

The History of Little Ealing Schools

Little Ealing Infants School was opened on May 1 1905 and the Boys' and Girls' Schools were opened on August 26 1905 to meet a long-standing need in the South Ealing area. Up until 1900, the education of Ealing children had been under the auspices of the various religious denominations and had been paid for by voluntary subscriptions. Indeed, Ealing had no School Board at that time. An HMI was instructed to look closely into the matter of school provision and he described Ealing as the "richest and worst educated parish in the whole of Middlesex". As a result of this and other adverse comments, a Board of Education was set up in September 1901. In 1902 the Education Bill was passed which required there to be "local education authorities" who would ensure elementary education, erect new schools and provide secular education. One of their first tasks was to provide schools for the 500 plus children living in South Ealing who had failed to gain admission to any of the existing schools.

In consequence, three Little Ealing Schools were established. One was to be a Mixed Infants' School to accommodate up to 300 pupils. This was housed in a separate building. Separate Boys' and Girls' Council Schools were established in a shared larger building; the hall still contains a central beam which once formed part of the partition to divide it into 2 smaller halls. This partition was removed in 1962. The 2 exterior gates leading into Weymouth Avenue still bear the legends Boys and Girls. There was a wall across the playground to divide the playing area, the mark of which can still be seen on the main building.

Initially most pupils lived on the south side of Little Ealing Lane, the schools having been built on open fields originally belonging to Brentford Football Club. Many of the parents worked at the local gasworks, sewage farm, iron foundry or industrial rubber factory. However there was much unemployment in the area and very considerable poverty. Much work to alleviate hardship was performed by staff of that era. Visiting HMIs paid tribute to the staff for the high standard of work which was being achieved.

Following the publication of the Hadow Report (1928), a form of reorganisation took place which became effective in January 1932. This involved the transfer of the Girls' School to Northfields and the creation of a Junior Mixed Department at Little Ealing, in the half of the building formerly occupied by the girls and a Senior Boys Department for boys of 11 years upwards in the other half. The girls went to the recently opened Grange Senior Girls School because it was felt that older children would benefit from single sex education. To increase facilities for the senior school, two new "practical" rooms were built in the playground.

This arrangement continued until the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939 when 270 pupils were evacuated to Bourne End in Buckinghamshire. Teachers of that

period had the added responsibility of temporary foster parenthood. However by February 1941 all but 80 of these children had returned to Ealing. With the frequent bombing of London, much time was spent in the air raid shelters under the playgrounds. An Air Warden's Post with a reinforced concrete roof was built at the back of the school. Teachers assisted with a fire-watching rota which involved them sleeping on the premises. Holidays were given up to organise activities for the children.

Throughout the whole of this period, the school maintained a high standard of education which continued and developed through the post-war years. More and more pupils from the Junior Department gained admission to local Grammar Schools and the poverty which was noted in the early part of the century had by now virtually disappeared.

The next major change was to occur in 1962 when the Secondary Boys' Department was housed in a new building assuming the name of Ealing Mead. This left the Junior School in possession of the majority of the main building. However certain classrooms together with the whole of the Metal Workshop block was given over to use by pupils of Walpole Grammar School. Catchment areas of this and neighbouring schools were rearranged to make the best use of the additional accommodation which was then available. This brought about a rapid increase in the school roll from 300 to nearer 400 pupils. In September 1966, two language classes were opened to teach English to pupils from the borough who came from former Commonwealth countries which increased the roll to nearly 500. By 1972 school lunches were prepared in the canteen which was converted from two classrooms vacated in 1962 by the Boys Senior School.

In September 1974, the borough completely reorganised the educational system in Ealing to form First and Middle Schools. The Infant School became the First School with pupils from 4 years to 8 years, and the Junior School became the Middle School with pupils from 8 years to 12 years from where they went to Comprehensive High Schools until they were 16 years old.

