



22nd August 2019

**Attn:** Freedom of Information Officer,  
Dublin West Education Centre,  
Old Blessington Road,  
Tallaght,  
Dublin 24,  
Ireland.

**Re: Request for Records Under Freedom of Information Act, 2014**

Dear Madam or Sir,

I would like to make a formal request for access to records under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014. I originally made this request to the Professional Development Service for Teachers, but I am informed by the Office of the Information Commissioner that since the PDST is not a separate legal entity, I can make this request towards the Dublin West Education Centre. Therefore, in accordance with Section 12 of the Act, I am requesting access to the following non-personal information from your records:

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. 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.

5. 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.
6. Details of any payments made by the PDST to the Catholic Church or Diocesan Advisors acting on behalf of the Catholic Church.

That several events have taken place, which match the criteria defined above, is already a matter of public record<sup>1</sup>. That is, this request is seeking documents relate to all such events, rather than wondering whether or not any events might match these criteria. Moreover on 5th February 2018, Ms Ciara O'Donnell from the PDST wrote to me in relation to these events, stating as follows:

*"From time to time we are asked by ... Diocesan bodies to present at their events ... Our invitation is purely to speak about a curricular topic, and there is no agreement on an overall agenda with the organising body, simply an agreement regarding our input only as guest curricular speakers ... PDST has accepted invitations to speak at events from a range of religious traditions, in keeping with the curriculum content as outlined above."*

I have no reason to doubt any of this information provided by Ms O'Donnell. However, I take this as confirmation that records exist with regard to communications from Diocesan bodies and agreements with respect to the role of the PDST. Consequently, I am seeking copies of those documents. Under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, I will look forward to your detailed response to these requests within four weeks of the date of this letter.

Yours Sincerely,

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John Hamill.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dioceseofkerry.ie/2016/03/post-primary-religious-education-in-service/>