



VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

Chipping Norton

Social History II: Education

Education to 1800

Grammar School The Holy Trinity guild was licensed at its foundation in 1450 to acquire lands in support of chantry chaplains, and to maintain a 'fit' person to give free instruction in basic grammar (i.e. in Latin) to poor boys coming to Chipping Norton.¹ The phrasing suggests that it was intended to draw some pupils (as later) from beyond the town. Few details are known before the 1540s, but probably most early schoolmasters were guild chantry priests, who may have charged fees to supplement their income. Since no dedicated school buildings are known before the 1570s lessons were presumably conducted either in hired premises or in church or chantry property, perhaps close to the guildhall or (as later) on Church Street, site of the guild's almshouse and of several chantry houses.²

Exceptionally, the grammar school survived the guild's suppression in 1548, making it one of only two Oxfordshire medieval grammar schools outside Oxford to continue after the Reformation.³ Its survival partly reflected local need (there being 'much youth' in the town), petitioning by the townspeople, and the reputation of the master Hamlet Malban (a former chantry priest 'well learned in grammar'),⁴ although as similar petitions from other towns were unsuccessful there was perhaps also some intervention by resident gentry.⁵ The Crown took over payment of the master's £6 stipend,⁶ and in 1572 a group of townsmen acting as feoffees, perhaps inspired by the refoundation of Burford grammar school the previous year,⁷ acquired a house on the south side of Church Street, to which an adjoining house was added in 1590 'to the use and ... towards the maintenance' of the schoolmaster.⁸ The buildings (on the site of the present-day vicarage) were used thereafter as a schoolhouse and master's residence, comprising in 1827 a wide two-storeyed range with

¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1446–52, 402; *VCH Oxon.* I, 467.

² For Church St premises: *Cal. Pat.* 1548–9, pp. 192, 414; Rosen and Cliffe, *Making*, 190, 192 (incl. part of the later school premises); below (welfare: almshos).

³ *Chant. Cert.* xviii, 56; *VCH Oxon.* I, 457; XVIII, 223 (Ewelme school).

⁴ *Chant. Cert.* 20, 46, 55.

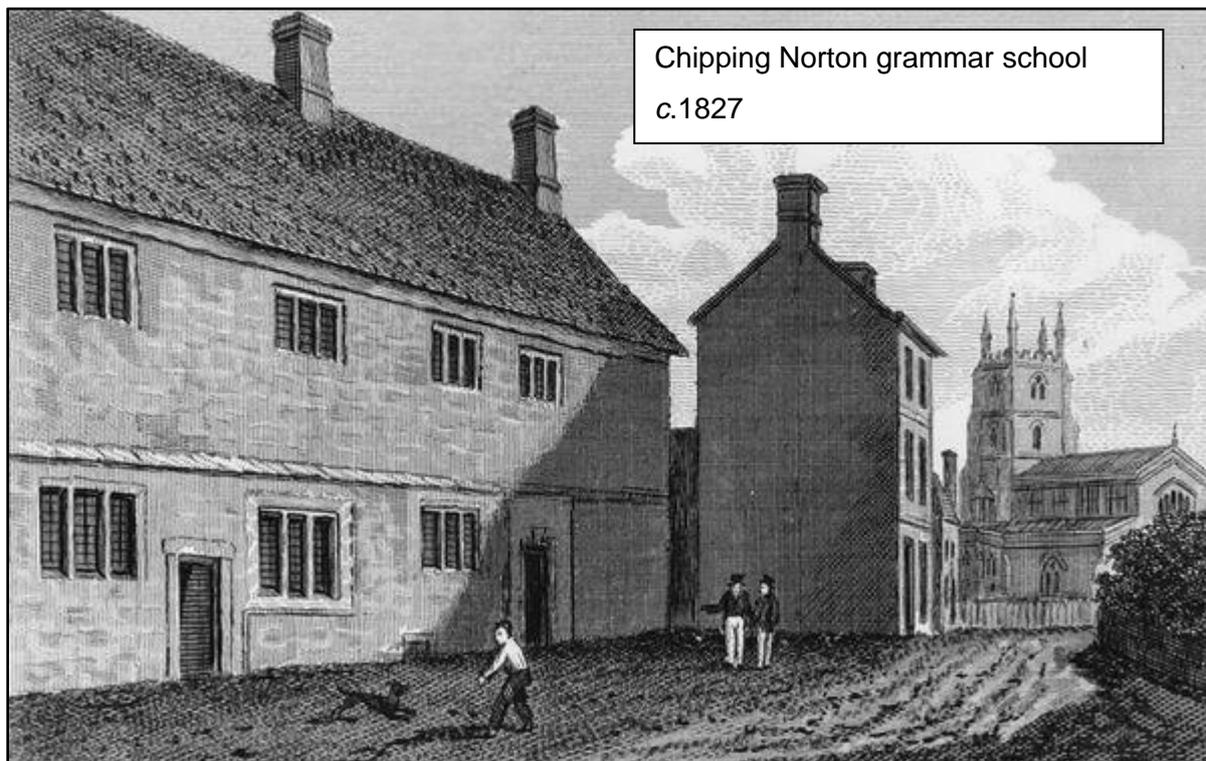
⁵ e.g. the Hobys: Rosen and Cliffe, *Making*, 45.

