Records Management Policy

Thorn Grove Primary School

Approved by Governing Body on:	21 November 2024
L.Vose Headteacher	*T.Buckley* Chair of Governors
Next review due by:	November 2026
Based on a Stockport LA policy	September 2024

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Schools Record Management Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. The school recognises that by efficiently managing its records, it will be able to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the effective overall management of the institution.

1.2. Records provide evidence for protecting the legal rights and interests of the school and provide evidence for demonstrating performance and accountability. This document provides the policy framework through which effective management of records can be achieved and audited.

2. Relationship with existing policies

2.1. This document should be read in conjunction with school data protection policy, Freedom of Information policy, the records retention schedule, safeguarding and child protection record keeping guidance and other legislation regulations or statutory guidance (including, audit, equal opportunities, and ethics) affecting the school.

3. Aims

3.1. All members of the school staff (including governors, volunteers, and contractors) are to follow this policy on the management of records and relevant related statutory policies where information and records may be created.

4. Scope

4.1. This policy applies to all records, in all electronic or physical formats or media created, received, or maintained by staff of the school in the course of carrying out its functions.

4.2. It sets out the responsibilities of the School to manage records and commitments to ensuring records are properly created, accessible and available for use and that they are disposed of in a secure and timely fashion. It provides staff with guidance regarding individual responsibility for accuracy and appropriate storage of records.

4.3. Records are defined as all those documents which facilitate the business carried out by the school and which are thereafter retained (for a set period) to provide evidence of its transactions or activities. These records may be created or received, and then stored, in hard copy or electronically.

4.4. A small percentage of the school's records may be selected for permanent preservation as part of the institution's archives and for historical research. This should be done in liaison with the School Information Governance Team, Stockport Archive Service and Greater Manchester County Record Office.

5. General

5.1. Records are defined in as any information created, received, or maintained in the following formats:

- Physical, for example, a document, letter, certificate, image, notes.

- Electronic, for example, email, web information, voice/video recording.

5.2. For compliance with the data protection principles laid out in the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (UK GDPR), all information must be:

- Legally held and used;

- Correctly labelled and stored;

- Readily available in a helpful format to those who should have access to it;

- Securely protected from those who should not have access to it;

- Preserved for an appropriate period of time.

5.3. Effective records management begins by ensuring that the right information is captured, labelled correctly, and stored in an appropriate shared area with the required access. The term 'management' covers normal processing, retention, and disposal of records permissions. Declaring information as a record provides assurance that it will be appropriately retained and protected against amendment or premature disposal.

5.4. As a general principle, schools should declare as records any information which has corporate value (short or long term), including:

- records which contribute to discussion or decision, such as policy documents, reports, reviews, guides, as well as any correspondence sent externally;

- records which are produced regularly as part of an administrative or operational process, such as minutes, meeting papers, data returns, reports, Memoranda of Understanding, and audits.

5.5. Important information must be saved as records, in particular:

- any material that would be regarded as a significant Historical Record, which will include the documents summarised in the last paragraph of this section;

- records retained for Legal or Audit Purposes, including legal, finance and accounting records, contracts, and agreements (noting that these may need to be retained in hard copy as well).

6.   Responsibilities

6.1.   The school has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record keeping systems in accordance with the regulatory environment and the creation and maintenance of school level records management procedures and must also be able to demonstrate their compliance with it. The person with overall responsibility for this policy is the Head of the School.

6.2.   Individual staff and employees should complete appropriate data protection and information governance training and must ensure that records for which they are responsible are accurate and are maintained and disposed of in accordance with records management guidelines and are responsible for maintaining record keeping systems and the records they hold in accordance with this policy:

- keeping accurate official records;

- preparing records correctly for storage. Self-modifying fields (such as those that display 'current date' whenever the file is opened) should be replaced by fixed data as at the time the record is being created. Records should not be encrypted, compressed, password protected, or in any condition that will make them difficult to access by authorised people;

- storing records correctly in the right shared areas in accordance with unit guidance. Electronic records must not be stored offline on media such as CD, DVD, portable drives, etc.

6.3.   The person responsible for records management in the school will give guidance about good records management practice and will promote compliance with this policy so that information will be retrieved easily, appropriately and in a timely way. They will also monitor compliance with this policy by surveying at least annually to check whether records are stored securely and can be accessed appropriately.

- Provide guidance for good records management practice;

- Promote compliance with policy by routinely checking that records are securely stored and appropriately accessible;

- Ensure that records are transferred, stored, and disposed of appropriately and in accordance with information governance policy and UK government guidelines.

7.   What records should be kept?

7.1.   All records should be retained in line with regulations and retention guidelines as outlined in the Schools retention and disposal schedule and good practice and retain the following types of records:

- Pupil, staff, building, finance, and governance records. A pupil record is defined in section 12 of the DfE guidance on educational records for England. [1]
- Records about the history of the school, trust, or academy (if applicable, including the 'school history' from prior to the conversion to an academy). See The National Archives' research guide on schools [2] for examples.

8.   Personnel Records

8.1.   Personnel files and training records (including misconduct and working time records) should normally be retained for 6 years after employment ceases. However, records should be retained until the adult reaches retirement, or for 10 years (if this is the longer period) where any of the following concerns are identified:

- Behaviour of an adult working with children where s/he behaved in a harmful way towards a child (actual harm or potential to harm);

- Adult possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;

- Adult behaved towards a child in a manner that indicated s/he was unsuitable to work with children.

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[1]

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/2016-key-stage-2-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara/section-12-keeping-and-maintaining-records

[2] https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/schools/

Children and Young People Records

9.   Pupil Records

9.1.   The pupil record is the primary means of charting an individual pupil's progress through the Education System and should accompany the pupil through every stage and every school attended:

9.2.   Pupil records are to be accurate, objective, and accessible. Detailed statutory guidance is accessible on DfE GOV.UK site [keeping and maintaining records](#).

