

Information Management Strategy Support Materials for Schools

Keeping People Informed

When schools collect, store and use personal data they have an obligation to inform parents and pupils through the issue of a fair processing notice. Beyond this obligation there are a host of ways that can be used to make sure that everyone knows and understands what the school is doing, why and what rights individuals have.

Section 1 of this pack gave advice on the issue and use of UPNs; section 3 gave advice relating to schools' obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 and section 4 offered tips on good practice for information and computer security.

This section offers some suggestions for extra ways to keep people informed. Schools may wish to adapt some to suit their own particular circumstance but are not obliged to use any of them.

Letters to Parents and Pupils

Included in this section is a selection of sample letters that schools might wish to use. They could be used as covering letters when sending out Fair Processing Notices or separately to ensure that both pupils and parents are aware of their rights in relation to information that the school holds.

Remember it is the pupil, who has rights under the Data Protection Act. The presumption is that by the age of 12 a child has sufficient maturity to understand their rights and to make an access request themselves if they wish. In certain circumstances, depending on capacity to understand, a parent or legal guardian may seek to exercise some of these rights on behalf of the pupil. In such circumstances, the school must decide whether it is appropriate to act on the request. A parent would normally be expected to make a request on a child's behalf if the child is younger

The Internet

Many schools have, or are developing, their own web sites.

A copy of the school's fair processing notice could be placed on the site along with summary information, copies of letters sent to pupils and parents.

Try adding a link to www.wales.gov.uk and http://www.ico.gov.uk/about_us/regional_offices/wales.aspx so that users can gain access to more detailed information if they want to.

Forms

Schools often use forms, for new admissions, checking information and contact details.

Where forms are used for collecting or checking personal data schools may wish to include a reference similar to this;

“The data requested will be stored on the school management information system and used for the purposes outlined in our fair processing notice. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy and security of personal data held by the school. Individuals have certain rights of access to personal information held on them these are outlined in our leaflet “What the School, Local Education Authority and Government does with Information it holds on Pupils” copies of which are available on request from.....or on our web site at.....”

The addition of such a statement to data collection and checking forms is considered to be best practice by the Office of the Information Commissioner.

Please note, however, that the addition of this statement to data collection forms does not negate the need to ensure that every parent/pupil receives a copy of the fair processing notice leaflet on first entry to your school.

School Prospectus and Governors’ Annual Reports

A statement could be added to the school prospectus and/or Governors’ Annual Report to Parents along the lines of;

“The school collects information about pupils and their parents/guardians at admission to school and for specific purposes during the school year. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy and security of the data collected which is generally stored on the school’s computerised management information system. Individuals have certain rights of access to personal information held on them, these are outlined in our leaflet “What the School, Local Education Authority and Government does with Information it holds on Pupils”. A copy of this leaflet is given to every parent or pupil on first admission to the school. Additional copies are available on request from...or on our web site at...”

Again use of this text in your prospectus or Governor’s report will not negate the need to issue copies of the fair processing notice.

The addition of this statement is NOT a statutory requirement under School Prospectus or Governors’ Annual Report regulations.

Schools may also consider including the full text of the Fair Processing Notice in the school prospectus, however care must be taken to ensure that every pupil (or their parents) joining the school receives a copy.

A copy of the Fair Processing Notice has been included in this pack for your information.