

Journalism Innovation: FOI workshop

@PaulBradshaw
#bcujournos

Sending your first (and second) FOI...

- Some preparation (background research)
- Targeting the right body
- Phrasing a good request

Let's just do it.

(10 mins)

I did all the work, you just send the
request (and enter the data)

Planning and sending our FOI requests — part 1

1. Identify what information we want
2. Identify who collects it
3. Use previous requests to help us phrase our own questions and get ideas
4. Plan the data entry so we will get what we need

How not to do it:

Dear Department for Education,

Please could you provide the statistics on how many children under the age of 10 were reported missing in the UK in 2017, 2018 and 2019?

The Department does not collect information on the number of children reported missing across the UK. The National Crime Agency collects and publishes data on missing persons. They can be contacted via [1][[email address](#)].

How not to do it:

Dear Birmingham City Council,

I would like to know the breakdown of school exclusion by ethnicity for secondary pupils up to and including 2017

Yours faithfully,

Ms Jennifer Campbell

Unfortunately, this request is too imprecise to allow us to act on it, and accordingly, we are unable to process your request.

We would be obliged if you could please confirm if your request can be rephrased to allow us to locate the information that you are seeking.

BCC can only provide permanent exclusion data as fixed term data has reliability issues at the moment and what time period are you looking at – it just says “up to and including 2017”? Do you just want the total number of exclusions each year split into ethnicity?

Identify what information we want — and who collects it



Help with buying school uniform

School Clothing Assistance Academic Year 2022/23

Important notice: You only have until the 31 January 2023 to apply for a school clothing voucher, as any applications received after this date will be refused.

Eligibility criteria

If you live in Sandwell, receive one of the benefits listed below and your child will be in reception class or Years 7 to 11 from September 2022 you may qualify for a voucher towards the cost of your child's school uniform.

Vouchers will not be available to any child in a nursery class, in School Years 1 to 6 or in School Years 12 to 14.

All

Shopping

News

Images

Videos

More

Tools

About 11,900 results (0.39 seconds)

<https://www.gov.uk> › ... › Schools and education

⋮

Get help with school uniform costs - GOV.UK

Get financial help from your local council or your child's **school** to pay for **school uniform** and games kit.

<https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk> › school-uniform-al...

⋮

School Uniform Allowance - Nottingham City Council

Nottingham City Council offers School Clothing Allowance for pupils who are in academic years reception, 1, 4, 7, 9, and 11. **You must apply by 31st December.**

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk> › info › education_benefits

⋮

Help with buying school uniform - Sandwell Council

School Clothing Assistance Academic Year 2022/23 ... **You will not qualify for a school uniform voucher if you receive any amount of Working Tax Credit.**

<https://cumbria.gov.uk> › schoolsandlearning › freescho...

⋮

Apply for free school meals and clothing vouchers

Please Note: All children who currently receive free **school** meals and **clothing** grants do not need to apply each year. where possible all parents and guardians ...

Use previous requests to help

19 October 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Request ID: FOI368428931

Thank you for your request for information relating to school uniform grant.

You have requested the following information:

1. As a local authority, do you provide a School Uniform Grant? (it may be called a different name in your authority, but is generally known as this)

Coventry City Council does not currently provide a school uniform grant.

To assist, individual schools may have arrangements in place however you would need to contact them directly individually, to obtain this information. Contact details for schools are accessible using the link below:

https://www.coventry.gov.uk/directory/10/schools_and_their_contact_details

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/directory-record/57225/school-uniform-grant>

Freedom of Information



Enquiry Number - FS136147205

Request and Response:

Q1: Does Sandwell Council offer a school uniform grant?

A1: Yes.

Q3: How many grants were issued and what was the total amount spent on school uniform grants in the last year for which data is available?

A3: 1556 Total Clothing Grant Vouchers issued at a value of £35,595

Q4: How many grants were issued and how much was spent on school uniform grants in (a) 2010 and (b) 2015?

A4: Year 2010: 2038 Total Clothing Grant Vouchers issued at a value of £54,540.00*

Year 2015: 1317 Total Clothing Grant Vouchers issued at a value of £29,920.00

Plan the data entry

The screenshot shows a Google Sheets interface with the following details:

- Title:** Data entry for FOI requests to councils
- Toolbar:** Includes icons for file, edit, view, insert, format, data, tools, extensions, help, and a timestamp "Last edit was seconds ago".
- Header Row:** Contains columns labeled A through G. Column A is bolded.
- Row 1 Headers:** Contains the following labels: Council name, Academic year, Offered a grant? (T/F), Applications received, Grants awarded, Money awarded, and Notes.
- Row 8:** A single cell in column D is highlighted with a blue border, indicating it is currently selected or edited.
- Row Labels:** Rows are numbered from 1 to 12 along the left edge.

