

School records



Research Guide to school records at Queensland
State Archives

Queensland State Archives (QSA) is the official repository for Queensland Government records selected for permanent retention because of their continuing value. The archived public records are from state government departments, state courts, local government authorities and statutory authorities. The records are in our facility at [Runcorn, Brisbane](#), and open records are available for viewing in the Reading Room, free-of-charge.

The main finding aid for records held at QSA is the [Queensland State Archives' online catalogue](#) (known as ArchivesSearch).

The following citation abbreviations are used throughout our catalogue:

ITM	QSA Item (describes the item)
PR	Physical Representation (generally the original or microfilm copy)
DR	Digital Representation (for a digital image)
S	Series (for a series of records)
A	Agency ID (for the creating or responsible agency).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that our catalogue contains images, names and voices of people who have died.

Agencies responsible for education in Queensland

The names of the agencies responsible for administering education records are:

Board of General Education	7/9/1860–1/1/1876
Public Instruction Department	1/1/1876–12/8/1957
Education Department	12/8/1957–12/02/2004
Education and the Arts Department	12/2/2004–13/9/2006
Education, Training and the Arts	13/9/2006–26/3/2009
Education and Training Department	26/3/2009–3/4/2012
Department of Education, Training and Employment	3/4/2012–16/2/2015
Department of Education and Training	16/2/2015–12/12/2017
Department of Education	12/12/2017– present

The records refer mainly to state government schools (primary and high) and state rural schools, however there are some departmental records about grammar, mission and church or non-vested (private) schools.

Types of schools in Queensland

Compulsory and free education was introduced by the *State Education Act 1875* for children aged 6 to 12 years but the compulsory clauses of the Act were not gazetted until 1900. The school leaving age was raised to 14 in 1912 and to 15 in 1964. The scholarship examination was an annual external examination first held in 1873 and continued until 1962. From 1900 scholarships were tenable at State, Grammar or any other approved school. From 1914 each pupil who averaged 50% or more gained a scholarship.

Primary Education

National

Four National schools were in operation prior to separation from New South Wales in 1859. National schools were proposed in New South Wales in 1848 and were based on the Irish National school system. The first National school was established at Toolburra near Warwick in 1850. (See also Vested and Normal).

Vested and non-vested

Vested or national schools were those whose property were vested in the Board of Education (1860-1875), and therefore came directly under the supervision of the Board. Fees were charged until 1870. Vested or National schools became State schools in 1875. Non-vested schools were those whose property and control were in the hands of various church groups and/or private individuals, ie. not vested in the Board of Education. Vested and non-vested schools were both subject to supervision of curricula by the Board of Education and received financial assistance. All assistance to non-vested schools was withdrawn in 1880.

Normal and Pupil Teachers

The Normal or Brisbane National School was opened in 1860 in Adelaide Street, Brisbane. Its most important function was as a training centre for pupil or apprentice teachers. The system was modified in 1878 to allow Head teachers throughout the state to train pupil teachers.

Provisional

From 1869 provisional schools could be established with as few as 12 children if the local people were willing to provide some sort of school building and accommodation for a teacher. Provisional schools often became permanent State schools.

Rural

The Nambour State School became Nambour State Rural School in 1917. This was the first Rural School in the State and over the next three decades twenty-nine schools followed the Nambour model. Rural schools aimed to make primary schools in rural areas more vocational. Curricula for boys in the last two years of primary school included woodwork, metalwork and the development of farm management skills. Girls were taught dressmaking and household management. Rural schools remained an important part of the educational system until the 1960s.

Opportunity

Opportunity schools were established in the 1920s with educational provisions for children with special needs. Many of these schools were renamed Special schools in the 1970s.

Secondary Education

Grammar schools

The *Grammar Schools Act 1860* allowed for the establishment of a fee-charging Grammar, or secondary, school in any town where at least £1000 was raised locally. A government subsidy of twice the local contribution was then guaranteed. In the years 1863-1892 ten Grammar schools were established in Queensland, the first was in Ipswich.

High Top

From 1912 High Tops were added to existing primary schools where there was an average attendance of not less than 25 qualified pupils and where there was no other State-aided secondary education.