9.3.   Historical records relating to pupils who have left school education are to be retained from DOB + 25 years.

10.   Child Protection Records

10.1.   A Child Protection or Safeguarding File is separate to the School Pupil/ Educational Record. All child protection records are sensitive and confidential so should be kept in a secure (locked at all times) filing cabinet, or protected electronic storage, separate from other education records and only accessible to staff who are involved in the safeguarding process of the child.

10.2.   Electronic Child Protection Records should be password protected with access strictly controlled in the same way as paper records

11.   Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Records

11.1.   SEND records are retained from DOB of the pupil plus 25 years and disposed of securely unless subject to a legal hold. Where necessary SEND records may be chosen to be kept for a longer period by the school to defend itself in a "failure to provide a sufficient education" case. There is an element of business risk analysis involved in any decision to keep the records longer than the minimum retention period and this should be documented.

11.2.   SEND files (including advice and information provided to parents), reviews and Individual Education Plans (IEP) are normally transferred to the receiving school – the receiving school is then responsible for normal processing of these records

12.   Retention Schedule

12.1.   The principle underpinning retention of records as directed through the DPA is that: 'Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes.'

12.2.   Detailed guidance on the types of records held within schools and their recommended retention periods is available on SLA Online which sets out the normal processing of

records; the length of time a record series needs to be kept and the action required when it is of no further administrative use.

12.3.   The schedule refers to all information regardless of the media in which it is stored (paper or electronic). This retention schedule contains
- legislation which directs a statutory retention period;
- A limitation period, for example keeping a contract for at least the length of time that a claim could be brought against it;

12.4.   When appropriate, the retention schedule will be reviewed and amended by the Information Governance Team to include any new record series created and remove any obsolete record series.

12.5.   Where an external contract is used to process records, this will need to be included in the school retention schedule (for example, software use for child protection and safeguarding records).

13.   Disposal

13.1.   When records have reached their retention period records should be reviewed and a decision on their long-term value must be made. School records of historical interest may be archived but not all records are of long-term value and worthy of permanent preservation. Records and data that are of no longer value or required may be disposed of securely and confidentially.

13.2.   Any records containing personal information, or sensitive policy information must be securely disposed of, made either unreadable or unreconstructable to reduce the likelihood of retrieval and reconstruction to an acceptable level so that it cannot be accessed by anybody else either by mistake or for malicious purposes. Do not dispose of these types of records with regular waste or a skip

13.3.   Paper records should be shredded using a cross-cutting shredder or shredded by an external company, [3] CDs / DVDs / floppy disks / SD and other storage media should be destroyed in line with National Cyber Security Centre guidance [4] for data held electronically or on storage media to ensure data cannot be read by unauthorised parties after it has left school organisational control.

13.4.   Documentation on destroyed records should be kept indefinitely to manage the risk of not having evidence that records were destroyed during a managed disposal process, in the event that destruction of particular records is questioned.

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[3] Where an external contractor is used for shredding records, it is recommended that all records must be shredded on-site in the presence of an employee. The organisation must also be able to prove that the records have been destroyed by the company who should provide a certificate of destruction. Staff working for the external provider should have been trained in the handling of confidential documents.

[4] https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/secure-sanitisation-storage-media

13.5.   Documentation should provide evidence that the destruction took place in accordance with established and formally adopted policies and schedules and with appropriate authorisation. Without this it may be difficult to demonstrate that records were not eliminated to avoid disclosing them in response to a request for information.

13.6.   The IG Support Services Team has produced a template for annual review of school records and safe data destruction checklist to help with compliance.

14.   Information Access Requests

14.1.   Effective information and records management is crucial to being able to process both a request under the Freedom of Information Act or a subject access request (SAR) under the UK GDPR.

14.2.   Both Acts require organisations to search all their information and data holdings for anything within the scope of the request, then review the content in line with the respective Act and consider any justifiable exemptions ahead of releasing any documents.

14.3.   It is therefore crucial to have identifiable locations where school documents are being held, to label them appropriately and to have an electronically searchable index to enable swift and effective searches as required. This is especially important for large holdings of hardcopy (physical) files, as both FOIs and SARs have mandated timescales to complete the process in (FOI - 20 school days or a maximum of 60 working days. SAR – one calendar month).

14.4.   Managing records against the retention schedule is deemed to be "normal processing" under statute data protection and freedom of information legislation. Both Acts recognise where information has been appropriately destroyed after their retention period, however once a request is received or a legal hold imposed, records disposal relating to the request or legal hold must be stopped.

15.   What should happen to records belonging to an educational establishment that is closing?

15.1.   On closure of an educational establishment, all records are to be managed in accordance with these guidelines. Physical records should be transferred to a suitable place of deposit and a schedule of the records to be held is to be retained in accordance with guidelines.

15.2.   When an educational establishment closes, the following records should be identified and either retained, by the school, academy, or trust, and retained while they are still actively required for legal or regulatory purposes (i.e., until the retention period is reached). Alternatively, the following records should be transferred in liaison with the School Information Governance Team, Stockport Archive Service and Greater Manchester County Record Office.

- Governance and 'school history' records should be offered to the council archive service for permanent preservation. The 'school history' records are things that need to be permanently preserved at an archive, e.g., where there is community interest such as whole school photos.
- Electronic and paper records that need to be kept for a limited time, e.g., records of pupils who haven't transferred to another school; records of staff who do not continue their employment with the school; records for the buildings (including asbestos, chemicals etc.); governance records; and financial records related to school.

16. Support

16.1.   The Council Information Governance Team is able to offer further support and guidance on records management within the school.

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