

School records at Brent Archives

School records are often a source of invaluable help for local historical and genealogical research, and teachers and students who wish to find out about the history of their own school, as well as for former pupils when they need to provide proof of their attendance or educational record.

However, keeping all such records indefinitely would clearly cause schools a major storage problem. In any event, access to individual pupil records is protected by the [Data Protection Act](#) and therefore not all school records are available to the general public. This page aims to provide some initial guidance about school records and access to them, under the following themes:

- Advice for former pupils and family and local historians
- Examination results
- Advice for schools about keeping school records

Advice for former pupils and family and local historians

It is important to appreciate that school records for an individual pupil can be kept by the school for a limited time only. If you are a former pupil looking for your attendance and/or your education record at a Brent school, it would be advisable to first contact the school you attended to see what records they still have. Access to your own records is subject to the Data Protection Act.

Some schools may have deposited their historical records, such as admission registers, with Brent Archives, and we hold records for some schools dating back to the late 19th century and early 20th century. However, although schools are encouraged to transfer their records to the archives once they are no longer current, they have no legal obligation to do so. A school which has existed on the same site since it was originally established is most likely to retain its 'formal' records – admission registers, log books, punishment books, and attendance registers.

However, whilst the first official guidance issued by the Ministry of Education back in the 1950s (Administrative Memorandum No.531) advised schools that log books should 'be preserved at least during the whole life of the school', it only recommended that those other records 'be kept for at least three years after completion'. In theory, therefore, the only records which such schools were likely to have kept indefinitely are the log books.

There is, of course, no guarantee that even these records will still exist; they are certainly unlikely to have been kept in 'archivally friendly' conditions, and may have suffered irreparable damage such as that caused by fires or flooding. There is also the real possibility that they may simply have been destroyed by mistake.

For schools which may have relocated, merged, or simply no longer exist, the situation is often much the same. In most instances, the move or closure will have

occurred prior to the establishment of the Archives, and in the majority of such cases, many records appear simply to have vanished without trace. Thankfully, there are still many that have survived, including relatively complete collections for some schools. For details of the school collections we hold, search the online catalogue, or contact the archives on 020 8937 3541 or archives@brent.gov.uk.

To comply with the Data Protection Act, there is some important guidance to follow if you wish to consult someone else's personal information in school records. School records are closed for a 100-year period, meaning that entries for an individual who is (or would be) more than one hundred years old can be viewed without restriction. However, if the individual is less than one hundred years old you would need to provide proof that that person is now deceased, and to supply a death certificate for them.

If you require seeing the personal information for an individual who is still alive, then you would need to apply to the Brent data protection officer for permission, dpo@brent.gov.uk.

Examination results

The collections at Brent Archives include a small number of GCSE certificates for two schools, but in general, records of the examinations taken by past pupils and the grades they attained are not retained by the schools, and have therefore not been transferred to the collections at Brent Archives.

If you sat exams before leaving school, and wish to acquire a printout of your examination grades, or a replacement certificate (including an indication of the school you attended), you should contact the examination board, seek advice from them. Schools may be able to assist in identifying which examination boards were used. The contact details for the main boards are as follows:

London Qualifications Ltd (EDEXCEL)
Stewart House
32 Russell Square
London WC1B 5DN
0970 240 9800
enquiries@edexcel.org.uk

AQA
Exam Records
0844 209 6614
eos@aqa.org.uk

OCR
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU
01223 553998
general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

Advice for schools about keeping school records

There should be a presumption against destroying any records unless it is considered that they are of no historical value, and Brent Archives staff are happy to provide advice. Brent Archives is always pleased to accept new donations of school records, in line with our collecting policy, so if your school may have records suitable for transfer, please contact the Archives on 020 8937 3541 or archives@brent.gov.uk.

The following guidance is by no means exhaustive but covers the items most frequently asked about.

School log

School logs should be retained permanently. They are retained in the school for 6 years from the date of the last entry; then transferred to the archives.

Admission registers

Admission registers should be retained permanently - note that this is not the same as the class register in which daily attendance is marked. These are retained in the school for six years from the date of the last entry, then transferred to the archives.

Pupil record cards or printouts

Primary – These are retained while the child is in the school; then transfer to the relevant secondary school.

Secondary – These are retained until the child is 25 years old and then shredded.

Class registers

Class registers are retained whilst the pupils are still at school and for three years after the last date in the register; then destroyed. For example, if a pupil enters school in September 2001 and leaves in July 2008, the September 2001 register for that class can only be destroyed in August 2011.

Old photographs and other records that play an important part in the life of the school can be transferred to the archives for historical purposes.

In every case, the Archives will confirm what they have retained and send a copy of the retention details to the school for their information. Often, schools will want to put on a display of old records for special events, and with advance notice the Archives can arrange the loan of material, subject to certain safeguards concerning the preservation and security of the items whilst on display. Contact us for full details of the terms under which such loans can be made, or for any further advice on retention and disposal of records.