



Representative Church Body Library

Policy for the Appropriate Custody of Primary School Records*

**with particular relevance for schools in the Republic of Ireland*

1. Ownership of School Records and their Value for the Historical Record

The School records of any primary school in the State belong to the Board of Management or Patron responsible for that school, with the Board of Management making decisions about what records should be retained for the historical record. Many have a unique value which may be required for reference for a variety of legal, educational, historical and social purposes in the future. School Boards of Management are employers of staff who hold a range of pupil-related and sensitive data that may need to be retained under data protection legislation. Further advice should be sought in relation to the management of such personal data prior to the closure of the school.

This document is primarily focused on records of schools in the Republic of Ireland, where legislation governing Primary School records comes under the remit of the Department of Education. Useful information about the remit of the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland is provided on p.5 below. Whilst the RCB Library is concerned about the preservation of the records of Church of Ireland Primary Schools because these documents contain valuable information, the Library is not the custodian of Primary School records nor is the Library responsible for the long-term storage of such records. The Library has however been in discussion with colleagues in the Local Government Archivists and Records Managers (LGARM) Group representing archivists and records managers at local government level within the Republic of Ireland. The LGARM has confirmed the following in writing:

“The group is happy for the RCB to inform any Board of Management/Patron of Church of Ireland primary schools wishing to deposit their collections in a local archive service that we will facilitate such requests, subject to the following points:

- The majority of LGARM members are willing to acquire primary school archives (many have been acquiring these collections for a number of years already) subject to available storage;
- The school to be responsible for imposing an arrangement on the collection prior to its transfer to the local archive, e.g. all registers, roll books, daily attendance books, District Inspector’s observation books, organiser’s observation books, corporal punishment books to be sorted chronologically;
- Member bodies are particularly interested in acquiring any extant school photographs, as these records can be made available without restriction;
- Local authority archive services to be considered as the first place of deposit for these collections.

In the case of local authorities with no archivist, the group recommends that the National Archives of Ireland might be considered as the temporary custodian of these collections until such time as a local authority archive has been established or that suitable storage has been identified.” (*Letter from LGARM, 27 Sept. 2022*).

Discussions are ongoing in this regard, and if any difficulties arise, in the first instance the Librarian & Archivist, Dr Susan Hood email susan.hood@rcbdub.org will provide further advice.

It is the school or school board of management who remain responsible for arranging the collection prior to transfer and for agreeing the access terms (so if a school wished to have materials closed for a period, this can be assured in a transfer agreement form). The recommended closure periods for materials containing personal or sensitive data is 100 years, while more routine administrative material (such as

minutes) should be closed for 40 years. General interest material such as photographs and any printed items such as magazines have no restriction imposed and thus be available for immediate access if possible.

The advice below seeks to assist School Patrons and Boards of Management with guidance about the historical value of Primary School records and ensure they take the correct steps to arrange and safeguard these materials, by contacting the most appropriate places of custody for their permanent safekeeping. This is particularly relevant where records have ceased to be used in the day-to-day administration of a school or in circumstances where a school is due to close or has already closed.

2. Appropriate Records for Permanent Keeping

As mentioned above, not all records need to be retained. Boards of Management and their Patrons will already be aware of the retention periods for routine administrative materials such as personnel files on pupils, employment records of staff, accounts, and other HR-related records, and be reviewing these as part of current administration. School Boards of Management should also ensure that appropriate long-term arrangements are put in place regarding school data held online or in electronic format. This may involve close consultation between the relevant Patron, Diocesan Office or Diocesan Board of Education.

In circumstances where a School Board of Management either no longer has capacity to retain school records of historical value on the school premises, or where that school is due to close, appropriate steps must be taken to ensure that school records are secured and made accessible for relevant parties to consult in the future. In the first instance, contact should be made with the Secretary of the General Synod Board of Education, Dr Ken Fennelly, email ken.fennelly@rcbdub.org who will provide further advice and guidance.

The types of school records of historical value that should be retained, and arranged for permanent archival storage are set out in the table below:

Table 2.1: Types of School Records of Historical Value

*** Note these records are listed in alphabetical order, which does not imply a hierarchy of value.**

Attendance roll books

Details daily attendance of pupils by name. Also includes their dates of birth, dates they entered the class, numbers of pupils in each class and the number of pupils in the school.

Attendance roll books for extra subjects

These volumes list extra subjects taken by pupils. Details pupils' names, their dates of birth, the class in which they were enrolled and the dates on which the classes were held.

Corporal punishment books

Includes instructions from Office of Primary Education, Marlborough Street, Dublin City, County Dublin on inside front cover. Includes the following headings: 'name of pupil' 'standard' [class]; 'punishment'; 'teacher's signature', and 'date of pupil's previous punishment if any'.

Daily report books

Pupils' daily attendance in tabular form for each class. Also notes any discrepancies between number of pupils on the school roll and actual attendance figures. There are no details of pupils' names.

District inspector's observation book 1

Book 1 details dates of inspection and the district inspector's observations regarding mode of teaching; discipline and order; school accounts; school room and premises; supply books and apparatus; industrial training and observance of former suggestions.

District inspector's observation book 2

Book 2 details the names of the teachers in the school; the classes they taught; the number of class monitors; dates of inspection; pupils' proficiency in their subjects; general observations and suggestions.

District inspector's observation book 3

Book 3 details dates of inspections, the proficiency of the classes in their subjects with suggestions and general observations as to discipline, cleanliness, repairs of house and other observations.

Examination rolls

Lists pupils' names; attendances; dates of admission to class; results of last examination; previous Primary schools attended, if any. Subjects examined include reading; writing; arithmetic; spelling; grammar; geography and needlework, and any extra subjects taken.