⁶ TNA, C 93/4/1; *Cal. SP Dom.* 1634–5, 288. The Crown latterly charged a 15s. fee (later 11s. 8d.): *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 256; *Oxf Jnl* 22 Aug. 1857.

⁷ *VCH Oxon.* I, 468.

⁸ *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 257; OHC, BOR1/5/A1/2.

twin entrances and mullioned windows.⁹ The premises were transferred in 1607 to the newly established borough corporation, along with responsibility for appointing (and where necessary removing) new masters.¹⁰



Under the 1590 conveyance the master was to teach 'all the inhabitants of the town ... freely', but by the 18th century (and probably much earlier) free education was limited to just two poor boys chosen by the corporation, while other pupils paid quarterly fees totalling 7s. 6d. each by the 1820s.¹¹ Presumably that reflected the school's small income, despite several philanthropic attempts to increase it: a bequest by Edward Hutchins (d. 1602) produced £2 a year, while Elizabeth Wimot (d. 1604) left interest from £10, and Richard Hutchins (d. 1644) half the interest from £60.¹² A £300 bequest by Frances Barnes (d. 1763)

⁹ *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 257–8; Rosen and Cliffe, *Making*, 190–2; *Sixty Views of Endowed Grammar Schools, from Original Drawings by J. C. Buckler* (1827). The adjoining house (No. 8) was acquired as a master's house in the 19th cent. (below).

¹⁰ *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 257; OHC, BOR1/1/D/1 and BOR1/1/D/3.

¹¹ *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 257–8; OHC, BOR1/5/A/1/1, f.180; BOR1/29/L. *VCH Oxon.* I, 467–8 states incorrectly that quarterly fees and free teaching of two boys were laid down in the 1607 charter.

¹² TNA, C 93/4/1; OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon c 141, p. 521; *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 258, 263. Edw. Hutchins' bequest was later lost and Ric. Hutchins' temporarily misapplied.

brought the stipend to c.£18,¹³ but masters were also required to keep the buildings in repair,¹⁴ and their low income presumably accounts for a rapid turnover and several vacancies during the 1750s–70s.¹⁵ Then as earlier the masters were Anglican clergymen and Oxbridge graduates, and many of them supplemented their income by serving local churches, their number including the Chipping Norton vicars John Norgrove (d. 1659) and Edward Redrobe (d. 1721), and the curate Samuel Leigh (master 1811--31).¹⁶ Despite the difficulties of recruitment the corporation continued to exercise close oversight, one master being deprived c.1757 and another threatened with removal in 1768,¹⁷ and in the 1790s the school was said to be held in 'high estimation'.¹⁸ By then the curriculum had been expanded to meet the town's wider needs, teaching in Latin (still the only subject mentioned in 1758) being supplemented by the 1760s–70s by reading, writing, and arithmetic.¹⁹

Other Schools No other schools are known before the early 18th century, when there were a few small private boarding and dame schools.²⁰ A girls' boarding school established by the 1760s charged 11 guineas a year in 1772, moving a few years later into a large house next to the grammar school (presumably No. 8 Church St).²¹ Such institutions were dismissed by the scrivener and sometime town clerk John Wakefield (d. 1782), whose bequest towards his niece's education stipulated that she should not be sent to 'a boarding school or milliners to be pampered in pride, idleness [and] dissipation.'²² A few poor children were taught from the 1720s thanks to a £50 bequest from Joanna Redrobe (d. 1724), widow of the former vicar;²³ possibly that was the charity which in 1768 supported a man and a

¹³ TNA, PROB 11/893/139; *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 258; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 558, f. 150; *Oxf Jnl* 22 Aug. 1857. For a further bequest in 1812, TNA, PROB 11/1534/296 (Sukey West).

¹⁴ e.g. OHC, BOR1/5/A1/1, ff. 151, 180; *Oxf Jnl* 22 Aug. 1857.

¹⁵ OHC, BOR1/29/L/1; *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 12 Feb. 1757, 7 Jan., 6 May 1758, 11 July 1761, 19 May 1764, 30 Mar. 1771, 8 Oct. 1774.

¹⁶ *Cal. SP Dom.* 1634–5, p. 288 (Norgrove); *Par. Colln.* I, 93 (Redrobe); OHC, BOR1/29/L/1 and *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. d 578, f. 67 (Leigh); below, *relig. hist.* Leigh also served Heythrop and was town bailiff in 1824: *VCH Oxon.* XI, 141; OHC, BOR1/5/A1/2, 2 Jan. 1824.

¹⁷ *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 12 Feb. 1757; Meades, *Hist.* 84.

¹⁸ *Univ. Brit. Dir.* II (c.1793), 556.

¹⁹ OHC, BOR1/29/L/1; BOR1/5/A1/1, ff.151, 180; *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 257–8.

²⁰ e.g. OHC, *par. reg. transcript* (burials of Mary Cook, 1719, and Eliz. Carpenter, 1720); *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 28 May 1774, 25 Dec. 1779.

²¹ *Oxf. Jnl Syn.* 15 Mar. 1766, 23 Mar. 1772; *Oxf. Jnl* 19 Oct. 1776. It was probably this school which was reported to have Roman Catholic leanings: OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 564, f. 116v. For No. 8 Church St (later the grammar master's ho.), below (1800–1914).

