
Education Records

Education history in England: a summary

The earliest schools were those attached to cathedrals, monasteries and chantries. These date from medieval times. At the Reformation many of these schools went out of existence although some were refounded as grammar schools. Early attempts to improve learning were introduced by the church and ecclesiastics often took an active role in providing education. Philanthropic individuals and organisations also became involved with education, particularly that of the poor.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century **charity schools** were developed to educate and clothe the children of the poor, free of charge. As it was felt that the provision of education would alleviate poverty such schools were often set up in poorer urban centres rather than in rural areas. Some of these charity schools provided boarding facilities and were often termed 'hospitals'. Such schools were also known as **Blue Coat, Green Coat or Grey Coat** Schools after the uniforms worn by the pupils. They were often supported by private contributions but operated by a religious body. For example, the **Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK)**, a Church of England organisation, became involved in setting up charity schools to provide full time education for poor children. This society was founded in 1698 and was foremost in aiding the foundation of parochial schools from the late seventeenth century onwards. By 1750 there were at least 1,500 such schools supported by voluntary subscriptions. They declined in importance in the first half of the 19th century and many were taken over by the **National Society**.

Workhouse schools were attached to parish workhouses, particularly after the **General Workhouse Act** of 1723, which allowed for overseers of the poor to engage a schoolmaster. The emphasis was on practical subjects to enable the pupils to be subsequently apprenticed.

Robert Raikes of Gloucester first introduced **Sunday Schools** in 1780. By 1785 the Society for the Establishment and Support of Sunday Schools was formed to co-ordinate their activities. An inter-denominational Sunday School Union was formed in 1803.

Many schools were provided for by charitable organisations such as the nonconformist **British and Foreign School Society**. This society started life as the Royal Lancasterian Society formed in 1808 by followers of the Quaker Joseph Lancaster to carry out his educational ideas. The Society changed its name in 1810 to the British and Foreign School Society. By 1851 there were 1500 British Schools in the country, drawing their pupils mainly from nonconformist families.

In 1811 the **National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church** was set up. It gradually absorbed the schools already established by the SPCK and by 1851 the Society controlled over 17,000 National Schools. The National Society financed by the Anglican Church became the most influential educational body in the country. In 1833 Parliament made a substantial grant to elementary schools, which was shared between the voluntary British and National Schools. The **1870 Education Act** led to the Society's gradual decline.

Ragged schools were established by philanthropists to provide free education for poor children. This type of school began when Portsmouth cobbler, John Pounds, provided a school in 1818 free of charge for the poorest children. In 1844 Lord Shaftesbury helped to found the Ragged School Union. Day and Evening Schools (the term specifically given to evening classes established at this period for providing elementary education to illiterate adults) and also Sunday Schools were established across the country by the Ragged School Union, which in 1914 changed its name to the Shaftesbury Society and Ragged School Union. There also existed numerous **private common day schools** that provided low-fee elementary education for poor children. These included the **dame schools, elementary schools** run by women in their own homes, the usual fee being 3d or 4d per week. These largely disappeared after the 1870 Education Act.

As a result of the Poor Law Act of 1844, Poor Law Commissioners were empowered to appoint a teacher for workhouse children. This led to the formation of **District Schools** serving several workhouses in a district, where children could be educated away from the workhouse buildings. These schools declined after the 1870 Education Act. The Industrial Schools Act of 1857 allowed magistrates to send children found begging or in need of care to an Industrial School to learn a trade.

Only with WE Forster's **Education Act of 1870** did education become freely available. The act divided England into educational districts and obliged local authorities to establish rate-aided elementary schools in their areas if the numbers of existing voluntary or charity schools were deemed inadequate. **School Boards** were set up to manage these districts and the schools that they founded were called **Board Schools**. Board schools were the first local authority run schools and were at first complementary to the voluntary and charitable schools. The school boards and their schools were secular and nondenominational and as such were resented by the voluntary, usually religious, schools, many of which had to close for want of pupils. Such voluntary or charitable schools were obliged to provide adequate schooling or face being taken over by the local board.

