



**South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
South Gloucestershire and Stroud Academy Trust**

Group Freedom of Information Policy

**If you would like this document in an alternate format
Please contact the Human Resources Department**

Prepared by:	Gavin Murray
Job Title / Role:	Deputy Principal & Data Protection Officer
Ref. No.: Q/P 145	Date of this version: 01 July 2024 Review date: 31 July 2025 Upload to External College website? Yes Upload to e-Campus? Yes
Approved by:	SGS Academy Trust Board SGS College Corporation
Date of Approval:	10 July 2024 (SGSAT)

MANDATORY INITIAL IMPACT SCREENING		
Completed by:		
Gavin Murray	Deputy Principal	01/07/2024
I have read the guidance document: Completing a Policy Impact Assessment?		✓
If this policy has been up-dated, please tick to confirm that the initial impact screening has also been reviewed:		<input type="checkbox"/>



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	
Characteristic	This policy seeks to:
Age	No appreciable impact
Disability	Commit to making reasonable adjustments to promote equality of access and opportunity for learners, employees and members of the public with disabilities and/or learning difficulties/disabilities.
Faith or Belief	No appreciable impact
Gender	No appreciable impact
Race or Ethnicity	No appreciable impact
Orientation	No appreciable impact
Gender reassignment	No appreciable impact
Economic disadvantage	Use available resources to identify and address any issues of inequality as a result of social and economic factors. Supporting learners and staff, both academically and pastorally in order for all to be successful
Rural isolation	No appreciable impact
Marriage	No appreciable impact
Pregnancy & maternity	No appreciable impact
Carers & care leavers	No appreciable impact
Vulnerable persons	Safeguarding children or vulnerable adults
Please identify any sections of the policy that specifically seek to maximise opportunities to improve diversity within any of the College's stakeholder groups:	
Please identify any sections of the policy that specifically seek to improve equality of opportunity within any of the College's stakeholder groups:	
Section 5	
Is there any possibility that this policy could operate in a discriminatory way?	<input type="checkbox"/> x
If you have ticked yes (red), which characteristic will be most affected? Choose an item.	
If yes please confirm that the Policy has been sent for a full Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment, and note the date:	<input type="checkbox"/> Click or tap to enter a date.

Note: if the policy does not seek to increase diversity or improve equality you should go back and review it before submitting it for approval.

MAPPING OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS	
Which United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Right does this policy most protect:	Art. 17 Access to information Art. 42 Right to know your rights Choose an item.
Which Human Right (HRA) does this policy most protect:	Choose an item. Choose an item.

DATA PROTECTION & PRIVACY BY DESIGN SCREENING	
Tick to confirm that you have considered any data protection issues as part of the design and implementation of this policy; and, that implementing this policy will <u>not</u> result in the collection, storage or processing of personal data outside of official College systems:	✓
Tick to indicated that this policy has or requires a Data Privacy Impact Assessment:	<input type="checkbox"/>

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT		
Does this policy relate directly or indirectly to any legal, regulatory environmental or sustainability standard(s)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If so, please list them:		
Will any aspects of this policy result in:		
Reduced miles travelled or provide / improve / promote alternatives to car-based transport (e.g. public transport, walking and cycling car sharing, the use of low emission vehicles, community transport, environmentally friendly fuels and/or technologies)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reduced waste, environmental hazards and/or toxic materials for example by reducing PVC, photocopier and printer use, air pollution, noise pollution, mining or deforestation? Or increase the amount of College waste that is recycled or composted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reduced water consumption?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reduced instances of single use plastic?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reduced use of natural resources such as raw materials and energy to promote a circular economy?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Improved resource efficiency of new or refurbished buildings (water, energy, density, use of existing buildings, designing for a longer lifespan)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will this policy improve green space or access to green space?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please list the sections of this policy which specifically target an improved environment:		

Will any aspects of this policy result in:		
The promotion of healthy working lives (including health and safety at work, work-life/home-life balance and family friendly practices)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Greater employment opportunities for local people?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The promotion of ethical purchasing of goods or services for example by increasing transparency of modern slavery in our supply chain?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Greater support for the local economy through the use of local suppliers, SMEs or engagement with third sector or community groups?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The promotion of better health, increased community resilience, social cohesion, reduced social isolation or support for sustainable development?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mitigation of the likely effects of climate change (e.g. identifying proactive and community support for vulnerable groups; contingency planning for flood/snow, heatwaves and other weather extremes)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The promotion of better awareness of sustainability, healthy behaviours, mental wellbeing, living independently or self-management?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Please list the sections of this policy which specifically target improved sustainability:		

What is the *estimated* carbon impact of this policy (in terms of tCO2e)	Increased (+tCO2e) *	Decreased (-tCO2e) <input type="checkbox"/>	Net Zero CO2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Records collation, transfer, storage, dealing with and responding to FOIA requests generates CO2, where possible requests are responded to electronically to reduce the impact of printing and postage.			

Mandatory initial impact screening completed by:	Gavin Murray, Deputy Principal
Date	01/07/2024
Initial impact screening supported by (Please list each individual)	Ben Winter, Assistant Date Protection Officer

Group Freedom of Information Policy

1. Executive Summary

This policy sets out your rights and our obligations under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and the INSPIRE Regulations. SGS College and Academy Trust publishes certain information as a matter of routine under its Model Publication Scheme. This policy also sets out how a request, for information, should be made or what you can do if you are seeking to request access to information not published under that scheme. This policy also describes how we intend to deal with any such request.

2. Introduction

Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) the public have a right to request information recorded and held by SGS College, SGS Group and SGS Academy Trust in its capacity as a public authority.

Throughout the remainder of the policy references to 'SGS' should be read as meaning (SGS Group (Commercial Services), SGS College and the SGS Academy Trust, including The Forest High School, SGS Berkley Green UTC and SGS Pegasus).

You may ask us for any information that you think we may hold. However, the right to access information **only** applies to recorded information which includes information held electronically or in hardcopy as well as images, video and audio recordings.

Should you wish to make a request:

- You should identify the information you want as clearly as possible; although your request can be in the form of a question, rather than a request for specific documents.

SGS does **not** have to answer your question if this would mean creating new information or giving an opinion or judgment that is not already recorded.

Not all information held by SGS is accessible under the FOIA; and some information may be exempt, for example because it would unfairly reveal personal details about somebody else or if it is commercially sensitive, protected by copyright or other intellectual property rights.

You don't have to know whether the information you want is covered by the Environmental Information Regulations or the Freedom of Information Act. When you make a request, it is for SGS to decide which law we need to follow. We will explain our decision making, in this respect, when we respond to any request we receive.

3. Freedom of Information Regulations Act 2000 (“FOIA”)

The FOIA provides public access to information held by public authorities.

It does this in two ways:

- Public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities; and
- Members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities.

The Act covers recorded information that is held by a public authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The FOIA **does not** give people access to their own personal data (information about themselves) such as their educational record. If you want to know what information that SGS holds about you, you should refer to our Data Privacy and Protection Policy.

Public authorities spend money collected from taxpayers and make decisions that can significantly affect many peoples’ lives. Therefore access to certain information can help the public hold authorities accountable for their actions and allows for public debate to be better informed and more productive.

Public authorities include government departments, local authorities, the NHS, state schools and police forces. However, the Act does not necessarily cover every organisation that receives public money. For example, it does not cover some charities that receive grants and certain private sector organisations that perform public functions.

4. Model Publication Scheme

Adopting a Model Publication Scheme is a requirement of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the purpose of which is to promote greater openness and accountability across the public sector by requiring all “public authorities” to make information available proactively. The Publication Scheme describes the information that a public body publishes or intends to publish. It is not a list of the actual publications as this will change as new material is published or existing material revised. Rather it is the public authority’s commitment to make available the information described.

