Freedom of Information Policy

This policy is effective for all schools within The Mead Educational Trust, the Teaching School, the SCITT and all other activities under the control of the Trust and reporting to the Trust Board.

Version:	5.1
Ratified by:	Executive Team
Date ratified:	3rd November 2026
Next review date:	October 2028 (every 2 years)

Revision History:

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes:
5.1	Oct 2026	CBR	Section 5 – amended time limit for responding to FOIs from 20 working days to 20 school days, or 60 working days if this is shorter in line with Information Commission guidance
5.0	Sept 2026	CBR	Sections 2, 3 & 9 – addition of references to the use of AI in line with ICO updated FOI guidance
Earlier versions of this policy are available on request.			

1. Introduction

TMET, along with all other public authorities, must comply with the Freedom of Information Act. The Act was created as an initiative to increase openness and transparency in Government, with the Freedom of Information Act passed on 30 November 2000.

The Act obliges organisations covered by it to publish certain information about their activities and, additionally, to make any other information (with a number of statutory exceptions) available upon request.

2. Scope

This policy is intended to cover all records created in the course of the business of TMET. This includes records held in electronic systems, emails, collaboration platforms, cloud services and information generated or stored through authorised Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools used for Trust business purposes.

This policy applies to all TMET employees, including temporary, casual or agency staff and contractors, consultants and suppliers working for, or on behalf of, TMET.

3. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

TMET recognises that requesters may use AI tools to assist in drafting Freedom of Information requests. Requests generated or supported by AI will be processed in the same way as any other request and will be considered valid where they meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Where the wording of a request is unclear, excessively broad or requires clarification, TMET may seek clarification from the requester and will provide reasonable advice and assistance to help the requester refine their request where appropriate.

Information created, generated or stored through AI tools for Trust business purposes may constitute recorded information under the Freedom of Information Act and may be disclosable where held by TMET, subject to any applicable exemptions.

4. Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, which is approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), and to publish information covered by the scheme.

The scheme must set out the public authority's commitment to make certain classes of information routinely available, such as policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, annual reports and financial information.

To help schools do this the ICO has developed a model publication scheme. The Trust has adopted the ICO version designed for academies. Each academy has an individually tailored publication scheme published on their website, alongside the ICO Publication Schemes: a Guide as required.

The publication schemes are monitored annually by the Trust.

5. Requesting information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 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.

Under the second provision of the Act, the right to request information, anyone may make a request in writing for recorded information held by TMET or its schools. A request for information not included already published must be made in writing to:

Email:
info@tmet.uk

Post:
Data Protection Lead
TMET
The Mead Centre
343 Gipsy Lane
Leicester
LE4 7DD

Requests for information will be met within **20 school days** of receipt, or 60 working days if this is shorter. Requests for information that require TMET to complete a public interest test will be met within **40 working days** of receipt.

6. Transferring requests for information

Should a request for information relate to Leicester City Council, TMET will acknowledge to the requester that the request relates to Leicester City Council and refer the requester to Leicester City Council, who will process this request for information, within **10 working days** of receipt.

7. Subject access requests

These are requests for personal data. Please refer to TMET's Subject Access Request Policy.

8. Exemptions

The Freedom of Information Act contains 23 exemptions whereby information can be withheld. TMET may choose to withhold information if it falls within the scope of one or more of these exemptions. Where a request is made for information that includes exemptions, TMET will apply a public interest test before deciding whether to disclose the information.

Where information is withheld under an exemption TMET will, in most cases, inform the applicant as to why the information is being withheld, citing the exception.

9. Vexatious requests

The Act allows TMET to refuse any requests that have the potential to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress.

Decisions on whether a request is vexatious will be taken by the Chief Executive Officer with the assistance of legal advice where necessary.

In assessing whether a request is vexatious or repeated, TMET may consider the volume, frequency, burden and context of requests, including situations where AI tools are used to generate multiple substantially similar requests or correspondence.

10. Record keeping

All Freedom of Information requests will be logged and tracked by TMET. This will aid identification of repeat, similar or vexatious requests.

11. Internal reviews

Applicants dissatisfied with TMET's response to a request, including appeals against decisions to withhold information, may request an internal review within **40 working days** of receipt of the FOI response. An internal review will be undertaken by an impartial senior member of Trust staff. The Trust will endeavour to provide the outcome of the review within **20 working days** from the date on which it received the request.

12. Information Commissioner

After an internal review, you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you have the right to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner under FOIA s50 (see FOI and EIR complaints | ICO):

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire, SK9 5AF