

School Records

Background

School records can be used in many different ways. You can find out which school a child attended, and more about their family such as their address. But you can also research the history of the school and the local community.

School log books often refer to what was going on in the local community. Events such as fairs, markets, harvests and holidays are often mentioned. National events such as coronations, wars and the weather are often noted by the headteacher.

If you live in a former school, you may be able to find plans of the original school buildings and pictures of what the building was like when it was used for teaching.

Please be aware that if you are looking at material under 100 years old, you will be required to sign a form stating that you will not use the information to harm a named person or their family. This may include removing any names from your research. Some records may be closed, and you will not be able to view them. If you are trying to access information about yourself you may need to make a Subject Access Request for information (see <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/access-to-information/access-my-personal-information/>). **For more information, please ask a member of staff or email us on archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk.**

Before the 1870 Education Act there was no official provision for education in England and Wales. In the 1860s it is thought that only half the children in Britain attended a school of any kind. There were however, some privately funded educational establishments including:

- Church of England schools
- The British and Foreign Schools Society (BFSS)
- Charity schools
- Sunday schools
- Schools run by an institution or business

The 1870 Education Act created school's boards of elected local ratepayers who had the power to build and manage schools where there was no existing or adequate provision already. The Act required all children between the ages of 5 and 13 to attend school, although the individual school board could decide whether to enforce compulsory attendance.

The Act did not provide education for free; it was usual to pay a few pence per week for each child. This could cause additional hardship to poor families. In some areas the poorest families received assistance with fees from the school board.

What records are there and what information will they contain?

There was no standard practice for keeping records before the 1870 Education Act. Therefore, there is no guarantee that any records of schools before this date were kept or have survived. The 1870 Act standardised record keeping, and as records were systematically kept from this date, they have a higher survival rate. The most common records to survive are:

- Admission registers, which usually include:
 - Name
 - Date of birth
 - Date of admission and leaving
 - Last school attended
 - Name and address of parents/guardians
- Log books, usually written by the headteacher. These may include information about:
 - The arrival and departure of pupils
 - Comments about illness, absences, behaviour and progress
 - Information about the staff and events in the school
 - Information relating to the curriculum and copies of the Inspector's reports
 - Events in the local community including references to national events.

Other material that may have survived includes punishment books, photographs, examples of work, scrap books, prospectuses, and school plans. This varies widely from school to school. Sadly, for some schools, no records at all have survived or been deposited.

How to Find the Records

School records have been deposited at Gloucestershire Archives in a number of different ways. This means that the records might be held in different collections. You can find details of these records in the online catalogue (<https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/>). Try searching using the place name and the word "school".

'S' Records

- Deposited by a representative from the school.
- Only for state funded schools.
- Include most official records such as log books and admission registers.

'P' Records

- Reference used where school was associated with a Church of England parish.
- Relevant catalogue references usually include 'SC' (for **S**CHOOLS).

'GCC' Records

- Transferred by various County Council departments, including the education department ('GCC/EDU').
- Usually include prospectuses, board minutes, plans and reports.

'D' Records

- Privately funded school records.
- Records deposited by an unofficial body or person such as former pupil.

REMEMBER: There is no guarantee that records have survived or that they are held at the archives. Some schools, especially private ones, keep their own records.