



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

Emma Smith

By email - request-222037-6fcd9d6d@whatdotheyknow.com

16 December 2014

Dear Ms Smith

INTERNAL REVIEW OF FOI REQUEST REF: 0729-14

Thank you for your email of 28 October 2014, asking for an internal review of the FOI Request 0729-14. In your review you stated that *"I am writing to request an internal review of Foreign and Commonwealth Office's handling of my FOI request 'Private School'. As the FCO have failed to keep my update in respect with my FOI request and in their last reply several weeks ago you indicate my request is nearing complete and will be forwarded onto me within the next subsequent few days. But to date no reply have been received"*.

I am writing to confirm that I have conducted a full examination of all the material, both released and exempted, of relevance to your request. I apologise for the delay in replying. The answer has now been passed to you.

Search for information

A search of FCO records was undertaken. Not all the records are centrally held or in a format that provides breakdown of the information in a format that enables us to answer your question as requested. I am therefore content that a reasonable search was carried out in relation to your request.

Use of exemptions

Exemptions under Section 12 and 38(1)(b) of the FOI act were used. We considered that it would exceed the limit of £600 to provide the information on the fees for the children of individual officers to the schools in Washington and Dublin. We judged that there would be a risk to staff and children if we named the schools that diplomatic children attend. I am therefore content that section 12 and 38 (1)(b) were correctly applied. We only used these

exemptions after we had assessed the information and applied the public interest test arguments.

Your specific queries

You asked specifically about the length of time it took to answer your FOI Request. The FCO did take longer than we would have liked to answer your FOI request. We realise that it is not acceptable to take that length of time to reply and apologise again for the delay. However, there are several sensitive issues involved here, such as the welfare and safety of children, security of the pupils and schools and the protection of personal information to be balanced against the policy requirements of the FCO to be open and transparent and comply with the FOI act. We assessed the public interest and the need for accountability of public funds against the sensitivities of the specific request. We believe that it is right to uphold the use of these exemptions.

I am sorry that you were not kept fully informed of the progress of the FOI request. There was a staff change in the team and we did not keep you as up to date as you should have. For that, I do apologise. Our team should have contacted you more frequently to keep you informed of progress.

I hope you are satisfied with the process of this review and the outcome. However, if you feel that we have not handled your internal review correctly and you wish to make a complaint, you may then apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Yours sincerely,

Jon Carney

Jon Carney
Open Government Liaison Officer - HRD



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