Examination roll and promotion sheets

Lists the name of each pupil; attendances; dates of admission to class; results of last examination; previous Primary schools attended if any. Subjects examined include reading; writing; arithmetic; spelling; grammar; geography and needlework, and any extra subjects taken. Also includes promotion sheet indicating if pupils have been promoted to the next class. The sheet records the pupils' names, register numbers and their examination results.

Organiser's observation books

Details the name of each teacher; date of inspection; special branch [subject] taught; training in subject; date of teacher's appointment to school; proficiency of class, and suggestions.

Photographs

Photographs are particularly useful resources for illustrating histories of individual schools, or other promotional literature. They may be stored either in their original format or scanned and the digital surrogates kept instead. They are often only of value where the subject material is labelled and dated.

Plans, drawings, architectural surveys and reports

Any materials showing plans or details of the school building and related buildings. (Such records may have been created by the Commissioners of Public Works – now the Office of Public Works. Local archivists will guide schools about this distinction).

Promotion sheets

Sheets indicating if pupils have been promoted to the next class. The sheet records pupils' names, register numbers and their examination results.

Religious instruction certificate books.

Book containing certificates to be issued if a parent or guardian wished their child to receive religious instruction from a teacher of a different religious denomination to that of the child or if the teacher was giving instruction in a religion which was different from that of the child. These books are typically left blank or in some cases initials and dates are written across the first certificate.

Registers

Includes details of pupils' names, dates of birth, religious affiliation, residence, occupation of parent or guardian and any previous schools attended.

Scheme for work and monthly progress records

Account of work done in class organised by subject detailing lessons taught and books read.

3. Appropriate Custody of Non-Current School Records

When a school has arranged all its historical records, the appropriate place of deposit should be the relevant County Archive of the county in which the school is located, with whom contact should be made directly by the Board of Management/Patron. Some counties do not have a dedicated archive and in these instances contact could initially be made with the National Archives in Dublin which holds national school records for some local authorities. Alternatively, the local studies section/department of the relevant County Library.

A list of County Archives or relevant Library Services (with current contact information) is provided in Table 2 below. Please note that contact for the National Archives of Ireland is available through: <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/>

In the first instance, contact should be made by the Board of Management directly with the relevant staff member(s) of each county repository. The archival/and or library staff will be able to give practical advice about boxing and listing materials in the categories (as outlined in Table 1), arrange for the collection of these materials (or advise about delivery) and outline the terms of the deposit (normally in the form of an agreed Depositor Agreement).

Where records are for a school in Northern Ireland, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, should be contacted.

Table 3.1: List of County Archives or Library Local Studies Services

Donating Boards (as Depositors) may be assured that each of these repositories have the local context and interest and will store such records in a suitable and protected environment, where they will professionally administer the preservation, access and use of the records, in accordance with statutory requirements, or any further special conditions.

Carlow: Contact the Local Studies Dept of the County Library, tel. 059-9129705 or e-mail: library@carlowcoco.ie

Cavan: http://www.cavanlibrary.ie/Default.aspx?StructureID_str=36

Clare: https://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/archives/archives_index.htm

Cork: <https://www.corkarchives.ie/>

Donegal: <https://www.donegalcoco.ie/culture/archives/countyarchivescollection/>

Dublin: The various county council divisions within the city and county of Dublin apply. For Dublin City: <https://www.dublincity.ie/residential/libraries/find-library/dublin-city-library-and-archive>, for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council: <https://libraries.dlrccoco.ie/library-services/local-history/local-studies> ; for Fingal County Council: <https://www.fingal.ie/council/service/archives> and finally for South Dublin: South Dublin City Council: <https://source.southdublinlibraries.ie/>

Galway: Contact Library Headquarters, tel. 091-509388 or e-mail: info@galwaylibrary.ie

Kerry: <https://www.kerrylibrary.ie/local-history--archives.html>

Kildare: <https://www.kildare.ie/heritage/archives.asp>

Kilkenny: https://www.kilkennylibrary.ie/eng/our_services/local_studies/archives/

Laois: Contact the Local Studies Section of the County Library Service, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise. Any telephone enquiries should be directed to 057-8664234

Leitrim: through the Local Studies Section, <https://leitrimcoco.ie/eng/Community-Culture/Library/Local-Studies/>

Limerick: <https://www.limerick.ie/archives>

Longford: <https://www.longfordlibrary.ie/archives-and-local-studies/archives/>

Louth: <https://www.louthcoco.ie/en/services/archives/>

Mayo: <https://www.mayo.ie/library>

Meath: Contact the Library local studies unit, <https://www.meath.ie/council/council-services/libraries/local-studies-and-family-history>

Monaghan: <https://monaghan.ie/library/category/archive/>

Offaly: <https://www.offaly.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Heritage-and-Archaeological-Objects/Archives-in-Offaly/>

Roscommon: <https://www.roscommoncoco.ie/Coco/en/Services/Community/Library/>

Sligo: <https://sligolibrary.ie/archives/>

Tipperary: <https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/your-council/county-archives>

Waterford: <https://www.waterfordcouncil.ie/departments/culture-heritage/archives/index.htm>

Westmeath:

<http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/library/explorewestmeath/localstudies/archives/>

Wexford: <https://wexfordcountyarchive.com/>

Wicklow: <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Our-Service>

4. School Records in Northern Ireland

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast (PRONI) takes in all school records for schools located in Northern Ireland.

A useful [model retention schedule available on this link](#) provides the guide for schools to follow laying out what information should come to PRONI, the various retention periods and what can ultimately be destroyed. The legislation around depositing with PRONI is The Public Records Act 1923 and the Disposal of documents Order 1925. Further information about PRONI can be found here:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni>

RCB LIBRARY
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