

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Our ref: FOI Ref: DE/2013-0126
Your ref: Request 167173
30 July 2013

Dear Mr McAree

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I wish to confirm that the Department has now completed its search for the information which you requested on 1 July 2013.

I have established that some of the information you requested is not held by this Department. An outline of the information held by the Department and details of how to access some of the information not held is provided at Annex A. The available information is set out in a spreadsheet in a separate attachment to this response.

If you are unhappy with the level of service you have received in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. You may write to Garth Manderson, Departmental Information Manager, Rathgael House, Balloo Rd, Bangor, BT19 7PR, or send an email to garth.manderson@deni.gov.uk, if you wish to make a complaint.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a review of our original decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

SHARON LAWLOR
Head of Curriculum Support Team
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- 1. The number of schools who have applied for exceptional closure days during the period 2010-2013. Please also detail the reasons given for the exceptional school closure.**

It would be misleading to answer this question as it has been raised, as particular schools may have had several requests for exceptional closure for differing reasons and all may not have been approved. We have therefore provided a list of schools that were granted approval for closure and the reason for closure. During the period 2010-2013 the Department received a total of 2,025 requests for exceptional closure from schools. The information is provided by school reference number, all Belfast Board schools begin with 1. A number of the 2,025 requests received were not approved and are therefore not included in the spreadsheet.

During the period 2010-2013 an exceptional closure day was also approved for all schools on two occasions to mark the Royal Wedding and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Schools were not required to seek the Department's approval therefore we do not hold information on the schools that availed of these exceptional closures.

- 2. The number of schools who have taken optional school closure days during the period 2010-2013. Please detail the number of optional days which were taken per school.**

Schools are entitled to 5 optional days in the school year. It is a matter for individual schools to decide when to take their optional days, for example, as an extension to the Easter, Christmas or summer holidays or to cover planned events such as building work or a move of premises. Schools are not required to inform the Department of Education about the dates of their optional closure days and the Department therefore does not hold information on schools' optional days.

- 3. The number of schools who have taken "School Development Days" during the period 2010-2013. Please detail the number of these days which were taken per school.**

The Department does not hold details of the information you request in relation to School Development Days (SDDs). Schools should include details in their Board of Governors' Annual Report of the days on which the school was closed for SDDs. Schools are also required to submit written proposals each year for SDDs to the local Education and Library Board's Curriculum Advisory Support Service (ELB CASS). This information will include details of dates and proposed activities. The local ELBs should therefore hold details of SDDs taken by schools. The contact details for the 5 ELBs are provided at Annex B.

- 4. Does the Department record the length of each school day to monitor how each school records and maintains the 'minimum hours under instruction' as detailed under circular 2013/09?**

The Department does not record information on the length of each school day. Schools have been informed of the need to complete attendance records in both AM and PM sessions for each child.

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