

Dear

ATISN 26802 – School Staffing

Information requested

Thank you for your request which I received on 14 March 2026. You asked for:

Information for the period 1 January 2018 to present day relating to correspondence held by Welsh Government which contains any of the following terms: school budget deficit; teacher recruitment; teacher retention; staffing pressures in schools; workforce sustainability in schools. This request relates to correspondence between Welsh Government officials and local authorities of Estyn only and is limited to the Education, Culture and Welsh Language Group.

Our response

From my preliminary assessment, I estimate that it will cost more than the appropriate limit set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 to answer your request. The appropriate limit specified for central government is £600. This represents the estimated cost of it taking over 24 hours of time to determine whether we hold the information and to thereafter locate, retrieve and extract it.

My initial estimate is that complying with your request would exceed 58 hours. This has been estimated by contacting colleagues across Education Department asking them to look for correspondence you have asked for within the subject areas. The combined time it took to sample for evidence has enabled me to estimate the total hours.

If you wish to submit a revised request, I refer you to the advice set out in my earlier letter to you regarding FOI ATISN 26698, which I will now expand upon. To date your requests have been sufficiently broad that it has not been possible to provide you with precise advice on how you can refine and refocus any future requests. This is because it remains unclear what specific information you are seeking.

We suggest you consider the precise information you require. What is the exact question you wish to have answered? What is it that you are seeking to understand? Rather than structuring your request around where you believe the information may be located—for example, by referring to correspondence containing particular terms or phrases—you should instead consider focusing on the specific questions you wish to pose and the specific information you wish to obtain. You should also consider narrowing the scope of your request. In both requests you have sought information spanning an eight-year period and covering a wide range of material; in addition to narrowing the scope as advised above you may wish to reduce the time period for which you request information.

I also want to make you aware that in the searches undertaken as part of sampling, no correspondence has yet been found that matches what you have requested. It is worth noting that, in general, the areas about which you have asked for information may form part of wider verbal discussions between Welsh Government and local authorities or Estyn, and there would not necessarily be any correspondence.

If you decide to submit a new request, please ensure you write to the Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at: Information Rights Unit, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely