



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending
watchdog

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CONDITION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS REPORT

Thank you for your request for information of 29 June 2023 for information about our [Condition of school buildings report](#). We have handled your request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Your specific request is set out in **Annex A**.

We confirm that we hold the information you have requested. Our report states that *“Around 700,000 pupils are learning in a school which the responsible body or DfE believes requires major rebuilding or refurbishment, given safety issues or the general building condition. This figure is derived from the 1,200 schools that responsible bodies have nominated, or DfE has selected, for the latest major school rebuilding and refurbishment programme (paragraphs 3.11 to 3.16).”* (Paragraph 2.9).

We obtained this information drawing from published information available on the Department for Education's (DfE) website, which can be found here [School rebuilding programme: schools in the programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme).

It may help to understand how DfE selected schools for the rebuilding programme. In 2021, DfE selected 100 schools in the first two selection rounds. In 2022, following consultation with the sector, DfE selected the next 300 schools based on applications from responsible bodies. The 1,200 schools are drawn from two data sources. These are:

1. A document called [“School rebuilding programme: list of selected schools”](#) lists all those 400 schools selected. **Those marked as “Set 1 – February 2021” and “Set 2 – July 2021” represent the 100 schools selected by DfE in the first two selection rounds.**
2. A document called [“School rebuilding programme: list of nominations received in 2022”](#) lists all those who subsequently applied (with 300 of these having been selected for the school rebuilding programme). **The document lists 1,105 schools.**

Adding together the **100 schools** listed in source 1 above and the **1,105 schools** listed in source 2 leads to **1,205 schools**. **We rounded this figure to “1,200 schools” in paragraph 2.9 of our report.**

As the information you requested is publicly available, it is exempt under FOIA in accordance with Section 21 (information accessible to the applicant by other means). **Annex B** provides details of how this exemption applies to your request.



Annex C sets out the steps you may wish to take if you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your request for information under FOIA.

I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

NAO FOI Team

Annex A

Request for information about condition of school buildings:

Your report on school buildings states 700k pupils are in buildings which need "major rebuilding or refurbishment". Do you have a list of these schools I can have please?

Annex B

Section 21 Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information accessible to applicant by other means.

(1) Information which is reasonably accessible to the applicant otherwise than under section 1 is exempt information.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) –

(a) information may be reasonably accessible to the applicant even though it is accessible only on payment, and

(b) information is to be taken to be reasonably accessible to the applicant if it is information which the public authority or any other person is obliged by or under any enactment to communicate (otherwise than by making the information available for inspection) to members of the public on request, whether free of charge or on payment.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1), information which is held by a public authority and does not fall within subsection (2)(b) is not to be regarded as reasonably accessible to the applicant merely because the information is available from the public authority itself on request, unless the information is made available in accordance with the authority's publication scheme and any payment required is specified in, or determined in accordance with, the scheme.

Reasons why we have applied the Section 21 exemption:

Under Section 21 of the FOIA we are not obliged to provide information that is reasonably accessible to you and the information you have requested is in the public domain. Section 21 is an absolute exemption and is not subject to the Public Interest Test.

As we set out in our response letter, the list of 1,200 schools that responsible bodies nominated, or that DfE has selected, for the latest major school rebuilding and refurbishment programme is in the public domain and the source data can be found here [School rebuilding programme: schools in the programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

Annex C

Statement of Policy

Our policy is to respond to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as helpfully and promptly as possible, having regard to the principles set out in the Act. I therefore hope you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not, then you should take the following steps.

In the first instance, within 40 working days, write to the National Audit Office Freedom of Information (FOI) Team at FOI@nao.org.uk or by post to:

FOI Team, Green 2, National Audit Office, 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SP

The Head of FOI will arrange a review, which will be conducted by a senior member of staff who was not involved in decisions relating to your original request. Once the review has been completed, we will write informing you of the outcome.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The primary way of escalating your concerns to the Information Commissioner is at: <https://ico.org.uk/foicomplaints>. Alternatively, you can contact the ICO at <https://ico.org.uk/> or Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF.