

DATA PROTECTION

How to spot a SAR and what to do

A quick guide for school staff - recognise it, record it and route it promptly.

THE QUICK TEST

Is someone asking for a copy of their own personal information? If yes, or you are unsure, treat it as a possible SAR and follow your school's reporting process.

It may be a SAR if someone says...

- Please send me all emails that mention me.
- I want a copy of the information in my child's file.
- Can I see the notes from my meeting?
- Tell me what information you hold about me.
- It arrives verbally, in writing, by email or through another channel.

Do this immediately

- Record the date, time, channel and the person's exact words.
- Acknowledge calmly without deciding whether the request is valid.
- Send it promptly to the school's DPO or designated data protection lead.
- Preserve relevant records and follow any search instructions you receive.
- Mark the message as confidential and use the approved internal route.

It is not necessarily a SAR

- A request for a general policy or other non-personal information.
- A complaint that does not ask for personal information.
- A routine request for a report already provided through normal school processes.
- A request to correct or delete information - another data right may apply, so still escalate if unsure.

Do not

- Insist that the person uses the words SAR or completes a special form.
- Send records yourself or promise that everything will be disclosed.
- Ask the requester to narrow the request unless the DPO asks you to.
- Delete, alter or tidy records after the request arrives.
- Share the request with people who do not need to know.

REMEMBER

Why speed matters: a valid request can reach any part of the school and the usual response period is one month. The DPO decides identity checks, scope, searches, third-party information and exemptions.

AUTHORITATIVE GUIDANCE

ICO: [A guide to subject access](#)

ICO: [Getting copies of your information](#)

Guidance checked 22 August 2026. Use this alongside your school's data protection policy and reporting route. General staff guidance only; it is not legal advice.