

Creating Childhoods: Ideas of Child and School in London 1870 – 1914

Imogen Claire Lee

Goldsmiths College, University of London

PhD History

DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Imogen Lee

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides the first comprehensive examination of how children's abilities were 'classified' and managed in London, following the creation of school places under the 1870 Elementary Education Act. It explores how new schools (known as Board Schools), shaped and were shaped by the diverse social, physical and mental capabilities of London's children. I argue it was only through administering the 1870 Education Act across such a diverse city that a right to schooling was shown to be not enough, children needed a right to learn. Yet learning was not uniform and different authorities could not agree on how and what children needed for successful learning. The idea of the Board School and its students would become increasingly pluralistic.

In 1874 the School Board for London (SBL) described it as its 'duty' to educate London's near half a million child-population. In order to realise this duty ideas of school and child were challenged. This thesis examines how these ideas developed from the implementation of the Education Act in 1870 to the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 prior to the Great War. I unpick how children and their learning began to be classified by teachers, inspectors, doctors and local and national government bodies. In so doing I demonstrate how children's abilities and disabilities, their origins and impact, could be both challenged and reinforced by the education system. Legislation and reports of Royal Commissions and government departments provide some of the voices and context for this study, but it is only by focusing on individual schools within The Capital that the day-to-day realities of classification emerges. Such focus reveals how and why the identification and treatment of children with perceived physical and mental 'defects' is a history which must be seen as part, not set apart, from the development of elementary schooling.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

Cross Commission	Royal Commission on the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts
EDCDEC	Education Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children
Egerton Commission	Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and the Dumb &c. of the United Kingdom
LCC	London County Council
LCCEC	London County Council Education Committee
LMA	London Metropolitan Archive
SBL	School Board for London
SLHL	Southwark Local History Library
Higher Grade School	Schools where Standards VII and Standard (ex) VII were taught
Lower Standards	Standards I-IV
Merit Grant	Grant awarded according to a school's 'Excellent', 'Good' or 'Fair' records and resources
Moon embossed writing/ Moon type	An alternative alphabet to braille
Overpressure	Stress experienced by student or teacher
Payment by results	System which paid teachers according to exam passes
(School of) Special Difficulty	Schools provided with extra income to compensate for exam results
Special Instruction	Education and training for children classified as Blind, Deaf and Dumb, 'defective' or 'backward'
Special School/Centre/Class	Places where special instruction was given
Upper Standards	Standards V-VII

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: The Idea of the Child in History

Among the red-rotting minutes of the School Board for London (SBL), now housed in the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), there is a rejected motion put forward in the spring of 1871. In it two of the forty-nine elected members of the newly created SBL, Mr Watson of Greenwich and Mr Macgregor of Marylebone, suggested that the Works and General Purposes Committee,

Consider and report upon suggestions, designs, and apparatus, by which Schools provided by the Board, especially those for the poorest children, may be made –

1. *Healthful*, by playgrounds and facilities for exercise and for bathing
2. *Pleasant*, by children's games and music
3. *Attractive*, by comfortable School furniture, simple tasteful decoration wall pictures, diagrams, and flowers
4. *Stimulative*, to good conduct, attention, and progress, by prizes, holiday excursions, visits to exhibitions and museums, &c.
5. *Instructive* by illustrated lectures, and by periodicals and publications suitable for children
6. *Useful* to children of parents at work
7. *Influential*, in after life by a system of...certificates and rewards

The ambition of these Board Members was never directly met, the criteria was dropped without explanation. Yet in the thirty-four years of the SBL's existence, the idealism articulated in this motion echoed through the curriculums, architectures, pedagogies and inspections of London's expanding elementary system. This thesis explores the interaction between this idealism and expansion and how they were tempered by perceptions of children, their abilities, and the realities of their schooling.

The thesis is rooted in the cultural history of childhood, in which the story of child and school have ‘turning points,’ such as the 1870 Education Act that legislated the Board into existence, but also a capacity to ‘meander over the centuries,’ as the subject-matter is debated and redrawn by different and ever-evolving communities. The history of London’s elementary system therefore draws as much upon the conceptualisation of the individual in the Eighteenth Century as the treatment of children in the Nineteenth Century and the rise of the ‘expert’ in the Twentieth. This chapter serves as an introduction to the diverse historiography and material culture that has shaped the concept and classifications of the child and the school in nineteenth-century London. The chapter explores the treatment of the child and the evolution of the school in relation to the conceptualising of the individual, the classroom, Romanticism and disability. Consequently the SBL is located within the political, educational and cultural landscape of Victorian Britain, where the evolution of elementary schooling is shown to have been shaped by changing ideas of the child in society, as their differences began to be identified as needs.

The Individual and the Child

Since the 1700s the history of western childhood has developed through century-long discussions about child-rearing. The posthumous debate between John Locke’s 1693 *Some Thoughts on Education* published in 1693 and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s 1762 novel *Emile*, for example, characterise the differing attitudes towards and definition of the child and their educational need. Locke argued that children were born dangerously naïve and thus needed parents to act as ‘Absolute Governors’ in ensuring moral and intellectual development.

Rousseau similarly believed children were born innocent of right and wrong, but that their innocence could be preserved only if adult supervision, with all its worldly mores and social conditioning, was kept to a minimum. These conflicting positions characterise not only public debates on child rearing and its growing industry of 'expert' advice in the long Eighteenth Century, but also the sociological and pedagogical focus historians of childhood have used to examine the idea of the child and the school.¹

In *The Policing of Families* the sociologist Jacques Donzelet examined the relationship between parental opinion and professional advice in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France. He highlighted how the growing industry of medical and educational publications on childhood were heavily defined and limited to middle-class households.² These limitations reinforced differences between the practicalities of child-rearing in working-class households and the theories of wealthier counterparts. Lack of educational opportunity in poorer households became seen by middle-class communities and political elites as a lack of ambition that needed correcting.³ Yet as this thesis will testify no one social-group monopolised the idea of the child and the school. Practice could shape theory and thus philosophical visions of childhood emerged alongside an inherently modern understanding of an individual's autonomy, as western society swayed with political developments and economic realities.

¹ See Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001), pp.23-27 and Hugh Cunningham *The Invention of Childhood* (BBC Books, London, 2006), pp. 109-115

² Jacques Donzelot (Trans. Robert Hurley), *The Policing of Families* (Hutchinson & co, London, 1979), p. 22. See also Paul Thompson *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (Wiedenfield and Nicolson, London, 1975) pp. 56-58 and Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (Routledge and Keegan, London, 1981), p.79

³ Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994), p. 5, p.68

In the second half of the Eighteenth Century European political discourse was in turmoil. The American War of Independence demanded that Britain deal with a colony as a nation unto itself, resulting in political bargaining for slaves prepared to fight for Britain and ultimately American citizenship for Britain's former subjects.⁴ The championing of personal liberty and national sovereignty fuelled distrust of monarchical nations in Europe and resulted in revolution in France. Radicalism nipped at the heels of Britain's political establishment and in Germany the autonomy of individuals was given philosophical weight by Emanuel Kant, who argued that if all experiences were unique to the individual, then all individuals were equal in their subjectivity.⁵ By the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, just as Rousseau had championed the innate sovereignty of the self, so too had much of Europe.

Similar to Locke and Rousseau, Kant explored the universality of the human condition through the prism of a hypothetical individual. The irony was, this 'universal individual' who 'seemed to be everyone and no particular one', as the historian Nancy Leys Stephan has described it, 'on closer inspection' had 'some special characteristics of gender, sexuality and ethnicity. The universal individual was male and European.'⁶ By unpicking the stitches of this hypothetical character, Leys Stephan questions if universal rights were ever really demanded in the Eighteenth Century and the extent to which they have been achieved since. In the Nineteenth Century rights and liberties were fought for at all socio-economic levels, but implementation was limited to those who

⁴ Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, The Slaves and the American Revolution* (BBC Books, London, 2006), pp 13-20

⁵ Nicholas Fearn, *Zeno and The Tortoise: How to think like a philosopher* (Atlantic Books, London, 2001), pp. 102-108

⁶ Nancy Leys Stephan, 'Race, gender, science and citizenship' pp. 61-86 in Catherine Hall (ed.) *Cultures of Empire a Reader* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000), p.63

had the power to formally classify who, or what, constituted an individual; their rights and their responsibilities.⁷ It is this dynamic between the conceptualising of a universal figure and its formal classification that is key to understanding the idea of the child and its schooling in this thesis.

Despite the specific characteristics that permeate the history of the hypothetical individual, there is limited historiography discussing how assumed norms may have shaped educational and pastoral care in elementary education. The definition and application of gender and class in schooling is an exception. By reconstructing the patriarchal cultures of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Feminist Historians, for example, such as Carole Dyhouse, Barbara Taylor, Sally Alexander and Anna Davin, have paved the way for a methodological foundation for understanding how classification of an individual or group of people affects and effects their place in society. These historians have shown how ideas of gender shaped formal and informal schooling, where beyond learning to read, write and count, subjects were taught according to the assumed needs, interests and limitations of a gender.⁸ The work of these historians reveals that following the 1870 Education Act universal schooling did not necessarily mean universal education.

This thesis develops analysis of universality and classification still further, exploring the social and educational specificities of the Elementary-School child.

⁷ See Donzelot, *Policing*, pp. 22-24

⁸ See Dyhouse, *Girls*, p. 41; Barbara Taylor *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, (CUP, Cambridge, 2003), p. 78 Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (Rivers Oram Press, London, 1996), pp.133-149 Sally Alexander, *Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Feminist History* (Virago, London, 1994), pp. 215-219

By focusing on the spectrum of physical and mental ability included and excluded from Board School classrooms a complex web of classification is uncovered that relies upon, but goes beyond, conventional analysis of gender and class. The administering of the 1870 Education Act, which guaranteed a school place for the majority of children, is given a broader disciplinary framework, where pedagogic encounters, political ideology and medical observation attempt to formalise an ever-shifting spectrum of ability and disability. Consequently elementary schooling is shown to have been caught between discovering and constructing children's development.

The classroom: control through classification?

Historians who pioneered the reconstruction of late-Victorian education positioned Britain's 1870 Education Act as a product of the industrial revolution, democratic-will and imperial-force. JS Hurt, for example, argued in *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918* that following the expansion of the male vote, under the Representation of the People's Acts of 1832 and 1867, a literate electorate was a democratic necessity. Consequently Britain's political elites sought to reposition their use of power to the domestic populace as a force for benign paternalism.⁹ For the social-historian Gareth Stedman Jones, the classroom offered a captive audience for state-approved lessons, preaching a 'middle and upper class view of British History and its place in the world.'¹⁰

⁹ JS Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979), p. 67 See also Thompson, *The Edwardians*, p.58

¹⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983), p. 221

The elementary classroom has long been framed as a place of identification and control, for both mind and body. For the critical-thinker Michel Foucault the classroom echoed the industrial landscapes constructed across northern Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. As the philosophical and political conceptualising of the individual evolved so too did industrial manufacturing. By identifying the component parts of a production-process and through use of mechanical technology, both producer and produce could now be duplicated and replaced without hindering production flow. Likewise, Foucault argued, the development of classroom design from Britain to Italy, 'was one of the great technical mutations of elementary education.' Foucault argued that prior to industrialisation educational spaces engendered an intimate 'heterogeneous group' of children. Devoid of uniform buildings or the formal seating of modern schooling, teachers, argued Foucault, were inclined to view educational progress as a shared experience. The advent of school houses in France, Prussia and Britain, however, separated children into classes, incorporating them as individuals into formalised seating plans. Thus teachers could now engage with an individual student whilst surveying the class around them. 'It made,' argued Foucault, 'the educational space function like a learning machine, but also as a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding.'¹¹

This mechanisation of knowledge, in which the classroom was the teacher's tool to identify, classify and educate children matched with the objectification of the individual Foucault had revealed in his unpicking of the medical gaze in *Birth of the Clinic* and his analysis of eighteenth-century classifications in *The Order of*

¹¹ Michel Foucault; Alan Sheridan, (trans.), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Penguin, London, 1977), p. 147

Things. Foucault's focus on how scientific, medical, political and educational institutions acted as forums for the identification and classification of the anatomical, epidemiological and behavioural components of humanity, revealed how power could be paradoxically centralized through its dispersal. Indeed for the historian James Vernon the diverse proliferation in institutions in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries enabled 'diffuse and multiple' examples of individually-held and publically approved power. This was because each institution, from school to asylum, required different specialists, who could understand and manage these differing outlets. By monopolising specific areas of knowledge, specialists could frame the limitations of their knowledge as justification for further analysis. In so doing what had once been unknowable, hidden or private worlds, became increasingly legitimate realms for public intervention in the pursuit of knowledge and reform.¹²

Leys Stephen has argued that 'science is always a social product and tends to reflect in general terms the political and social values of its times.'¹³ As Britain's Empire grew, for example, scientists reflected the pursuit to map and use the world's resources at a macro-level, classifying and experimenting with every mineral, animal and peoples they encountered. In 1859 Charles Darwin published his hugely influential theory of evolution in *Origins of the Species*. Read by an imperial nation with a strong class-structure, Darwin's theory of natural selection quickly became co-opted in Britain to justify arguments for socio-economic hierarchies. By the late Nineteenth Century, under the guise of

¹² James Vernon, 'The Ethics of Hunger and the Assembly of Society: The Techno-Politics of the School Meal in Modern Britain,' pp. 693-725 in *The American Historical Review*, Vol 110, No. 3 (June 2005), p. 696

¹³ Nancy, Race, p. 73 See also Michel Foucault; Alan Sheridan, (trans.), *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Routledge Classics, London, 2002), pp. xii-xv; pp.170-176; pp. 375-380

expertise, scientists like Robert Knox used a system of classification to argue that only certain races were truly human.¹⁴ Across the political spectrum objective facts about human development were being embraced to form linguistic-armour for subjective opinion. It is perhaps, therefore, unsurprising that within a period where the individual and their abilities could be measured and contested that long-standing debates about child-rearing were now shaped by questions of classifying the child and their development.

The hegemonic vision of power, exemplified by Foucault, in which industrialisation enabled the control of children through scientific classification and pedagogical specialisms, prove powerful theories in childhood's historiography. As Britain's Capital, London was at the heart of and expanding industrialised Empire, where these discourses on the liberty and classification of people and lands flowed into and out of the country's political centre in Whitehall, through the scientific chambers of the Royal Institute, down to the economic hub of The City and across to the docks and warehouses of the Thames.¹⁵ While the scale of London was unique in Britain, its rapid expansion was not, emblematic of the urbanisation taking place across Europe. It is this urbanisation, however, which suggests that to approach London classrooms and the idea of the child, which developed within, as simply means to control or deny individuals of their humanity, is to risk the omission of the very issue Foucault and Vernon attempt to expose; that being the subjective moralisation

¹⁴ Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind* (Harper Collins, London, 1997), pp.480-481

¹⁵ Roy Porter, *London A Social History* (Penguin, London, 2000), pp.248-249

of objective fact.¹⁶ It is to view institutional power without the range of effervescent emotions that drove the people operating within.¹⁷

In ‘Oh, what beautiful books!’ Captivated Reading in an Early Victorian Prison, the historian Helen Rogers argues that schooling of the working classes does not always fit neatly into the power-relations that Foucault described in *Discipline and Punishment*.¹⁸ I develop this argument still further, showing how the classification and management of child and school were born from a genuine care to foster a love of learning. By examining the breadth of the education system in London the isolation and control that might otherwise be seen as a deliberate method of educational and social apartheid, is instead revealed by this thesis as a paradoxical byproduct of social integration. The diversity of circumstance and ability among the Capital’s population made it ‘obvious’ to SBL members that to create a universal system of education, ‘in a city like London, no general theory [would] hold good.’¹⁹ It is romance then, in all its instinctive, whimsical, passionate, irregular and above all human form that must be considered to understand the justifications for and development of elementary schooling and the idea of the child in the late Nineteenth Century.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault; Alan Sheridan (trans.), *The Birth of the Clinic* (Routledge Classics, London, 2003) pp. i-xii, xix-xxii

¹⁷ Vernon, *Ethics*, p. 696: ‘We need a diffuse and mobile view of power and agency that recognizes...the inseparability of the ethical from the technical, the moral from the physical, the human from the nonhuman.’

