



## **Freedom of Information Policy**

<b>Document Control Information</b>			
<b>Freedom of Information Policy, Issue 2 – August 2017</b>			
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<b>Revision History</b>			
<b>Author</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Date Authorised</b>
R Righini	New policy extracted section from data protection policy	1	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2017
<b>Authorisation</b>			
<b>Approved By:</b>	This policy was approved by the Trustees		
<b>Date Approved:</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2017		
<b>Date of Next review:</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2019		
<b>Document Owner &amp; Reviewer:</b>	The senior manager responsible for this policy is the Operations Director		
<b>Equality Impact</b>			
<b>Statement</b>	<p>We welcome feedback on this document and the way it operates. We are interested to know of any possible or actual adverse impact that may affect any MATs in respect of any of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics.</p> <p>The person responsible for equality impact assessment for this document is the Director of Equality and Diversity.</p>		
<b>Screening</b>	<p>This document has been screened by the Equality Team and the impact has been assessed as:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Medium</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> High</p>		

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This policy document represents New Bridge Multi Academy Trust (MAT)'s response to the requirement under the Freedom of Information Act for publicly funded organisations.

## **2. Scope of Policy**

- 2.1. This document advises how official information can be accessed by members of the public. For other enquiries not directly covered by the Publication Scheme it is the responsibility of the designated Freedom of Information officer to research and respond to requests for information which are not directly covered by the scheme and this process is explained within the document.

## **3. Reason for Review**

- 3.1. This policy was reviewed as part of a MAT policy audit. The review also acknowledges the significant changes that will take place in May 2018 for all schools.

## **4. Aim(s)**

- 4.1. We aim to inform the public about Freedom of Information and how they should make a request to our organisation.

## **5. Procedures and practice**

### **5.1. Legal Requirement**

5.1.1. Adopting a publication scheme is a requirement of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This Act promotes greater openness and accountability across the public sector by requiring all 'public authorities' to make information available proactively, through a publication scheme.

5.1.2. 'Public authorities' are defined in the Act. This group of public bodies has been extended in the Academies Act 2010 to include all academies from January 2011.

### **5.2. What Is a Publication Scheme?**

5.2.1. A publication scheme is a document which describes the information a public body authority publishes, or intends to publish. In this context, 'publish' means to make information available, routinely. These descriptions are called 'classes of information'. The scheme is not a list of the actual publications because this will change as new material is published or existing material revised. It is, however, the public body's commitment to make available the information described.

5.2.2. A publication scheme must set out the classes, or categories, of information published. It must also make clear how the information described can be accessed and whether or not charges will be made.

### **5.2.3. The 'Model' Publication Scheme for Schools**

5.2.3.1. New Bridge MAT has adopted the model publication scheme developed for schools and is therefore committed to publishing the information it describes.

5.2.3.2. This model is designed for schools across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The purpose of the model is to save institutions duplicating effort in producing individual schemes and to assist the public in accessing information from across the sector. However, to reflect the diversity in size and function of institutions, a number of optional classes of information are included. As a result, models within the sector will vary slightly. Any optional classes relevant to us have been included in our scheme.

### 5.3. **Who We Are**

5.3.1. The New Bridge MAT is a cluster of organisations that work together to create appropriate and high quality individual pathways for around 550 young people between the ages of 4 and 25. New Bridge School, Hollinwood Academy and Spring Brook Academy are part of the New Bridge MAT. New Bridge School is an 11-19 secondary special school rated outstanding by Ofsted in February 2015. We hold national recognition for innovative solutions for pathways for young people with special educational needs and the Ofsted website features our school under their outstanding practice section. Hollinwood Academy is a discrete environment catering for those on the autistic spectrum between the ages of 4 and 19, opened in September 2015. Spring Brook Academy is a discrete provision based on two sites that caters for young people with SEMH.

5.3.2. The New Bridge MAT is committed to working with communities in creating pathways so that young people with special education needs can achieve their full potential as citizens, employees and participants in a rapidly changing world.

### 5.4. **Accessing Information Covered by the Publication Scheme**

5.4.1. The classes of information we publish are described in Appendix 1 of the scheme.

5.4.2. Next to each class we have indicated the manner in which the information described will be available. We have also indicated whether charges apply to material in each class.

5.4.3. To request information available through our publication scheme, please contact: [info@newbridgegroup.org](mailto:info@newbridgegroup.org)

5.4.4. Please note that a publication scheme relates to 'published' information. Therefore, material covered has already been prepared in a format ready for distribution.

### 5.5. **What About Information Not Covered by the Publication Scheme?**

5.5.1. From 1 January 2011 you will have the right, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, to request any information held by a public authority which has not already been made available through its publication scheme.

5.5.2. Requests for information which is not covered by the publication scheme must be made in writing to:

**Freedom of Information Officer**

New Bridge MAT  
Roman Road  
Hollinwood  
Oldham  
OL8 3PH

5.5.3. A response will normally be made within 20 working days and a fee may be charged which will be calculated in accordance with the Fees regulations. However, information will not be required to be released where an exemption from the Act legitimately applies. We may be required to explain to the applicant why we are not releasing information and we may also have to justify this to the Information Commissioner.

**5.6. Consulting third parties**

5.6.1. It is the policy of the Trustees that copyright held by third parties will always be respected fully by the MAT and by all its employees.

5.6.2. Even where it is not necessary to consult third parties who may be affected by a request for information, New Bridge MAT considers it good practice to do so for the following reasons:

5.6.2.1. consulting the source of the information may help the MAT identify relevant exemptions or public interest factors;

5.6.2.2. the third party may advise New Bridge MAT to give the applicant more context or explanatory material, or include copyright restrictions;

5.6.2.3. contacting third parties in advance of any disclosure will help them prepare for any effect on their work, for example press coverage or an increase in enquiries.

**5.7. Feedback**

5.7.1. If you are dissatisfied with how your request has been handled or would like to formally appeal against our response, you can complain in writing to:

Mrs Rita Righini  
Information Manager  
New Bridge MAT  
c/o Roman Road  
Hollinwood  
Oldham  
OL8 3PH

5.7.2. If, after we have addressed your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with how the MAT has responded, you are entitled to appeal to the Information Commissioner, the independent body that oversees the Freedom of Information Act: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk) or telephone 01625 5457453.

**6. Sources and references**

- 6.1. Data Protection Act 1998
- 6.2. Equality Act 2010
- 6.3. Environmental Act

**7. Other useful documents**

- 7.1. Subject Access Request Policy
- 7.2. Freedom of Information Policy
- 7.3. Equality Impact Scheme
- 7.4. Publication Scheme
- 7.5. Complaints Policy

**8. Monitoring**

- 8.1. This policy will be monitored through the MAT's accountability framework.