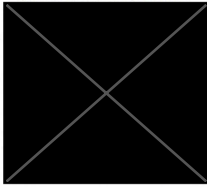


Mr John Hamill



16 January 2019

Re: FOI request FOI/2018/0012

Dear Mr Hamill

I refer to the request which you made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for records held by this Department:

1. All correspondence between the PDST and representatives of the Catholic Church (including emails and written correspondence) during calendar year 2016. This is to include Diocesan Advisors working with schools on behalf of the Catholic Church.
2. All minutes from meetings, policy documents or other agreements between the PDST and representatives of the Catholic Church that were applied during the calendar year 2016, which relate to in-service days for religion teachers. This is to include agreements and discussions relating to the content to be presented at such in-service days; arrangements for physical premises to be used; how costs should be covered and the management of any fees paid; how such in-service days should be advertised towards schools; and what commercial products would be promoted at such in-service days (for example, from suppliers such as Veritas).
3. Any minutes from meetings, policy documents or other agreements between the PDST and representatives of the Catholic Church during calendar year 2016, which relate to how religion should be taught or how teachers should be instructed in the teaching of religion.
4. All written correspondence and all emails between the PDST and the Department of Education and Skills during calendar year 2016, relating to the teaching of religion.
5. All written correspondence and all emails between the PDST and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment during calendar year 2016, relating to the teaching of religion.

6. A list of all in-service days for religion teachers during the calendar year 2016, which were attended both by representatives of the Catholic Church and representatives of the PDST, or which were arranged by both the Catholic Church and PDST.

7. Details of any payments made by the PDST to the Catholic Church or Diocesan Advisors acting on behalf of the Catholic Church.

I, Maria Bracken have now made a final decision in relation to your request and I am sorry to inform you that there are no records held on Department files for Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Please note in relation to section 6 of your request any inservice provided by PDST is advertised through the PDST website. The Department of Education and Skills does not hold details of the individuals in attendance at such events and I must therefore refuse your request. As explained below, this decision is made under Section 15(1)(a) of the FOI Act 2014 which states:-

“A head to whom an FOI request is made may refuse to grant the request where (a) the record concerned does not exist or cannot be found after all reasonable steps to ascertain its whereabouts have been taken”

I list below the steps that Teacher Education Section has taken to locate the records.

- 1) Detailed discussions with the staff of Teacher Education Section.
- 2) Circulation of an email to the staff of Teacher Education Section and the whole Department advising them of the request, the records sought and requesting that they forward on to the Deciding Officer all appropriate records pertaining to the request.
- 3) A search of the electronic databases and records held by Teacher Education Section, both on the computer server proper to Teacher Education Section and individual staff email accounts.
- 4) A physical search of all relevant areas of Teacher Education Section in which the records sought might possibly be held.

The above are the reasonable steps which we have taken to locate the records which were requested. In choosing these steps, Teacher Education Section has tried to maximise the chance that the records will be found, while not overly disrupting its operations. On this basis, Teacher Education Section has identified and implemented the steps to locate the records that were reasonable to take in this case.

The searches for the records requested were made on various dates between 8th January and 14th January 2019 by 2 staff members. The files searched were Correspondence files and any other files which was deemed to possibly hold the records requested. The records were searched both manually and by computer.

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 D01 RC96 or email foi@education.gov.ie

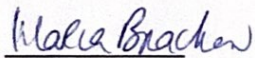
Your correspondence should include a fee of €30 (€10 for medical card holders) for processing the appeal. Payment should be made by way of personal cheque or postal money order made payable to the accountant in the Department of Education and Skills. Please note the Department of Education and Skills no longer accept cheque payments from business users. For further information regarding payment methods for business users, please email foi@education.gov.ie

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks from the date of this notification, where a day is defined as a working day excluding the weekend and public holidays. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this body.

Publication

All non-personal FOI requests will be recorded on an FOI disclosure log which will be published on the Department of Education and Skills website in due course. Should you wish to discuss the above, please contact me by telephone at 09064 84221.

Yours sincerely,



Maria Bracken
Higher Executive Officer