The SGS Model Publication Scheme can be found in the attached annexes, it contains a list of information we publish, which is predominantly available via our website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on the website or if you prefer not to access the information via the website, a written request should be made as follows.

5. Requirements for making a FOIA request:

For a request to be dealt with according to the Freedom of Information Act, requests must be:

- Made directly to SGS in writing, for example in a letter or an email or verbal or written requests for environmental information;
- The request must state your real name; and
- Provide an address to which we can reply. This can be a postal or email address.

You **do not** have to:

- Mention the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations; or
- Know whether the information is covered by the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations; or
- Say why you want the information, but telling us why you want the information or what you intend to do with the information could help us to respond more accurately.

6. Getting the most out of a request

The more information given to us about your request, the more likely it is that we will be able to deal with your request efficiently and to help you by providing guidance and advice where necessary.

Requests for information should:

- Describe the information required as clearly as possible;
- Include a date on the request so that we can reply within the 20-day timescale.

Please:

- Only ask for information that you think we may hold, identifying the information you want as clearly as possible;
- Be aware that the right to access information **only** covers recorded information; and,
- Access to information will not be provided to you as an individual but to the public at large. **Therefore**, SGS may consider public interest arguments before deciding whether to disclose information. We will not normally publish information that is not in the public interest.
- Be aware that if your request is in the form of a question, rather than a request for specific documents, we do not have to answer your question if this would mean creating new information or giving an opinion or judgment that is not already recorded;
- If you are planning on asking for a large volume of information, or make a very general request, we may ask you to assist us by considering whether you can narrow or refocus the scope of the request, to reduce any unnecessary burden or costs on SGS resources.
- The UK Information Commissionaire's Office advises that the amount of time and resources that we must expend in responding to a request should not be out of all proportion to that request's value and purpose. SGS will **not** respond to requests where the cost of complying with the request exceeds the

appropriate cost limit of £600. If we estimate that the appropriate cost limit may be exceeded, we will refuse the request and explain why.

- Where you find it impossible or difficult to make a request in writing please do let us know so that we can consider making a reasonable adjustment for you under the Equality Act 2010; If you wish to receive information in a particular format, due to a disability or because English is not your first language, please make this clear when you make your request.

Before making a request, you may find it help to ask yourself:

- **Is the information you are considering requesting suitable for general publication?** The aim of the Freedom of Information Act is to make information available to the public. Only information that would be given to anybody who asked for it or would be suitable for the public to see can be obtained. We therefore may refuse your request based on certain exemptions available to us under the FOIA.
- **Does your request have a serious or clear purpose?** If not, then the FOIA and EIR are probably not an appropriate means through which to pursue your request/concern. The ICO have published a list of dos and don'ts as a quick reference tool to help users make effective freedom of information requests [here](#).

7. How we will handle your request:

Where the information requested is readily available, we aim to provide this within a few days. Where it takes longer to gather the information we aim to supply the information within 20 working days.

When responding to requests we will tell you whether we hold any information falling within the scope of the request; and provide that information.

SGS does not charge a fee for responding to requests for information. However, under Section 9 (et. Al.) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 SGS does charge reasonable fees for reproducing documents containing the information, and the postage costs of transmitting the information, as follows:

- photocopying @ 15p per sheet; and,
- postage @ the Post Office's published rates (depending upon weight) for first class recorded delivery.

If we decide to charge a fee, we will provide you with the details of this fee in a fee notice. Note: SGS will **not** send information until we have received the fee; and the time limit for complying with the request excludes the time spent waiting for the fee to be paid. If we do not receive payment within three months of issuing a fee notice, we will **not** respond to your request; but we will tell you about the deadlines in our fees notice.

If you request information which is available from another source that is not a public authority, we may also add VAT to our fee.

8. Making a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act:

Write for the attention of the Principalship: SGS College, Stroud Campus, Stroud, Stratford Road, Gloucestershire, GL5 4AH.

