



UK Visas
& Immigration

Alexander Barnes-Ross



Freedom of Information
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FOI Reference:

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Dear Alexander Barnes-Ross,

Thank you for your enquiry of 30 August 2024. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Information Requested

On 14th June 2024, the head teacher at Greenfields independent school in Sussex wrote to parents informing them UK Visas & Immigration has withdrawn their ability to sponsor students from overseas and stated 'current sponsorship will end on 31st July 2024'.

The school's registered name is Greenfields Educational Trust (Charity number 287037).

Please can you provide any information held by UK Visas & Immigration regarding the cancellation of Greenfields' sponsorship status.

Specifically, I would like to know if/when the school was inspected, the purpose of the inspection, the outcome of the inspection, any reports or reviews of their sponsor status, the reason for revoking their sponsorship status and whether the cancellation is permanent, or a temporary suspension.

Response

Please note the Home Office has obligations under data protection legislation and in law generally to protect personal data. We have concluded that it is inappropriate to share the requested data as this contains personal information which risks the identification of individuals. Therefore, this information is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOI Act.

Section 40(2) – Personal information

The information you have requested has been withheld under Section 40(2) because of the condition at Section 40(3A) (a) where this concerns the personal data of third parties. This is based on some of the details within the reports reference specific students. The Home Office has obligations under data protection legislation and in law generally to protect personal data. This exempts personal data from release if disclosure would contravene any of the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. We believe release would breach the first data protection principle, since it would be unlawful and unfair to disclose the information.

Section 43(2) allows us to exempt information if its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any persons. If we were to disclose the information to you, this would be likely to prejudice the interests of both the Home Office and those companies with whom the Home Office operates.

This exemption requires us to consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption stated above outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. This can be seen in the **Annex** below.

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk, quoting reference [REDACTED]. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by staff not involved in providing you with this response. If you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you will have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

A link to the Home Office Information Rights Privacy Notice can be found in the following link. This explains how we process your personal information:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-rights-privacy-notice>

Yours sincerely





We value your feedback, please use the link below to access a brief anonymous survey to help us improve our service to you:



Annex – The Public Interest Test

Some of the exemptions in the FOI Act, referred to as ‘qualified exemptions’, are

subject to a public interest test (PIT). This test is used to balance the public interest in disclosure against the public interest in favour of withholding the information, or the considerations for and against the requirement to say whether the information requested is held or not. We must carry out a PIT where we are considering using any of the qualified exemptions in response to a request for information.

The 'public interest' is not the same as what interests the public. In carrying out a PIT, we consider the greater good or benefit to the community as a whole if the information is released or not. The 'right to know' must be balanced against the need to enable effective government and to serve the best interests of the public.

The FOI Act is 'applicant blind'. This means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone, including those who might represent a threat to the UK.

Considerations in favour of disclosing the information

There will be a public interest in disclosure as to the activity of institutions who are or have been permitted to sponsor international students.

Considerations in favour of withholding the information

This exemption requires us to consider whether, in every respect the public interest in maintaining the exemption stated above, outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Please find our reasons against disclosure below:

- Our published Student Sponsorship guidance sets out the requirements that Student Sponsors must meet to sponsor international students.
- If UKVI have deemed a sponsor to be compliant with the immigration requirements for sponsorship, the requirements that were met can be determined from the published policy guidance.
- If an institution is found to not meet the standards required of a Sponsor, compliance action will be taken, up to and including revocation where appropriate. Details of compliance monitoring and the action that may be taken are set out in the published Student Sponsorship Guidance Document 3.
- A visit report is a record of a range of checks undertaken during the site visit, aligned to the Sponsorship requirements, and therefore will contain sensitive information relating to the institution's operations. A sponsor may not engage frankly and openly with UKVI during the visit or as part of its licence lifecycle activity if it believes sensitive information may then be made public.

Conclusion

We have therefore concluded that the balance of public interests identified lies in favour of maintaining the exemption. This is because the overall public interest lies in ensuring that the Home Office's relationship with sponsors and prospective sponsors is not prejudiced.