Make sure you get details, and not in PDF format:

- Ask for a **breakdown** wherever possible
 - so you can make your own calculations
- Ask for figures for a number of **different years** so you can see if things are better or worse
- Specify **spreadsheet** format

Here's your request

Use WhatDoTheyKnow to send it

Copy the text from the workshop brief on Moodle

School uniform grant data

Under the FOI Act I would like to request the following information:

1. For each of the 10 academic years 2013/14-2022/23 (including the current academic year) please specify whether the council has offered a school uniform grant or similar scheme (for example school clothing voucher or allowance), and if so what the budget was in each year.
2. Where a grant, voucher or other support was offered, please provide:
 - a) The number of applications received in each of those years.
 - b) The number of grants awarded in each of those years
 - c) The amount of money awarded in total in each of those years.
 - d) If a further breakdown is available by school, ward, uniform type, or gender, etc. please also provide this for each year

Please provide this information in spreadsheet format (CSV or XLS).

It takes just 5 minutes

- 1. Go to whatdotheyknow.com**
- 2. Search for the body you want**
- 3. Make your request**
- 4. Preview it**
- 5. Send it.**

Freedom of information requests to

Environment Agency

[An executive agency](#) and [a navigation authority](#)

The Environment Agency is an Executive Non-departmental Public Body. Its principal aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development.

[Make a request to this authority](#)

Follow this authority

23 people are following this authority

[Follow](#)

[RSS feed of updates](#)

More about this authority

[Home page of authority](#)

[Publication scheme](#)

[View FOI email address](#)

[Ask us to update FOI email](#)

FOI email address for [Environment Agency](#)

WhatDoTheyKnow sends new requests to enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk for this authority.

Let's do it again.

(With feeling)

Planning and sending our FOI requests — part 2

- Identifying what schools should be doing...
- ...So we can target our questions to find out if they're doing what they're supposed to

What could you ask schools about regarding the cost of school sport? How?



Statutory guidance

Cost of school uniforms

Published 19 November 2021

Schools should keep the use of branded items to a minimum.

A school's uniform policy should be published on the school's website, be available for all parents, including parents of prospective pupils, and be easily understood.

Schools should ensure that their uniform supplier arrangements give the highest priority to cost and value for money (including the quality and durability of the garment).

Single supplier contracts should be avoided unless regular tendering competitions are run where more than one supplier can compete for the contract and where the best value for money is secured. This contract should be retendered at least every 5 years.

Schools should ensure that second-hand uniforms are available for parents to acquire. Information on second-hand uniforms should be clear for parents of current and prospective pupils and published on the school's website.

Schools should engage with parents and pupils when they are developing their school uniform policy.

What can we ask for? What is already available?



Uniform

The Olive School promotes excellence and aspiration in everything our pupils do. The school uniform is designed to reinforce this spirit of excellence. The uniform is smart and practical, encourages pupils to take pride in being part of their school and enables them to act as ambassadors for the school.

High standards of presentation are required at all times when wearing the school uniform. Whenever the school uniform is worn, it must be complete and not mixed with non-uniform clothing. This includes when travelling to and from the school.

Our uniform suppliers are:

Stevensons – 01727 815700

Please note Whittakers will be continuing to sell its existing stock until only March 2021.

[Click here](#) to view our Uniform policy.

[Click here](#) to view our Pre Loved Uniform policy.

Boys' PE Kit:

- Black/red detailed polo shirt embroidered with school emblem (compulsory)
- Black shorts with red/white embroidered detail (compulsory)
- Black/red football/rugby reversible top embroidered with school emblem (compulsory)
- Black embroidered hooded sweatshirt (optional)
- Black tracksuit bottoms (optional)
- Black Quarter zip training top (optional)
- Football/rugby socks – black & red (compulsory)
- Trainers (compulsory – must have non-marking sole)
- Football boots and shin pads (compulsory)
- Gum shield (optional)



PE kit is available to purchase from The Uniform Hub and Clive Mark and will be available to order during Open Evenings. PE kit can also be personalised with your child's name. Please discuss this with the supplier. For further information please see The Uniform Hub and Clive Mark websites below.

Please ensure all uniform is named.

The only jewellery we allow is one pair of small stud earrings.



[Uniform Hub: Girls Order Form](#)

[Uniform Hub: Boys Order Form](#)



Start searching...

- Search WhatDoTheyKnow for any FOI requests for the information you identified. Try disclosure logs too.
- Were they successful? Why?
- What can you learn from what they wrote — and what they got?

[Make a request](#)[Browse requests](#)[View authorities](#)[Read blog](#)[Help](#)[Pro](#)[Volunteer](#)

Details of contract with new school uniform provider

[Mrs Maly](#) made this Free
[RC Primary School, Lon](#)

Dear Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School, London,

Please can you provide the following information regarding the contract with Forest Casual and Schoolwear:

- 1) How was the contract awarded e.g. open competition, direct award?
- 2) Date the contract was awarded?
- 3) Date the contract will expire?
- 4) Was Redbridge Council involved in the tender of this contract?
- 5) What competitors, if any, were considered?
- 6) What criteria was used to select the supplier?
- 7) Does Our Lady of Lourdes School profit from the contract with Forest Casual and Schoolwear e.g. as a result of uniform sales? If yes, what remuneration is received?
- 8) If Our Lady of Lourdes has not entered into a contract with Forest Casual and Schoolwear, what is the nature of the agreement in place?

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Maly

What stories are we imagining?



Write your request (30 mins)

Be specific about what you want to
know.

Copy the text from workshop brief 2 on Moodle

Sanctions related to uniform

Under the FOI Act I would like to request the following information regarding sanctions and other punishment (e.g. detention, isolation, withdrawal of privileges, expulsion, exclusion) issued by the school in relation to uniform.

1) Please provide a breakdown, for each of the last five academic years, including the current academic year, of all punishments issued for misconduct relating to uniform (e.g. wearing wrong uniform, not wearing uniform, wearing forbidden items, etc). For each incident please provide:

- a) The nature of the punishment
- b) The nature of the misconduct
- c) Whether it related to school uniform or sports kit or another aspect of uniform policy

If you are unable to provide a breakdown of each incident, please provide summary totals for each academic year with the same breakdown.

If you are unable to provide annual totals, please provide details of the system used to track student behaviour and how that is monitored by staff, e.g. how they are able to identify those students who have been sanctioned most often.

More! on Moodle

School uniform supplier details



Under the FOI Act I would like to request the following information regarding the contract with your supplier(s) of sports uniform/kit:

- 1) How many suppliers do you have a contract with?
- 2) How was the contract awarded e.g. open competition, direct award? Was the local authority involved in the tender of this contract?
- 3) Date the contract was awarded?
- 4) Date the contract will expire?
- 5) What competitors, if any, were considered?
- 6) What criteria was used to select the supplier?
- 7) Does the school profit from the contract, e.g. as a result of uniform sales? If yes, what remuneration is received?
- 8) If the school has not entered into a contract with the supplier(s), what is the nature of the agreement in place?
- 9) Does the contract contain any clauses relating to the cost or affordability of items?
- 10) Please provide a copy of the contract with commercially sensitive details redacted.

Please note that redaction costs cannot be counted towards any cost limits under the FOI Act.

When can they say “No”?

Exemptions:

- Cost: >18/24 hours (local/central)
- ‘Absolute’ vs ‘qualified’ exemptions
- Absolute exemptions include national security, or info already public
- Qualified exemptions based on judgement: **body must argue case** (includes commercial sensitivity)

They are obliged to help you get it under the cost limit

If this request stands to be refused due to exceeding the cost limit, can you please supply as much information as can be found while remaining under the cost ceiling. If the information can be identified I would prefer to receive information from more senior members of staff over those of less senior members of staff, but only if this can be achieved while remaining below the cost limit. If the request would stand to be refused under the cost limit due to the time period specified, I would also be happy for the time limit to be reduced to the year 2014, rather than the previous year. If this request still stands to be refused due to hitting the cost ceiling, I would respectfully remind you of your obligation to give advice or assistance in obtaining the desired information, maybe by suggesting a more appropriate wording or limit to the information that would bring the total cost of the request under the cost limit.

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/flexible_working_applications_for_my_organisation

(And you can anticipate that)

Can we start compiling our own data?



PE and sport premium for primary schools

Online reporting

You must publish details of how you spend your PE and sport premium funding by the end of the summer term or by 31 July 2022 at the latest.

