the normal response period will not begin until clarification is received. Wherever possible, the review will be undertaken by a different member of staff than the person who took the original decision. During a review, the school will evaluate the handling of the request; particular attention will be paid to concerns raised by the applicant.

The applicant will be informed of the outcome of the review and a record will be kept of such reviews and the final decision that is made. If the outcome of the review is to disclose information that was previously withheld, the information will be provided to the applicant at the same time they are informed of the response to the review, where possible. If this is not possible, the applicant will be informed of when the information will be provided.

Within the response to a review, the applicant will be informed again of their right to complain to the ICO.

10. Publication scheme

The Trust will meet its duty to adopt and maintain a publication scheme which specifies the information which it will publish on each school's website, and whether the information will be available free of charge or on payment.

The publication scheme will be reviewed and, where necessary, updated on an annual basis.

Accessibility Statement

We are committed to ensuring that our policies are accessible to all individuals. If you require this policy document in an alternative format, such as Braille, large print, or another language, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Immersive Reader tools are a useful way for an enhanced reading experience. PDF and word have this as a function. Your accessibility needs are important to us, and we are here to assist you in any way possible.

Control of Documents- Records/Policies

Document Name	Staff Member
Freedom of Information Policy & Publication Scheme	Laura Mellis

Description	Name / Title	Signature	Date
Prepared by	Person who updated policy	<i>Laura Mellis</i>	06.05.25
Approved by	Person who approved policy	ELT	June 2025
Approved by (2 nd)	Second approver if applicable	Trust Board	10.07.2025

Appendix 1 - FOI Request Evidence Log

Date of request	Format (e.g. email or in writing)	Location (Where is the correspondence stored?)	Requester	Repeated request? (Yes/No)	Deemed vexatious or repeated? (Yes/No)	Comments

Appendix 2 - ICO model publication scheme information for ALP

This template guide covers only information we currently hold. If we do not hold some of the information listed below, we will mark it as 'not held' in the table.

Information to be published	How you can obtain the information	Charge
Class 1 - Who we are and what we do Information about us; our structures, locations and contacts <i>Current information only</i>		
Contact details for the academy/Trust, postal and email address. Named contacts with telephone number/email address	Advance Learning Partnership website and individual academy websites (see 'About us/Contact us' section)	No charge
Headteacher's contact details	Individual academy websites (see 'About us/Contact us' section)	No charge
Who's who in the school/academy	Individual academy websites (see 'About us' section)	No charge
Who's who on the governing body / board of governors and selection criteria for appointment Governing body's details	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance' section) and individual academy websites (see 'About us' section)	No charge
For academies: Trustees' details	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance Overview' section)	No charge
Instrument of Government / Articles of Association	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/Statutory Governance Information' section)	No charge
Gender Pay Gap Reporting	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/ALP	No charge

	Financials' section for ALP Gender Pay reports).	
School/academy prospectus	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Join our Trust' section) and individual academy websites (see 'Join us' or Key Information sections)	No charge
School/Academy session times and term dates	Individual academy websites (see 'School Life' section)	No charge
Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it Financial information about projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit <i>Current and previous financial year as a minimum</i>		
Annual budget and financial statements	WEBSITE: Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/ALP Financials' section) and Companies House website.	No charge
	HARD COPY: available upon request – dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
For academies: Annual accounts	WEBSITE: Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/ALP Financials' section)	No charge
	HARD COPY: available upon request – dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
Capital funding	WEBSITE: Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/ALP Financials' section)	No charge

	HARD COPY: available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
Financial Audits reports	WEBSITE: Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/ALP Financials' section) or see Companies House	No charge
	HARD COPY: available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
Details of expenditure items over £2000 (published at least annually, where practical, at a more frequent quarterly or six-monthly interval)	HARD COPY: available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
Staff pay – details of senior staff salaries in bands of £ 5,000. For all other posts, identify levels of pay by salary range	HARD COPY: available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
Staff allowances and expenses that can be incurred or claimed	HARD COPY: available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
For academies: Trustees' allowances that can be incurred or claimed, and a record of total payments made to individual trustees	HARD COPY: available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
Governors' allowances that can be incurred or claimed	HARD COPY: available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
Procurement and contracts we have entered into	HARD COPY: available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges

Details of any premiums we receive such as Pupil Premium.	WEBSITE: Individual Academy website (see 'Premium Allocations' section)	No charge
TU facility time reporting	Electronic copy through request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews <i>Current information as a minimum</i>		
Annual Report	Electronic copy through request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
Latest Ofsted report - Summary - Full report - Post-inspection action plan	Individual Academy website (see 'About us' or 'Key Information' sections) Or visit Ofsted website directly: https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/	No charge
Exam and assessment results	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Our Academies/Outcomes' section)	No charge
Performance tables	Individual Academy website (see 'About us' or 'Key Information' sections) Or visit DfE website directly: https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/	No charge
Careers programme information	Individual Academy website (see 'Personal Development' section).	No charge
The school's/academy's future plans. Eg. proposals for and any consultation on the future of our school/academy, such as a change in status.	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'About us/Improvement Strategies' section)	No charge

