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## 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 drawn up | Retain permanently until closure of school |  | Archive |
| 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 |