¹⁸ Helen Rogers, “‘Oh, what beautiful books!’ Captivated Reading in an Early Victorian Prison’ pp. 57-84 in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Autumn 2012) p. 76

¹⁹ LMA: 22.05 SBL, School Board for London, *The Work of Three Years (1870– 1873)*, p. 3

Romanticism

Throughout the Nineteenth Century the proliferation of urban industrialisation inspired artistic opposition and exploration. While village-born artists such as John Constable glorified pastoral scenes and fallen arcadias, London poets, such as William Blake, who had visions of angels rising over Peckham Rye, described this age of 'reasoning' as a 'hard cold constrictive spectre,' which now 'rose over Albion' like 'hoar frost and mildew.'²⁰ Children appeared in all mediums of the Romantic tradition. *In My Heart Leaps Up*, for instance, William Wordsworth, writing in 1802, saw the child as 'the father of the man' united by the cyclical bridge of nature,

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began
So is it now I am a man.

Some sixty years later Wordsworth's vision of the child would help inspire Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*, in which children, stunted by adults, experienced freedom when submerged in the natural world. Childhood echoed the purity of nature, against the polluted industrialisation of adulthood.²¹ This contrast was also expressed in art by John Everett Millais whose Pre-Raphaelite painting *Bubbles* depicted the artist's grandson blowing soap from a smoking pipe. *Child's World*, the painting's original title, highlighted the vitality

²⁰ William Blake, 'Jerusalem in Every Man' pp.205-206 in Alasdair Clayre (ed.), *Nature and Industrialization* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977), p. 205

²¹ For discussions of Wordsworth's 'My Heart Leaps When I Behold' see Stephanie Metz, <Romantic Politics>, <http://web.utk.edu/~gerard/romanticpolitics/wordsworth-and-the-child.html> (accessed 8/09/14). For a comparison of Wordsworth and Blake's visions of childhood see Cunningham, *The Invention*, pp.128-136

and innocence of youth through a child's vivacious attention for pure and fleeting bubbles, rather than the smoking, lingering vice of tobacco.²²

Hugh Cunningham has argued in *The Invention of Childhood* that the focus on nature, play and innocence in the Romantic tradition, pointed towards a 'radically new vision of what a child was. Children had access to levels of understanding greater than those available to adults.' Such visions were not based simply on nostalgia nor poetic metaphor. The *Water Babies*, for example, was written to contest the use of child labour in chimney sweeping.²³ Meanwhile, Millais' *Bubbles* may have begun life as a painting of a grandson, but as the Art Historian Erika Langmuir argues, it entered the popular imagination when Pears' Soap bought the copyright to the painting in 1887 and created one of the most ubiquitous Victorian adverts in British History.²⁴ Children may have been other-worldly in their depiction but they were formed of a very modern industrialised Britain. Yet despite the historiography's unpicking of the socio-economic fabric that made up these cultural depictions of childhood, there has been little discussion of the intersection between this socially constructed image of the wise and innocent Victorian child, with the implementation of the Education Act and the increasing interest in the mental and physical 'health' of children.

In 1870 under the Elementary Education Act the differing visions and contested facts of childhood that had been shaping Britain's cultural topography, now entered a new and evolving landscape of classrooms, boardrooms, school

²² See Erika Langmuir, *Imagining Childhood* (Yale, London, 2006), p. 216 fig. 155

²³ Cunningham, *The Invention*, pp.133-135 and pp.150-154

²⁴ Langmuir, *Imagining*, pp.219-220

halls, dining rooms and playgrounds. While the historiography of the elementary-school child explores the interplay between these settings, it is limited in scope and is almost entirely without consideration of how the history of the child and the school shaped and were shaped by ideas of ability and disability. Social, cultural, gendered, political, educational and disability histories have all uncovered different identities and ideas about the child and the school but without considering the commonalities and shared differences that transcend specific historical disciplines. In so doing the histories of child and school are fragmented. This study attempts to amend such fragmentation, by providing the first systematic exploration of the idea of the child in London's Board Schools, revealing a history that was caught between vision and pragmatism.

The School System (1802 - 1870)

Prior to the 1870 schools were unsystematic and almost exclusively funded through voluntary donations from philanthropic individuals and private or religious institutions. In 1811 the Church of England's National Schools were established, these were swiftly followed by the nonconformist alternative, 'British Schools' in 1814 established by the *British and Foreign School Society*. These religious schools were intended to combine an education which was both academically rigorous and theologically sound, catering for the denomination of local families. Scholars were expected to attend regularly, punctually and neatly. In 1839 the Committee of the Privy Council on Education (which in 1856 would also become known as the Education Department), was appointed to 'promote' education by providing parliamentary grants to any school prepared to

follow their Education Codes and be judged by HMIs.²⁵ Initially, however, these grants proved unpopular among National and British schools. Managers expressed concern that state funding would compromise sectarian curriculums. Consequently the majority of church schools were inclined to source their funding from local congregations and through attendance fees.²⁶ By 1870 National and British schools provided over 90 per cent of classroom places for boys and girls in England and Wales. Their ubiquity, however, belied their limited intake.²⁷

Funded independently a religious school could set the attendance fees and student-denomination. Pupils were typically drawn, therefore, from artisan and lower-middle class families who attended church regularly. In the Capital, where 'about three quarters of London's population was, if not totally "outcast", then "poor",' less than half of all children attended a voluntary-funded school.²⁸ In the 1870s those advocating for the School Board for London argued that previous schools had been developed in and for 'the villages and smaller towns' of England rather than 'in London and the great seats of industry' and thus had limited uptake in the more diverse metropolitan areas.²⁹ As this thesis will demonstrate the inability of traditional education to adapt to urban environments became a poignant issue in the 1870s and 1880s as London's Board School

²⁵ Committee of Privy Council on Education, *A copy of the report of the Committee of Council appointed to superintend the application of any sums voted by Parliament for the purpose of promoting public education*, (1838-1839) HC 284, London : Stationery Office. p. 1

²⁶ Richard Aldrich, *School and Society in Victorian Britain: Joseph Payne and the New World of Education* (Garland Publishing, London, 1995), p. 37

²⁷ Hurt, *Elementary*, p. 4

²⁸ Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil Motherhood in Outcast London 1870-1918* (Oxford University Press, London, 1993), p. 12; Stuart Maclure, *One Hundred Years of London Education 1870-1970* (Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1970), p.27

²⁹ Edward. R. Robson, *School Architecture: Being Practical Remarks on the Planning, Designing, Building, and furnishing of School Houses*, (John Murray, London, 1874), p. 17

teachers struggled to match the reality of their students with the expectations of inspectors.

There were alternatives to church schools: grammar schools operated on the principles of a founding philanthropist, usually charging high fees to those who could afford them and offering scholarships to academically gifted, but financially challenged, students. By the 1860s, however, many had shed the responsibility of scholarship education. Based on their charitable foundations, public schools, as many grammar schools became known, were now exclusively educating boys and almost exclusively boys whose families' could afford an expensive weekly 9d fee.³⁰

A variety of private schools educated children whose parents were unable to afford the fees of church or public schools. Dame schools, for example, were mainly attended by three to seven year olds and run singlehandedly by a man or woman needing to bring in a modest income, due to a disability, bereavement or a lack of pension. They charged as little as a penny a week to teach practical skills, like reading and sewing. Popular among 'thrifty mothers', these informal lessons were unsurprisingly criticised by advocates of church-schools, who argued the domestic setting created children who 'read readily' but were, 'very restless and...very troublesome, in a well-ordered school.'³¹ The 1861 Education Commission, populated by many who served church schools,

³⁰ See Aldrich, *School and Society*, pp. 38-39

³¹ 'Report of Patrick Cumin' pp. 21-212. *Royal Commission to inquire into the state of popular education in England, 1861, Cumin Report*, (C.2794-III), London, Stationary Office p. 144

concluded, describing Dame Schools where children were, 'as closely packed as birds in a nest and tumbling over each other like puppies in a kennel.'³²

For journalists and modern philanthropists, who stood outside of the established educational fold, it was the urban child who drew particular concern. Children who 'without even the rudiments of education' were unable to 'appease their hunger' through skilled labour and thus left them vulnerable to unscrupulous employers or worse the criminal figures that populated newspaper headlines.³³

In an attempt to curb a growing illiterate and unskilled population, the 1833 Factory Act required all factories and textile (excluding silk) mills to provide any worker aged nine to thirteen with two hours schooling for every day they worked. The effect, however, was to simply discourage employment of children, rather than encourage the education of them.³⁴ This did not, however, discourage further attempts at educating the uneducated. Under the Orders and Regulations issued by the 1835 Poor Law Commission, for example, 'boys and girls who are inmates of the workhouse shall, for three working hours at least, every day, be respectively instructed in reading and writing and in the principles of the Christian religion.'³⁵

For those out of the workhouse, the London City Mission attempted to deal with the under and over employed child, by developing free educational institutions.

³² Cumin Report, p. 84, see also p.145

³³ Mayhew, Henry (ed.), *Mayhew's London: Being Selections from 'London Labour and the London Poor'* (Spring Books, London, 1851), p. 342

³⁴ Margaret Hewitt and Ivy Pinchbeck, *Children in English Society Volume II: From the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act 1948* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973), pp.404-407

³⁵ 'First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission,' (1835) quoted in Hewitt and Pinchbeck, *Children*, p. 501

The Ragged Schools, as they became known, believed that 'pedagogy alone was not the way to rescue urchins from the street,' the child's pride and body needed nourishing as much as their intellect and skill.³⁶ From 1851, alongside lessons and meals, the boys could join the Ragged School Brigade guaranteeing them a bank account and jobs in either street vending or shoe shining.³⁷ Many urban children, however, were already working in these industries. Consequently on the streets the Brigades faced hostility and ridicule from their peers. Indeed despite the support of the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police, Ragged School attempts' at creating a pastoral and disciplined environment were condemned in 1858 by the Royal Commission on Education. The potential mixing of suggestible waifs and petty thieves that might populate such schools, were deemed by the commission to have created a training ground in idleness and delinquency.³⁸

The principles of ragged schooling, in which the very poor should be cared for holistically and trained in practical, industrial skills, however, remained highly influential in the education of working-class children. Under the 1857 Industrial Schools Act, voluntary institutions, which provided 'both scholastic and industrial instruction' to 'vagrant destitute and disorderly children' could receive government grants.³⁹ Industrial Schools were unique in their power to compel the child's attendance and charge their parents for the fee. Children as young

³⁶ Lionel Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood Child Oppression in Britain 1860-1918* (London, Routledge, 1991), pp. 117-118

³⁷ Mayhew (ed.), *Mayhew's London*, p. 340. For details of the Boys' Shoeblick Brigade see Hurt, *Elementary*, pp. 56-7

³⁸ Rose, *The Erosion*, p. 69 'brigade boys were looked on as class renegades: they were jeered at, pelted and had their equipment sabotaged with flour.' See also p. 117-118

³⁹ **Committee of Privy Council on Education, A Bill [as amended in committee] to make better provision for the care and education of vagrant, destitute, and disorderly children, and for the extension of industrial schools.** (1857-58), HC 2315, London Stationary Office, p. 2, cl. 5b

as seven and as old as fifteen could be sent by magistrates to attend these - mainly residential - institutions for up to two years or until suitable employment was found for them.⁴⁰

The schools mentioned thus far were founded with different intentions, but, whether religious, public or industrial, all educated the child based on a socio-economic understanding of their scholars, both in terms of what the child was (worker, scholar, criminal) and what it symbolised (income, poverty, denominations). There were children, however, who were not recognised by the mainstream voluntary systems, but were considered by individual philanthropists and charities to be in need of specialist attention, namely children with a disability or sensory impairment. For a minority of visually impaired children specialist schools had been in operation since the 1790s.⁴¹ In the main, however, disabled children, no matter their social class, were kept at home.⁴²

The history of 'special' schools for children with disabilities has formed a distinct sub-section in educational historiography, with asylums, doctors' records and idiosyncratic private institutions being looked to as evidence of a medical, rather than pedagogical genesis. Julie Anderson argues that as a historian of disability this unilateral focus has limited her field to a 'history of minorities,' which although valuable, does little to 'foster a wider dialogue between history of

⁴⁰ *HC Deb (17 June 1857), Vol. 145, Col. 1954*

⁴¹ Gordon Phillips, *The Blind in British Society: Charity, State and Community, C.1780-1930* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, Surrey, 2004) pp. 18-20

⁴² See for example, LMA: SC/PPS/063/061: *SBL Report of the Special Schools Sub-Committee* (1903) p. 7 and Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2013), chapter 3: Children who Disappeared, pp. 77-112

disability and mainstream history.⁴³ In contrast this thesis places disability in a broad political and educational landscape of nineteenth-century London. The variation of physical, mental or social abilities encountered among the Capital's school-population suggested a spectrum of development and learning that transcended medical care or a simple pedagogical approach.

This thesis recognises the parallels and contrasts between different types of schools and the idea of the child within them. Moreover it reveals no one type of pedagogy was isolated from another. For example the similarities between the child of special schooling and that of the Ragged and Industrial Schools had been entwined since the opening of the first school for 'crippled' boys in Kensington in 1865, which bore a striking resemblance to the principles and aims of residential Industrial School, with the intention being, 'to receive for three years – board and clothe, and educate on Christian principles – destitute, neglected, or ill-used crippled boys.'⁴⁴

Throughout the Nineteenth Century the aim to convert the supposedly idle child into an industrious one appeared time and again in discussions about the children of Ragged and Special Schools. Seth Koven has analysed Barnardo's 1870s photographic 'contrasts' of a boy who in one image had apparently just entered the philanthropist's 'Homes for Destitute Lads' and in another image

⁴³ Julie Anderson 'Review Article Voices in the Dark: Representations of Disability in Historical Research', pp. 107-116 in *Journal of Contemporary History* 2009, vol 44, no. 1, p. 108 See also Elizabeth Bredberg 'Writing Disability History: Problems, perspectives and sources', pp.189-201 in *Disability & Society*, vol. 14:2

⁴⁴ Charity Organisation Society, 'The Epileptic and Crippled Child and Adult: A Report on the Present Condition of These Classes of Afflicted Persons, with Suggestions for Their Better Education and Employment' (London, 1893), p. 129 As quoted in David G. Pritchard, 'The Development of Schools for Handicapped Children in England during the Nineteenth Century', pp. 215-222, in *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (December 1963), p. 1

was now shown to be 'a little workman.'⁴⁵ The photographs were sold to advertise 'the ways in which the loving regime of his homes transformed children from dangerous and costly threats to society into productive, self-supporting workers of the future.'⁴⁶ Ragged Schools were not unique in their use of photography, for while the SBL may not have created 'contrasts', at the turn of the Twentieth Century, as shown in Image 1.1 children from Special Schools were photographed in productive poses, similar to 'a little workman.' Yet as will be discussed below, the proliferation in cheap printed media, from newspaper illustration to school photography, remains a relatively untapped resource for historians of education. Consequently it is only through this thesis that the full complexity of the idea of the child and the school in London begins to be truly conceived.