²² TNA, PROB 11/1091/111.

²³ *Ibid.* PROB 11/596/402; cf. OHC, PAR64/13/F1/1, accts at end.

woman to teach reading and writing to eight boys and eight girls chosen by the vestry, but by 1824 it had long been lost.²⁴

Education 1800–1914

Grammar School and Private Schools In 1808 (when it was kept by the late master's widow) the grammar school had 50 pupils,²⁵ and though numbers fell to 15 just seven years later, probably largely due to increased competition,²⁶ by 1824 there were 45 pupils including 17 boarders, who were taught reading, writing, accounts, the classics, and French if required.²⁷ The old building had a 'spacious' school room but was by then in poor repair, while the stipend had risen to over £150.²⁸ The school continued to flourish under Edward Hartley (appointed in 1834), who in 1839 employed a 'classical assistant' (also fluent in French) to help with increased numbers;²⁹ Hartley placed an emphasis on 'kindness' and 'mildest discipline', preparing his 'young gentlemen' for the liberal professions, government offices, and commercial pursuits.³⁰ In 1851 there were 20 resident boarders aged from 11 to 15, of whom only three came from Chipping Norton, and several from Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, or Worcestershire.³¹ By then Hartley was living in the adjoining No. 8 Church Street, a tall 3-storeyed 18th-century house which he initially rented and later bought,³² and by 1854 (when fees were 20 guineas a year) the school's continued expansion forced it to move into 'more commodious' neighbouring premises, presumably No. 8 or the former parish workhouse to the east.³³ In 1857 there were c.80 paying boarders and day scholars, and four free charity pupils.³⁴

Despite its success the school was closed in 1859, its demise reflecting an increasing view that the benefits of its foundation should be spread more widely, and that a National school was 'much more suitable' for local needs, especially since the

²⁴ OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 558, f. 150v.; *ibid.* PAR64/2/A1/1, 3 Apr. 1768; *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 271. Provision for teaching 7 children 'of the poorer classes' on weekdays was mentioned in 1835: TNA, ED 103/135/165.

²⁵ OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 707, f. 43.

²⁶ *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 433, f. 58; below.

²⁷ *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 258.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 257–8; *Oxf Jnl* 14 Jan. 1815 (incl. £6 13s. 4d. from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, perhaps representing the Crown's contribution).

²⁹ *Leamington Spa Courier* 24 May 1834; *Oxf. Jnl* 13 July 1839.

³⁰ *Oxf. Jnl* 8 July 1843, 11 Jan. 1845, 3 Jan. 1857.

³¹ TNA, HO 107/1732; another came from Over Norton.

³² Town Map (c.1840), with OHC, BOR1/17/F1/6 (nos 76–7); *Oxf. Jnl* 24 Feb. 1849; Rosen and Cliffe, *Making*, 189–92.

³³ *Oxf. Jnl* 8 July 1854.

³⁴ TNA, ED 49/6123. Cf. TNA, PROB 11/1534/296 (Sukey West, bequest towards teaching poor Chipping Norton boys at the school).

'unwholesomeness' of the National girls' school (established by 1847) was causing defections to the British school.³⁵ In addition, a boys' 'middle school' school (charging 28--30 guineas) had just opened in Over Norton at Chapel House,³⁶ which although it proved short-lived added to existing competition from cheaper schools.³⁷ Hartley himself was willing to resign,³⁸ though he briefly resumed what he styled a 'grammar school' at Rock Hill House,³⁹ where there had previously been a young ladies' seminary.⁴⁰ The grammar school was again 'revived' in 1870 as the private Trinity School, and in 1894 by William Warne (who took over a failing private school called the Collegiate School), both ventures being supported by the vicar.⁴¹

Other, often short-lived private schools operated in various locations including High Street, New Street, and West Street, most of them aimed at the lower middle classes.⁴² In 1815 seven such schools catered for c.129 boys and 93 girls, though in 1860 only three schools were mentioned, teaching c.60 children.⁴³ By 1914 St Margaret's School on New Street entered pupils for the Oxford and Cambridge local exams and London matriculation, charging full boarders £12 12s. to £15 15s. a term.⁴⁴ The Sister's School (Daughters of Providence) supplied similar schooling, with freedom of conscience in religion.⁴⁵

National, British, and Catholic Schools As in other towns, the 19th century saw increased educational provision especially in elementary schooling, which in Chipping Norton was promoted first by Dissenters and later by the Anglican church. A non-denominational Lancasterian day school for 40 girls, maintained by well-to-do female subscribers, was established on New Street c.1809, attracting numerous Nonconformists,⁴⁶ and by 1815 well-established Dissenting Sunday schools had nearly 200 pupils, while an Anglican Sunday

³⁵ TNA, ED 49/6123. For the inadequate and overcrowded facilities for girls in 1859: *ibid.* ED 103/30/9.

³⁶ *Oxf. Jnl* 5 Feb. 1859; TNA, ED 49/6123; below, Over Norton, social hist. (educn).

³⁷ OHC, MS Oxf Dioc b 38, f. 60; below.

³⁸ TNA, ED 49/6123.

³⁹ *Oxf Jnl* 10 Jan. 1863.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 16 Jan. 1819, 8 July 1843, 11 Jan. 1845, 13 Jan. 1855.

⁴¹ *Oxon. Weekly News* 26 Jan. 1870, 7 Nov. 1894; *Oxf. Jnl* 18 Feb. 1870; TNA, ED 49/6123. For the Collegiate School: *Oxon. Weekly News* 12 July 1882.

⁴² *Oxf Jnl* 3 Jan. 1801, 5 Jan. 1805, 13 July 1816, 22 Apr. 1820, 15 July 1837, 9 June 1839, 13 Jan. 1844, 10 July 1852; *Oxon. Weekly News* 23 Feb. 1870, 17 Jan. 1872; Eddershaw, *Chipping Norton*, 99; Meades, *Hist.* 101.

⁴³ OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. c 433, f. 58; d 180, f. 276v. Cf. *Oxon. Atlas*, 130–1.

⁴⁴ *Oxon. Weekly News* 23 Feb. 1870 (Miss Mary Westaway); OHC, CC4/242; Meades, *Hist.*, 101–3, reproducing advert in *Oxon. Weekly News* 21 Jan. 1914. It moved to Rock Hill House in 1918: *Oxon. Weekly News* 4 Sep. 1918.

⁴⁵ OHC, CC4/242.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* MSS Oxf. Dioc. c 433, f. 59; d 572, f. 83v.; *Educ. of Poor Digest*, p. 721; *Robson's Dir. Oxon.* (1839); Brewer, *Oxon.* 498.

school (resumed in 1813) taught c.100 children on Bell's plan.⁴⁷ Nevertheless provision for the poor was inadequate, with c.400 children living within 2 miles.⁴⁸ A mixed British day school was opened c.1829 in a room in the Baptist church on New Street,⁴⁹ but the Anglican response was slow, and in 1834 (despite a recent increase to c.180 Sunday-school pupils) the vicar R.S. Skillern acknowledged that a day school was 'sadly wanted'.⁵⁰

The problem was finally addressed c.1838 when a National school for 200 boys was built facing the churchyard. An infants' school at West End was operating the following year, and a girls' school (taking over from the Lancasterian school) before 1847.⁵¹ By c.1850 the boys' school was well taught, but the girls' and infants' school (then held in the guildhall) were 'ineffective', and the cost of pupil contributions meant that many preferred the Dissenting schools.⁵² In 1853 the boys' school consequently had an average attendance of only 70, while the girls' school taught 30 (plus 15 little boys).⁵³ The British school, by contrast, was outgrowing its borrowed accommodation in the Baptist chapel,⁵⁴ and thanks to William Bliss and other prominent local Nonconformists was transferred in 1854 to the former manor house at Nos. 28–32 New Street,⁵⁵ which was substantially rebuilt for c.200 boys and girls with separate classrooms, rear playgrounds, and accommodation for the master.⁵⁶ The move made the school less obviously denominational,⁵⁷ and by 1859 average attendance was c.180.⁵⁸ Further new provision included a mixed Catholic school on London road, opened alongside the new Holy Trinity church in 1836; that remained 'very small', however, with just 30 pupils in 1872,⁵⁹ and though attendance reflected the limited number of resident Catholics, Anglican 'interference' was alleged.⁶⁰

⁴⁷ OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 433, f. 59. For the earlier Anglican Sunday sch. (before 1808), *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. d 707, f. 43.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 433, f. 59; *Educ. of Poor Digest*, p. 721.

⁴⁹ Brunel University Archive, transcript of 1897 list of British schools; TNA, ED 103/23/30.

⁵⁰ OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. b 38, f. 60; b 39, f. 90.

⁵¹ TNA, ED 103/135/165, pp. 861–5; ED 103/30/9, p. 207; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. b 41, ff. 65v.–6; *Robson's Dir. Oxon.* (1839); *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847).

⁵² OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 450, ff. 103v.–104; *Gardner's Dir. Oxon.* (1852); Charles Holmes' MS notebook (1855), held by Adrienne Rosen.

⁵³ TNA, ED 103/23/30.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ CNM, abstract of deeds for British School; OHC, S64/1/MS/1.

⁵⁶ TNA, ED 103/23/30, pp. 943–61; *Oxf. Jnl.* 16, 30 Sept. 1854; OHC, S64/1/Y/1 (plans); B. Allison, *The British Schools, Chipping Norton, 1863–1909* (2021), 15–16.

⁵⁷ TNA, ED 103/23/30; *Oxf. Jnl.* 16 and 30 Sept. 1854.

⁵⁸ TNA, ED 103/30/9. For improvements to Nonconformist Sunday school facilities: *Oxf Jnl* 5 Apr., 19 Apr. 1862, 14 July 1866.

⁵⁹ TNA, ED 103/30/9; OHC, CC4/52/2; below, relig. hist.

⁶⁰ In 1849: Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives, B01682.



The boys' school shown on the c.1840 town map, located opposite the churchyard. (The churchyard is coloured green and the school building black.)