School profile and performance data supplied to the English Government	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Our Academies/Outcomes' section and 'About us/Trust Prospectus' section)	No charge
Data Protection impact assessments (in full or summary format) or any other impact assessment (eg Health & Safety Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessments etc), as appropriate and relevant	Electronic copy through request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
Class 4 – How we make decisions Decision making processes and records of decisions <i>Current and previous three years as a minimum</i>		
Admissions policy and, where applicable, admission decisions (<i>eg application numbers/patterns of successful applicants, including criteria on which applications were successful</i>)	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance /Admissions' section). Admission sections/policies feature on Trust and individual academy websites (see 'Join us/Admissions' section and 'Policies & Procedures' section). Links are featured to both Durham County Council Admissions page: https://www.durham.gov.uk/school-admissions and Darlington Borough Council Admissions page: https://www.darlington.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-years/admissions/	No charge
Agendas and minutes of meetings of the governing body and its committees, unless an exemption applies to the information or parts of it.	Available upon request to: governance@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges

Class 5 – Our policies and procedures

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

Current information only

School policies and other documents, such as behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, e-Safety, values and ethos etc.	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/Policies & Procedures' section). Individual academy websites (see 'About us or Key Information/Policies & Procedures' section)	No charge
Safeguarding and child protection, including protecting children's personal data	Individual academy websites (see 'About us or Key Information/Safeguarding' section). Privacy notices for pupils and parent/carers feature on all websites under Policies & Procedures section.	No charge
Equality and Diversity	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/Policies & Procedures' section). Equality & Diversity statistics published (see 'Governance /Statutory Governance Information' section and 'ALP Financials' section for ALP Gender Pay reports). Individual academy websites (see 'About us/Equality Objectives' section).	No charge
Policies and procedures relating to recruitment and human resources	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/Policies &	No charge

	Procedures' section) and individual academy websites (see 'About us/Policies & Procedures' section) for Whistleblowing Policy for example. Other internal policies available on request. All individual academy websites have a 'Vacancies' section in the 'About us' page which links to the ALP vacancies page: https://alplearning.org.uk/careers/vacancies/	
Special educational needs	Individual academy websites feature their own 'SEND' page	No charge
Customer service and Complaints policies and procedures	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/Policies & Procedures' section). Individual academy websites (see 'About us/Policies & Procedures' section)	No charge
Pay Policy	Electronic copy through request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
Records management (Information security policies Records retention, destruction and archive policies) Data protection (including information sharing and CCTV usage policies)	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/Policies & Procedures' section). Individual academy websites (see 'About us/Policies & Procedures' section) – for E-Safety Policy, Privacy Notices. Other internal policies available on request.	No charge

Careers Programme Information	Individual academy websites feature their own 'Personal Development/Careers' page	No charge
Charging regimes and policies	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/Policies & Procedures' section). Individual academy websites (see 'About us/Policies & Procedures' section) – for Charging and Remissions Policy.	No charge
Class 6 – Lists and Registers Currently maintained lists and registers only (this does not include the attendance register)		
Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments	Available on request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
CCTV - Details of the locations of any overt CCTV surveillance cameras operated by us or on our behalf	Available on request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
Disclosure logs, ie information provided in response to FOI requests	Available on request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
Asset register and Information Asset register	Available on request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
Any information we are currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers	Available on request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	No charge
Class 7 – The services we offer Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses <i>Current information only</i>		
Extra-curricular activities	Individual academy websites	No charge
Out of school/academy clubs	Individual academy websites	No charge

Services for which we are entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees	Advance Learning Partnership website (see 'Governance/Policies & Procedures' section). Individual academy websites (see 'About us/Policies & Procedures' section) – for Charging and Remissions Policy.	No charge
Our publications, leaflets, books and newsletters	Individual academy websites.	No charge
	For Trust documents, available upon request to dpo@alplearning.org.uk	See Schedule of Charges
Additional Information Any information that is not itemised in the lists above		

Schedule of charges

This describes how the charges have been arrived at

TYPE OF CHARGE	DESCRIPTION	BASIS OF CHARGE
Disbursement cost	Photocopying @ 10p per sheet (black & white)	Actual cost
	Photocopying @ 50p per sheet (colour)	Actual cost
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2 nd class
Statutory Fee		In accordance with the relevant legislation
Other	£2 which includes research for each item	

*Before we produce the hard copy information requested, we shall inform you of the total cost.

You may wish to refine the request to reduce the cost and we would be happy to discuss this with you.