



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

Ms Emma Smith

By e-mail to: request-222037-6fcd9d6d@whatdotheyknow.com

12 November 2014

Dear Ms Smith

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0729-14

Thank you for your email of 28 July asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. I apologise for the delay in replying to your request. You asked:

I was wondering if you could tell me if the FCO ever paid any school fees for children of FCO staff working in the UK Embassy in Dublin or Washington DC in each of the past 2 financial years; If so the name of the school in which fees were paid and the amount spent per school per year.

I can confirm that the FCO does hold information relevant to your request.

I can confirm that the FCO met the cost of fees for children of FCO staff working in the UK Embassies in Dublin and Washington in FY 2012-13 and 2013/14. The following are the records of the payments made for those children (69 in total) who were being educated in Dublin and Washington only.

	2012/13	2013/14
Dublin	£12,999	£39,125
Washington	£414,158.77	£208,452

I am unable to provide the cost of UK boarding school fees for children of FCO staff working in the UK Embassies in Dublin and Washington in FY 2012-13 and 2013/14. This is because the information you requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would entail an extensive search of records. This would exceed the appropriate cost limit.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. You may therefore wish to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit. Normally under section 16 of the Act we are obliged to advise you to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit. However, in this case we cannot advise you how to narrow your request due to the large numbers of FCO Staff at Post.

Members of the Diplomatic Service must be prepared to serve anywhere in the world at any time during their career, sometimes at very short notice. Those who are parents are legally obliged to ensure that their children receive full-time education. We provide financial support to all diplomatic staff who serve overseas, to help enable them to meet this legal requirement.

Where staff cannot or choose not to take their children overseas because of the impact on the continuity of their education, we contribute towards the costs of boarding school education in the UK for children up to the age of 18, provided that officers meet specific eligibility criteria.

We are unable to provide you with name of the schools as release of the information could endanger the safety of staff and their children and has therefore been withheld under Section 38(1)(b). Section 38(1)(b) states that information is exempt if disclosure would be likely to endanger the safety of an individual. This exception requires us to carry out a public interest test. In applying the public interest we took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; in this case that releasing such information would demonstrate openness and public accountability. However, release of this information could seriously endanger safety of staff and their children. For this reason we judge that the public interest in withholding this information outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

The FCO has received your Internal Review connected to this FOI. Please be assured we are working on this separately and will respond to your request as soon as possible.

I hope you are satisfied with this reply. However, if you wish to make a complaint or if you would like a review of our decision, please write to the FOI and DPA Team at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room K4.10-13, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. E-mail: foi-dpa.imd@fco.gov.uk. You have 40 working days to do so from the date of this letter.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,
Vanessa Carty

Knowledge Management Officer
Human Resources Directorate



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