

Department of Education and Skills
Cornamaddy
Athlone
Co. Westmeath

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

5 August 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

Re FOI/2015_235

I refer to your FOI application, received 13 July 2015, in relation to:

Part One: I am seeking copies of correspondence, including letters, emails, telephone conversations and minutes of meetings, between the Department and the NGO Barnardos on proposals to make primary education free, in particular with regard to books, uniforms, transport, lunches and breakfasts, voluntary contributions and capitation grants, between 1st January 2014 and June 30th 2015.

Part Two: I am also seeking any correspondence, emails, meetings' minutes, among Department officials on the cost of primary school education and efforts to reduce costs to parents, in particular with regard to books, uniforms, transport, lunches and breakfasts, voluntary contributions and capitation grants, between 1st January 2013 and June 30th 2015.

I am the decision maker for the Inspectorate and have been tasked with co-ordinating this request on behalf of Schools Division Financial and the Minister's Office. I understand, from your contact with Mr Colm McGarvey, that your request is in relation to the cost of sending a child to school and the resulting burden on parents. In particular, it is in relation to the report published by Barnardos where they costed the removal of these charges to make education free. Schools Division Financial have had no communication with Barnardos regarding this issue and have no records regarding same.

I have made a final decision to part grant your request to-day, 5 August 2015. If you have any queries regarding this correspondence you can contact me by email @ caitrona_nibhriain@education.gov.ie.

The purpose of this letter to explain that decision. This explanation has the following parts:

1. A schedule of the records covered by your request
2. Concerning records to which access is denied, an explanation of the relevant findings
3. A statement of how you can appeal this decision should you wish to do so.

This letter addresses each of these parts in turn.

1. Schedule of Records

A schedule is included at the end of this letter. It shows the documents held that are relevant to your request. The schedule describes each document and indicates whether the document is released in full

or partially released. Three documents are being released: one is being released in full and two are partially released, and all accompany this email.

2. An explanation of the relevant findings

The sections of the Act that can apply to deny access to documents are known as its exemption provisions. The Freedom of Information Act 2014 protects the privacy of individuals about whom information is held by government departments and bodies. This is outlined in Section 37(1) of the Act.

The relevant text is:

"personal information" means information about an identifiable individual that, either—

(a) would, in the ordinary course of events, be known only to the individual or members of the family, or friends, of the individual, or

(b) is held by an FOI body on the understanding that it would be treated by that body as confidential

Parts of the records you seek are exempt under this section of the Act. You will note these sections have been marked out by a black marker.

3. Access Arrangements

The documents are being released to you by means of photocopies. Accordingly, copies of the documents are now attached.

4. Right of appeal

You may appeal this decision. In the event that you need to make such an appeal, you can do so by writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. Your correspondence should include a fee of €30 for processing the appeal. (Payment should be made by way of personal cheque or postal money order to the accountant, the Department of Education and Skills.) You should make your appeal within 4 weeks from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. *A week is defined in the Act to mean 5 consecutive weekdays, excluding Saturdays and public holidays. (Sundays are also excluded, as they are not weekdays).* The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

The FOI Unit can be contacted by telephone at 01 8896444/2385/2240 should you have any queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Caitríona Ní Bhriain

FOI Decision Maker (Inspectorate)

Department of Education and Skills