Despite the range of schooling on offer in Britain by 1870, of the estimated 560,000 three to fourteen year olds living in London almost a third were not registered with a school.⁴⁷ Beyond the workhouse and with only the Factory Act and the Industrial Schools Act compelling a select few to attend lessons, many children were a visible part of urban life. Illustrations in newspapers, (see Image 1.2) depicted this young working-class population as part of public thoroughfares rather than private dwellings. In Image 1.2, *The Penny Illustrated*, for example, has children holding snowballs in one hand and the tools of their trades in another. The boys playfully tip their hats, while a middle-class family

⁴⁵ Barnardo 'Contrasts' as quoted from Figure 2.6 in Seth Koven, *Slumming Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton University Press, Oxford, 2004), p.115 See also John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA, 1988) pp. 83–84

⁴⁶ Koven, *Slumming*, p. 115

⁴⁷ Based on the Education Department's calculation that one sixth of the nation was under thirteen. See Maclure, *One Hundred Years*, p. 23

try to politely shield themselves from the ambiguously frosty reception thrown their way. As visions of the child moved through the street into newspapers, illustration, parliamentary papers and photographs, debate swelled as to whether a perceived economic, moral or physical deficiency signified vulnerability and fortitude or idleness and social menace and indeed who was responsible for such signifiers.⁴⁸

The 1870 Elementary Education Act

In 1851 the social journalist Henry Mayhew described the lives of a group of mudlarks who traipsed up and down the banks of the Thames looking for coal, copper, rope and anything that they could sell. For Mayhew the mudlark was both young and old. He described how one boy of about nine nostalgically recalled, 'it was a long time since' he owned shoes. These were children naïve in years, but weary in experience. The 'wretched' circumstances, in which these 'creatures' silently worked left many without time or energy to consider school, indeed attendance was purely 'because other boys go there, than from any desire to learn.'⁴⁹

In 1853 Mayhew's research was cited in a House of Commons' debate concerning poor law medical relief. The Registrar General argued that in large towns, like London, low family 'wages' did 'not allow' parents economic stability. Thus Mayhew's Mudlarks experienced the 'evil' of 'neglect', as child and parent

⁴⁸ For examples of the dual perceptions of the poor child see the discussion of WT Stead's representation of child prostitution in Koven, *Slumming*, p. 130-131

⁴⁹ All quotes from Mayhew (ed.), *Mayhew's London*, p. 340-341

alike pursued income over familial welfare and education.⁵⁰ Yet by the introduction of the Education Bill in 1870 the same families were at the centre of a debate about compelling children to attend school. Concern was voiced by Lord Robert Montague, the former vice-president of the Committee of Education, who argued that working-class families ‘would suffer’ if children were simultaneously stripped of their sources of employment and forced into schools that relied on attendance fees.⁵¹

In London the introduction of compulsory schooling did prove difficult for many poor families. Not only was the household income reduced, but household expenditure now had to include the weekly fee for each child attending school.⁵² Yet the 1870 Elementary Education Act was intended for lower working-class families and their working children. Board Schools could charge as little as 1d per week for attendance and could waive the fee for up to six months if parents were thought ‘unable from poverty to pay.’ Moreover Board Schools could not contradict ‘anything contained in any Act for regulating the education of children employed in labour.’ Despite their focus Board Schools were unique in their universality. Under the Act’s byelaws every five to twelve year old could and, if necessary would, attend an Elementary School. Funded and elected through the local ratepayers, School Boards were formed to set up, maintain and develop new Elementary Schools in each parish, while in London a board was elected for the metropolis as a whole.⁵³ As much as they were aimed at poor families, these Boards could also take over the running of failing British or

⁵⁰ *HC, Deb (12 July 1853), Vol. 129, Col. 134*

⁵¹ *HC, Deb (17 February 1870), Vol. 199, Col. 474. See also, HC, Deb (17 February 1870), Vol. 199, Col. 438-98*

⁵² See Hurt, *Elementary*, pp. 34-5

⁵³ All quotes: 1870 Elementary Education Act, cls. 17; 74 (2); 74 (1); 1

National Schools and charge up to 9d per week if it was thought suitable for local families. They were, therefore, also concerned with the education of the artisanal and upper working class families who had traditionally been catered for by the voluntary sector.

The Education Act is also known as the Forster Act, due to the interest and perseverance of William Forster, the Liberal politician. Appointed Vice-chair of the Privy Council on Education under Gladstone's Government in 1868 Forster wanted to build upon earlier legislative reform of schooling by supplementing rather than supplanting the existing voluntary system. During the first reading of the Education Bill in 1870, for example, he commented that 'the question of popular education affects not only the intellectual but the moral training of a vast proportion of the population.'⁵⁴ For Forster the Act was intended to,

Complete the present voluntary system, to fill up gaps, sparing the public money where it can be done without, procuring as much as we can the assistance of the parents, and welcoming as much as we rightly can the co-operation and aid of those benevolent men who desire to assist their neighbours.⁵⁵

While the new Elementary Board Schools had to charge a fee, they were seen by Forster as complementing the voluntary schools, giving parents the opportunity to choose which school and the Board the opportunity to choose

⁵⁴ *HC, Deb (17 February 1870), Vol. 199, Col. 440.* This moral concern is discussed in Deborah E.B. Weiner, *Architecture and social reform in late-Victorian London* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994), p. 136, Weiner agrees with Davin that the Education Act included boys and girls, so as to encourage an arguably 'bourgeois' model of labour in which breadwinners were male and the domestic sphere was female.

⁵⁵ *HC, Deb (17 February, 1870), Vol. 199, Col. 444*

how to develop them. Anna Davin has argued that the lack of enforcement surrounding attendance in the 1870 Education Act, as already suggested, signified parliamentary concerns that compulsory Elementary Schools were inappropriate for those who were not already taking advantage of the pre-existing voluntary system. If a child was not already in school it was either likely to be 'running wild' - and hence was more suited to the discipline of an industrial school rather than the order of the elementary classroom - or already working, and in which case compulsory schooling would only interrupt a fledging vocation and a the family income.⁵⁶

Between the 1830s and 1850s compulsory attendance had become synonymous with schools of the very poor and the destitute. The 1833 Factory Act made education of working children a business responsibility, the 1857 Industrial Schools Act made it an issue for the court, compelling parents to send their child to residential classes, and while the 1855 Education of Poor Children Act had stipulated that outdoor relief was *not* conditional upon a child attending school, in 1851 it was found that Guardians had insisted parents could only receive the relief if they ensured their child went to classes.⁵⁷ Enforced schooling therefore, was considered by those debating the Education Bill to only be appropriate for those 'neglected and vagrant children, who had no guardians' that could afford to take responsibility of them.⁵⁸ Forster wanted the Act to 'fill in the gaps' of the current denominationally-led system of schooling and that relied heavily not only on 'the co-operation and [economic] aid of those benevolent men', but also the idea of parental and neighbourhood choice.

⁵⁶ Davin, *Growing Up*, p. 86

⁵⁷ All quotes, Hewitt and Pinchbeck, *Children*, pp. 404-405; p.513

⁵⁸ *HC Deb (18 March 1870)*, Vol. 200, Col. 236

The historian of education JS Hurt has argued the 1870 Education Act impeded rather than secured freedom of choice for parents, for they now lost control over deciding how much or how little schooling their child should experience.⁵⁹ Yet until the 1870 Education Act legislation for the schooling of working-class or very poor children had never been much concerned with parental consent. In contrast, because the 1870 Education Bill aimed to work in and alongside the current voluntary system - which relied on the 'voluntary zeal, and much willingness on the part of parents to send their children to school,' the new Board Schools had to be seen to be 'enlisting the sympathy and cooperation' of parents and local institutions.⁶⁰ The result was a system of education which though structured by Whitehall was administered at a local level, where those who would fund it (ratepayers), send their children to it (parents) and those who would help manage it (clergymen, doctors, politicians, philanthropists) could feel their ideas were heard. This thesis will explore how parental views and their choices were incorporated into, or rejected by, the development of London's elementary system.

The School Board for London

Forster had argued, during the debates over the Education Bill that a School Board should exist for every vestry or workhouse district. For WM Torrens, the London M.P. for Finsbury, however, if London was to have a School Board in each of the Capital's parishes, education would continue to be dominated by

⁵⁹ Hurt, *Elementary*, p. 25

⁶⁰ HC Deb (16 May 1870), Vol. 201, Col. 730 and *HC Deb (17 February 1870)*, Vol. 199, Col. 444

pre-existing vestry 'sects' and 'persons not best fitted' to help manage a new system of education that taught those that religious schools had failed to. If 'educational administration [was]...to secure tolerance, thoughtfulness, and fair play' amongst those using Board Schools then the Education Bill, Torrens argued, would have to be amended to 'leave the ratepayers of the metropolis at large to choose the persons who were to superintend education in the various parishes.' It was with this in mind, that the implementation of the Act, on the 29th November 1870 saw the establishment of one unified School Board for London.⁶¹

SBL elections encouraged representation of minorities and opened educational debate to less established voices by entitling ratepayers (of both genders) to take part in a secret ballot that allocated as many votes as there were local seats to each voter. Members were drawn from London's ten parliamentary divisions, with the number of members dependent on a division's population. There were four members each in the smaller, more central, parliamentary divisions of the City, Southwark, Greenwich and Chelsea. Five positions per division were awarded in Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Westminster and Lambeth (which by 1904 would be so large it was divided in two) as they spread, respectively, east, north-west and south-west from the Capital's centre. In Torrens' large, northern division of Finsbury, which boarded Hackney to the East and the City to the south six members were elected, while in Marylebone, which straddled much of the city's north-west, seven members were allocated.⁶²

⁶¹ See Maclure, *One Hundred Years*, p. 15

⁶² *HC, Deb (4 July 1870)*, Vol. 202, Col. 1419

The divisions represented a sprawling hotchpotch of urban and suburban dwellings. The rich economic hub of the City Division was surrounded by some of the poorest districts in Britain, indicative of London's young and impoverished population.⁶³ These were the people and localities etched into Britain's collective imagination: Mayhew's mudlarks that worked on the Thames shorelines of Lambeth and Chelsea Divisions, defunct jails and asylums that loomed over the city's streets, nearly a hundred years on from William Hogarth's satirical *Rake's Progress*. This was a London that less than half a century earlier provided the backdrop to near-journalistic works of fiction, where what was now labelled the SBL's Finsbury Division was described by Dickens in *Oliver Twist* as 'very narrow and muddy' neighbourhoods, where there were a 'good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at...night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from the inside.'⁶⁴

The establishment of the Board Schools and other civil building 'cut through' this London of narrow streets and rookeries, 'letting in air, light and police and, most important of all disturbing the inhabitants from their old haunts.' Yet the wretchedness of pre-1870 London and its children remained as alive in the imaginations and experiences of contemporary writers as they ever were in the streets of the city itself.⁶⁵ Even near the turn of the Twentieth Century 'Little Artful Dodgers' was journalistic short-hand for characters found in the parts of

⁶³ A third of the population were under thirteen and nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population experienced poverty. See Davin, *Growing Up*, p. 16 and Ross, *Love and Toil*, p. 12

⁶⁴ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Penguin, London, 2002, [1837-38]), p 61 Likewise for a depiction of the impact of St Giles rookery in High Holborn see Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century* (Jonathan Cape, London, 2007), pp. 174-175

⁶⁵ Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings, Life in an East End tenement block 1887-1920* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980), p. 10

London where 'every hovel, every court, every alley teemed with children.'⁶⁶ Nor were such depictions simply poetic flourish: Charles Booth, who brought scientific study to social research in the 1890s, revealed a map of London's ten parliamentary divisions, where neighbourhoods were stained by the inky blue of poverty and the black ink of the 'vicious, semi-criminal.'⁶⁷

Since the 1840s large tenement blocks had been erected throughout London, mainly renting out to the semi-skilled workers, who transformed the narrow rookeries of Dickensian London into 'model' dwellings.⁶⁸ Yet these developments relied solely on private investors, who could pick and choose projects, consequently housing developments in The Capital were barely accommodating even half of the city's annual population increase by the 1860s.⁶⁹

London was not, however, simply poverty-stricken. Instead modern upright villas, railway verges, semi-detached terraces and open fields of a newly developed Victorian suburbia made up much of the Capital's sprawling Divisions. As much as Divisions like Greenwich, for example, consisted of overcrowded and poorly housed vicinities like Deptford, the east of the Division was formed of the semi-industrial suburban landscape of Woolwich, where the gentle outskirts of rural Kent met with a maritime skyline of dock-walls, factories

⁶⁶ Charles Morley, *Studies in Board Schools*, (Smith, Elder & Co, London, 1897) p. 7, p. 40

⁶⁷ Charles Booth (ed.), *Life and Labour of the People in London Vol. VII: Population Classified by Trade* (Macmillan, London, 1896), p. 10, p. 24

⁶⁸ White, *Rothschild*, p. 18

⁶⁹ See Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Penguin, London, 1976), p. 197 In 1891 Charles Booth estimated that a million people could be classified as poor see Charles Booth (ed.), *Life and Labour of the People in London, Volume II: London Continued* (Williams and Norgate, London, 1891), p. 21. The population of London in this period was an estimated 4.5 million. See Porter, *London*, p. 249

and a large arsenal. These semi-suburban districts developed rapidly following the extension of the railway network in 1864, the Artisans Dwellings Act of 1875 and the introduction of discounted penny fares and regular timetables following the Cheap Trains Act of 1883.⁷⁰ As developers sought to capitalise on the new commuters working in factories and shops, Woolwich's existing industries and landowners burgeoned. It was a story repeated across London: Districts such as Kilburn and Willesden, for example, in the north-west of London's Chelsea Division, had once consisted of pasture and middle-class villas, but by the 1880s were attracting up to 100 new inhabitants a week.⁷¹

Contrasts in housing and population existed in each Division, sometimes within streets of one another. Lambeth, for example, consisted of Battersea in its north, populated by small industries, rookeries and dock works, where the 'disreputable poor' were 'shuffled' to by the parish workers of Westminster and Chelsea.⁷² Away from the riverside, however, towards the Division's southern tip was the respectable village of Clapham. In 1872 as London's population neared four million and trains became more accessible, teetotal workers escaped the dishevelment of Battersea and headed south, up the more genteel Lavender Hill and down towards Clapham and the Shaftesbury Estate, one of the first housing schemes in the country to offer workers affordable and respectable housing, fit for the pomp of an Imperial Capital.⁷³ If the School Board for London was to succeed it had to be responsive to the diversity not

⁷⁰ Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (Penguin, London, 1996), p. 282 and Peter Geoffrey Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Blackwells, Oxford, 2002) p. 63

⁷¹ Porter, *London*, p. 282

⁷² Both quotes Charles Booth (ed.), *Life and Labour of the People in London, Vol. III: Religious Influences, the City of London and the West End* (Macmillan, London, 1902), p. 81

⁷³ White, *Nineteenth*, p.84; Porter, *London*, p. 249

just contained within the Capital as a whole, but within each of these Divisions alone.

In response to the Capital's socio-economic diversity and in keeping with the parish-management originally suggested in the Education Bill, London's ten parliamentary divisions became the basis for the SBL's 'Education Divisions' but each one was also subdivided further into 'groups'. These groups were made up of four to six schools from a local neighbourhood, with each group allotted a Board Member from the Division and a series of unelected managers, made up of local figures, such as clergymen, doctors and philanthropic women. Managers held head teachers to account and oversaw the changes in curriculum, administration, staffing and complaints for the schools within the group. Managers were accountable to the Board Member, who would represent and debate the needs of their local schools with other Members and specialists hired by the SBL back at the School Boards headquarters. The uniquely democratic organisation of the SBL set a precedent for the Board's pedagogical approach, in which head teachers were encouraged to be responsive to the needs of their surrounding community in whatever way they saw fit. Moreover the system meant that in principle parents could hold the school to account at any level, from the head teacher through to the Board itself, yet while procedures were put in place for the parents voices to be heard and events created for families to share a positive experience of school, the relationship between school and family was dependent on whether individual head teachers

were prepared to listen and actively work with the needs of a family or the wider community.⁷⁴

In 1871 of London's 3,265,005 inhabitants, 681,000 were aged between three and thirteen, of which 398,578 were already in school while 176,014 children had never attended one.⁷⁵ The Education Act stipulated that all children have access to a school place within three miles of their home thus the SBL would need to ensure that classrooms were available for this new intake. Yet the SBL aimed at achieving a staff:student ratio of 1 teacher to every 31.5 students, thus school houses in London would no longer simply exist within miles, but streets, of one another.

