

### **Box School: Curriculum and related matters.**

Box school was a National School in 1848 (Kelly's Directory, 1848) but probably became one much earlier. These were schools affiliated with the National Society for the Education of the Children of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church i.e. a C of E society and, as the Church was strongly involved in the running of the school, may have been a National School from the early 1800s.

In 1833, the government first began paying grants to affiliated schools via the National Society. For example in 1850, special capitation grants of 4s-6s for boys and 3s-5s for girls were paid to rural schools for attendance of 176 days per year. As payments to schools increased over the years there was concern about costs and also about standards. This led to the introduction of a system of 'payment by results' known as the Revised Code in 1862. Schooling was either going to be efficient or, if it was not, it would be cheap.

### **The Revised Code of 1862**

Schools receiving grants must be led by a qualified head teacher and all grants to schools, except for buildings, were subject to certain conditions.

For children over the age of 6 a capitation grant of 12s per pupil was paid subject, firstly, to regular attendance (4s) and, secondly, on the child's performance in an annual examination in the 3Rs conducted by an HMI. Failure in any of these - reading, writing or arithmetic meant a loss of 2s and 8d per subject. The exams were arranged in a series of standards and a child was expected to move up a standard each year.

Infants were not examined. A grant of 6s and 6d was paid for each child, subject to regular attendance and a report from the Inspector that they were receiving 'instruction suitable to their age'.

In 1870 the girls' and infants' school at Henley suffered a reduction in the grant following criticisms of the practice of teaching the infants in the same schoolroom as the girls, citing 'the distracting influence of a gallery full of infants close by the ears of the elder classes'. As a result, 'No grant has been allowed on account of the infants taught in the girls' school as HM Inspector is unable to report upon their instruction'.

Under Miss Charlotte Gray, the grant to the girls' school was reduced in 1878 because of the poor standard of arithmetic over the previous three years (since the beginning of her time at Box). 'The continuing weakness of the arithmetic in the girls' school at length compel my Lords to order a deduction of one tenth from the school grant'. Also the granting of Miss Gray's full certificate (3 years probation was required for those who had qualified as a certificated probationer after completing the Pupil Teacher training) 'also has to be deferred'.

Unsurprisingly, she was replaced by a new teacher, Miss Margaret Moffatt in September.

### **The Standard Examinations**

#### **Standard 1**

Reading: Narrative in monosyllables

Writing: Form on blackboard or slate, from dictation, letters, capital and small, manuscript.

Arithmetic: Form on blackboard or slate, from dictation, figures up to 20; name at first sight figures up to 20; add and subtract figures up to 10, orally, from examples on the blackboard.

#### **Standard 2**

Reading: One of the narratives next in order after monosyllables in an elementary reading book used in the school.

Writing: Copy in manuscript character a line of print.

Arithmetic: A sum in simple addition or subtraction and the multiplication table.

#### **Standard 3**

Reading: A short paragraph from an elementary reading book used in the school.

Writing: A sentence from the same paragraph, slowly read once, and then dictated in single words.

Arithmetic: A sum in any simple rule as far as short division

#### **Standard 4**

Reading: A short paragraph from a more advanced reading book used in the school.

Writing: A sentence slowly dictated once by a few words at a time, from the same book, but not from the paragraph read

Arithmetic: A sum in compound rules (money).

#### **Standard 5**

Reading: A few lines of poetry used in the first class of the school.

Writing: A sentence slowly dictated once by a few words at a time, from a reading book used in the first class of the school

Arithmetic: A sum in compound rules (common weights and measures)

#### **Standard 6**

Reading: A short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative

Writing: Another short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative, slowly dictated once, by a few words at a time.

Arithmetic: A sum in practice or bills of parcels (*these were problems 'if a man takes 3 hours to do a job, how long will it take ...?'*)

This affected both the curriculum and the organisation of the school.

