



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Baile Átha Cliath 2

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dublin 2

Our Ref: FOI/Req/18/018

Ken Foxe

14 February 2018

Dear Mr. Foxe,

I refer to the request which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

*“- details of the international school fees paid for by the Department in 2015, 2016 and 2017, broken down according to number of students, location, and by year.
- a list of the schools to whom the Department paid money in those years along with the city in which they are located.”*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on January 25th 2018.

I have identified one record that falls within the scope of your request. I have made a decision to grant access to this record.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade comprises headquarters at home and 80 diplomatic, consular and representative offices abroad. Missions abroad perform a wide range of functions in pursuit of Ireland's foreign policy interests, including advancing government policies, in particular with the EU and the UN, and providing frontline consular services to Irish citizens overseas. They also support Irish culture and enhanced visibility for Ireland overseas, including via our diaspora and community networks. Working with the State Agencies missions advance Ireland's trade, tourism, education and investment objectives. They are critical to the organisation of Ministerial-led Trade missions and the Saint Patrick's Day programme of promotional visits and events both of which develop contacts and influence with business and political leaders. These and other promotional

activities help to advance our values and extend our influence on matters of interest to us. They enhance our outreach and our global visibility.

Maintaining a permanent team of diplomatic and consular officers experienced in international affairs is vital to derive the maximum benefit from Ireland's international engagement and protecting our citizens abroad. In relative terms, the Irish Foreign Service is modest in size: 65% of Ireland's offices abroad have one or two posted officers. All posted officers are civil servants; they are paid by the State according to the salary scales determined by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and, as PAYE workers, are subject to the normal tax and social security obligations of civil servants.

Support for school fees allows the children of posted officers to continue their education without undue disruption where it would otherwise be very difficult due to the language environment, differing educational systems or the lack of availability of local schools which would be equivalent standard to Irish schools. Such support is only provided where the officer can provide evidence to demonstrate that it is required to meet these criteria and represents good value for money compared to similar options.

I am refusing the second part of your request "*a list of the schools to whom the Department paid money in those years along with the city in which they are located.*" This Department operates in a complex international environment. We have a fundamental duty of care to protect our staff and their families. To provide a list of schools attended could jeopardise the safety of families and the right to privacy of the individuals concerned, particularly as we would have only one posted officer in a number of countries. In that light, I have refused this information under Section 37(1) *personal information* and Section 32(1) (b) *endanger the life or safety of any person* and 32(1)(c) *facilitate the commission of an offence*. I have however provided information on the number of schools in receipt of fees annually in each region of operation.

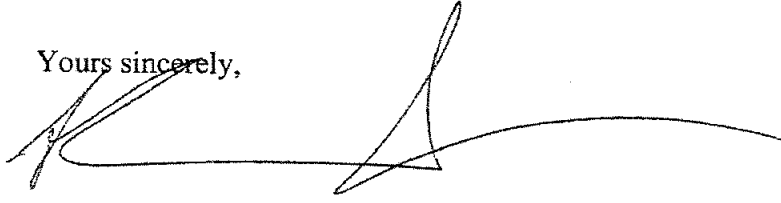
Right of Appeal

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so in writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to foi@dfat.ie. A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at foi@dfat.ie, or 01-4082857.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks (20 working days) from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate

circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kevin Byrne', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping flourish that extends to the right.

Kevin Byrne