As a rule, schools which charged less than 9d a day were to be taken over by the SBL in 1870. Of the 322,000 school places London had to offer, HMI inspectors determined that 14,000 were 'inefficient'.⁷⁶ Yet despite the Education Department calculating a population of 560,000 school-aged Londoners and only 308,000 'efficient' school places, the SBL initially estimated The Capital would only need to invest in a further 112,000 school places, less than half of what was actually required.⁷⁷ Unlike many other School Boards the SBL had intended from its inception to enact the 1870 Education Act's byelaw, to compel all five to twelve year olds, seen fit enough, to take a school place.⁷⁸ Such a commitment contributed to public and political concern that the Board would

⁷⁴ For example, see the depiction of a school's open evening in, Morley, *Studies*, pp.61-65

⁷⁵ See Ross, *Love and Toil*, p. 13. For analysis of initial estimates of school population see Maclure, *One Hundred Years*, p. 22

⁷⁶ 22.05, SBL, (1870 – 1873), p. 2

⁷⁷ Weiner, *Architecture*, p. 55

⁷⁸ Davin, *Growing Up*, p. 86

over stretch itself or worse yet fund an education for those who did not want or need it.⁷⁹ As a result the prospect of having to finance the development of more than quarter of a million school places, led the SBL to initially underestimate the Capital's requirements. Yet as the historian of educational architecture, Deborah Weiner, has argued far from indulgent expenditure the,

initial calculations [revealed] the unresolved conflict which would shape Board policies and public opinion in the years to follow: on the one hand, the desire to alleviate the tensions that were thought to result from the general ignorance and squalor in which many young Londoners grew up, and on the other hand, the resistance to paying for institutions which were to bring their transformation.⁸⁰

This thesis explores the tension between desire and resistance in education further, through close examination of the differing ambitions SBL staff held for children in different schools. It addresses how ambition for the child was affected by perception of their environment, class and gender and how financial resistance was attacked or justified at both a local and national level.

The former secretary to the Teachers Association, SBL member and subsequent deputy chairman for the London County Council (LCC), Thomas Gautrey divided the development of London's elementary pedagogy into three phases, 1870 to 1885, 1885 to 1896, and 1896-1903:

The first was devoted in a general way to giving effect to the Huxley report [the SBL's first Education Commission], the second to a great

⁷⁹ For examples of 'unjustifiable interference with individual rights' see Davin, *Growing Up*, p. 86, F.N. 8 and for examples of magisterial opposition of the SBL's penalties and support for families absenteeism see F.N. 10.

⁸⁰ Weiner, *Architecture*, p. 55

change of aim by making instruction less literary and less ambitious, and the third to making the boys and girls more fitted to perform their duties and work in after life.⁸¹

Gautrey's dates, parallel the political narrative of the Board, with the Liberal-leaning Progressives (of which Gautrey was a member) being the first party to dominate. These Members pioneered an ambitious curriculum and were the first to begin making arrangements for special instruction of 'Blind' and 'Deaf and Dumb' children in Board Schools. By the end of 1885 the Progressive Members lost their dominance over the Board to Moderate Members. The Moderates were mainly Tory supporters who accused the Progressives of over-spending on building programmes and supplies. In the 1880s concern erupted over the academic pressure inflicted on children, this resulted in a curriculum that was increasingly divided along vocational, commercial and academic lines. This splintering was represented in the rise of Special Difficulty Schools in 1884, Higher Grade Schools in 1889 and schools of Special Instruction in 1891. It is this splintering of elementary education which has provided the basis for much of this thesis' research.

Despite accusing Progressives of overspending, the Moderates were responsible for some of the most expensive investment in London's educational infrastructure. Led by the Reverent Diggle, between 1885 and 1894, Moderates were - like their 'dominating' leader, Diggle – on the whole, religious men, who had long been involved with the development of London's National and British

⁸¹ Thomas Gautrey, *'Lux Mihi Laus' School Board Memories*, (Link House Publications, London, 1937), p. 83

Schools.⁸² With many National Schools coming under the management of the SBL in 1870, these members had a concerted interest in guaranteeing that the Board's curriculum was one that worked with families who had voluntarily sent their child to such schools prior to the introduction of the Act. The final era of the SBL began with the creation of the LCC in 1889. In the same year, with further ratification in 1891, the Technical Instruction Act placed this municipal government body, firmly in charge of The Capital's new state-funded colleges and polytechnics. The Act also made the LCC responsible for a post-elementary scholarship scheme. LCC scholarships enabled children, who showed academic promise, the opportunity to continue their schooling at a local Grammar school once they had passed the compulsory age of attendance.

Throughout these political ebbs and flows the idea of the Elementary School child was in flux. The election of the first Board in the autumn of 1870 had, according to the local newspaper *The Examiner*, one aim: to 'get every section of our youthful community made wiser and better than we have them now.' Yet despite this universal claim, the newspaper could only describe this 'youthful community' as either 'little unwashed waifs and strays of humanity who needed looking after' or the 'wearers of small shoes and stockings, whose decent but struggling parents find it hard to manage that they should get elementary schooling.'⁸³ By the coming of the LCC in 1904 head teachers' Logbooks, inspectors' reports and school admission records revealed well over twenty descriptors to describe the various needs and social strata of the elementary child. This was an education system which expanded as its understanding of

⁸² Gautrey, '*Lux Mihi Laus*', p. 44

⁸³ Nineteenth Century British Newspapers Online (NCBNO): 'The Work And The Worth Of The School Board', *The Examiner*, (Saturday, November 19, 1870); Issue 3277 p. unknown

the child grew. Guided throughout by the SBL's founding principal of what was 'best suited for that School, and for the community for which it is designed', however, a proliferation in educational descriptions of children can reveal as much about the practicalities of pedagogy as it can say about advances in understanding child development.⁸⁴

Different schools for different types

By the time the LCC took over the running of The Capital's education system in 1904, the SBL had built 511 Elementary Schools across London. Nineteenth-century statutes did not define 'elementary education', so the SBL developed four different styles of school to suit the needs of Londoners and London. The first of the SBL's Elementary School was also the most common, known as the 'Ordinary' Board School.⁸⁵ They consisted of a mixed-sex Infants Department and typically single-sex Senior Departments, for both boys and girls. In theory children would begin their education at three in the Infants Department and upon their seventh birthday be assessed in the Senior Department in their reading, writing and arithmetic by the head teacher. The child then progressed through five Standards, the curriculum for each becoming more extensive and demanding as the child went from Standard I to Standard V.⁸⁶ By twelve (or

⁸⁴ Rev. W. Rogers MA, 'Amendment on the Motion of WH Smith Esq, MP, 13th February 1871 p. 62 in LMA: 22.05 SBL, *Minutes*, (December 1870-November 1871), p. 62

⁸⁵ Of the 511 Elementary Schools, 102 were special schools, 20 were of special difficulty and 37 were Higher Grade, suggesting that 69 per cent were 'ordinary'. The figure is very much questionable, however, as figures for Higher Grade schools are based on the SBL recording there being '72 Departments' teaching upper Standards, I have read this to mean 37 schools each with separate Boys and Girls classes counting, therefore, as separate Departments. See LMA: 18.7 (1), 'Report of the Education Committee for the year ended 31st March 1905' pp. 38-85 in *London County Council Annual Report of the Proceedings of the Council*, (1905), p. 45

⁸⁶ SBL, *Minutes*, (Dec. 1870 - Nov. 1871), p. 159

fourteen by the beginning of the Twentieth Century) the child was free to leave and seek further training elsewhere or enter the world of full-time employment.

The education and structure of the Ordinary Board School was the basis for the other three types of Elementary Schools, but all had slightly different intakes. The Senior Departments of a Higher Grade School, for example, provided further education in two higher Standards. Due to the selective natures of Standards VI and VII, the Higher Grade School covered a wider geographical area than its ordinary counterpart. At Special Difficulty Schools the Standards were the same as those in their Ordinary counterparts, but here the SBL considered 'that the parents and children were of such a character as to impose special difficulties on the teachers' and thus staff were entitled to a higher salary and inspectors were encouraged to give special dispensation during the annual inspection.⁸⁷ Finally there were schools of 'special instruction', otherwise known as Special Schools. Not to be confused with Schools of Special Difficulty, Special Schools were populated with children classified by doctors and teachers alike as either 'Mentally Defective', 'Physically Defective', 'Blind' or 'Deaf and Dumb'.⁸⁸ By the coming of the LCC in 1904, 17 per cent of London's Elementary Schools were a school of special instruction, yet these only dealt with 1.4 per cent of The Capital's school population.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Gautrey, *Lux Mihi Laus*, p. 94

⁸⁸ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/17 *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1886)

⁸⁹ This is based on the 1903 elementary population 546,593, of which 7661 children were attending mentally defective or physically defective schools see LMA: SBL/1500, London County Council (LCC) *Report of the School Management Committee of the Late School Board for London* (1904), p. iii and SBL *Special Schools* (1903), p. 4

This study focuses on the development of eleven of the SBL's Elementary Schools. Three were maintained as Ordinary, these being Bolingbroke Road in Battersea (Lambeth West Division), Droop Street in Queen's Park (Chelsea Division) and Maryon Park in Woolwich (Greenwich Division). Five schools studied had Higher Grade Departments: Monnow Road in Bermondsey (Southwark Division), Bloomfield Road in Woolwich (Greenwich Division) Surrey Lane in Battersea (Lambeth West Division) and two in the Chelsea Division: Kilburn Lane, which began and ended as an Ordinary School and Beethoven Street. Two schools that were within streets of one another, Orange Street and Lant Street (later known as Charles Dickens school), in the Southwark Division give key insight into the rise and fall of the Special Difficulty School. The history of special schooling is garnered from a number of sources, but Powis Street school in Woolwich, which sat between Maryon Park and Bloomfield Road acts as a case study in this thesis' Conclusion, in order to summarise the development of special schooling in elementary education.

Despite the range of schools developed under the SBL, historians have paid little attention to this educational diversity and how it may have been shaped by ideas of the child and the classification of their abilities and disabilities. This study addresses the disparity examining Ordinary, Higher Grade, Special Difficulty and Special alike. In so doing a new pragmatically utopian history of childhood comes into view, where no one group of experts or lay people monopolised educational debate. Instead ideas of the child and the school reveal a surprising level of interdisciplinary collaboration, between educational, social, medical and political schools of thought. All shaped and were shaped by London's elementary system.

The historiography of nineteenth-century education and childhood has focused on the socio-economic and political concerns that dominated educational debate prior to 1870. Viviana Zelizer, for instance, argues elementary schooling in America was driven by predominantly middle-class expectations that scholarly lessons were essential to employment. Zelizer argues that as more children left employment and entered the school, the idea that the child as an emotionally 'priceless' family asset was reinforced and positioned un-schooled, working children as neglected creatures.⁹⁰ Similarly historians of British education, such as Gretchen Galbraith and James Vernon draw attention to the cultural paternalism of the non-working classes. Through the prism of school dinners and academic-stress, Vernon and Galbraith respectively unpick the politicisation of the mental and physical health of the working-class child. In so doing both reveal wider concerns among political, medical and philanthropic elites that the State needed to take responsibility for aspects of working-class life so that existing social-orders are not undermined.⁹¹

Class remains a driving force within this thesis, but it is also shown as simply one factor within a complex web of local and personal relations in determining perceptions of child development and their educational experience. Schools could be as much a bridge to class interaction, challenging perception and impetus, as much as they were a well-established fortress. By exploring the educational classification of children, however, the developments highlighted by Galbraith, Vernon and Zelizer, between elementary schooling and discussions

⁹⁰ Zelizer, *Pricing*, pp. 56-72

⁹¹ Gretchen R. Galbraith *Reading Lives: Reconstructing Childhood, Books, and Schools in Britain, 1870-1914* (Macmillan, London, 1997), pp. 101-119 and Vernon, *Ethics*, p. 695

of public responsibility, are given further credence. What these historians discussed as a story of collective responsibility for *why* children *should* be schooled, becomes in this study a story of collective responsibility for understanding *how* children *could* be schooled.

As with class, the impact gender norms had on both the child and the culture of SBL schooling has driven vital research, without which this thesis would struggle to examine perceptions of ability. Historians, such as Anna Davin and Deborah Wiener, have shown that lessons in domestic economy, carpentry or sewing, which many of the children may have encountered in their homes, were represented in Elementary Schools, using a 'middle-class conception of the appropriate division of labour between boys and girls.'⁹² In working-class homes, where space was at a premium and boys and girls grew up together, the distinction between male and female spaces and tasks could blur. By contrast, Wiener argues, school model-houses, workshops, classrooms and playgrounds were all gendered as SBL Members saw fit; members who were dominated by, 'wealthier classes who did not send their own children to Board Schools.'⁹³ It resulted, Davin has shown, in confusion amongst some working-class children, as to what constituted respectable behaviour for their gender.⁹⁴ Both Davin and Wiener have explored the relationship between class and gender in and out of the school environment. Yet neither explores specifically how these arrangements differed or were replicated in the four types of

⁹² Wiener, *Architecture*, p. 136 see also Davin, *Growing Up*, p 152

⁹³ Wiener, *Architecture*, p. 29

⁹⁴ Davin gives the example of a school trip to a pantomime in Hoxton where upon realising they were to be separated some boys protested 'What? Ain't we going to sit alongside our tarts?' See Davin, *Growing Up*, p. 120. See also p. 137

Elementary Board School found in London and the significance this could have in shaping and responding to the education of different groups of children.

This thesis goes, therefore, some way to respond to the plea set out by Peter Bartlett, the historian of mental disability, who called for a 'local study' to 'engage in the nuts-and-bolts question of how doctors and other social administrators determined' which children were assigned which classifications and why, so as to uncover 'who it was exactly that was being discussed.'⁹⁵

Through the prism of London's developing range of Board Schools this is the first study to unpick how and why the children of The Capital were classified as 'forward', 'backward', 'defective', 'bright', 'Blind' or 'Deaf and Dumb.' In so doing disability becomes viewed through an evolving spectrum of *ability*. By analysing the ways children were classified by physical and mental examination in the Ordinary, Special Difficulty and Higher Grade Schools, whilst also exploring the socio-economic debates surrounding the child and its education, Special Schools, their classifications of 'Deaf and Dumb', 'Blind', 'Physically Defective' or 'Mentally Defective' are shown to be a part, not set apart from 'ordinary' elementary schooling.

Material culture

The difficulties individual children faced in learning to read, write, count and complete tasks in all four types of school are scattered amongst sporadically-annotated Admission and Discharge registers, in the observations head

⁹⁵ Peter Bartlett, "Review of '*The Borderland of Imbecility: Medicine, Society and the Fabrication of the Feeble Mind in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*'", review no. 289, (November 2009), <<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/289>> (accessed: 8/12/2012)

teachers decided worthy of the school logbook, in the remaining school photos where children's bodies betray their development, in classroom design and in exam records that registered, for example, an inability to read as a failing reader, rather than a reader with failing eye sight.⁹⁶ The breadth of sources demands a methodology which is as responsive to material culture, as it is to the social and educational histories that produced it. By examining school photographs and design alongside the bureaucratic ephemera of the classroom, this is the first study to reconstruct the multifaceted idea of the child and the school envisioned by the SBL and managed by its successor the LCC. It reveals the site-specific nature of the classroom, how children and the local environment affected the school's understanding of its role and its relationships with parents, managers, local communities and the city itself.

During its existence the SBL built and improved over 500 schools.⁹⁷ The divergence of the Elementary School in that time, from Ordinary to Special, not only focused attention on the environment from which children came, but also the environment they now entered. The design of the classroom, playground, school house and their relationships to the home, neighbourhood and city were all examined over the next forty years by teachers, inspectors, doctors and architects in an attempt to understand the impact schooling had on children's development. The school had to be a space which could influence en masse.