- The curriculum became focused on the standard requirements, together with Religious Knowledge (which was examined annually by the Diocesan Inspector) and needlework for girls.  
Much teaching must have been very dull indeed. For example, in 1863 the elder girls were taught the history of 'contemporary Kings of Israel and Judah' from the Old Testament. There was also a problem with resources; Ellen Palmer (Mistress from December 1864) complained in January 1866 'that the reading in standard 1 was 'very bad - have no books for them to read from'. The HMI Report however found that reading was 'generally very fair' though 'not spirited enough in expression'.  
Children were organised in their standard, which might or might not relate to the age of the child. Hence the frustration of teachers when children were absent and fell behind, when older children were admitted not knowing their letters and when some children made poor progress. For example: Louise Elliott (March 1864) found it 'very difficult to make the children who have been irregular in the cold weather work well with those who have been regular - the former so behind the latter'. Lucy Woodley wrote in February 1884 'several girls have been placed in lower standards as it is quite hopeless that they will pass the standard in which they have been working during the year' In 1899, she despaired of the 13 children in standard 1 'who do not know the alphabet and cannot form a letter. It seems almost impossible that they can be worked up to pass the standard'. In 1893 John Burrows, the Master of the boys' school complained about one Frances Dancey aged 8, 'He is dreadfully backward and should be in the Infants' department but the mistress refused to admit him'.
- The Box school year began in May (the month of the HMI visit) with children being re-organised into their standard groups and promoted from the infants immediately following the inspection.
- Children were given 'home lessons' to try and get them up to standard. In 1867, for example, children were given 2 questions to learn at home as they were 'not quite perfect in Church Catechism'. A Mrs. Dainton sent a note to the school in March 1870, however, 'requesting that Ellen may not carry lessons home as she has not the time to do them'.

### **Changes to the Revised Code and the Curriculum + teachers' experiences**

1867 Additional grants were given for 'specific subjects' (grammar, history, geography) though schools could choose whether these were taught. These were made 'class subjects' in 1875 with the grant being earned by the proficiency of the class as a whole rather than individual exams.

By 1878 grants were available on the following terms:

Grants based on attendance (250) = 4s per child

Plus if singing is taught = 1s

If organisation is satisfactory = 1s

Grants on individual examination 3s per subject

Grants for class subjects' if classes pass a creditable examination in one (or two) of grammar, history, geography, plain needlework + 2s for each subject

Specific subjects for standards 4 to 6 (e.g. mathematics, needlework, domestic science and eventually even Latin) = 4s for each subject, maximum of two subjects.

'Object' lessons were also becoming popular for the younger children. These were lessons based on a particular subject (see Ada Pillinger's lesson on 'rice' below), often illustrated through the use of objects/resources.

Box school Managers seem to have been keen to implement change when it brought additional funding.

In July 1868 geography was introduced into the girls' curriculum, with new Mistress Annie Vines giving a geography lesson to standards 5 and 6. HMI recommended in 1870 however that 'more maps should be at once be provided in the boys' and girls' schoolrooms'. This was again mentioned in May 1871 and eventually two maps were provided for the girls in December 1871.

She also taught singing, though this is not mentioned until January 1870.

She gives some information about the needlework: December 1869 'Commenced a parcel of work from Mrs Horlock (vicar's wife) consisting of 6 pairs of sheets and a dozen pocket handkerchiefs'. This was completed by the 17<sup>th</sup> and Mrs Horlock then sent 2 dozen towels for the girls to work on. This was common practice, as it saved the expense of buying materials. In February 1870 all the girls in standards 3 to 6 were given a piece of canvas 'for learning to mark' (?) and in March, a half holiday was given to enable Miss Vines 'to render assistance (to Mrs. Horlock) in cutting out clothing for the children'. The next day she 'gave each child in standard 2 and 3 a pinafore to make entirely by herself', and a chemise to each of the elder girls in standards 4-6. The infants also did sewing, presumably only the girls, and in March 1870 Miss Vines commented that she was 'pleased with the neatness of several of them'

December 1874 the girls completed two patchwork quilts.

**HMI Reports** show that Miss Vines had mixed success. That for 1871 recognised some of her difficulties in teaching around a 100 girls and infants in one room, with the assistance only of two monitresses.

The infants were 'making very satisfactory progress. But the rest of the scholars are comparatively backward, perhaps owing partly to their irregularity as so few appear to be qualified for a grant. The arithmetic seems to be gravely at fault as only 3 out of 15 passed in that subject.'

One monitress seems to have left as in June 1871 Miss Vines complained to the Vicar about 'the insufficient help in teaching the children there being ... but one monitor'. By May, a Pupil Teacher, Ada Pillinger, had been appointed but this

would have meant more work for Miss Vines in giving her lessons before or after school 5 days per week. Ada also seems to have been poor at keeping order. In May, she gave an object lesson to the infants 'the discipline might have been better' and her lesson on 'rice' 'did not keep up their attention'. Ada was 'removed from the register of Pupil Teachers in May 1873 by HMI 'because of poor health'. Miss Vines resigned in June 1872.

Her successor Miss Emily Fisher found herself teaching single-handedly for several weeks after the mistress resigned. HMI recognised staffing was insufficient and agreed 'the proposed transfer of A.M. Gilson (a P.T) from Timsbury National School'. This was possibly because, whilst other subjects were fair or fairly good, 'arithmetic almost a failure only 17.5% passed in that subject'. They also said that 'the warming of the classroom is still necessary' and that 'the supply of books needs attention'.

Emily Fisher resigned in December 1874 and the PT, Aveline Gilson, managed the whole school until the new schoolmistress, Alice Williams, began in February 1875. She resigned in June the same year and was succeeded by Miss E. Collins.

She oversaw the transfer of the girls and infants to the new school in Box village (see 'Buildings') but left in July 1876 to teach at a school in Newark. Aveline Gilson was also absent, having passed all her P.T exams and taking her Queen's Scholarship exams for entrance to the Home and Colonial Training College. The school was temporarily run by the School Manager, Rev. George Gardiner taking Miss Gilson's place while Fred Lane, formerly a P.T in Norfolk, stood in for the schoolmistress until Charlotte Gray was appointed. Also appointed as Assistant Mistress in charge of Infants was E. Beatrice Gray, presumably her sister.

Rev. Gardiner was very scathing about Miss Collins conduct of the girls' school, making an entry in the Log as follows:

'I find the average attendance lower than usual in consequence of the habit of unpunctuality into which all the girls and infants have fallen. The understanding of what they read has not been attended to: no needlework at all has been done in the infants' room while it has been sadly neglected in the girls' school. Arithmetic tables have fallen into disuse.'

The 1876 'rules for the school' (see 'Buildings') pasted into the Log amongst other things tried to tighten up on attendance and appointed a 'Ladies Committee' to assist with and oversee the needlework in the girls' and Infants' schools. Mrs Gardiner, the Vicar's wife regularly read to the elder girls whilst they were sewing and Miss Balfour also taught the girls to knit.

The Vicar also examined the children in the 3R's and gave prizes to those children who had done well in an effort to improve standards but found the 'results in arithmetic most unsatisfactory' in December 1876. He also gave at least two arithmetic lessons in February and March 1877, whilst his wife

promised that every girl who passed in all 3 subjects would be given a work apron.

Miss Gray listed the 10 songs learned by the girls for the HMI Inspection. These included 'God Save the Queen' and 'Men of Harlech' but all others are unfamiliar (eg 'Who will care for mother now?'). The infants learned 6 songs, including 'bread making', 'Good night and good morning'. Charlotte Gray also began teaching object lessons to the girls, with a lesson on 'wool' to standard 2 in July

Despite all efforts, the results of the Inspection were mixed according to the Report received in July. Discipline was effective, needlework was good and reading and writing was fairly done but 'in view of the general imperfection of the arithmetic, considerable improvement will be looked for next year. The infants were found to be 'somewhat backward' and the Inspector was 'unable to approve of E.B.Gray'. She was replaced by a Pupil Teacher the following September. Also see page one for what happened at the next inspection in 1878. The Diocesan Inspector also commented on the children and teaching in October 1877 saying 'but the children are, many of them, of rather a dull type and require a bright and varied style of teaching to draw out their intelligence'.

The 1879 HMI Report found a great improvement in the standard of the arithmetic under the new teacher Margaret Moffatt 'the proportion of passes in which subject is 50% higher than last year. This mentions 'new subjects' but the only new subject mentioned in the report is that of **Grammar**.

