

Keeping School Records

Retention Guidelines

School records and archives

Records are a vital part of the daily life of any school. Your school is required by law to keep certain records, many of which must be kept for several years. A small proportion of your records will be worth keeping permanently as archives because of the unique evidence they contain about your school, its staff, pupils and the wider community.

Requirements

You need to manage and retain your records in a way that complies with various pieces of legislation including:

- **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** sets out the data protection principles by which organisations should manage their records. Article 5 (e) states that “*personal data shall be kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed*” unless kept for “*archiving purposes*”. Therefore, it’s important to know what records you have, how long you need to keep them for, and what to do with them afterwards
- **Freedom of Information Act 2000:** requires public authorities, including maintained schools, to have a records retention and disposal policy, so that information is accessible for as long as it needs to be.

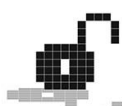
The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was established in March 2015 to investigate whether public bodies and non-state institutions have delivered their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse. The inquiry is nation-wide and ongoing.

In July 2015, the IICSA Chair issued a stop on the destruction of files with content relating “directly or indirectly to the sexual abuse of children or to child protection and care.” Knowingly destroying any such files could constitute a criminal offence under the Inquiries Act 2005.

Until further notice, any records relating to children; services provided to children; and individuals who work(ed) with children should not be destroyed. Any records that would ordinarily be destroyed, should now still be retained.

Retention Guidance

Many of the records created by schools must be kept for specific lengths of time. These lengths of time are called **retention periods**. Retention periods vary according to the type/purpose of a record and begin at defined points (“**trigger points**”) e.g. closure of file; date of birth of a pupil.





Security of Personnel data

A **Retention Schedule** lists all the different types of records (**records series**) an organisation produces. It should clearly state:

- the purpose of each records series;
- how long each records series should be kept;
- what the trigger point for each records series is;
- the basis for keeping the records.

The retention schedule should make it easy to identify how long to keep records and should be followed by the School, its staff and governors.

Below is a summary retention schedule for schools, listing the main records series produced as part of school functions and activities. It recommends minimum retention periods and the disposal actions that would ordinarily apply. However, remember that the IICSA's requirement to keep children's records currently overrides any "Destroy" action.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do the same retention periods apply to both paper and digital records?

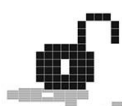
Yes, generally, the retention requirements for a particular records series should be applied to all regardless of medium. For example, both digital and paper accounting records should be kept for the same length of time.

If I have several copies of the same record, can I destroy all but one copy?

Yes, you can destroy exact duplicate records, ensuring that you retain one copy for the specified retention period. Where possible, keep the original copy

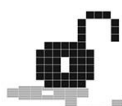
When should records be kept for "archiving purposes"?

When you do not use them regularly for administrative reasons but keep them for what they tell you about the history of the school, its staff and pupils. Archives should be preserved permanently.



Retention Schedule

Record Series	Trigger Point	Minimum Retention period at School	Basis for keeping records	Action
Accident Reports (children)	Date of birth of child	25 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Destroy
Accident/injury at work records (staff)	Date of incident	4 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 11	Review
Accounting records	End of financial year	6 years	HMRC - Compliance Handbook Manual CH15400	Review: Archive annual accounts
Administrative files (routine)	End of administrative use	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Review
Admission registers	Date of last entry	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Archive
Attendance registers	End of academic year	3 years		Destroy
Contracts under seal	End of contract	12 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 8	Destroy
Contracts under hand	End of contract	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Destroy
Contract monitoring records	End of Current year	2 years		Destroy
Development plans (School)	End of administrative use	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Archive
Examination certificates (public)				Any certificates left unclaimed should be returned to the appropriate Examination Board
Examination results - internal	End of academic year	5 years		Destroy
Examination results - public	End of academic year	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Destroy
Free School Meal Registers	End of current year	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Destroy
Governors' reports	Date of meeting	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Archive
Instruments of Government	Date Instruments	Retain permanently		Archive



	drawn up	until closure of school		
Log book	Date of last entry	6 years		Archive
Maintenance logs	Date of last entry	10 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Destroy
Minutes of governors, staff and PTA meetings	End of academic year	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Archive
OFSTED reports and papers	Superseded by new report	Review on replacement by new inspection report		Archive
Policies	Superseded by new policy			
Property title deeds and architect's plans	No longer used regularly	Permanent		Archive
Pupil files and record cards (primary)	Pupil leaves school	Immediate	Transfer records to secondary (or other primary) school	
Pupil files and record cards (secondary)	Date of birth of pupil	25 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Destroy
SATs/PAN/Value added records	End of academic year	6 years		Destroy
School Prospectus	End of academic year	3 years		
Special Educational Needs (SEN) files	Date of birth of pupil	31 years	Children and Families Act 2014; Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Review. Some authorities choose to keep SEN files for a longer period of time to defend themselves in a "failure to provide a sufficient education" case
Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 Section 1: statements	Date of birth of pupil	31 years	Children and Families Act 2014; Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Review
Staff - personnel files	End of employment	6 years	Limitation Act 1980, Section 2	Destroy