At the time of reorganisation, all the South Ealing schools were very overcrowded. To alleviate this, one of the closing Secondary Girls' Schools, Northfields, was reopened as an additional First and Middle School. All of the South Ealing Schools lost part of their catchment areas to the new school. As a consequence of this, and the change in policy to stop "bussing in" immigrant children, the school roll began to drop and went from over 500 in 1974 to 250 in 1981. This enabled smaller class numbers and the creation of specialist teaching areas.

The History of Little Ealing Schools

In September 1981, Northfields Schools closed because of falling numbers and the old catchment areas were restored. In January 1982, a nursery was opened attached to the First School catering for 100 children from 3 years old.

The First School needed more space to accommodate a rising roll so the classrooms in the Middle School building nearest to them and the Horsa huts in the Middle School playground were used for the overflow.

From 1990, Ealing Education Authority began to put in place plans to reorganise state schools following the introduction of the National Curriculum. Primary schools would cater for pupils from age 3+ in Nursery to age 11 in Year 6; High Schools would cater for pupils from 11 in Year 7 to 16 in Year 11 and a Tertiary College for Years 12 and 13. This system required two yeargroups of pupils to leave the Middle Schools and start at High Schools at the beginning of the school year. In order to accommodate this bulge, secondary schools closed their Sixth Forms and used those classrooms for the extra yeargroup. The Tertiary College was established in what was Ealing Boys Grammar School on Ealing Green and opened in September 1992. First and Middle Schools combined to become Primary Schools which required the establishment of new Governing Bodies. At the same time as this was happening, schools became responsible for managing their own budgets, a scheme called Local Management of Schools (LMS). Some schools chose to opt out of this and become Grant Maintained Schools (GMS) which entitled them to a different level of funding from the local authority. Consequently several schools chose to stay as separate Infant and Juniors, especially if they were large schools or on separate sites. All staff, including Headteachers, had to re-apply for their jobs and there were some inevitable casualties. And the buildings had to be adapted for their new role.

In September 1993, all the new schools, including Little Ealing Primary School, opened. The pedestrian entrance in Weymouth Avenue was widened by adding a second gate taken from the wall dividing the First School playground from the Middle School which was removed. New signs were erected and the classroom on the right of the entrance was adapted to become the Main Office by replacing a window with a door and putting in a wall dividing the office area from the access way into the school. The Welfare Room became the headteacher's office. The Home Economics Room became the Staffroom to allow all staff to be able to meet together. A hard standing was built near the boiler room for the paladin bins with double gates leading on to the pavement so that refuse workers did not need to come on to the site to empty them.

Once the amalgamation had taken place, the main focus for the school was to enhance the playground in order to provide a stimulating environment and an outdoor curriculum. The area in front of the school to the right of the entrance on

Weymouth Avenue had already been allocated as a Wildlife Area in 1992 and a pond had been dug. Over the years, parents and staff have changed it into separate areas representing different environments – pond and wetland area, heathland and meadowland - by removing flowering cherry trees and replacing with birches, removing turf and replacing with meadow flowers and heathers, planting a hedge of indigenous shrubs, putting in a stile and making a path connecting all the areas together. Pupils continue to use this to study various aspects of their science curriculum. The area in front of the school to the left of the entrance became a sensory extension to the Nursery play area by planting a large variety of herbs in a spiral pattern and a living tunnel of willow for them to walk and run through. Existing shrubs were changed into a dinosaur and a bird by skilful topiary work to the delight of the children.

The climbing frame and planters and logging in the main playground were installed when the Middle School was still in existence.

In 1996, following the Dunblane disaster, security at the entrance was increased. Wooden gates and fencing were installed at the front of the school so that the playground could be enclosed and an electronic buzzer system was put on the main entrance. Shrubs were planted in front of the fencing to both enhance the area and provide further security. Over the years more flowering plants and shrubs in pots and planters have been added to this entrance area to the school, maintained by the PTFA.

