

FOI template and guidance

Requesting information via a Freedom of Information [FOI] request can be an effective means of establishing what policies and systems a school is using.

When writing a request the Information Commissioner's Office [1] advise you must include:

- your real name; and
- an email or postal address.

You do not need to:

- know which law you're making a request under (eg FOIA, EIR or INSPIRE); or
- say why you want the information, however, if you do this may help with your request.

The organisation should send you the information within 20 working days of receiving your request. Some schools are allowed more time during school holidays.

Tips: Address the letter/ email to the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors by name.

Don't submit catch-all requests such as "send me everything about x". Public bodies can refuse requests that they think are too broad or burdensome.

Don't combine a request for information with a complaint about the public body or a comment about their actions. This could make it hard to interpret what you're requesting and you may not get a response you are happy with.

Do not use threatening, offensive or accusatory language or be offensive about individual members of staff. The public body can refuse your request if you are.

Suggested FOI requests:

1. Please provide a pdf copy of your school's policies and/or guidance relating to single-sex and, if relevant, mixed-sex toilet facilities.
2. If relevant, please provide a pdf copy of your school's consultation results, risk assessments and evidence supporting your mixed-sex toilet facilities policies and/or guidance.
- 3a. Please provide information regarding any incidents the School, the Local Authority and/or Academy Trust and/or police have recorded involving a child of the opposite sex (identifying as 'transgender' or otherwise) in single-sex toilets eg a male child causing distress to a female child/children in the female toilets or vice versa.

3b. If your school provides mixed-sex toilet facilities, please provide information regarding any incidents the School, the Local Authority and/or Academy Trust and/or police have recorded involving children in mixed-sex toilets eg a male child causing distress to a female child/children in the mixed-sex toilets or vice versa.

4a. Please provide information regarding any complaints the School, the Local Authority and/or Academy Trust and/or police have received involving children of the opposite sex (identifying as the opposite sex or otherwise) in single-sex toilets eg from parents concerned about their child's privacy, dignity and safety.

4b. If your school provides mixed-sex toilet facilities, please provide information regarding any complaints the School, the Local Authority and/or Academy Trust and/or police have received involving children in mixed-sex toilets eg from parents concerned about their child's privacy, dignity and safety.

5. Does your school have a policy and/or guidance relating to children who could be considered to be experiencing gender distress, sometimes referred to as 'transgender'? Please provide a pdf copy of the document/s.

6a. Does your school operate a policy of self-ID for gender identity; in other words, whether the school considers the sex/gender of a child to be the sex/gender that that child declares it to be?

6b. Does your school allow a child who identifies as a different gender to their sex to use toilets defined according to their new gender, rather than their biological sex. Please provide a pdf copy of the relevant document/s relating to 6a and 6b.

Suggested FOI request letter/ email:

Dear [Name of Head Teacher and/ or Chair of Governors]

Under Freedom of Information Act Regulations, I would like to request the following information:

[When requesting information, be specific and avoid general questions.]

Please do not hesitate to contact me *[insert telephone number if you are happy to receive a telephone call]* should any aspect of my request require clarification.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[1] <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/official-information/how-to-write-an-effective-request-for-information/#:~:text=Make%20your%20request%20as%20specific%20as%20possible&text=Try%20to%20include%20details%20such,send%20me%20everything%20about%20x%E2%80%9D.>