

Box CE VC Primary School
Extracts from Box School Log Books

The Government introduced a Revised Code in 1862 which began a 'payment by results' system for schools receiving grant aid and with a qualified Headteacher. A grant of 12shillings was payable for each child over 6 that met requirements for:

- regular attendance = 4shillings
- a pass in each subject of the 3 Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic = 2s 8d per pass.

Children were examined on an annual basis by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI)

The exams were arranged in 'standards' and each child was expected to move up a standard every year.

The first school log book for the girls and infants, who were taught in a large room with a gallery for the infants in Henley, began on May 1st 1863 with an entry by the head mistress which said she, *'examined class 3 in arithmetic and found numeration had been neglected considerably'*. On May the 4th she, *'heard of the Inspector's intended visit to the school on May 20th and began a revision of their yearly work'*. On May 6th the headmistress, *'Punished some moderately late children by keeping them in the same time they had lost.'* On the 8th May she, *'Cautioned a 1st class girl on her absurd way of dressing'*. In June she wrote, *'Had a case of lying which I punished with the cane and I whipped a little girl for incorrigible fidgetiness'*.

Attendance was not compulsory until 1880 and children were often absent from school.

In June 1863 the log book notes that, *'A few elder girls were kept at home in consequence of hay making'*. Other entries report absence due to snow, potato picking, fruit picking and measles, whooping cough, small pox and scarlet fever and not having enough pence to bring. In July 1884, *'Box Revel a tea party and various other festivities going on, affected the school numbers'*.

The log book entry for October 14th 1864, *'Examined section 2 and scripture lessons for the week and found they knew them well with the exception of one child who had evidently been idle and accordingly made her work an hour at dinnertime'*.

On 6th May 1870 Her Majesty's Inspectors examined religious instruction. For elder infants and standard 1 they examined easy hymns and texts, Creation, Fall and Noah and the Birth and boyhood of Jesus. For the 3rd division they examined all of this plus catechism, the Ten Commandments, Patriarchs, Christ's baptism, temptation, transfiguration, passion, resurrection and ascension, (the teacher choosing and mainly keeping to one of the Gospels) By the 1st division all of this was examined plus parables, miracles, Moses, Joshua, Kings and Judges. Teachers were also expected to teach lessons of a more exclusively pastoral character to the older children.

The school at Henley was very overcrowded and in 1868 Inspectors reported that, *'The staff is quite inadequate for the 124 children present at my inspection. The 53 infants quite spoil the mistress's efforts among the older classes who are in the same room as them. ... Discipline is as good as could be expected where so many infants are in the same room as the elders and where desk accommodation is inadequate.'*

Again in 1870 the difficulties were recognized by HMI, *'As in the former mistress's time, success is made practically impossible by the distracting influence of a gallery full of infants close by the ears of the elder classes. Manifestly, one of two things should be done; either admit no child under five years old; or provide an adjoining Infants' room under a properly qualified helper'*. The inspector also commented that, *'The loose organisation of sewing time, whereby all the girls dull their powers for sitting 2 hours at the needle daily helps to destroy intellectual steadiness and vigour. These two causes, quite as much as any looseness of control of teaching on the mistress' part, induce (especially in arithmetic and style of writing) a lack of vigorous application and thoroughness of grounding.'* Further references to poor behaviour continue in the log books with the mistress of the girls' school reporting in February 1870 that she was, *'obliged to punish Alice Howell rather severely for being very saucy and disobedient.'*

In March 1872 a wooden partition was constructed to separate the infants from the elder pupils. HMI commented that, *'the discipline appears to be benefited from the separation of the infants.'*

The boys were taught in a *'school near the Church'* it is thought that this may have been in the top storey of Springfield House, which was then the Parish Workhouse. The boys went into the school room via an outside staircase to avoid contact with the paupers.

A new school, the present school building, was built and opened on the afternoon of November 17th 1875. It cost £2, 700 to build with capacity for 400 children in three separate 'sections' for boys, girls and infants, and a school house as a residence for the school mistress. The school appears to have opened with great ceremony. Boys and girls worked together to practise songs. Preparation seems to have been inadequate, however, as Miss Collins complained *'the routine of school work is very irregular, there being no desks or other apparatus in the room'* and the following week she complained about *the 'inefficient warming of the schoolroom'*. HMI also commented on this in 1876 *'the warming of this school ... needs attention'*. The supply of books was also seen to be poor. Miss Lucy Woodley, mistress from October 1882 - June 1898, appears to have had some problems with parents and wrote in May 1884, *'Mrs Fisher appeared in a very boisterous manner because her child was kept in, fortunately the Vicar was here who was able to get her out.'*

A log book entry for February 1898 reports that *'The clock in commemoration of the Jubilee has been placed in the school tower this week'*.

Extracts compiled by Meg Gomosall