Technical

The Brisbane Technical College began formally in 1882. Outside of Brisbane technical instruction was usually held in conjunction with the Schools of Art. The aim of technical education was to teach young men and women useful arts and sciences. The first technical college that prepared students for a specific vocation was the Charters Towers School of Mines, which opened in 1901 with 100 students. After 1905 the various colleges were placed on a more uniform footing with regard to the curricula and examinations.

School records

School files (Correspondence)

1/1/1858 – 31/12/1976

[S12607](#)

There may be files of administration and correspondence between the Head Teacher, or the School Committee/Trustees and the Education Department for State or Grammar Schools including the original application for the establishment of the school and details of construction and maintenance. Some files list parents and pupils intending to use the school, plans of the original buildings and teachers' accommodation.

Annual Statistical Returns

[S12595](#), Statistical Returns, Annual and Monthly for Secondary Schools,

1/1/1912 - 31/12/1969

[S12596](#), Statistical Returns Furnished by Head Teachers of Provisional and State Schools,

1/1/1874 – 31/12/1969

The Head Teacher of each State School compiled annual and monthly statistics on attendance which was sent to the Education Department. In more recent returns there are lists of the teachers, their classifications and classes taught. Remarks on these records often include notes on why a school was closed, for example due to an outbreak of Diphtheria or Measles or flooding. No lists of pupils are given in these records.

Registers of Schools

1/1/1860 – 31/12/1878

[S12606](#)

Entries for each school are on two or more pages, with the first page noting school name and number, when established, general information and capital expenditure. Under capital expenditure, there may be sketch plans for grounds with the area, and buildings such as residences and school rooms with dimensions, lists of furniture including number and type and dimensions. Subsequent pages from 1 January 1876 include date, number of children enrolled, teachers and their yearly emoluments, head teacher, assistant teacher and pupil teachers and salaries, ordinary expenditure, grounds and buildings, school requisites, miscellaneous, total, school board or committee (names of members). There is an index by name of schools in [ITM13620](#), Register of Schools, Volume 1.

Arbor Day Reports

1/1/1913 – 1/1/1964

[S113](#)

1/1/1920 – 31/12/1973

[S121](#)

Arbor Day was an annual day when shrubs and trees were planted by the teachers and students in all Queensland state schools. Contains printed annual reports filled in by the school, school name and number, head teacher's name, average school attendance for the previous month, the date Arbor Day was held, when the holes for planting were prepared, who did the planting (teacher, pupils, parents, committee or paid labour).

Inspectors' Reports - Board of General Education

1/1/1874 – 5/6/1991

[S4533](#)

Each pro-forma Inspection Report details school name, school number, class being assessed, date of the inspection, and total number of male and female students present. There is an assessment of the school by these categories: school administrative records; school 'government' or discipline; organisation which includes sufficient accommodation, classification of pupils, teaching standard and experience; proficiency and progress of pupils; care of grounds; school games and physical exercise; general conditions; and general remarks. Note: some items in this series have been digitised, and the items are available in our catalogue. The [School Inspectors' Reports 1974-1991](#) open data file is available on the Queensland Government publications portal.

Closed State School Files

16/3/1949 – 5/7/1984

[S9422](#)

1/1/1957 – 31/12/1986

[S17860](#)

Files include correspondence and forms about closures, assets, equipment, buildings and grounds' fixtures and how they were disposed of, inspection reports, and general returns.

Teacher records

Registers of Teachers (Personal, Professional and Employment details)

1/1/1860 – 31/12/1903

[S6425](#)

The registers give biographical and career details about State School teachers. These registers are indexed in the [Teachers 1860-1905 index](#) available online on the Queensland State Archives' website.

If an [online QSA index](#) is available, we recommend researchers search this. The content of online indexes has been sourced directly from original records. Digitised copies of many original registers and indexes are also available in the [QSA catalogue](#), and digitised copies of some microfilmed original records are available on Reading Room computers.