Legislation in 1876 established that all children should receive elementary education and school attendance committees were set up where no school board existed. Restrictions were also imposed on the employment of children. The **1880 Education Act** made attendance at school between the ages of 5 and 10 compulsory. At the age of 10 a child could obtain a certificate and leave school provided that the child met the required number of attendances. Under the Education Act of 1889 the **Board of Education** was set up and County Councils were empowered to levy a 1d rate to provide technical education. **Legislation of 1891, 1893 and 1899** provided for free elementary education, raised the school leaving age to 11 and then 12 respectively.

In 1902, Balfour's Education Act transferred the obligation to provide elementary and secondary education to county and borough councils. The old School Boards were abolished and the Board Schools became **Council Schools**. County and borough councils also acquired a certain amount of influence over voluntary schools, as they were now to provide their equipment and pay their teachers' salaries. The 1902 Education Act also allowed urban areas of a certain size to become separate elementary education authorities. **Bury St Edmunds** and **Lowestoft** took advantage of this provision. The **Ipswich Borough Education Committee** was also set up under the same Act.

The **Education Act of 1918** raised the school leaving age to 14 and sought to replace elementary schools, which provided for children between the ages of 7 and 14 with separate junior (7-11) and senior schools (11-14) though these were not common until after 1926. Boards of managers were introduced for elementary schools and boards of governors for grammar schools, a distinction which survived until the **1980 Education Act**.

The **Hadow Report of 1926** also recommended that pupils should change schools at the age of 11 with secondary education guaranteed to all at least until the age of 14. East Suffolk developed a system of **Area Schools** to implement the principles of the Hadow Report.

Under the **Education Act 1944** fees in state secondary schools were abolished. Elementary education was reorganised into infant and junior schools and secondary education was graded into **grammar** and **secondary modern** schools. The existing Area Schools in **East Suffolk** were redesignated **Modern Schools**. The school leaving age was raised to 15.

After 1945 **Bury St Edmunds** ceased to be a separate education authority but in **Lowestoft**, East Suffolk County Council's powers as regards primary education were delegated to the Borough Council. In 1974 Suffolk County Council took over responsibility for schools previously run by Borough Councils and has been the sole education authority within the county from that date.

The Records of Individual Schools – these mainly date from the mid 19th century onwards. The majority of early records relate to primary schools.

Logbooks - were only created by primary schools. The earliest date from 1862, but in fact many date from when the school first came under the Inspectorate. These were compiled by head teachers, and include inspector's reports and details of day-to-day occurrences in school, attendance and reasons for absences, accidents and illnesses of the staff and children, weather conditions, visits to the school, punishments, local celebrations, awards of prizes, grants etc.

Admission registers - these mainly date from 1880s. They give dates, ages, residences, father's occupation, date and reason for leaving, previous and next place of education.

Photographs - may date from the 1860s, but many are much later. These might include photographs of school buildings (interior and exterior), groups of children (often named) and school activities.

Punishment books - giving names, ages, nature of the offences and punishments given

Grammar School - records can include lists of previous pupils and magazines.

Workhouse schools – very little survives from the early schools which relates to individual pupils.

Charity Schools – deeds and accounts survive, but very little on the children's experiences.

Private Day Schools – nothing survives from the schools in the county.

Other records

These include the records of the various Education Authorities including lots of information on teachers, cleaners and caretakers.

Examples of timetables, curriculum and of teaching and learning aids; Financial records and stock books; printed ephemera: brochures, information for parents and reports of H M Inspectors. For schools linked to the Church of England there are Diocesan Inspectors' reports; lists of candidates entered for examinations or assessments giving names of the candidates, ages, attendances, standards and results; minutes and other records of School Boards; minutes of meetings of school managers, governors or trustees.

Finding education records

County directories are useful in identifying which parishes had schools and the date they were established. Once you have identified the school, Bury and Ipswich record offices hold comprehensive indexes to Education Records. Lowestoft record office has a list of useful records for their area.

Bury Record Office, 77 Raingate Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2AR

Telephone: 01284 741212

Email: bury.ro@suffolk.gov.uk

Ipswich Record Office, Gatacre Road, Ipswich, IP1 2LQ

Telephone: 01473 584541

Fax: 01473 584533

Email: ipswich.ro@suffolk.gov.uk

Lowestoft Record Office, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DR

Telephone: 01502 405357

Fax: 01502 405350

Email: lowestoft.ro@suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk Record Office web site: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro>

Suffolk Heritage Direct website: <http://www.suffolkheritagedirect.org.uk>