

ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS AND LECTURERS

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Consultation on Information Commissioner's Office template guide to information for schools and draft model publication scheme.

Response from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers

May 2013

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

In January 2011, ATL and the Association of College Management (another TU affiliated union), realising their common shared values and commitments, formally merged. **The Association of Managers in Education, AMiE**, is the department of ATL that represents managers across the spectrum of colleges, secondary and primary schools.

As an organisation that crosses the traditional divide between schools and colleges, ATL is thus uniquely placed to voice concerns and provide innovative solutions to the challenges of post-16 education.

Response

Although ATL Cymru is in favour of openness and accountability we have several reservations about the information required on the template document. We query what the purpose of the template is and seek clarification about this. Schools are already required to make public a significant amount of information via Governors' Annual Report to Parents and other means and we wonder why the additional information asked for in the template is required as it duplicates much of the data and information already available.

Members feel that some of the information required for the template is inappropriate, for example the requirement for staffing structures and salaries. The release of this information could potentially be problematic and leave members of staff open to abuse from both pupils and parents alike.

Members stated that in an ideal world all information pertaining to a school would be held on its website. Practicalities make this complicated as maintaining a website is an onerous task and uses a lot of manpower. It is important to keep information up to date but it is questioned who will be available to do so in most schools. Currently a lot of schools websites have staffing lists that are more than three years old. More administration equals more cost and it is important to keep accountability for the accuracy of the information in house. At a time when schools are urged to focus their efforts on raising standards it was not understood how the collection of this information would contribute to this objective.

The completion of the template by schools would lead to excessive bureaucracy and an unnecessary increase in their workload. Members struggled to balance the workload involved in completing the template with the likelihood of a member of the public actually asking for the information. Under the FOIA members of the public are able to access information if they wished to do so. It was hoped that a test of reasonableness would be applied to schools in respect of meticulous adherence.