In an effort to improve Anglican schooling, the grammar school and its endowments (worth c.£17 a year) were made over in 1859 to the vicar Alexander Wishaw and a committee for the instruction of children of the labouring classes.⁶¹ The school was rebuilt in Gothic style in 1861, creating separate schools for boys and girls, while the infants moved into the nearby former boys' National schoolroom opposite the churchyard. The new premises had space for c.330 pupils, with No. 8 next door acquired as a master's and (separate) mistress's house, the leading subscriber being the local brewer William Hitchman. Up to six boys were to be educated free, and the trustees could require particular boys to be taught Latin, while religious instruction was directed by the vicar, although no child was required to learn Anglican doctrines or attend services.⁶² A few pupils came from outside town, including nearby Heythrop.⁶³ Workhouse children were separately taught in-house, under supervision of the Local Government Board.⁶⁴

By the mid 1870s the British school (with space for 258 children) was overcrowded, and inspectors criticised poor facilities and the low attainment of younger pupils.⁶⁵ A separate infants' department (created in 1877) was housed at first in the Wesleyan Sunday school room, and from 1884 in the Baptist chapel; the arrangement proved inadequate, however, and in 1888, after a stop-gap renovation, the infants swapped places with the boys

⁶¹ TNA, ED 49/6123; above (grammar sch.).

⁶² TNA, ED 103/30/9, pp. 213–31; ED 2/362/8 (1872 pupil accomm.); OHC, QSD/C/17; *ibid.* S64/2/Y1/1–10 (plans); *ibid.* CC4/51, no. 33 (1905 photos). No. 8 was sold to the vicar and churchwardens by Edw. Hartley in 1860: conveyance in *priv. hands.*

⁶³ *VCH Oxon.* XI, 143.

⁶⁴ OHC, BOR1/29/C/3 (dated 1878).

⁶⁵ Allison, *British Schools*, 60–1; TNA, ED 2/362/8.

in the main school.⁶⁶ The Catholic school, meanwhile, was rebuilt and enlarged in 1883 with space for c.146 children, though average attendance remained lower.⁶⁷ Overall, almost two thirds of children in Chipping Norton's schools in 1878 were aged under ten, with pupils taught in large mixed-age classes.⁶⁸ Attendance (as elsewhere) was affected by illness and by parents using their children for field and garden work.⁶⁹



The Chipping Norton British school's New Street premises for girls and infants.

The town's voluntary schools faced acute financial problems in the wake of the 1891 Education Act, which increased pupil numbers by ending obligatory parental contributions, and demanded higher standards. Ratepayers such as Col. William Dawkins of Over Norton House favoured imposition of a school board of the kind established in Over Norton, which they believed would be fairer, more efficient, and a counter to alleged 'Romish' influence in the Church schools.⁷⁰ Many others were opposed, and local fundraising was co-ordinated by the town council, which feared change would bring greater costs.⁷¹ The managers of the National school secured extra money and made plans for enlargement, but in April 1895 their less well-funded Nonconformist counterparts were forced to close the British school in the face of government demands for repairs and for establishment of a new boys' school.⁷²

⁶⁶ Allison, *British Schools*, 61–2; *Oxon. Weekly News* 27 Aug. 1884.

⁶⁷ *Oxon. Weekly News* 10 Oct. 1883; TNA, ED 21/14407; ED 2/362/8; OHC, CC4/52/1–2 and 17–21.

⁶⁸ OHC, BOR1/29/A1/5; Allison, *British Schools*, 17.

⁶⁹ OHC, BOR1/29/A2/1; BOR1/29/A1/2; Allison, *British Schools*, 19–23; *Retn Public Elem. Schs.* (Parl. Papers 1875–6 [C 1882], lxvii), pp. 346–7; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883 edn).

⁷⁰ *Oxon. Weekly News* 25 May 1892, 22 Feb. 1893, 18 Sept. 1895 etc.; Allison, *British Schools*, 64--8; below, Over Norton, social hist. (educ.).

⁷¹ *Oxon. Weekly News* 27 Apr., 11 May 1892; Allison, *British Schools*, 67 (letter from Mayor A.C. Rawlinson to ratepayers 14 Feb. 1895).

⁷² TNA, ED 21/14405; ED 2/362/8; ED 21/14406; Allison, *British Schools*, 66.

Its pupils were reportedly ‘thrown upon the streets’ or sent to other schools against the wishes of their parents, who then petitioned for a school board.⁷³

The crisis was resolved later that year thanks to large donations from Albert Brassey of Heythrop Park, the newly elected MP for Banbury, which ensured the survival of the town’s voluntary system. Brassey paid for the erection of a new stone-built National school for 290 girls and infants on Burford Road (opened at the end of 1896), and for a new brick-built British school for 160 boys at The Green (which opened the following January), the British school on New Street being reopened for girls and infants. The National schoolroom on Church Street became exclusively for boys, while the infants’ school near the church was converted into a parish room.⁷⁴ The smaller Catholic school was able to survive independently, the mission priest (Samuel Sole) claiming later that he ‘never allowed a deficit to appear till the voluntary system in this radical town was safe’.⁷⁵



The Chipping Norton
British school for boys
in 1904.

Evening Schools Anglican and Nonconformist evening classes operated by the 1850s, the latter supported by William Bliss, who supplied separate schools for his young male and female employees, as well as reading and lecture rooms and a circulating library.⁷⁶ Anglican

⁷³ TNA, ED 2/362/8.

⁷⁴ Ibid. ED 21/14405; ED 21/14406; OHC, S64/1/MS/1; *ibid.* CC4/50–1 (incl. photos); *Banbury Guardian* 17 Dec. 1896; *Evesham Standard* 23 Jan. 1897.

