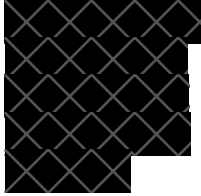


13 May 2021

Mr. John Hamill



**Re: FOI request 2021 - 0192**

Dear Mr. Hamill.

I refer to the appeal which you made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 in relation to FOI request 2021 – 0192.

I am a more senior member of staff in the ITE & Professional Development Section of the Department of Education, than the original decision maker in this case.

Your original request sought access to the following 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.

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

I have today, 13 May 2021, made a decision in relation to your FOI Internal Review Request. This review of your request is an entirely new and separate decision.

In arriving at this decision I have had regard to the original request, the steps taken to locate any records relevant to that request and the appeal which you submitted with your application for an internal review of the original decision. I have also contacted the PDST and requested that they conduct a review of their records and also consider the statement provided by you in support of your internal review request. From my review of the Original Decision, the process to locate records relevant to your request were as follows:

1. Circulation of an email to the staff of Teacher Education Section and relevant sections in the 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

Sections contacted by email

- Teacher Education Section including former staff members
- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit
- Inspectorate

2. A search of the electronic files held by Teacher Education Section in 2016 using Keywords Searched 'Religion', 'Religious Education', 'Catholic', 'Diocesan', 'Diocese', 'Church', 'PDST' where it was reasonably expected to find records relevant to the request. These records included letters, emails, excel spreadsheets, word and pdf documents.

All files searched were deemed to be potentially relevant to the records requested. While the "key word" search identified a number of records, subsequent analysis established that these records were not relevant to the request.



3. A physical search was conducted of relevant hard copy files in Teacher Education Section where it was reasonably expected to find records relevant to the request. This search included the TES Filing Room and TES Office space.

Approximately 1198 paper files were searched. No records relevant to FOI Request FOI/2020/0192 were found.

4. Contact was made with Dublin West Education Centre

A summary of the reply stated that- "it has been decided by the Data Commissioner that DWEC is not subject to FOI for PDST data and information as we do not hold the data onsite or have access to the PDST servers. It has also been agreed the PDST is not subject to FOI as it is not in itself a legal entity.

5. Contact with PDST

In March, The Director of the PDST was emailed with a request to review their records and if any records relevant to the request existed, the relevant records should be copied, attached and returned to Teacher Education Section.

PDST advised that "it is most common for the PDST to be requested to provide curricular and pedagogical expertise to events arranged by others and PDST record these for CPD interaction numbers. As these are not PDST events we have no access to rolls etc. Most of these events are arranged by phone between advisors and agencies which is why there are only 2 email records available. There are no reports/minutes/payments/ arrangement of venues etc. involved as these are not PDST events. An external agency may decide to reference the PDST input on a flyer but that is not PDST documentation".

Under this internal review the PDST has conducted a search of its electronic files using key words Key words for 2016 - Church, Catholic, Diocesan, Diocese, Religion, Religious Education, Le Cheile, RTAI. The PDST has located 4 additional records relevant to this FOI which are included in the schedule of records for this Internal Review of this FOI.

Having regard to the aforementioned I am satisfied that comprehensive searches have been conducted to locate records relevant to your request. Eight records relevant to your request have been located and I have decided to release the eight records which are identified in the schedule of records. These records have been redacted to remove personnel information or data that is not relevant to this Request.

## **Appeal**



You may make an 'application for review' of this decision to the Information Commissioner no later than 6 months from the date of this notification. There is a fee of €50. Payment should be made by way of postal order or personal cheque, crossed and made payable to the 'Office of the Information Commissioner'.

Alternatively you can make payment on-line which can be located at:

<https://www.oic.gov.ie/en/Apply-for-Review/Fees-Payable/> .

Should you wish to make such an 'application for review' in writing, please use the details below:

Office of the Information Commissioner,  
18 Lower Leeson Street,  
Dublin, 2.  
DO2 HE97

Alternatively you may appeal using the Office of the Information Commissioner on-line application form which can be located at:

<https://www.oic.gov.ie/en/apply-for-review/apply-for-review-online/>

If an appeal is made by you and accepted, the Information Commissioner will fully investigate and consider the matter and issue a fresh decision.

Details of 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.

Yours sincerely,

Noel Farrell  
Assistant Principal Officer  
ITE & Professional Development Section