9. Refusing Requests

SGS is committed to being open and transparent, however, the FOIA recognises that there will be valid reasons why some kinds of information may be withheld, such as if its release would damage commercial interests. For some exemptions we must consider whether the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in releasing it. If we decide that the information cannot be released, we will explain why. However, we will **not** deal with vexatious or repeated requests or in some cases if the cost exceeds an appropriate limit.

If we refuse your request, we will tell you why.

10. Complaints or concerns

If you are not satisfied with our response to a FOIA or EIR information request, complaints or concerns should be made in writing with a request for an internal review and sent to:

The Data Protection Officer, SGS College, Filton Campus, Filton Avenue, Bristol, BS34 7AT.

We will aim to carry out the internal review as soon as possible or within 20 working days for FOIA reviews and 40 working days for EIR reviews. We will not make a charge for conducting an internal review.

If you remain dissatisfied with our response or if we fail to review your case, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner provides an online facility for reporting complaints which you will find at <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

11. Sensitive Information

Where SGS reasonably considers that particularly sensitive information is being sought, the Data Protection Officer will inform the appropriate governing body (via that body's Clerk) prior to release of the information.

12. DfE and ESFA Conditions of Funding Agreement

The DfE and ESFA Conditions of Funding Agreement (GFE & Specialist Colleges) sets out specific clauses in relation to Freedom of Information and Confidentiality.

13. Related Policies:

- Data Privacy and Protection Policy
- SGS Complaints Policy and Procedure
- SGS CCTV Policy
- SGS Model Publication Scheme

Annex A: Model Publication Scheme **SGS Further Education Corporation**

<p>Who we are and what we do Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legal framework / Instrument of Government / Articles of Association ▪ How the institution is organised ▪ Lists of and information relating to organisations it works in partnership with and any companies wholly or partially owned by it ▪ Location and contact details ▪ Student activities 	
<p>What we spend and how we spend it Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding / income ▪ Budgetary and account information; expenditure ▪ Financial audit reports ▪ Capital programme ▪ Financial regulations and procedures ▪ Pay policy ▪ Staff allowances and expenses ▪ Governors' allowances ▪ Register of suppliers ▪ Procurement and tender procedures and reports ▪ Contracts 	
<p>What our priorities are and how we are doing Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual report and Self-assessment report ▪ Corporate and business plans ▪ Teaching and learning strategy ▪ Academic quality and standards ▪ Most recent Ofsted inspection report ▪ Privacy impact assessments (in full or summary format) ▪ External review information ▪ Corporate relations ▪ Government and regulatory reports 	
<p>How we make decisions Decision making processes and records of decisions.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minutes, agendas and papers from governing body, council, academic boards, steering groups and committees. 	
<p>Our policies and procedures Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policies and procedures for conducting college business ▪ Procedures and policies relating to academic services ▪ Procedures and policies relating to student services ▪ Procedures and policies relating to human resources ▪ Procedures and policies relating to recruitment 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Code of Conduct for members of governing bodies ▪ Equality and Diversity policies and our Equality Objectives ▪ Health and Safety ▪ Estate management ▪ Complaints policies and procedures ▪ Records management and personal data policies ▪ Charging regimes and policies 	
<p>Lists and registers</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any information the college is currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers ▪ Asset registers ▪ Information asset register ▪ Details and locations of overt CCTV surveillance cameras operated by or on behalf of the college ▪ Disclosure logs ▪ Any register of interests kept in the college ▪ Senior staff's declaration of interests ▪ Register of gifts and hospitality provided to senior staff 	
<p>The services we offer Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prospectus and course content ▪ Services for outside bodies ▪ Health including medical services ▪ Welfare and counselling services ▪ Funding, such as grants and bursaries, available to students from the college ▪ Careers advice ▪ Chaplaincy services and multi-faith provision ▪ Services for which the college is entitled to recover a fee together with those fees ▪ Sports and recreational facilities ▪ Facilities relating to music, art and other cultural activities ▪ Museums, libraries, special collections and archives ▪ Conference facilities ▪ Advice and guidance ▪ Media releases 	