⁷⁵ Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives, Z0001/2/8/3/331/9.

⁷⁶ OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. d 179, f. 110; c 335, f. 88; *Reports on the Paris Universal Exhibition, 1867*, Volume VI (Parl. Papers 1867–8 (3969), xxx), 47, 75; above (industrialization and society). A house owned by Bliss at the bottom of New Street included a schoolroom: *Sale Cat., Bliss Tweed Mills* (1893): photocopy in OHC, Acc. 2585.

classes had mixed success, blamed partly on opposition from 'British school interests' (in 1860), and on long working hours in shops and factories.⁷⁷ A borough technical instruction committee was formed in 1891 to co-ordinate county council evening classes, which were held (amongst other locations) in the guildhall, the Church of England girls' school on Burford Road, and the British girls' school on New Street.⁷⁸ The guildhall itself (repurchased for the borough by Albert Brassey) was refurbished in 1901 to house a technical institute, which incorporated a carpentry room and small lecture theatre;⁷⁹ students included mill workers, apprentices, shop boys, pupil teachers, and married women, the classes including maths, book-keeping, woodcarving, horticulture, cookery, dressmaking, drawing, and poultry rearing.⁸⁰ Even so a report in 1906 called for additional instruction adapted to local industrial needs, and for more employer cooperation, expressing disappointment that young people did not make more of the opportunities.⁸¹ Other vocational training included a ten-day Oxfordshire Agricultural Society dairy school held in the town hall in 1892,⁸² while a Workers' Education Association branch was established in 1913.⁸³



An early photo of Chipping Norton Technical Institute (in the guildhall).

⁷⁷ OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. d 180, f. 277; c 350, f. 93.

⁷⁸ OHC, BOR1/5/A1/5, 30 Sept. 1891; *Lists of Secondary Schools, Science and Art Classes, Evening Schools... for the School Year 1902–1903* (Parl. Papers 1905 [Cd 2323], lix), p. 103; CNM, leaflets and letters; *Oxon. Weekly News* 4 Oct. 1893.

⁷⁹ *Oxon. Weekly News* 11 Dec. 1901; OHC, CC4/243; *ibid.* BOR1/29/R1/2; BOR1/5/A1/7, pp. 100–2, 217–18; CNM, 1907–8 programme.

⁸⁰ OHC, BOR1/29/R1/1 (admission register, 1901–5); *Oxon. Weekly News* 24 Sept. 1902, 28 Sept. 1904.

⁸¹ OHC, BOR1/5/A1/7, pp. 543–5.

⁸² *Oxon. Weekly News* 13 Jan. 1892.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 26 March and 13 June 1913.

Education after 1914

Primary Education to 1945 The early 20th century saw growing recognition that having many small schools was inefficient, but change proved difficult to negotiate.⁸⁴ The county council took over the British schools in 1909 because of the trustees' lack of funds for improvements at New Street,⁸⁵ though both the council and the Church of England maintained separate boys', girls' and infants' sections until 1924, when each combined its respective girls' and infants' departments.⁸⁶ Further rationalisation (proposed in the 1930s) was finally completed in 1943, when the council boys' school was converted to a senior boys' school, the Church boys' school to a junior boys' school, the council girls' and infants' school to an infant and standards 1 and 2 girls' school, and the Church girls' and infants' school to a senior girls' school.⁸⁷ The mixed-age Catholic school continued despite its small size (62 children in 1936) and ongoing staffing problems.⁸⁸ A National Children's Home branch established at Penhurst on New Street in 1904 provided schooling for those of its children too disabled to attend local schools.⁸⁹

Early 20th-century facilities and teaching were mixed. The Church boys' school on Church Lane was poorly lit and, as at the other schools, repairs were long delayed, notably to the playground.⁹⁰ By 1937 pupils at the 'cramped' and 'drab' council girls' and infants' school on New Street suffered additionally from traffic noise.⁹¹ Teaching was generally deemed to be sound,⁹² except at the Catholic school where staff shortages compounded poor attendance.⁹³ Boys from all schools were taught gardening, and girls were sent for cookery and laundry classes in the Oddfellows' hall (opened in 1910).⁹⁴ Lack of manual

⁸⁴ TNA, ED 21/37937; OHC, S64/1/A3/1.

⁸⁵ OHC, CC4/50/21; *ibid.* S64/1/A3/1, s.a. 1908. For county council improvements: TNA, ED 21/14406; OHC, BOR1/29/Y/3.

⁸⁶ TNA, ED 21/37937; OHC, CC4/50, no. 20.

⁸⁷ TNA, ED 21/59536; ED 21/59537.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* ED 21/37939; ED 21/59538.

⁸⁹ *Oxon. Weekly News* 14 Oct. 1903, 6 Jan., 18 May 1904; Meades, *Hist.* 132–3.

⁹⁰ OHC, CC4/51.

⁹¹ TNA, ED 21/59537.

⁹² OHC, CC4/50–1 (inspecn reports).

⁹³ TNA, ED 21/14407; ED 21/37939; ED 21/59538; OHC, CC4/52; *List of Public Elem. Schools* (Parl. Papers 1906 [Cd. 3182], lxxxvi), p. 525.

⁹⁴ OHC, S64/1/A3/1, 3 Feb. 1908; *ibid.* CC4/50–2; TNA, ED 70/1986. For a 'housewifery' centre at the New Street council school in 1928: OHC, CC4/50/30.

training for older boys⁹⁵ was remedied in 1935 by provision of a practical instruction centre at the council boys' school, in which boys were taught woodwork and girls domestic science.⁹⁶

Primary Education after 1945 The second half of the 20th century saw piecemeal reorganisation and eventual rationalisation of the town's primary schooling. The boys' council school on The Green became a secondary modern school in 1948,⁹⁷ its existing pupils being transferred to the Church of England school on Church Street. The site was later taken over (in 1964) by a new mixed Church of England junior school (St Mary's), the remaining secondary modern pupils being transferred to Chipping Norton County School (below) and most of the buildings replaced,⁹⁸ while the old Church Street boys' school finally closed.⁹⁹ A new county council infant school was established on the site of the Burford Road Church girls' school the following year, resulting in the closure of the New Street school.¹⁰⁰ Holy Trinity Catholic School lost its age 11–14 pupils to the Blessed George Napier secondary modern school when that opened in Banbury in 1962,¹⁰¹ by which time the children's home at Penhurst had improved its facilities and specialised in caring for severely disabled children drawn from a wide catchment area.¹⁰²

The infant and junior schools were combined at the St Mary's site (whose buildings had already been much extended) in 1988, fulfilling a long-held ambition.¹⁰³ By the early 2000s the school taught over 320 pupils aged 4 to 11 (just below capacity), though numbers fell to 255 in 2010 and to 245 five years later.¹⁰⁴ Holy Trinity Catholic School had 117 pupils aged 4 to 11 in 1994, of whom only 41 were Roman Catholic; it became an academy in 2014, and three years later (when it was judged 'outstanding') the roll stood at 202.¹⁰⁵ The Penhurst children's home and school was reduced in size in the 1990s, and closed in 2013 due to falling numbers.¹⁰⁶ A private mixed prep school for 4- to 11-year-olds (The Vicarage

⁹⁵ TNA, ED 21/14405 (1907 and 1910).

⁹⁶ TNA, ED 70/1985; ED 21/37937 (1935); *The Nortonian: Chipping Norton School, Golden Jubilee* (May 1978), 20.

⁹⁷ Below (secondary educ.).

⁹⁸ OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. b 154, no. 6; *ibid.* S64/5/Y1/1–2 (plans); *The Nortonian*, 23.

⁹⁹ For its age defects and poor domestic accommodation, OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. b 154, no. 6 (1965 report).

¹⁰⁰ OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. b 154, no. 6.

¹⁰¹ *Banbury Guardian* 10 May, 7 June 1962.

¹⁰² TNA, ED 32/1879; *Oxford Times* 18 May 1962; Meades, *Hist.* 132.

¹⁰³ *Chipping Norton News* Dec. 1987, June 1988; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. b 154, no. 7.

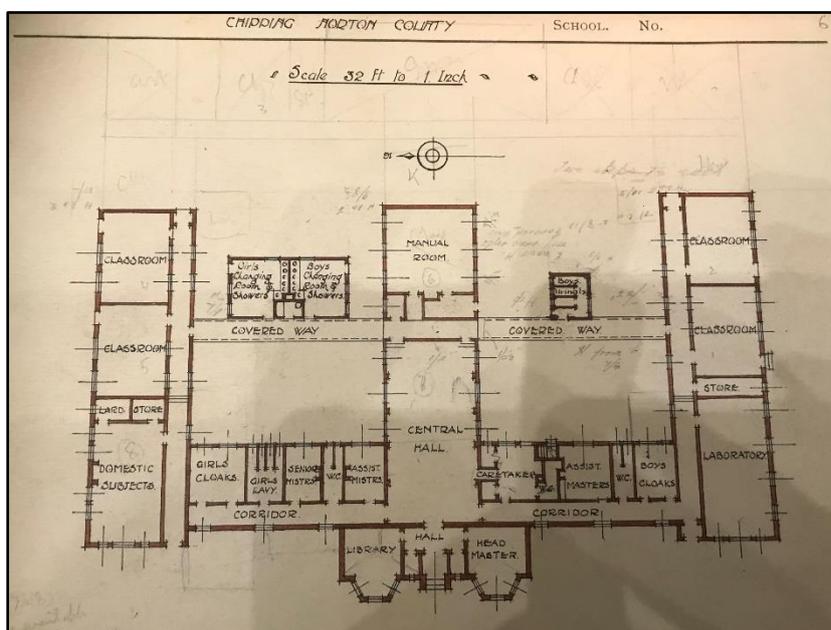
¹⁰⁴ Ofsted inspection reports (2001, 2007, 2010, 2015).

¹⁰⁵ Ofsted inspection reports (1994 and 2017).

¹⁰⁶ Eddershaw, *Chipping Norton*, 118; <http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/ChippingNortonNCH/> (accessed June 2022).

School) was opened in 1944,¹⁰⁷ but had closed by 1962 when the only private primary was on The Leys.¹⁰⁸ The town had no private primary schools in 2022.