The HMI Report of 1881 was glowing in its praise. 'the general condition of the school is very creditable to the teacher; an excellent tone pervades the discipline and the efficiency of the teaching is evidenced by the very uniformly good results attending the examination. The girls' proficiency in grammar, writing and arithmetic is very conspicuous and in the last subject most unusually so.' Miss Moffatt resigned in July and a temporary teacher Mrs. Teague (first mention of a Mrs.) took the school until the arrival of Lucy Woodley in October 1882.

A qualified (article 50 had finished PT training but had not attended College) assistant teacher was also appointed in May 1883, bringing the staff up to 4, including two stipendiary monitors.

A calculation of the number of children admitted to the school by Miss Woodley in 1884 gives an indication of pupil turnover.

Jan. 4 new girls

Feb. 1 new girl

March Six returners 'whose names have been off the register for some time' but four girls also left.

June 2 new girls and 2 left

July 1 new girl

Sept. 2 new girls

Sept. 1 readmittance

Nov. 4 new girls

Miss Woodley taught at the school until March 1898 and HMI reports were consistently good. For example, in 1884 'The children are in admirable order and the high level of their attainment indicates that the teaching they have received has been both skilful and persistent. From whatever point regarded the results of the exam. Reflect great credit to Miss Woodley and her subordinates'. This was not achieved without stress.

In 1888, for example, she had the usual difficulties with low-attaining pupils. In January she examined the work of Eliza Gingell and Ellen Hancock and found 'that the statement made about them by the Infant teacher as to their defective intellect is quite correct. Indeed they seem totally unable to retain any instruction for any length of time'.

She also had the usual problems with attendance with only 4 children in school on February 24<sup>th</sup> because of snow and the school was forced to close until the weather improved. By March 9<sup>th</sup> the children were 'working vigorously' but 'there is a deal of lost work to make up' before the exam. In May she had two Pupil Teachers so also had to prepare and teach daily lessons for them and monitor their teaching. They had their annual exam in April (generally held elsewhere by this point e.g. Chippenham).

The HMI Report was good (very satisfactory condition' 'attainments improved since 1887).

The school was closed because of 'measles of a severe type' in late May and June. Attendance was poor in July because of 'very wet and stormy weather' and again in March 1889 because of snow.

March 20<sup>th</sup> 1889, the assistant teacher fell ill and 'the Dr.orders that Miss (Rosie) Smith resigns her duties for some time'.

Miss Woodley was herself taken ill on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 'her Dr. now orders that she takes a rest for a month or two.' On the 25<sup>th</sup> she 'resigned charge of the school'. Miss Smith also resigned on March 29<sup>th</sup> 'owing to over pressure of the brain'. She returned to the school in 1892 .

March 29<sup>th</sup> Miss Pulham, late of Nunney Board School took charge, together with assistant teacher Miss Phillips, late of St. Paul's school in Chippenham. HMI Inspection took place on May 7<sup>th</sup> and Miss Pulham left on May 10<sup>th</sup>, though the Report recent in June was good in relation to attainment. It did mention that 'the girls have suffered through the recent illness of their teachers' so an element of pique may have caused her to leave?

Miss Phillips also resigned on June 6<sup>th</sup> and Lucy Woodley resumed charge of the school with C.Leighton (article 50) from Camberwell as her assistant teacher: this is the sole mention of her so she probably did not stay for long.

## **Curriculum Developments under Lucy Woodley.**

The Revised Code was beginning to lose its stranglehold, with greater flexibility for teachers.

Domestic Economy was also becoming very popular as a means to teach girls their future responsibilities as wives and mothers. Grant payments were given for the teaching of domestic economy from 1874, cookery from 1882 and laundry work from 1889. As a result, the number of girls study such 'subjects' rose sharply, with, for example a rise from 844 to 59,812 in girls learning domestic economy between 1874 and 1882,

July 1893 'I began the History Readers with the upper standards this week'.  
December 1893 'Standards 5 and 6 commenced their poetry on 'The Merchant of Venice' and seemed to be much interested in it'.

In 1894 she attended classes in Trowbridge every Friday evening to learn how to teach cookery. The domestic science curriculum was also extended to include teaching darning, how to put on a flannel patch and 'marking' and 'cutting out exercises' to the girls

In June, she began 'musical drill and they seem to like it very much. The word-building lesson too, in the lower standards is much enjoyed.'