Annex B: Model Publication Scheme **SGS Academy Trust**

<p>Who we are and what we do Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Articles of Association ▪ School prospectus and curriculum ▪ Board of Trustees/ Local School Boards ▪ School session times and term dates ▪ Location and contact information of each school 	
<p>What we spend and how we spend it Financial information about projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual budget plan and financial statements for the Trust and individual schools ▪ Capital funding ▪ Financial audit reports ▪ Procurement and contracts ▪ Pay policy ▪ Staff allowances and expenses ▪ Staff pay and grading structures ▪ Trustees/Local School Board members' allowances 	
<p>What our priorities are and how we are doing Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Performance data supplied to the government ▪ Latest Ofsted report ▪ Performance management information ▪ The school's future plans ▪ Safeguarding and child protection 	
<p>How we make decisions Decision-making processes and records of decisions</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Admissions policy / decisions ▪ Minutes of meetings of the governing body and its committees 	
<p>Our policies and procedures Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School policies and other documents ▪ Records management and personal data policies ▪ Equality and diversity ▪ Policies and procedures for the recruitment of staff ▪ Charging regimes and policies 	
<p>Lists and registers (Trust and Schools)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curriculum circulars and statutory instruments ▪ Disclosure logs ▪ Asset register ▪ Any information the school is currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers 	
<p>The services we offer</p>	

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Extra-curricular activities▪ Out of school clubs▪ School publications▪ Services for which the school is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees▪ Leaflets, booklets and newsletters | |
|---|--|

Annex C: Model Publication Scheme **SGS Higher Education Provision**

<p>Who we are and what we do Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legal framework and information about how the Higher Education offer is organised ▪ Location and contact details ▪ Lists of and information relating to organisations which the College's Higher Education Faculty has responsibility for, those it works in partnership with, those it sponsors and companies wholly or partially owned by it. ▪ Student activities 	
<p>What we spend and how we spend it Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding / income ▪ Financial statements, budgets and variance reports ▪ Financial audit reports ▪ Capital programme ▪ Financial regulations and procedures ▪ Staff allowances and expenses ▪ Staff pay and grading structures ▪ Register of suppliers ▪ Procurement and tender procedures and reports ▪ Contracts ▪ Research funding 	
<p>What our priorities are and how we are doing Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual report and Self-evaluation ▪ Corporate and business plans ▪ Teaching and learning strategy ▪ Academic quality and standards ▪ Privacy impact assessments (in full or summary format) ▪ External and internal audit; review information ▪ Corporate relations ▪ Government and regulatory reports ▪ Higher Education compliance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Widening Participation 	
<p>How we make decisions Decision making processes and records of decisions.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agendas, officers' reports, background papers and minutes from governing body, Council / Senate, academic boards, steering groups and committees ▪ Teaching and learning committee minutes ▪ Minutes of staff / student consultation meetings ▪ Appointment committees and procedures 	
<p>Our policies and procedures Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policies and procedures for conducting Higher Education business ▪ Procedures and policies relating to academic services ▪ Procedures and policies relating to student services ▪ Procedures and policies relating to human resources ▪ Pay policy statement ▪ Procedures and policies relating to recruitment ▪ Code of Conduct for members of governing bodies ▪ Equality and Diversity policies; Equality Scheme ▪ Health and Safety ▪ Estate management ▪ Research policy and strategy ▪ Publicly funded research outputs and data ▪ Charging regimes and policies 	
<p>Higher Education Lists and registers</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher Education Information we are currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers. ▪ Any register of interests kept in respect of Higher Education 	
<p>The services we offer Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding, such as grants and bursaries, available to students benefiting from the Higher Education offer ▪ Services for which the College is entitled to recover a fee together with those fees 	