⁹⁶ 'Mrs Burgwin Examined' pp. 113-126 in *Royal Commission on the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts*, (Cross Report) Second Report, 1887, (C.5056), London, Stationary Office, 17367-17368, p. 125

⁹⁷ 'Report of the Education Committee', (1905), p. 38

The study focuses on *School Architecture, being practical remarks on the design, building and furnishing of school houses*, written by Edward R. Robson, the SBL's chief architect in 1874, to reconstruct initial attitudes towards school buildings and their local environments. Upon being appointed chief architect in 1871, Robson argued that, 'public interest has been much more excited on the question of cost' with 'the average Englishman' only beginning to 'understand the importance' of elementary education itself.⁹⁸ Following the 1870 Education Act the Education Department circulated rules regarding the internal architecture of Board Schools.⁹⁹ If, as Robson had it, however, the SBL needed to convince working Londoners that compulsory schooling was a worthy investment, then these rules were only part of his brief. He would also need to consider how the school was seen from the outside. Robson aimed to demonstrate that Board Schools were 'public buildings,' representative of the needs and aspirations of London's teachers, scholars *and* parents and neighbours.¹⁰⁰

In the 1850s and 1860s there was a proliferation in civic and imperial architecture, catalysed in 1840 by the commencement of a gothic rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament. As the art historian Alex Bremner has described, this was a period of architectural development, 'framed by questions concerning political economy and the expression of local, national and imperial identities.' Contemporaries of Robson, such as George Gilbert Scott, had worked with gothic and classical vernaculars in the 1860s, to celebrate and historicise contemporary experience, with Scott's Foreign and Common Wealth Office in

⁹⁸ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 3

⁹⁹ Education Department Code quoted in Robson, *Architecture*, pp. 417-424

¹⁰⁰ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 2

Whitehall being adorned with friezes of national and colonial identities. Meanwhile the red-bricks that swept across the industrial landscape in the heart of the country were reimagined as gothic spires in Scott's Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras station. Robson was from this generation of architects that had seen the buildings of industrialisation shape the cultural landscape. These were architects who grew up with the changing green and pleasant lands of Romanticism and a growing cultural interest in architecture as 'sermons in stone.'¹⁰¹

Optimally set as far back from the street as possible, so as to allow 'rays of sun to enter the playground...and enable... the passer-by to see the building better,' the newly built Board Schools were an opportunity for an architect to create something which could be seen and was seen by all.¹⁰² 'Each one, "like a tall sentinel at his post," keeping watch over the interests of the generation that is to replace their own.'¹⁰³ Robson wanted to 'extend the process of education...by the adoption of good and tasteful designs as well as superior workmanship.' Classrooms could proffer truly universal schooling having, 'influence on the minds of the young and ignorant,' without engaging with traditional pedagogy. A school building did not just house teacher's lessons, but also a lesson for those outside of the school: that investment in education was investment in neighbourhood. Board Schools, each with their three storeys of locally produced red and yellow brick, secular-white window frames and each tailored to their

¹⁰¹ John Ruskin and all quotes in Alex Bremner, 'Nation and Empire in the Government Architecture of Mid-Victorian London: The Foreign and India Office reconsidered' pp. 703-742, *The Historical Journal* (Vol. 48, No. 3, September 2005) pp. 707-712

¹⁰² Robson, *Architecture*, p. 332

¹⁰³ Charles Booth quoted in Weiner, *Architecture*, p. 54

locality, were quickly seen to be an iconic part of the London skyline.¹⁰⁴ How did Robson's view of the ideal school environment, however, tally with the daily practicalities and priorities of teacher and scholar? To what extent did school architecture mirror and develop the ambitions of teacher, child and neighbourhood?

Bremner has argued that Victorian architecture was used to present 'an idealized portrait of society.' This thesis explores the resulting tension of such portraits, where the desire to create civic buildings sometimes produced educational spaces which idealised one vision of the child and the school, for the sake of another. Model-houses, laundry or metal work centres, for example, may have proved popular with some families already employed in these industries and with the SBL and LCC, but as Chapter Two will highlight the dreams of the unskilled poor could be left wanting.

The study does not just rely on material produced by those working within the school system. In 1897 'in response to numerous suggestions' from the readers of *The Daily News* the journalist Charles Morley published a collection of his columns 'Studies in Board Schools'.¹⁰⁵ The 'humorous and pathetic' collection described, 'the work done by the Schools in London, of the methods employed, of the special purposes served by 'Special Schools' under the London School Board; and...glimpses of child life in the Metropolis.'¹⁰⁶ *The Pall Mall Gazette*

¹⁰⁴ Quote in Robson *Architecture*, p. 360. Also in Robson's Appendix: 'Rules of Education Department', the ecclesiastical vernacular of 'lead lights and diamond panes' were prohibited; see p. 423

¹⁰⁵ NCBNO: 'Studies in Board School', *Daily News* (29th September 1897), p. 6

¹⁰⁶ NCBNO: 'Studies', *Daily News*, p. 6; NCBNO: 'Studies in Board School', *The Morning Post* (8th October 1897), pg. 3

considered Morley's 'pictures of the Board-school interior...convincing by reason of their unadorned realism: the teachers and the scholars are, for the most part, made to speak for themselves, and the descriptive matter is no more than is necessary to emphasize an individuality or to supply the local colour.'¹⁰⁷ Morley's descriptions, however, reveal the difficulty of untangling the Board School child from their environment.

In Morley's account of children from Borough in Southwark, one of the poorest areas in London, the journalist noted how children spoke with 'sailors language, only sound and a little temper.' His accounts entangled the child's appearance, in the haphazard morality of parents and adults he never met. Some children, Morley observed, had 'a terribly grown-up appearance,' inhabiting their parents problems, as they did their parents' hand-me-down boots. Morley framed his descriptions by adult responsibilities, noting how girls 'stop...at home and nurse...the baby.' Children were questioned about their experiences of adult brutality, Morley asking if fathers had ever 'knocked them about' and recalling the little girl who witnessed 'her mother kill one of her brothers in a drunken frenzy.' Children's bodies are presented by Morley as objects swallowed up by adult consumption; where heads are shaved by employees of the workhouse, where bodies are knocked about by violent parents, where family poverty was so bad that 'little girls [were found] in big dresses, big girls in short dresses; many girls in very little dress at all.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ NCBNO: 'Studies in Board School', *The Pall Mall Gazette* (11th October 1897), p. 10

¹⁰⁸ Morley, *Studies*, pp. 37-47

Morley shades in the accounts of Board School children outlined in logbooks and parliamentary papers, presenting them for literary consumption, but his account is not the only example of London's schools and children being portrayed for a wider public. The LMA's unique photographic collection of London's class groups, lessons and sports teams, spanning nearly eighty years of education, beginning in the 1890s, present images of London children quite different from the poverty stricken, heartstring-pulling, images of melodrama that filled Victorian newspapers. Photos do not show the child unmediated, but they display the vision of diversity and uniformity of the pragmatic utopianism of the SBL. Indeed among the shaven heads, ill-fitting dresses and ragged boots that Morley had seen, there were also clean pinafores, starched collars, velvet bowties and lace stoles. Photos offer an alternative vision of the child, where they are not seen through parental mistakes but through parental scrutiny and the work of the school. Photos reveal the commonality among London's 500 strong Elementary Schools. Whether in a Higher Grade Department or a Special School, children were photographed together; whether or not they had a shaved head because of lice (Image 1.3) or whether they were the best or worst swimmer in their school (Image 1.4), the wealthiest in the class or the poorest, Jewish or Roman Catholic, children sat side by side, pictured as a coherent group. These photographs reveal an elementary system which was as much about highlighting similarity as it was difference.

Few historians have focused on the school photograph, one of the few exceptions have been Catherine Burke and Helena Ribero De Castro, whose analysis of mid-twentieth century images explore the interaction between the idealised ordered view of the classroom and the familial relationships between

classmates and teacher.¹⁰⁹ Their work informs this study's approach to the photographs, questioning what role they played in presenting and representing ideas of the child and the school at the turn of the Twentieth Century.

This is the first study to examine the breadth of school photography in the LMA's collection, revealing a vast range of class portraits, sports teams, lessons and commemorations. The variation of production and the shared signifiers of poses and environments, reveals still further how the diversity of and differences between children were ordered and rationalised by the classroom and the adults around them. The historian of asylum photography, Katherine Rawling, has argued photography and its uses varied between different institutional settings.¹¹⁰ In the case of London's Board Schools, this thesis shows the use and style even varied within the same type of institution, with some photos ready to be hung in school halls (Image 1.5), others published in reports (Image 1.6), produced as postcards (Image 1.7) or as commemorative prizes (Image 1.8). The variation in format and style suggest different photos had different uses and potentially different audiences, with some intended for educational purposes, others for political record or even for the children themselves. As with Robson's vision of school architecture all promoted an

¹⁰⁹ Catherine Burke and Helena Ribeiro de Castro, 'The School Photograph: Portraiture and the Art of Assembling the Body of the Schoolchild', pp. 213–226, in *History of Education* Vol. 36, No. 2, (March 2007)

¹¹⁰ Katherine Rawling, 2010, *Asylum Snapshots: Institutional Photographic Practices and Patient Images at Holloway Sanatorium, Surrey, 1880-1910*, <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/archive/audio/2010_09_14/2010_09_14_InhabitingInstitutions_KathrineRawling.mp3> [podcast] (accessed: 8/12/2012), Rawling highlights the difference in class, environment and coercion in medical, criminal and workhouse portraiture, arguing that 'seeing all patient photography as repressive denies the subject's agency that may be being displayed.' Moreover, 'seeing them as honorific simply because they're portraits ignores the oppressive and negative use of photographs in certain contexts.'

image of a coherent and effective elementary system that was worth paying into.¹¹¹

The photographic collection of London's schools are almost entirely devoid of individual authorship, or surrounding detail, yet this lack of specificity beyond the name of the school is in itself evidence. As John Tagg has argued in *The Burden of Representation*, 'we can investigate the author not as an individual but as a complex entity.' For Tagg the anonymity, the standardised, mechanical eye of institutional photography exposes the 'wordless power' exerted over those in 'police cell, prison, mission house, hospital, asylum, or school.' Just as Foucault described the omnipotent eye of the teacher in the industrialised classroom, Tagg argues institutional photography allows the 'smallest deviations' to be 'noted, classified and filed' by the 'unreturnable gaze' of the captors.¹¹² Yet school photographs reveal that the gaze is not as 'unreturnable' as first thought. Unlike other institutions school portraits provide circumstantial evidence of efforts to engender familial interest and trust.¹¹³

Tagg perceived the relationship between institution and society as one where photography enabled the 'local state' to 'contain' newly enfranchised and challenging social groups. By highlighting the visual accuracy of the medium, staged images of a group could be presented to the wider public as factual

¹¹¹ See also, Jane Hamlett, 'Displaying Educated Womanhood: Cultural Identity in Staff and Student rooms at Royal Holloway College for Women in the Late Nineteenth Century', pp.583-608 in *Quaderni Storici*, Vol. 3, (December 2006) Photographs of personal quarters are used to explore how institution and student identities were negotiated and portrayed.

¹¹² Tagg, *Burden*, p. 85

¹¹³ Arguably 'the ubiquitous 'class photograph' is itself a form of surveillance, a public demonstration of the orderliness of teacher and students,' it is an example of how far 'society will go for social order.' See Eric Margolis and Sheila Fram, 'Caught Napping: Images of Surveillance, Discipline and Punishment on the Body of the Schoolchild', pp. 191-211, in *History of Education*, Volume 36:2 (March 2007), pp. 198-200

'evidence'. For Tagg this enabled local institutions to 'negotiate' the 'change' they wanted to exert upon their photographed subject.¹¹⁴ For Tagg the visual presence of individuals in institutional photography was, therefore, not 'a mark of celebration' but 'a burden of subjection,' compounded by the limited number of photographers prior to the Twentieth Century. School photos give credence to Tagg's view that institutions negotiated change with the wider community through photography; however, while Tagg saw this negotiation as a process which succeeded by manipulating and silencing working-class subjects, for school photos to be used as a way to negotiate power with surrounding families and ratepayers, the image had to succeed as an object representative of positive commemoration, rather than systematic punitive care. Indeed the exclusivity of the medium provided families of schools with the novelty of portraiture usually only accessed by the middle-classes. Teachers and students were often positioned in photographs like familial groups (Image 1.9), ingratiating an educational relationship into familial memories, where everyone, no matter the relation, could be captured.¹¹⁵

Women of the School Boards

The unique enfranchisement of women in School Board elections and the common and diverse roles they undertook in the development of Britain's education system provide historians with a range of characters and detail to retrace the development of pedagogy and ideas of the child at the turn of the

¹¹⁴ Tagg, *Burden*, p. 85

¹¹⁵ See also Rawling *Asylum Snapshots*, who argues, 'photographic conventions of the domestic, private, family-album informed medical, scientific, institutional, patient-photographs...the photographic conventions from outside the asylum walls were brought inside.'

Twentieth Century.¹¹⁶ Much of the historiography has focused on middle-class women and how their values shaped and were shaped by their interaction with Board School children. Mark Jackson's *the Borderland of Imbecility*, for instance, explores the development of special residential schools for 'feeble-minded' children through the work of Mary Dendy. As a member of Manchester's School Board, Dendy developed the Sandlebridge Boarding Schools and Colony for the Feeble-minded in Cheshire and became involved with the, *Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded*, leading to her appointment on the Control Board, set up under the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act. Jackson describes how Dendy was born into an 'aristocracy of talent', with ancestors, brother and cousins alike engaged in government education policy.¹¹⁷ Likewise Carolyn Steedman's, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain*, explores the role of Margaret McMillan and how, as a middle-class woman, she shaped pedagogical care. Working in and around the School Boards of Bradford and London, McMillan campaigned for medical examinations, established day-care centres in some of the poorest areas in the country and acted as a manager for a group of London schools. Steedman roots McMillan's story in her lower middle-class background, portraying her as a female outsider looking in on the development of a male-dominated education system but also, like Dendy, as a middle-class insider exploring and reforming working-class environments.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ For example see, Joyce Goodman and Sylvia Harrop (eds.) *Women, Educational Policy-Making and Administration in England: Authoritative Women Since 1880* (London, Routledge, 2000)

¹¹⁷ Mark Jackson, 'Mary Dendy (1855–1933)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/51775>>, (accessed 30 Nov 2012) see also, Mark Jackson, *The Borderland of Imbecility: Medicine, Society and the Fabrication of the feeble-minded in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (Routledge, 2000, London) p. 58

¹¹⁸ Carolyn Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931* (Virago Press, London, 1990) pp. 50-55

Yet as much as the historiography describes a culture of education in which middle-class women informed government policy and public approaches to children this thesis uncovers some of the shared values that existed between those who ran schools and those who used them. It suggests working-class women may have had a more active role in local education than previously identified. Francis Widdowson and Dina Copelman have both examined the lives of teachers and their progression through London's education system, showing the working-class lives from which many teachers came. This thesis draws upon the life and work of one such woman, Elizabeth Miriam Burgwin who worked her way up from pupil-teacher in south-west London to becoming London's (and Britain's) first Superintendent for Special Schools and ultimately having a direct role in the development of the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act. Burgwin's story encapsulates the development of nineteenth- and twentieth-century education. Born in 1850 to her mother Miriam and her father William Canham, an agricultural labourer, at thirteen Burgwin left her Suffolk home to move to Chelsea and train at the Church of England's National teacher-training college Whitelands.¹¹⁹ Widdowson has shown how Kay Shuttleworth, the first secretary for the Education Committee, set about funding institutions, such as Whitelands to appeal to, 'the manual labour-class and the classes immediately in contact with it', because 'sufficient inducement could not in the first instance be offered to other classes, to devote their children to the profession.'¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Pamela Horn, 'Elizabeth Miriam Burgwin: Child Welfare Pioneer and Union Activist' pp. 48-60 in *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (Autumn 1990), p. 49

¹²⁰ Including Shuttleworth's quote, see Frances Widdowson, *Going Up into the Next Class: Women and Elementary teacher Training 1840-1914* (Women's Research and Resources Centre Publications, London, 1980), p. 15

Far from being unique Burgwin was typical of the working-class children who had completed their National School's Standards, which Shuttleworth now wanted to attract into teaching, with paid apprenticeships that 'unlike many other trades' had no upfront charge. Thus after five years of her family paying a school fee the tables turned and Burgwin now received a 'small salary' to stay in school as a 'pupil-teacher'.¹²¹ The status enabled a young adolescent Burgwin to move from a rural community to the ever expanding urban landscape of Greater London. Training as an elementary teacher at St Luke's Church School in Chelsea, however, proved for Burgwin to be, 'the hardest period of life that a girl can possibly have...because the work was so heavy, and [there were]...so many home lessons to do.'¹²²

Upon completing her apprenticeship, aged just nineteen, Elizabeth Miriam married William Burgwin, a butcher on 12th February 1870, just a few months before the enactment of the Elementary Education Act. The historian of education Pamela Horn notes that, 'surprisingly' no member of Burgwin's family 'signed the marriage register' and 'unlike many Victorian wives' newly married Burgwin 'had no intention of remaining at home to concentrate on domestic affairs.' Moreover although she had completed her training, Burgwin's circumstances were financially precarious with Elizabeth yet to gain her teaching certificate. Indeed as Dina Copelman has noted in *London's Women Teachers*, it was not uncommon for London teachers to continue working after marriage and even after giving birth.¹²³ In fact this thesis can reveal that

¹²¹ Widdowson, *Going Up* p. 15

¹²² Burgwin, Cross Report, 17199 p. 118; see also Horn, 'Elizabeth', p. 49

¹²³ Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930* (Routledge, London 1996) p. xiii

Burgwin forced her own hand, separating from William just after one year of cohabitation. He had been a promiscuous husband 'guilty of acts of violence' towards her.¹²⁴ In 1872 she set about sorting her own lodgings and amending her lack of accreditation by taking her first teaching position at West Ham Board School.