Secondary Education The selective Chipping Norton County School (also known as Chipping Norton Grammar School) was established on Burford Road in 1928, to cater for the town and surrounding area. Before then secondary schooling was available only at a distance, in Oxford, Banbury, or Burford (where many of the county scholarships were available). The light and airy stone building (designed by the county surveyor J.A. Daft) initially accommodated c.40 pupils, of whom three quarters (and soon afterwards a half) paid fees, most of them staying to age 16. The building formed an E-shape, the library and headmaster's office flanking a central hall and manual room, with separate boys' and girls' classrooms in the wings.¹⁰⁹ Ten years later (and after several extensions) the school was the largest secondary school in the county, with 184 pupils, and by 1947 there were c.250, though with only 15 sixth-formers.¹¹⁰ Pupils' academic attainment was modest, but clubs and activities flourished despite a far-flung catchment area which included Charlbury and Woodstock.¹¹¹



Chipping Norton County School plan c.1928. Note the headmaster's office at the entrance.

¹⁰⁷ *Oxfordshire County Guide* (c.1956).

¹⁰⁸ *The Borough of Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, The Official Guide* (1961 edn), 12.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, ED 35/5727; OHC, CC4/241/6-7 (plan and photos); *Banbury Advertiser* 10 May 1928; *Banbury Guardian* 24 May 1928; *The Nortonian*, 4.

¹¹⁰ *The Nortonian*, 2, 15; TNA, ED 109/4847; ED 35/5727.

¹¹¹ TNA, ED 109/9042: in all 70 per cent of pupils came from those two places and Chipping Norton.

A cramped secondary modern school (Hailey County Secondary School) was opened in 1948 on the site of the former council boys' school at The Green, catering for c.200–220 pupils. Additional teaching space was supplied mainly by Horsa huts and the dining room.¹¹² Pupils came predominantly from Chipping Norton, with a few from nearby villages including one in Warwickshire; some leavers went on to work in the tweed mill, and others to Banbury Technical College. The school was united with the grammar school as an early comprehensive (or bi-lateral) school in 1957, although younger pupils remained at the Hailey School site until 1963.¹¹³ Selection within Chipping Norton ceased, although until the early 1970s the school admitted pupils who had been selected for grammar schooling in places which still had secondary modern schools, including Hook Norton. The contradiction created a difficulty of varied parental expectations.¹¹⁴

By 1975 the combined Chipping Norton School had 1,100 pupils and 70 staff, its much-needed new facilities including physics and modern language laboratories, a maths room, music rooms, a theatre, and a sports hall.¹¹⁵ Pupils were drawn from Chipping Norton, Kingham, Churchill, Middle Barton, Great Rollright, Hook Norton, Enstone, and Chadlington, and from Little Compton and Whichford in Warwickshire, with some sixth-form places going to pupils of Charlbury's Spendlove School wishing to continue school after 16.¹¹⁶ The wide catchment caused difficulties with transport and in communicating with parents, while the long narrow corridors and generally stark and unattractive buildings were said to make it hard for pupils to take pride in their environment at a time of high unemployment. Nonetheless in 1982 there were 1,102 pupils including 106 sixth formers.¹¹⁷

In 1987 the county council agreed to retain the sixth form despite fewer pupils staying on,¹¹⁸ and though overall numbers fell in the early 1990s, by 1996 they had recovered to 1,028. Exam results were reasonably good despite the number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, including c.40 Traveller families based mainly at a fixed local site.¹¹⁹ Later improvements included a three-storeyed science block and a new entrance completed in 2011. The school joined the multi-academy River Learning Trust in 2017, and retained c.1,000 pupils (including c.200 sixth-formers) in 2022.¹²⁰

¹¹² TNA, ED 109/9042; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. b 154, no. 7; *The Nortonian*, 21–2, 34.

¹¹³ *The Nortonian*, 19, 23; OHC, S64/3/Y1/1–2 (plans); *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. b 154, no. 6; TNA, ED 109/9042. The grammar school head ran both schools from 1954.

¹¹⁴ *The Nortonian*, 1; below, Hook Norton, social hist. (educ.).

¹¹⁵ *Banbury Guardian* 18 July 1975; OHC, S64/3/Y1/3–5 (lab plans, 1970–1).

¹¹⁶ In 1977: *The Nortonian*, 2.

¹¹⁷ Ofsted inspection report (1983).

¹¹⁸ *Chipping Norton News* Mar. 1987.

¹¹⁹ Ofsted inspection report (1996), and cf. Ofsted inspection report for St Mary's, Chipping Norton (2001).

¹²⁰ Local information; <https://riverlearningtrust.org/schools> (accessed Sept. 2022).



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Adult education Adult education continued to flourish for much of the 20th century, the technical institute moving out of the guildhall to the practical instruction centre at the council boys' school in 1936, and county council-run courses moving to Chipping Norton School by the 1970s.¹²¹ The WEA increased its range of subjects,¹²² and by the 1960s organised discussions and attracted eminent speakers.¹²³ By the early 21st century, however, formal provision was limited to county council-run courses at Abingdon and Witney College, with only a few exercise classes held in the town itself.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Brochures in CNM; Meades, *Hist.* 137; above, town buildings (guildhall).

¹²² Notes in CNM.

¹²³ *The Borough of Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, The Official Guide* (1961 edn), 15.

¹²⁴ www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk (accessed Sept. 2022).