



[Department](#)
[for Education](#)

Guidance

DfE records appraisal methodology

Published 25 March 2026

Applies to England

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Purpose of this methodology

This high level methodology sets out how the Department for Education (DfE) seeks to meet its statutory obligations under the [Public Records Act 1958](#) (as amended) (the 1958 Act). This document does not cover the public record responsibilities of arm's length bodies associated with DfE that are also covered by the 1958 Act.

The selection and appraisal of records in any format will take place in accordance with the methodology set out in this records appraisal methodology.

A detailed overview of the function and remit of the department is set out in [DfE's](#)

[about us](#). In summary, we are responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy in England.

We are a [public records body](#) as defined in schedule 1 of the 1958 Act, which sets out that the following records are covered by the 1958 Act:

“administrative and departmental records belonging to His Majesty, in the UK or elsewhere, in right of His Majesty's Government, and in particular records of or held in any government department and records of offices, commissions or other bodies under HMG in the UK.”

As part of our responsibilities we must carry out the following functions:

- select records for permanent preservation
- in relation to the safekeeping of records, maintain guidance for DfE staff on the management of records throughout their lifecycle
- transfer selected records to The National Archives (TNA) by the due date. This applies unless the records need to be retained in DfE. In this case, the approval of the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) must be obtained. At the time of publishing DfE does not use a place of deposit other than TNA.
- make applications for retention and closure through TNA. These are reviewed by The Advisory Council on National Archives and Records (ACNRA)
- dispose of records not selected for preservation by destruction or presentation to another institution

History of the Department for Education

- Committee of the Privy Council on Education (1839 to 1899)
- Education Department (1856 to 1899)
- Board of Education (1899 to 1944)
- Ministry of Education (1944 to 1964)
- Department of Education and Science (1964 to 1992)
- Department for Education (1992 to 1995)
- In 1995 the Department for Education merged with the Department of

Employment to become the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (1995 to 2001)

- After the 2001 general election DfEE split becoming the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2001 to 2007) and responsibility for employment policies moved to the new Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- On 28 June 2007 the department was split into the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007 to 2010) with responsibilities including education to 19 and children's services. Higher and further education, lifelong learning and skills policy moved to the newly formed Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- The DfE was created on 12 May 2010. DfE gained responsibility for higher and further education and apprenticeships following the dissolution of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Apprenticeships and skills moved out of DfE in 2025 and became the responsibility of DWP

Selection decisions

Our record selection decisions are in line with [The National Archives records collection policy](#) and reflect the current responsibilities of the department, which includes (this list is not exhaustive):

- teaching and learning for children in the early years and in primary schools
- teaching and learning for young people in secondary schools
- teaching, learning and training for young people in further education
- teaching and learning for young people and adults in higher education
- policy development on disadvantaged children and young people
- children's services
- workforce policy for teachers and social workers

We select records for preservation that capture the principle policies, decision making and actions of government. We consider them in the context of the time in which they were created and their historical significance and value, including:

- records that we have submitted to public inquiries
- short-term bodies that DfE sponsored and whose records were transferred to DfE

after being closed down will be reviewed for potential selection

The internal administrative, operational and case records created by the department will not be selected for preservation and will be managed in relation to retention periods defined by statute, regulation or business requirements.

[DfE annual reports and accounts](#) also help to provide context on the work of the department over time.

Websites and social media channels

Our pages on GOV.UK and other websites (for example temporary campaign websites) and certain social media channels used by us (for example X and YouTube) are captured as part of [the UK Government Web Archive](#).

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