By twenty-four Burgwin had already accrued ten years' worth of teaching experience in both a pre- and post- Education Act landscape. Having gained her teaching certificate in the relatively impoverished setting of West Ham, Burgwin was now hired to work in one of London's poorest Board Schools, Orange Street in Southwark, but this time as head mistress. Burgwin navigated her way through economic, educational and personal hardship alone and combined with her experience at Orange Street, her belief that education ensured independence galvanised her. Burgwin wanted her students to understand 'the lesson that dependence and idleness are synonymous with misery'.¹²⁵ It was a lesson, this study can reveal of personal experience, for it took seven years, but in 1878 Burgwin, 'prayed for divorce on the ground of [her estranged husband's] adultery and cruelty' from William.¹²⁶ It was at this point that her vocation became a career.¹²⁷

Copelman, among other historians of education, documents Burgwin's contribution as the first woman to be elected to the National Union of

¹²⁴ The Times Archive Online (TTAO): 'Burgwin vs Burgwin', *The Times*, (Friday 22nd February 1878), p.11

¹²⁵ SBL Special Schools (1903), p. 49; Burgwin, Cross Report, 17304, p. 121

¹²⁶ Women were not able to divorce their husbands for adultery alone see Alexander, *Becoming*, p.124 and p. 163

¹²⁷ 'Burgwin vs Burgwin', p.11

Elementary Teacher's (NUET) Executive Committee in 1885 and her subsequent contribution to the Royal Commission on the Working of the Elementary Education Acts (Cross Commission), which was set up in the wake of the overpressure crisis.¹²⁸ Indeed the historiography of schooling is peppered with Burgwin's account to the Cross Commission, yet there is little analysis of why she was interviewed and how her opinions shaped the work of the SBL. Copelman, Davin and Angela O'Hanlon Dun all highlight Burgwin's view that the funding of teachers' via payment by results was flawed and that needlework could negatively affect the mental and physical health of teachers and girls.¹²⁹ Yet Davin also explains how Burgwin believed the school had a positive, transformative-effect on both children and families.¹³⁰ Burgwin's commitment to the power of publicly-funded education was ratified in 1905 when she gave evidence to the *Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded*, in her capacity as Superintendent for Special Schools. Horn notes how she,

fiercely rebutted the suggestion of one hostile questioner that the annual expenditure of £40,000 to £50,000 incurred in the running the Special School was a waste because so few children could be turned into entirely self-supporting adults.

Burgwin's response was indicative of a woman who lived and witnessed the benefits of the Education Act, commenting, 'I think those children...have their rights and the parents of such children have their rights as well as a normal

¹²⁸ Copelman, *Teachers*, p.201, see also Davin, *Growing Up*, pp. 141-146

¹²⁹ Copelman, *Teachers*, pp.110-111; Davin, *Growing Up*, p.145; Angela O'Hanlon-Dunn, 'Women as witnesses: Elementary Schoolmistresses and the Cross Commission, 1885-1888,' pp. 116-135 in Goodman and Harrop (eds.) *Women*, p. 121

¹³⁰ Davin, *Growing Up*, p.141

child; I feel that very strongly.¹³¹ Burgwin's career allows this thesis to unfold, her experience of Orange Street's children and families are discussed in Chapter Two, in Chapter Three her opinions of examination and funding give insight into the development of Special Difficulty and Higher Grade Schools. Her national profile grew with the debates on overpressure, discussed in Chapter Four and finally Chapter Five examines her role in shaping the development of Special Schools as Superintendent.

Classifying the Child: The Development of Special Schools

Throughout the first twenty years of the SBL, schools were funded in part through a system of 'payment by results', where Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) financially awarded teachers and the school according to the dexterity of girls' needlework and in both the Boys and Girls Department, the tidiness and accuracy of children's written samples and the oral answers given to the HMI, regarding their curriculum. The ability of a child to pass the Annual Exam, as it was known, was therefore interpreted as simply the teacher's ability to teach rather than as an indication of the child's ability to learn. For many teachers the system of payment by results failed both the child and the school as it did not recognise the progress teachers made with individual students. Yet as Chapter Three will show the difficulties the system of payment by results created for schools and their bid to manage its impact forced head teachers to recognise and understand why certain children excelled and others floundered in a schoolroom.

¹³¹ Burgwin quoted in Horn, 'Elizabeth', p. 56

Between 1891 and 1916 taking on the role of Superintendent of Special Schools enabled Burgwin to pioneer the management, intake and development of London's special instruction, its classes, schools and centres. Throughout this period she was involved nationally in the identification and establishment of education for children classified as Mentally Defective. As shall be discussed in Chapter Five between 1896 and 1898 she sat on the Education Department's Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children (EDCDEC), whose concluding report resulted in the 1899 Elementary Education Act (Defective and Epileptic Children). This Act compelled local authorities to provide special instruction to children who could not be taught in an Ordinary Elementary classroom by 'ordinary methods.' In 1905 Burgwin's evidence to the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble Minded would also ultimately led to legislation, in the form of the Mental Deficiency Act in 1913.

Burgwin's trajectory from daughter of a farm labourer to sometime Government-Advisor may have been atypical, but it placed her in the unique position of both shaping and representing the development of nineteenth-century teaching. As an active member in both the NUET and the Metropolitan Board of Teachers Association (MBTA) she listened and worked alongside her fellow teachers, moreover, as this thesis will document, she was happy to look to those outside of education, doctors and journalists alike, if she felt it was in the interests of the classroom.

The Historian of schooling, Ian Copeland, has argued that when developing the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Bill and the Elementary

Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Bill, the Education Department had been more inclined to use the evidence of an established medical profession than the anecdotes of emerging educationalists.¹³² Consequently doctors and policy makers tended to understand learning difficulties in terms of physiological defects.¹³³ As much as educational policy was shaped by medical opinion, however, medical opinion relied on educational practice. As this thesis reveals doctor's access to school children relied on the consent and personal knowledge of head teachers. Moreover Burgwin's career and her involvement with both local and national policy reveal that the opinion of teachers were not necessarily in opposition to doctors, but as shall be discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, nor were they always in agreement.

In the 1880s, the debate regarding the potential negative impact of mass-education that had arisen during the hearings of the Education Bill in the 1860s, reignited. This was catalysed by the publication of a report on 'overpressure' by James Crichton-Browne, the former superintendent for the West Riding Lunatic Asylum and author of *Education and the Nervous System*. Based on his account of twelve SBL Schools, Crichton-Browne argued that stress caused by school work and exams 'overpressed' the child if they were also experiencing malnourishment, poor sleep and/or poor living conditions. These were factors which plagued an estimated 60,000 families, who lived in one-bed residences and were likely to have sent their child to a Board School. They were factors which left the SBL struggling to justify the positive impact it had and the

¹³² Ian Copeland, 'Special Educational Needs' pp.165-184 in Richard Aldrich (ed.), *A Century of Education* (Routledge Falmer, London 2003), p. 173

¹³³ Benjamin Dumville, *Child Mind: An Introduction to Psychology for Teachers* (University Tutorial Press, London, 1913), p. 186

Education Department having to reassure parliament that it was in the child's interest to be examined by HMIs.¹³⁴

The 1870 Education Act may have enabled the SBL to take children off the street and into the classroom, but for poor families this had not halted their poverty. Indeed with families expected to pay a weekly attendance fee (until they were abolished in 1891) the impact of poverty remained acute, with an estimated 55,000 Board School children suffering from malnourishment.¹³⁵ For Crichton-Browne boys and girls sat, 'hunger gnawing within... uncomplaining at their little desks, toiling at their allotted tasks... These children want blood, and we offer them a little brain-polish, they ask for bread, and receive a problem.'¹³⁶ Strategies to combat malnourishment and its effects were pioneered by local teachers and churches, but it was not until the formation of the Underferd Children's Committees, some twenty years after the founding of the SBL, that malnourishment began to be tackled directly by London's education authorities. Yet the creation of the SBL and its schools provided the structure for a level of engagement between families and institution, which revealed the daily realities of children's health and questioned the limitations of the Education Act. Crichton-Browne's complaint that children needed feeding, for example, was initially met by many in the SBL and Education Department as beyond their pedagogical responsibilities. The ability to exempt a poor family from the attendance fee, it was argued, meant schools did everything in their power to ensure poverty did not affect a child's opportunity to learn. Yet exemption did

¹³⁴ Davin, *Growing Up*, p.45

¹³⁵ Pamela Horn, *The Victorian and Edwardian School Child* (Allan Sutton, Gloucester, 1989), p. 77

¹³⁶ Education Department, Dr. Crichton-Browne, *Copy of the Report Upon the Alleged Overpressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools in London*, (1884), Volume 69, HC 293, London, Stationary Office, p. 76

not just apply to the fee, but the child itself. Under the 1870 Education Act neither school nor parent was under any obligation to teach a child who was prevented from attending classes due to, 'sickness or any unavoidable cause.'¹³⁷ It was through local engagement, however, that teachers, parents and legislators alike began to consider that the 'sick', 'afflicted', 'abnormal' or 'defective' child who 'too often [had been] merely an object of pity,' was not being exempt from schooling by legislation but excluded by it.¹³⁸

In 1886 the Idiots Act was passed to provide, 'facilities for the care, education, and training of Idiots and Imbeciles.'¹³⁹ The Act did not compel parents or local authorities to send children to, 'hospitals, institutions and licensed houses.'¹⁴⁰ Moreover many children did not fit into such classifications, attending Board School but failing to keep up in lessons.¹⁴¹ Following the overpressure debates of the mid-1880s, in 1889 the Royal Commission on the Blind Deaf and Dumb (Egerton Commission) stated that children with sensory impairments were just as entitled to an education at an Elementary School as any other child, but that they needed specialist instruction to guarantee them a fair educational chance. The Report led to the passing of the Elementary Education (Deaf, Dumb and Blind) Act in 1893, which guaranteed children, classified as Blind or Deaf and Dumb, an elementary education under special instruction. The publication of the Egerton Report coincided with the SBL's decision to hire Burgwin as the

¹³⁷ 1870 Elementary Education Act, cls. 28 and 32

¹³⁸ SBL Special Schools, (1903), p.7. See also Hewitt and Pinchbeck, *Children*, p. 516 who argue that in making the 'education of the poor a national duty' it expanded the *care* available for pauper-children. Also see, Maclure, *One Hundred Years*, p. 9

¹³⁹ HL, Deb, (23 March 1886), Vol. 303, Col.1627

¹⁴⁰ 1886, The Idiots Act (49 Vic)

¹⁴¹ Ian Copeland, *The Making of the Backward Pupil in Education in England 1870-1914* (Woburn Press, London, 1999), for backward as a temporary state see pp.63-64; for the medical and educational differences see, pp.168-169

Superintendent for Special Schools to develop, 'instruction in separate Schools or classes, for those children who, by reason of physical or mental defect, could not be properly taught in the ordinary standards or by the ordinary methods.'¹⁴² Burgwin's increasing specialisation in education mirrored not only the professionalisation of schooling but the SBL's own approach to the child.

The 1870 Education Act's clause that, 'sickness or any unavoidable cause' was a 'reasonable excuse' for the 'total or partial exemption of attendance' enabled school boards to relinquish responsibility of certain children.¹⁴³ Yet for some, such as parents of children with sensory impairments, what legally could be perceived as a reason for exemption was simply a lack of pedagogical dexterity. Thus as early as 1873 the SBL found it necessary to hire an instructor to ensure children considered Deaf and Dumb could still engage with 'ordinary' classes. In 1875 this commitment was extended to children classified as Blind or Myopic.¹⁴⁴ By 1904 although such children continued to receive an 'elementary education,' they were now taught in full-time Special Schools. Here departments were separated by 'defect' rather than gender, where along with a Blind Department, there could also be a Deaf and Dumb Department, a Physically Defective Department and even a Mentally Defective Department. All four classifications evolved differently and so too the purpose of education, but the evolution of Special Schooling began with the identification of sensory impairments. By examining the evolution of the SBL's Deaf and Dumb and Blind instruction, it becomes clear that the decision to house children in Special Schools was the

¹⁴² LMA: 22.05 *SBL Annual Report* (1891), p. 83

¹⁴³ 1870 Elementary Education Act, clause. 74, (5,2)

¹⁴⁴ *SBL Annual Report* (1891), pp.81-82

culmination of thirty years' worth of debate, as London's Elementary Schools attempted to understand not just how the child learned, but why.

In a bid to ensure systematic entry into these Special Schools or classes the SBL introduced limited medical inspections for those entering 'special instruction' in 1890. Children believed to be, 'Intellectually weak, poorly endowed with perception, memory, reasoning etc.,' could be nominated by head teachers to be assessed by a medical officer and Burgwin, but there was no hard and fast rule about exactly who did or did not enter these schools.¹⁴⁵ Instead the introduction of routine national medical inspections in 1907 followed on from an evolving and complex lexicon of classifications, developed by the efforts of individual teachers, SBL Members, one-off medical investigations, reports and discussions between the SBL and the Education Department.¹⁴⁶

This study deliberately uses the language of the SBL and LCC to describe children that required 'special instruction', rather than contemporary terminology such as a 'learning disability' or 'physically disabled'. As schools increasingly began to identify children unable to excel in a classroom by 'ordinary' methods, labels such as Blind, Myopic, Deaf, Feeble-Minded, Dull, or terms like backward, nervous, delicate, became construed as signs of a physical and/or mental 'defect' or 'deficiency'. Compounded by the overpressure debates the differences in children's development both physically and mentally became

¹⁴⁵ LMA: 2154 SBL: Report of the School Board for London (1893-1894) p. 79

¹⁴⁶ 'Forward' see LMA: 22.05 SBL, *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June-November 1889), p. 633; 'bright' see Powis Street Council Blind School, HM Report (1911) in LMA: LCC/EO/DIV6/POW/LB/1, Powis Street MD, Logbook (1894-1913) or Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 6; 'mentally normal', 'backward' or 'feeble-minded' see Education Department. *Report of the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children* (EDCDEC), Vol. I, 1898, (C. 8746-7) London, Stationary Office, p. 4

things to be fixed by special instruction.¹⁴⁷ Defect, Deficient and Defective covered a vast spectrum of capacities and needs; it captured the breadth of classification that doctors and educationalists were identifying in London's Elementary Schools.¹⁴⁸ Moreover the words encapsulated a continual debate throughout the period of the SBL, as to whether one aspect of a child was considered to affect them as a whole. In 1897, for example, following a study of 10,000 elementary children, the London paediatrician Doctor Francis Warner explained that, 'the defects is [sic] the thing you actually see in the body of the child.'¹⁴⁹ In other words, the child was independent of their defect. Yet, as shall be discussed in Chapter Five, Warner made the statement to the Education Department's Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children, of which the title alone framed defects and epilepsy as indicative of the whole child.