Online reporting must clearly show:

- the amount of PE and sport premium received
- a full breakdown of how it has been spent
- the impact the school has seen on pupils' PE, physical activity, and sport participation and attainment
- how the improvements will be sustainable in the future

<https://www.thehayesprimaryschool.co.uk/pe-and-sport-premium-spending/> ::

PE and Sports Premium Funding | The Hayes Primary School

We have welcomed the Government's announcement on 22nd June, 2022 confirming that schools in England will benefit from **£320 million** from the PE and Sport ...

PE and Sports Premium Funding

[Home](#) >> [Key Information](#) >> [PE and Sports Premium Funding](#)

PE and Sport Premium Funding

At The Hayes Primary School, we believe PE and Sport plays an important role

Please click the below links to see how we used the funding in the past and what we plan to do during 2022-23.

PE and Sports Premium Planned Spend and Impact 2022.23



2022.23. Evidencing the Impact of the Primary PE and Sport Premium

Evidencing the Impact of PE and Sports Premium Planned Spend and Impact: 2021-22



2021.22. Evidencing the Impact of the Primary PE and Sport Premium

Evidencing the Impact of PE and Sports Premium Planned Spend and Impact: 2020-21



2020.21. Evidencing the Impact of the Primary PE and Sport Premium

All News Images Videos Books More

About 12,500 results (0.43 seconds)

<https://www.john-hampden.oxon.sch.uk> › pe-and-sport... :

PE and Sport Premium Funding

Item/project

Support Teacher for School Swimming training

'Top-up' swimming sessions for Y5/6 pupils

Orienteering Course around the school

[View 14 more rows](#)

Amount Allocated Key Indicator(s)

PE and sport premium spending inurl:school

X

<https://www.lowerwortley-pri.leeds.sch.uk> › our-school ... :

PE & Sport Premium Funding | Lower Wortley Primary School

Please read the document at the bottom of this page which summarises **spending** and impact of the **sport premium**. **PE, sport** and physical activity play a very ...

<https://www.phillimoreprimary.sch.uk>

What is Sport Premium

The money can only be spent on additional and sustainable impro...

<https://www.gloucesterroadprimary.sch.uk>

P.E. and Sport Premium

Physical Education. At Gloucester Road Primary School we have developed a Scheme of Work for our **Physical Education**...

<https://www.google.com/search?q=PE+and+sport+premium+spending+site%3Asch.uk>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=PE+and+sport+premium+spending+inurl%3Aschool>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=PE+and+sport+premium+spending+intitle%3Aschool>

PE and sport premium spending intitle:school

<https://www.lowerwortley-pri.leeds.sch.uk> › our-school ... :

PE & Sport Premium Funding | Lower Wortley Primary School

Please read the document at the bottom of this page which summarises **spending** and impact of the **sport premium**. **PE, sport** and physical activity play a very ...

<https://www.lowerdarwenprimary.co.uk> › pe-and-sport-... ... :

PE and Sport Premium | Lower Darwen Primary School

There is also an additional report on how our **expenditure** on swimming impacts positively on our pupils. Please note, our swimming **expenditure** is financed ...

<https://www.homefields.derby.sch.uk> › pe-and-sport-pr... ... :

PE and Sport Premium | Homefields Primary School

To allow pupils to have a wide range of sporting opportunities. For further information on how we spend our **P.E. and Sport Premium** budget please look at the ...

PE and sport premium for primary schools

You are also required to publish the percentage of pupils within your year 6 cohort in the 2021 to 2022 academic year who met the national curriculum requirement to:

- swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres
- use a range of strokes effectively, for example, front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke
- perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations

Directed study for week 5

1 hour: reverse engineer a story from
pinboard.in/u:paulbradshaw/t:foieg

- How was FOI used? When?
- What bodies did they ask?
- What questions might they have used?
- What could have been better?
- Share in [the forum on Moodle](#)

Directed study for week 5

- 1 hour: Read one or both of the chapters from the book on FOI on Moodle
- Use it to come up with ideas for FOI - email your ideas to me (ideally write a draft request) at [paul.bradshaw@bcu.ac.uk!](mailto:paul.bradshaw@bcu.ac.uk)

Directed study for week 5 and 6

- Read [Data Journalism Heist](#) (1 hour)
- Use the techniques to find story leads in the datasets mentioned, or those on Moodle
- Get ready to pitch your story ideas from your analysis