Registers of Teachers (Appointments, Classifications, Salaries)

1/1/1860 – 31/12/1905

[S5137](#)

Details for entries from 1860-1878 include date when admitted to service, resigned or re-admitted, classification including pupil teacher years of training, salary and school. Registers from 1878-1905 are divided into males and females and include date, appointment and schools, rank, classification including pupil teachers, salary, and remarks. The registers also include annotations in red ink about resignations and leave.

Registers of Pupil Teachers

1/1/1871 – 31/12/1886

[S12608](#)

Details include exam results and name of the school where the pupil teacher taught. The registers are indexed by name of pupil teacher.

Teachers' Pay Records (Books and Cards)

1/1/1870 - 30/6/1960

[S6427](#)

From 1870 to 1926, records are arranged chronologically and by school. From 1926 to 1960, records are arrangement chronologically, then alphabetically by teacher's name.

Returns of All Teachers Employed in State Schools - Alphabetical by School

01/01/1859 – 31/12/1950

[S5136](#)

These registers contain annotated copies of printed annual returns of teachers. These printed annual returns were published in the *Queensland Government Gazettes*. Subsequent handwritten annotations record transfers, resignations and readmissions. Schools are listed alphabetically within year. Detail includes average attendance numbers of the school for the year, name of the teacher and qualifications, classification, position at the school, salary, living allowances and total emoluments.

Returns of All Teachers Employed in State Schools (by Region)

1/1/1949 – 31/12/1975

[S5140](#)

These registers record teachers employed by the Department, and their movements. The schools are listed alphabetically under regions – Northern, Central, Wide Bay, Darling Downs, South Western and North Western. Details include official school number, name of school, average attendance numbers of school for the year, class of school, name of the teacher and qualifications, classification, position at the school and remarks.

Teacher's Staff Cards (Resigned and "Current" Teachers)

1/1/1890 – 31/12/1987

[S17557](#)

This series records teachers employed by the Department of Education and its predecessor agencies. Details recorded may include teacher's full name and female's maiden name; employment number; marital status; date of birth; private address; date/s of admission, resignations, and any transfer; place, status and classification of appointment/s; allowances paid; senior school; teacher education and tertiary qualifications. Some cards are listed in the QSA catalogue by the family name of the teacher. If you do not find the name of the teachers, you will need to apply for access permission to view the relevant alphabetical range of names. For 'current' teachers (current at the time of the series creation), the alphabetical ranges are from ABBERTON – BARLING, QSA ITM327637 to WILSON, E. – ZYLSTRA, QSA ITM327637. Search [ArchivesSearch](#) to find the relevant ITM number.

An application for access permission may be necessary as the restricted access period is 65 years.

School pupil records

Admission Registers

Search by the name of the school in the QSA catalogue to find the school admission register. These registers record the annual enrolment of children, and include date of admission, name and age, date of birth, parents/guardians name and occupation, religious denomination, grades, date of leaving, date of return.

School admission registers are digitised and are available free of charge. Digital copies are subject to a 70-year protected period which means these are not available in [ArchivesSearch](#). If you are not able to *View a Digital Copy*, to request access, create an account, log in and *Request Digital Copy*.

Note: the [Queensland School Pupils Index Parts 1-6](#), created by Queensland Family History Society (QFHS) is on the Reading Room computers. Search the accompanying list of schools to find the part for indexed schools.

Corporal Punishment Registers

These registers were kept by the head teacher of each school and record all corporal punishment administered by the head teacher or an assistant (authorised by the Minister). The registers contain date, pupils punished, fault or incident requiring punishment, kind and extent of punishment.

State Scholarship Examination Results

Circa 1/1/1876–30/11/1962

[S4022](#)

This is results of final year of primary school (state scholarship) public examination.

State Scholarship Examination Results and Statistics

Circa 1/1/1905–31/12/1958

[S19121](#)

Primary Correspondence School - Admission Registers – Brisbane School of Distance Education

1/2/1922–circa 31/12/2003

[S1501](#)

These registers of primary school students unable to attend a traditional school.

School building records

Public Works Department

The Department created records about schools including plans, specifications, detail ledgers and contract ledgers.