The Education Historian Ian Copeland has shown how prior to the EDCDEC, the Cross Commission and the Egerton Commission shuffled the 'feeble-minded' child off their terms of reference.¹⁵⁰ Chapter Four of this thesis reveals that this was in spite of the evidence of witnesses such as Burgwin and Warner, who argued that such children were neither uncommon nor separate to the children identified by the overpressure debates or by the Egerton Commission.

¹⁴⁷ Similarly Carolyn Steedman has shown how the mass identification of the 'sickly and deformed' following the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act (1907) lead to a 'general system' intended to support the healthy development of all children, became instead a 'process of cure for a particular class of child.' See Steedman, *Childhood*, p. 199

¹⁴⁸ Seth Koven similarly explains his use of 'cripple' as not wanting to make a 'value judgment'. Such deployment instead helps to show how ideas of disability 'evolved over time' and are 'historically contingent.' See Seth Koven, 'Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers and the Great War in Great Britain', pp. 1167-1202 in *American Historical Review* (October, 1994), p. 1171

¹⁴⁹ Dr Francis Warner, MD, FRCP, called in and examined' (12th February 1897), pp. 25-39 in EDCDEC vol. I; for neurotic see EDCDEC, Report, vol. I pars. 903-905, p. 36; for defects see EDCDEC, Report, vol. I, par. 687, p.26 See also Jackson's discussion of the 'physical stigmata of deficiency' Jackson, *Borderland*, p. 94

¹⁵⁰ Copeland, *The Making*, pp. 58-68

When the EDCDEC produced their report in 1898 they criticised previous Commissions for reinforcing the view that feeble-minded applied to, 'all classes of mentally deficient children, including imbeciles,' rather than framing it as simply a problem limited to children attending Board Schools.¹⁵¹ The EDCDEC defined 'the feeble-minded' as children who were neither idiots nor imbeciles, but who, 'cannot properly be taught in Ordinary Elementary Schools by ordinary methods.' As Copeland has argued the EDCDEC defines 'feebleminded', therefore, 'negatively, rather than positively; it identifies what the subjects are not rather than what they are.'¹⁵² Yet this thesis contends the EDCDEC did provide positive identification, because it considered the 'feeble-minded' to be 'educable children', who given, 'individual teaching and suitable training' could 'be put in the way of making their living.' As the Committee argued, 'though the difference...is one of degree only' between their 'ordinary' and 'imbecilic' peers, 'the difference of treatment which is required' for the education of a child they considered to be 'mentally defective' made them, 'for practical purposes a distinct class'.¹⁵³ As shall be discussed in Chapter Five EDCDEC was informed by a range of London-based practitioners working in education and medicine. Indeed the use of specialist knowledge to determine which children were part of this 'distinct class' EDCDEC referred, was indicative of the Capital's evolving elementary system, its professionalisation of knowledge and its expertise regarding the child and the school.

¹⁵¹ EDCDEC, Report, Vol. I, p. 4

¹⁵² Copeland, *The Making*, pp. 86-87

¹⁵³ All quotes EDCDEC, Report, Vol. I, p.4

The London County Council and Perceptions of Care

In 1902 the London County Council became the administrative body for The Capital's municipal services. A year later, following the implementation of the London Education Act, the School Board for London was amalgamated with the LCC.¹⁵⁴ Just as the SBL had been a microcosm of late nineteenth-century philanthropic and democratic government, however, so too the LCC's Education Committee became a vehicle for enacting and debating the welfare reforms of the Liberal Government, which dominated the political climate at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The LCC implemented the 1906 Education Act, which secured funding for school meals, the 1907 Education (Administrative Provisions) Act, which developed The Capital's school medical inspections, and the Children's Act of 1908, attempting to systematise the care and protection of vulnerable children.

The replacement of the democratically elected SBL with a specialist administrative body, the Education Committee, managed as one of the LCC's municipal services, was indicative of the centralisation of knowledge, taking place throughout the Twentieth Century as expertise in local government superseded representation.¹⁵⁵ With no elected Board Members, families and head teachers no longer had a representative to voice the needs of the school or child at the level of local government.¹⁵⁶ This distancing between local school and central administration did not, however, necessarily increase tension between the two. Each Elementary School now had two committees, the

¹⁵⁴ Maclure, *One Hundred Years*, pp. 75-76

¹⁵⁵ Susan D. Pennybacker, *A Vision for London 1889-1914: Labour, everyday life and the LCC experiment* (Routledge, London, 1995), p.14

¹⁵⁶ Maclure, *One Hundred Years*, p. 80

Management Committee developed and governed the school's economic and academic administration, keeping in regular contact with the LCC's Education Committee and neighbouring schools, while the Care Committee, typically run by local women of 'superior backgrounds' (similar to those who acted as school Managers under the SBL), initially took responsibility for malnourished children but this was increasingly extended to children's social and psychological welfare too. Consequently a systematically more holistic approach to the child took place administratively under the LCC than under the SBL.¹⁵⁷

Between its foundation in 1870 and its dismantling in 1903 the SBL attempted to change the attitudes and environment of the Working Classes through supervision and teaching of their children. For the first thirty-five years of the Education Act, however, other than the effect of the legislation itself, which drove the child out of employment and into the schoolroom, the quality of the child's home-life was, on the whole, only directly challenged by individual reformers and willing head teachers. The SBL made direct entry into the home, introducing the Visitor, who visited absent children and later endorsed the use of a school nurse (typically funded by private individuals). It was in the early Twentieth Century, however, when national legislation widened the responsibility of education authorities, that domestic surroundings, considered adverse to a child's physical and mental wellbeing, were able to be systematically and directly challenged by the school and its staff.¹⁵⁸ From the outset of the SBL inspectors had judged the success of a school by the cleanliness and neatness of its children, teachers had been encouraged,

¹⁵⁷ Pennybacker, *A Vision*, p. 203

¹⁵⁸ Pennybacker, *A Vision*, p. 203

therefore to send children home for dirty hands and lack of boots under the SBL.¹⁵⁹ Under the LCC, however, and with the growing use of school medical inspections, cleanliness of the child became mandatory. Children and their families were required to attend 'cleansing stations' if deemed by a school nurse as 'verminous,' with parents facing prosecution if no action was taken.¹⁶⁰ The concern shown for parental rights when the compulsory clause was discussed in the 1870 Education Bill, had in the Twentieth Century the concern for parental responsibilities.

What was the relationship between a school's jurisdiction over child and family, as set out in legislation and local government policy, and the reality of having to interact with child, parent and neighbourhood on a regular basis? If the establishment and development of the education system is to be fully understood then there must be an exploration as to how the different types of schools, in different types of areas, were able to balance the priorities and aspirations of the local authority, the parent and the teacher with the practicalities of mass education. Exactly who was London's elementary education system for?

Thesis structure

This chapter briefly outlined the ideas of the child and the development of elementary schooling in London before during and after the implementation of the 1870 Education Act. It introduces the political, cultural, scientific and socio-

¹⁵⁹ See Davin, *Growing Up*, pp. 134-136

¹⁶⁰ Pennybacker, *A Vision*, p. 204

economic factors that shaped many debates in the Nineteenth Century on childhood and schooling, and explored the historiographical challenge to recognise the extent to which these debates were entwined with issues of identity, industrialisation, urbanisation and (dis)abilities.

The breadth of ideas surrounding the child and the school highlight the need for a heterogenic approach to understand their impact on one another. The remaining chapters address this need by focusing on specific developments and events in London's elementary system between 1870 and 1914. The diversity and ubiquity of the Capital's Elementary Schools (Ordinary, Higher Grade, Special Difficulty and Special) and the neighbourhoods in which they were situated is used to understand and compare national, local and individual influences upon the idea of the child. All four styles of school were found across London, with the eleven schools studied in this thesis being drawn from across four of London's Education Divisions (Appendix 1): Southwark, which faced the country's economic hub – the City; Lambeth West which sat opposite the country's political centre – Westminster; and Chelsea and Greenwich, which spread into the newly developing suburban landscape on the west and east side of Greater London.

The multiple ways the idea of the child and the school were imagined is reflected in the thematic structure of the thesis. Chapter Two, which introduces the four divisions and their schools, explores the SBL's vision in theory and in practice. The impact geographical and socio-economic differences had on ideas of the child and the school are revealed through comparisons between the

original architectural, managerial and curriculum plans of the SBL and with local reports, made by inspectors, journalists and head teachers once schools were fully established. Chapter Three focuses on the development of Higher Grade and Special Difficulty Schools by examining the impact of funding and how teachers and inspectors perceived and responded to the educational impact socio-economic realities of children could have on the school. Chapter Four focuses on the overpressure crisis of the 1880s to compare educational views of child and school with those from political and medical communities. Through a close analysis of the parliamentary-commissioned, *Report Upon the Alleged Overpressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools* made by Doctor Crichton-Browne in 1884, the responding memorandum made by the Chief HMI, the SBL's *Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board* and Mrs Burgwin's contribution to the Cross Commission in 1886, this chapter not only builds upon the crisis of responsibility for children's welfare, discussed by historians such as Galbraith and O'Hanlon-Dunn, but also asserts that the overpressure crisis helped to affirm, rather than simply discredit, newly developing educational expertise. This expertise is explored further in Chapter Five's retracing of the rise of 'special instruction'. It explores ideas of child development and how and why London was one of the first to begin to classify and respond to children's perceived physical and mental differences.

Despite the breadth of identities and visions for the child and the school explored in these chapters, there remains continuity between the children the SBL believed their students to be in 1870 and those the LCC were educating by 1914. This is in part due to the philosophy of the individual and romantic

traditions discussed at the beginning of this chapter. By educating children en masse Kant's theory that all individuals were unique was given practical application. The size of the school population acutely showed childhood to be unique in its universality: no matter its length or form, everyone had one. Moreover just as Kant had argued experience was universally subjective, so too was the individuality of the child and their development. These ideas are explored throughout the period from questioning the validity of educating working-class children in 1870 (as these were children with specific economic experiences and needs), through to the justification at the turn of the Twentieth Century that educational segregation of 'special' children was necessary, because it afforded skills that enabled these children to economically integrate with their 'ordinary' peers outside of school.

The balance between the ubiquity of childhood and the uniqueness of the experience, is reflected in this thesis' breadth of source material and the information contained within. From the child's first encounter with the school their identity was classified and formalised. Each child was entered into an Admission and Discharge register and given a student number. In a series of columns, the head teacher entered the date the child was admitted, their full name, the name of their father or guardian, their address, date of birth, list of schools attended and then a further three columns to detail when the child left, what standards they achieved and any further comments.¹⁶¹ What was sometimes detailed (parent occupations, level of literacy, defects and deaths)

¹⁶¹ By 1913 records included the occupation of fathers see for example, LMA: X095/403, *Lant Street Mixed*, Admission and Discharge Register, (1910-1922)

and was not, says something for the teachers observing these children and their families and the formalised nature of their relationships.

The Admission and Discharge registers, housed at the LMA, provide the beginning and end of the school experience. What sat in the middle of that experience, the nuances of classroom life, the detail of examinations made of the child and its teacher, the development of a child's skills, of a teacher's pedagogy scatted themselves through paper-trails across London. From punishment books locked in desk-drawers, logbooks dumped neatly in school basements, framed photos on assembly walls, to personal studies by local Managers interned to the LCC's Embankment headquarters, just along from their National administrative counterparts in Whitehall. Schools may have produced a wealth of material, but without a clear preservation policy, a full archive of any SBL school has rarely, if ever, escaped the recycling bins and red-rot of the past century. As a consequence the schools in this thesis are chosen, partly, because their archives are broad in detail if not in scope.

All head teachers were compelled to keep a school logbook recording staff illness, playground accidents, fire drills etc. Beyond compulsory entries, a patchwork of visitors, events and complaints are acknowledged according to the head teacher's own priorities and interests. Like Admission and Discharge records, this individuality can be telling of head teachers' own character and how they viewed their relationships with child, family, staff and neighbour. The idiosyncrasy of the logbook means a more coherent narrative has to be garnered elsewhere, namely the centrally maintained bi-annual reports of SBL

Inspectors and members and the annual reports of the HMIs. With their mixture of statistical fact, social context and individual perspectives these reports give insight into the cultures of classroom management, school development and child progress. Indeed their educational and social narratives provide a relatively stable, but flexible, backbone to locate the circumstances for different ideas of the child found elsewhere in the archives.

To enter the geographical topography of London's schools and their streets, the LMA's collection of maps and the minutes of the SBL and LCC, as well as the Charles Booth Archive have all been invaluable. Focused on retelling the development of specific schools, children's direct experiences in these environments are lacking and can only be heard as echoes in adult experiences. Yet from the encounters with children recalled by London's teachers, head teachers, SBL members and doctors, found in Parliamentary Papers to the journalistic prose of Charles Morley's dubious, but vivid, parroting of SBL students; all enable us to hear how children of the Board Schools were heard by those who claimed to listen. Taken alongside articles found in The Times Newspaper Archive, the British Library's Nineteenth Century Newspaper collection a detailed picture emerges from this thesis of how the needs of the child, the wants of their parents, the priorities of staff and the expectation of inspectors and the opinions of doctors were carefully (if not, necessarily, successfully), balanced against one another, within and outside of the Elementary School.

CHAPTER TWO

The Development of Local Board Schools: Priorities and Experiences 1871 - 1914

On the morning of the 20th October 1896 the Boys Department at Kilburn Lane Higher Grade Elementary Board School was photographed by an anonymous employer of the publishing house Cassells for a commemorative book *The Queen's London*. The publication was a celebratory record of 'the streets, buildings, parks and scenery of the great metropolis in the fifty-ninth year of the reign of her Majesty Queen Victoria.' The photo (Image 2.1) depicted a morning assembly in which 'no less than five hundred boys' would begin their day in the Department's hall. Adorned with paintings of rural scenes, botany samples, Queen Victoria, photos of school groups, mathematical ornaments and pieces of pottery, the hall's walls burgeoned with icons from the civic, academic, domestic and natural worlds. Flanked by their teachers and pupil-teachers the children posed 'waiting for the conductor's beat' of the morning hymn that would be led by the school's string band. The publisher of the photo, Cassells, noted how the incorporation of the band had encouraged the boys to take 'reverent interest...in the proceedings.'¹⁶²

This chapter explores the image of the Elementary School and its relationship with scholars and the surrounding communities, as visualised by those who built

¹⁶² All quotes from, Anonymous, *The Queen's London : A Pictorial and Descriptive Record of the Streets, Buildings, Parks and Scenery of the Great Metropolis* (Cassells and Company, London, 1896), <<http://www.victorianlondon.org/ql/queenslondon.htm>> (accessed 5th July 2010). See also London Metropolitan Archive (LMA): LCC/EO/DIV2/KIL/LB/1, *Kilburn Lane Boys*, Logbook, (1885-1906), 20.10.1897, p. 187

them, worked in them and reported on them. This is not to exclude the familial or neighbourly perspective, but rather to draw comparisons between, on the one hand, the recorded aims and aspirations of the Elementary Schools, as set out by the School Board for London (SBL) and on the other, the daily and annual accounts garnered through school log books, annual inspector reports, managers' minutes and local newspapers. The aim is to reconstruct the relationship between school, family and city as it was imagined by the SBL and what effect the daily interaction between these groups, in different socio-economic areas, had on a school's own self-image and its acceptance in the lives of London's families

By investigating three types of Elementary Schools in four of London's educational divisions, Southwark, Lambeth West, Chelsea and Greenwich the aim is to reconstruct the relationship between the idea of the Elementary School and the realities in practice. The chapter will use the principles of the Elementary School as set out by the SBL, along with the visual iconography that the Board developed for its schools to understand how London's children and their education were initially imagined and how head teachers and their staff adapted these visions, through formal and informal engagement with local families.