Pergolas were attached to the canteen building with large planters containing climbing shrubs to provide shade in the summer. Two more pergolas were put up; one against the smaller building with a bench beneath and one backing onto the Headteacher's kitchen with the lion's head fountain beneath, both to provide quiet shaded areas.

Play equipment was installed in the smaller playground for the younger children and a climbing wall at the end of the large playground for the older children.

The other half of the building containing the music studio was used by the borough as a Caretakers' Training Centre and then as a base for the SENSS Team. As the school roll increased it was turned into two much needed classrooms with cloakrooms and toilets and became the Year 6 block.

As the school roll continued to rise, more space was needed for classrooms. The Horsa huts between the two larger playgrounds had been used by the First School as Reception classrooms. In 1997 the Art Room was moved there from the main building and The After School Care Club was established in the other room. The science room had the science benches and gas fittings removed and became the

resources store. The upstairs offices were used by the Special Educational Needs team for teaching areas and meetings.

In order to improve the learning environment, there was a rolling programme of refurbishment and redecoration throughout the school, particularly the ceilings which fell down regularly. The most major refurbishment project was the replacement of the windows and exterior doors with modern UPVC designs. Although there was a great deal of opposition from parents and governors, the replacement took place. It caused a lot of disruption to pupils and staff as it took much longer than predicted and necessitated classes having to vacate their room and have lessons in the hall for a couple of days before moving back in, but ultimately it made the rooms warmer, brighter and quieter and the school more secure. The most noticeable difference was the replacement of the opaque panels in the hall roofs with clear glass which returned them to their original design and flooded both halls with sunshine and light. Also the dormer windows were able to be opened which allowed air to circulate and improved all activities in the hall, especially in the summer. At the same time lowered ceilings were installed in the classrooms with more efficient and effective lighting which also reduced the heating bill considerably.

Unfortunately, the Horsa huts were condemned because of asbestos contamination so the vacant Caretaker's house, which had been empty for some years, was taken over by the council and became the After School Care Club. The garden was turned into the Secret Garden with a mosaic path designed by children and made by parents, a wrought iron gate and wall decorations designed by a parent, a tall multi-level planter and replanted flower beds with brick paving. This was used at lunchtimes by each class in turn as a quiet place to eat their lunch. The area in front of the house became the vegetable patch, managed by a group of parents, and was used to deliver part of the science curriculum.

In 2000, the Millennium Garden was finished. This took the place of the Horsa huts in the playground and consisted of an amphitheatre with a small stage, a sunken river bed and bridge and an open area with five silver birch trees, surrounded by railway sleepers and logging fencing. Originally the ground covering was bark chippings but these proved to be unsuitable so were replaced with brick paving.

There were several additions to the playgrounds to celebrate the school's centenary in 2005. A covered walkway was installed linking the main building to the Early Years building. It is made of modern materials based on a Victorian design and the whole project was managed by a parent who is an architect. A caged area was put in at the end of the far playground with football goals, basketball/netball rings and appropriate playground markings. And a large piece of play equipment, a space net,

was put in the middle playground. As it was over six metres tall, it needed planning permission!

The next area to be improved was the Nursery playground. The area was completely redesigned and new equipment and ground covering was installed over the summer of 2007. The final playground for Key Stage 1 was refurbished in 2008 and new equipment and play surface installed.

The use of rooms in both main buildings continued to evolve as the school roll expanded and new technology came on board. Upstairs rooms became offices for admin personnel and senior leaders; an ICT suite was established in a classroom; a new resource area was built incorporating what was the welfare room for the middle school and the yard behind the entrance on the corner of Weymouth Avenue; and a classroom was taken over as the main office and reprographics room.

Finally in 2009 the reception area was remodelled to create a more welcoming aspect for visitors to the school and a better working environment for the admin staff.

In 2010, it was decided to expand the school to three forms of entry which would require major rebuilding works. These are detailed in the Expansion News on the website.