Batch Files - Schools

1/1/1879 – 31/12/1984

[S17826](#)

These correspondence files are about new buildings, renovations and maintenance of schools, and may include plans, specifications, contracts, land transactions and closure or re-opening of schools.

Batch files – “A” Series - High Schools and Technical Colleges

1/1/1896 – 31/12/1974

[S17828](#)

Architectural Drawings of Public Buildings

1/1/1857 – 19/2/2001

[S1162](#)

Architectural Drawings of Public Buildings

1/4/1819 – 30/9/1984

[S17690](#)

This series contains a diverse range of public buildings in Queensland including educational institutions, such as schools, universities and colleges. Search by the name of the institution in the QSA catalogue.

Batch Files (General Correspondence)

5/9/1908 – 15/6/1998

[S1173](#)

These batch files are Public Works Department construction and maintenance files.

Department of Education

Corporate School Files - Works/Facilities (Works Establishment Files)

1/1/1871 – 23/10/1998

[S53](#)

These files include supplies, requisitions, equipment, buildings with furniture, teaching materials, lighting, teacher accommodation, acquisition of land for establishing and extending schools and opening and closing.

Corporate Subject Files

Circa 10/01/1800–17/11/1998

[S426](#)

To find files of correspondence, search the entry cards (registration cards), [S425](#). Files include letters, memoranda, notes, reports, directives, and works' requisition forms and plans etc.

Entry Cards (Registration Cards) - Education

Circa 01/01/1908–31/12/1994

[S425](#)

Use these cards to find corporate subject files, [S426](#).

General Correspondence (Education various)

6/7/1860–31/12/1971

[S6477](#)

This correspondence series is arranged by subject including individual schools, eg. Mission Schools. These files are arranged by subject heading.

School photographs

There are many series of records of photographs mainly of school buildings. The details of these photographs are not always identified in the catalogue. As well as searching our catalogue, also search [our social media channels](#), in particular the [Flickr album for schools](#). QSA does not hold class photographs of students.

Re-issue of school certificates

QSA does not issue school certificates. For re-issue of school & vocational certificates, see contacts below:.

Junior/Year 10 before 1960

Contact University of Queensland - Phone – (07) 3365 9194; Email – transcripts@uq.edu.au
Website – [Order a certificate](#)

Junior/Year 10 1960 to 1995

Contact Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority www.qcaa.qld.edu.au
Phone – (07) 3864 0213 or General enquiries on 3864 0299
Email – reissue@qcaa.qld.edu.au

Senior/Year 12 certificates before 1973

Contact University of Queensland Phone – (07) 3365 9194; Email – transcripts@uq.edu.au
Website – [Order a certificate](#)

Senior/Year 12 Certificates from 1973

Contact Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority www.qcaa.qld.edu.au
Phone – (07) 3864 0213 or General enquiries on 3864 0299
Email – reissue@qcaa.qld.edu.au

VET Certificates & Statements of Attainment

If the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is **still operating**, contact the RTO directly. RTO are searchable by name at www.training.gov.au. If the RTO is **no longer operating**, contact Australian Skills Quality Authority www.asqa.gov.au or the ASQA Info Line on 1300 701 801 or via email at enquiries@asqa.gov.au.

Other sources of information

- *Education Office Gazette* from 1899-1959 are available on our Reading Room computers. These online indexes are soon to be published under [Schools, hospitals and orphanages](#) - Scholarships in the Education Office Gazettes 1900-1940 ; Teachers in the Education Office Gazettes 1926-1952
- *School Inspector's reporting regions*, 1900-1960. This paper finding aid may be useful for finding school names within a specific region. Please ask the Archivist on duty about access.
- Opening and closing dates of Queensland schools web page available at <https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/history/school-anniversaries/opening-closing-dates>
- History of education in Queensland <https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/history> .

Reference

The Rural School Experiment: creating a Queensland yeoman by Tony James Brady. Queensland University of Technology, 2013, https://eprints.qut.edu.au/60802/3/Tony_Brady_Thesis.pdf accessed 2 November 2021.

Need more information?

Check our online catalogue [ArchivesSearch](#).

Phone us on (07) 3037 6777 or you can [email](#) an archivist.