In October, she gave the first cookery demonstration. 'The practice lessons will be given on every Monday and every alternate Thursday and the demonstration every alternate Thursday. There is a reference in September 1898 to a cookery teacher.

In October she also changed the normal dictation lessons to composition 2 days per week 'it is very much liked by the children'.

In November the elder girls had object lessons on 'coins' and clothing' and the PT gave a lesson on 'rivers'. There is a list of object lessons for standards 1& 2 those for standard 3 in the entry for May 21<sup>st</sup> 1897.

Miss Woodley left the school in June 1898 but her successor, Eliza Lewis continued with similar developments e.g. teaching the Tudors in history, more interesting object/general lessons such as 'climate', 'how animals protect themselves, a collection of Autumn fruits and so forth (May 1901)

## **The Boy's Curriculum**

Very little information is available for the boys' school as the only surviving log book for the Victorian period begins in 1892.

School staff were:

Wm. John Burrows Head

George William Saunders Assistant Master (article 50)

Harry Tyringham Y4 PT

Francis Virgin Y4 PT

Philip Mc.Ilwraith YPT Y3

Interestingly, female PTs in the girls' school were also called Virgin and Mc.Ilwraith in the same period, presumably their sisters.

Their curriculum would have been much the same as that of the girls, with the exception of needle work and domestic subjects.

July 1892 'History has been taken up instead of grammar.' Geography was also taught and singing (HMI Report 1892).

February 1893 Drawing was introduced, with the subject being very much linked to the geography. 'Standard 4, for example, drew the river basin of the Danube and maps of Spain and France.

### **School Leaving Age and Attendance Regulations**

Various Education Acts were passed during 1870 to 1880 with the intention of enforcing attendance at school for every child over 5. Schooling still had to be paid for until 1891 and for poor families the costs of schooling (e.g. decent clothing and footwear) and loss of income from a child's earnings were an intolerable burden. Many employers such as farmers also resented the potential loss of child labour and colluded with parents to keep children from school.

Legislation relevant to rural schools:

#### Agricultural Children's Act 1875

No child under the age of 8 was to be employed in agricultural work by an employer - this did not preclude a child being employed by a parent or guardian. Between 8 and 10 a child could only be employed if 250 school attendances had been made and certified by the Schoolmaster or Mistress. Between 10 and 12 150 attendances were required. After 12, the child was free to leave school. Children younger than 12 could leave school if they had passed the exam to show they had reached the 4<sup>th</sup> standard. Hence the significance of Jan's relative's certificate showing he had passed standard 4.

In practice exemptions were made eg farmers could apply in writing to the magistrates to ask permission to employ children in harvesting and the Act proved totally ineffective. There was also no means identified to see the provision was properly carried out.

#### 1880 Education Act

Compulsory attendance for children aged 5 to 14. But, in practice this meant that only children between 5 and 10 were required to attend full time - after 1893 to age 11.

For 10 to 12 year olds 250 attendances had to be made before the child could be employed, for those aged 12 to 15, 150 attendances.

Complete exemption from attendance could be obtained if a child passed the 'Labour Certificate' examination at the standard laid down by local bye-laws usually standard 4 or 5.

In November 1889 Lucy Woodley recorded that she had 'received a copy of the new bye-laws according to which children must attend the school until they have passed standard 5 instead of standard 4 as before'.

If a child did not reach this standard they were allowed to leave school at 13, having made 250 attendances over the previous 5 years. This was known as 'the dunces leaving certificate' and, in practice, the regulations re the attendance record were largely ignored. For example, Eliza Lewis complained that even the Attendance Officer had flouted the regulations in force in 1900:

July 1900 'Eva Parsons, daughter of the Attendance Officer, has been taken away from school on the plea that the child has passed her labour certificate. This is so but she will not be 12 until next April'.

And, 'sent a notice to a mother to know why her child, Bertha, was not at school. The answer was that the (School) board had given the parents permission to take her away. This girl has made but 12 attendances since May 1<sup>st</sup>, her last being May 21<sup>st</sup>. She will be 13 in September'.

As we see from evidence such as this, in practice, it was a while before full-time schooling became the accepted norm for poor children in rural areas.