The Elementary Board School: Three Types

Between 1870 and 1904 The School Board for London established 511 Elementary Schools across its Education Divisions. These fell into three categories. 90 per cent were Ordinary Elementary Board Schools, where

attendance was regular, children aged three to twelve could complete up to six standards and teachers were not paid extra for the academic or social circumstances of the school. This study examines three of them: Bolingbroke Road in Battersea (Lambeth West Division), Droop Street in Queen's Park (Chelsea Division) and Maryon Park in Woolwich (Greenwich Division). Secondly there was the 'school of Special Difficulty', a term introduced by the Board in 1884 which recognised twenty schools in notably economically-deprived areas, where the 'character' of local families were considered to 'impose' themselves negatively on their classrooms.¹⁶³ Two Special Difficulty Schools, Orange Street and Lant Street, which were overseen and represented by the same local school management committee, are examined in this thesis. Finally there was the introduction of the Higher Grade Elementary School in 1889, which, through specialist classes and an onsite higher elementary department, catered not only for children at the compulsory age of attendance, but also for those aged up to fourteen who had passed six of the seven Standards. Five Higher Grade Schools are discussed in this study, Monnow Road in Bermondsey (Southwark Division), Bloomfield Road in Woolwich (Greenwich Division) Surrey Lane in Battersea (Lambeth West Division) and two in close proximity to one another Kilburn Lane and Beethoven Street in the Chelsea Division. As shall be explained in Chapter Three from 1900 these Higher Grade Schools began to be phased out and by 1914 all but Kilburn Lane (which returned to the status of an 'ordinary' Elementary School) had been converted into larger, 'Central Schools', in which having passed an entrance

¹⁶³ Thomas Gautrey, *'Lux Mihi Laus' School Board Memories*, (Link House Publications, London, 1937), p. 94. Which claims only fifteen schools to have been dedicated of special difficulty.' For the twenty schools recognised see LMA: 22.05 School Board for London (SBL): *SBL Management Committee Report*, (1888), p. 455.

exam children aged between eleven and sixteen would undertake a curriculum with a commercial or industrial bias.

Two of the three ordinary Elementary Schools selected here, Droop Street in Kilburn and Maryon Park in Woolwich, included some very poor families amongst their scholars, but the extreme hardships faced by those in 'schools of special difficulty' just did not exist on the same scale in these schools. Droop Street, for example, which achieved the 'excellent merit' from inspectors many times under its first head master Mr Bottle (1877-1892), was situated in an area populated by 'transport workers, craftsmen, clerks, a few labourers and small shopkeepers.'¹⁶⁴ Here 'about 40 per cent of children' lived in houses and rooms on the nearby Queen's Park Estate, which by the mid-Twentieth Century was described by one inspector, as having been,

built in the 1880s [the houses] are one-storey terrace type with two or three bedrooms and provide good accommodation by ordinary standards. The other area is composed of two storey basement houses...and are, for the most part, let out each floor to a family. All the children are well clothed and are well cared for.¹⁶⁵

Maryon Park, situated between Greenwich and Woolwich, did not achieve the high academic results of Droop Street. Close to an industrial riverside, parents who were not employed as skilled labourers found seasonal work in the docks or permanent unskilled positions at the local arsenal and Siemens factory,

¹⁶⁴ 'Ever since the school was formed it has always earned the 'excellent merit' grant' see Argus, 'The Late Mr E Bottle,' *The Indicator*, August 26, 1892 [clipping] in LMA: LCC/EO/PS/6/59, *Kensal Green Group*, Minutes of Managers, June 1891 to July 1896. Parental occupations sourced from LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/D35/49, *Droop Street*, London County Council Education Committee Primary and Secondary Schools Report, (1949)

¹⁶⁵ *Droop Street*, LCC Education Committee Primary and Secondary Schools Report, (1949)

where submarine cables were produced.¹⁶⁶ When the school opened in 1896 the managers described the area as ‘unfavourable’ due to ‘the untidy and unclean habits’ of the children, but despite three ‘bad cases of truanting’ within a year of opening Maryon Park began to achieve regularly high (over 90 per cent) levels of attendance.¹⁶⁷ Despite the sound academic and attendance records of Droop Street and Maryon Park, their teacher’s efforts never achieved the specific financial status that was granted to those working in Higher Grade or Special Difficulty Schools. These two schools were by all accounts ‘ordinary’.

The majority of London’s new Elementary Schools were ‘ordinary’ like Maryon Park and Droop Street, with only twenty schools throughout London being designated as Special Difficulty, there remained ordinary Elementary Schools which were located in areas of extreme hardship. Bolingbroke Road, for example, was only 5 minutes north of Surrey Lane Higher Grade School and even came under the same school management committee. Despite a higher fee to Orange Street and Lant Street, Bolingbroke Road was similar to those of Special Difficulty, with 21 per cent of its scholars struggling to pay and only 10 per cent of students staying beyond their eleventh birthday, a rate that was lower than either of the Special Difficulty Schools discussed in this chapter.¹⁶⁸

The managers even admitted ‘the school is a difficult one...many of the children are very poor and neglected and that high attainments cannot be expected.’¹⁶⁹

The school’s first head master, Mr Pink agreed saying that, ‘the results of the examination are good considering that so many of the scholars belong to very

¹⁶⁶ LMA: X095/035, *Maryon Park*, Admission Registers (1896-1915), p. 1A

¹⁶⁷ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/M21/1, *Maryon Park*, Managers’ Report, (1897)

¹⁶⁸ ‘Return shewing [sic] the number of children on the roll in each standard and according to ages on the 25th March 1888,’ in LMA: SBL, *School Management Committee Report*, (1888), Bolingbroke Road, p.420. Lant Street, p. 425 Orange street, p.425

¹⁶⁹ LMA: LCC/EO/PS12/B50/26, *Bolingbroke Road*, Managers’ Report, (1894)

poor homes.’ Yet Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) argued that the lack of ‘success in this school is due to the lack of firm discipline and Mr Pink does not seem to have the power to secure this with the rough boys who attend the school.’¹⁷⁰ From the perspective of the inspector it was not that students failed to be disciplined *because* of their ‘poor’ backgrounds, but because the teacher had failed to use appropriate methods to effectively educate ‘rough boys’. With this disparity between the inspector’s aspirations for the boys and the realities of teaching them, Bolingbroke Road regularly received criticism from the Education Department, who determined the school’s annual grants.¹⁷¹ It would appear that the criteria used to determine Special Difficulty status (a low fee, low academic success and a low age of completion) were also seen to be part of the trials and tribulations of any ‘ordinary’ Elementary Board School.

The 1870 Education Act had been designed to develop alongside existing schools, but by adapting the Act to suit the current education system, rather than adapting the education system to suit the Act, it meant certain habits were continued that could not accommodate the social breadth of London’s new elementary intake. As shall be discussed in Chapter Three, under ‘payment by results’, for example, schools and their teachers were financially rewarded for good exam results. If a school had low grades then it would not receive a full educational grant and in turn teachers would receive a lower income.

¹⁷⁰ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/6/15, *Bolingbroke Road Group*, Minutes of Managers, April 1894 to September 1898, 4th November 1894, p. 30

¹⁷¹ *Bolingbroke Road Group*, 1894-1898, 4th November 1894, p. 30

By financially rewarding a school, for attendance and examination results, success was only acknowledged through the limited scope of academic achievement. Such funding worked when schools catered for similar social groups in similar areas, as it allowed for fair comparisons, but Elementary Board Schools were built in a range of socio-economic environments. Under this grant-system the diverse contexts in which some of London's teachers were working could not be acknowledged. Consequently, as Chapter three will examine further, when being assessed by the HMI, external factors, such as poverty, were not recognised to explain poor academic results, nor were the holistic approaches of teachers. The system did not, for example, acknowledge that in areas where families were reliant on seasonal work, the school population would be migratory as parents moved to where jobs were and where unpaid bills were not.¹⁷² Children who had inconsistent or poor attendance struggled to keep up with academic standards, lowering a school's exam results in the process.¹⁷³ But even for those who attended regularly the responsibilities of work, family and illness were not left outside the classroom. Teachers were left struggling to keep up with the needs of their students and the expectations of their inspectors.

In 1884 the SBL's School Management Committee began to recognise that under the payment by results system schools in poorer areas tended to gain poorer exam results and thus failed to achieve full educational grants, which led

¹⁷² 'Of the 207 names now (March 1908) on the roll, only 144 have been there for more than one year.' LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/49, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1908). Mr Pink head master of Bolingbroke Road disputed the HMI's claim that as the school remained 'weak' he should be replaced arguing the school's results were not due to poor management but 'the poor surroundings and migratory character of a large number of the children, and the very inconvenient structural arrangements of the school buildings.' See *Bolingbroke Road Group*, 1894-1898, 4th November 1894, p. 31

¹⁷³ 'boys belonging to migratory families are, of course, almost always backward,' see, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1908)

to a relatively high turnover in teachers.¹⁷⁴ In an attempt to acknowledge the perseverance of these teachers, some of these schools with low examination results were reclassified as being of “special difficulty.’ Head teachers would be paid £20 extra while teachers an extra £10. To qualify the school’s fee had to be 1d, children above the leaving age would be rare and there would be a high annual turnover students brought about by the nature of the neighbourhood rather than ‘any defect in the teacher’. As the former Board Member Thomas Gautrey admitted, this last factor proved particularly ‘insidious’ for managers to determine.¹⁷⁵ Of the 3 per cent of schools designated as Special Difficulty by the Board a quarter of these were in Southwark, the highest concentration in London.¹⁷⁶ In Borough both Orange Street and Lant Street had to contend with classes where up to two-sevenths of the children were working outside of the school, which meant they had ‘not much energy left for school work.’¹⁷⁷ Poverty amongst the scholars was rife: whereas only 4 per cent of students at the local Higher Grade School, Monnow Road, had failed to pay their 2-4d weekly fee within fourteen days, 23 per cent of children at Lant Street had struggled to pay their penny fee, while at Orange Street 30 per cent had failed to pay even after thirteen weeks.¹⁷⁸ Considering the equal levels of poverty exhibited at Bolingbroke, described above, however, part of this chapter will ask, what image did the Board have of Borough that helped to ensure both Orange Street, Lant Street and three other neighbouring schools were considered more in need

¹⁷⁴ In the space of just four years all 9 original teaching assistants at Orange Street school had left. Compare LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/1, *Orange Street*, School Board for London Inspector’s Report, (undated) with 1881, where ‘no less than twelve assistants have been working in the school during the year, only two of them remaining through the whole period.’ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/9, *Orange Street*, SBL Inspector’s Report, (1881)

¹⁷⁵ Gautrey, ‘*Lux Mihi Laus*’, p. 94

¹⁷⁶ 5 out of 33 Elementary Schools in Southwark were of special difficulty see SBL: *School Management Committee Report*, (1888), p. 455

¹⁷⁷ *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1908)

¹⁷⁸ ‘Return shewing [sic] the number of children whose fees were under remission and the number of weeks to which such remission extended, on the 25th March 1888,’ pp. 376-377 in SBL: *School Management Committee Report*, (1888), pp. 358-377

of special treatment than others and how did this shape the school's view of local families and their role within them?

The Higher Grade School specialised in schooling for children who were likely to pass the seventh standard that had been introduced under the 1882 Government Code. As shall be discussed further in Chapter Three, without additional staffing some teachers in ordinary and Special Difficulty Schools, who had been used to managing one class of Standard V, were until the creation of the Higher Grade School expected to manage the newly added Standards of VI and VII. Moreover many schools teaching these new Standards found they had to open a further class for children who had completed the VII Standard but had yet to reach their thirteenth birthday when they could leave. The SBL argued that schools should always seek to 'promot[e] a forward child more quickly than a dull one,' consequently to ease the 'rigidity of system' the Board began to establish and fund some existing Elementary Schools as 'higher standard schools.' By 1898 this resulted in 'most senior departments' in London having 'higher standards.'¹⁷⁹ The higher standard system alone, however, meant that 'teachers and managers' still only had 'limited powers of classification' making it difficult for the strengths and weaknesses of 'individual children not to be lost in the crowd.' What were needed, therefore, were schools which could hone a child's specific skill in academic, industrial or commercial work. In 1889 the Education Department acquiesced to the School Board's pressure and permitted the creation of Higher Grade Schools to meet this need. The Board then asked its members to list up to four existing schools,

¹⁷⁹ LMA: 22.05, SBL, *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June 1889-November 1889) pp. 632-633 and LMA: 18.7 (1), 'Report of the Education Committee for the year ended 31st March 1905' pp. 38-85 in *London County Council Annual Report of the Proceedings of the Council*, (1905), p. 45

in which special attention be given to the teaching of the higher standards; and that where such schools or departments are established or exist already, the parents of children attending Board Schools within half a mile radius be notified, on their children passing the sixth standard, of the existence and special suitability of such school...and that...no higher fee being charged to such child than was charged in the school from which he or she is removed.¹⁸⁰

By 1904 the London County Council began to manage Elementary Schools and there were 74 Higher Grade departments in London. Teachers received a higher salary than those working in Ordinary Elementary Schools in recognition of the demanding timetable that included: arithmetic, mathematics, experimental science, English subjects (including composition), history, geography, one foreign language, drawing, systematic physical exercises, 'and in addition, for girls, needlework for Standard VII, and singing.' Children and teachers were required to stay until five in the evening studying for their London County Council scholarship, which guaranteed the student a place at a local senior school or studying for their Oxford or Cambridge Local examination providing them with a certified level of achievement to show employers.¹⁸¹

By 1904 there was an average of 34,470 on the roll of the old, industrial riverside borough of Southwark (Image 2.2), with Monnow Road being one of four Higher Grade Schools scattered across the division.¹⁸² Situated to the east of Borough High Street, south of Bermondsey's docks and north of Old Kent Road's burgeoning thoroughfares Monnow Road opened in May 1874. Just off a leafy square, the immediate households surrounding the school were depicted on Charles' Booth Poverty Map as having 'good ordinary earnings' but it was

¹⁸⁰ *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June 1889 - Nov 1889), p. 633

¹⁸¹ 'Report of the Education Committee', (1905), p. 38

¹⁸² LMA: SBL/1500, London County Council (LCC), *Report of the School Management Committee of the Late School Board for London* (1904), pp. 203-219

by no means a suburban idyll with pockets of 'chronic want' spilling forth into the dark blue of 'the very poor' the further one walked from Monnow Road to the river's edge.¹⁸³

To the east, in Greenwich (Image 2.3), despite a roll of 65,817 – almost double the size of Southwark's – the division, which spread from the muddied docks of Deptford in the west to the open fields of Lewisham in the south-east, only had five Higher Grade Schools. Bloomfield Road was one of the two Higher Grades that covered the whole of the Woolwich to Plumstead area of the division.¹⁸⁴ Like Monnow Road, Bloomfield Road's immediate vicinity was one of 'comfortable' households, which had 'good gardens,' and where 'none [were] very poor.'¹⁸⁵ Set thirty minutes walk from Maryon Park, but still considered to be part of the same educational Division (Greenwich) Bloomfield was geographically and socially far away from Maryon Park's 'unfavourable' intake.

Like Greenwich, Chelsea was an economically diverse Division that began at the riverside with its industries of docks and warehouses, just to the west of Westminster it then spread upwards, towards Hampstead Heath and the suburban streets of Kilburn where clerks shop keepers, respectable artisans and transport workers could afford to settle. Here too the Board had opened five Higher Grade Schools. After the City and Southwark, however, Chelsea was the third smallest division in London with only 58,184 children on its school registers. Moreover unlike Monnow Road and Bloomfield Road, which both

¹⁸³ See Booth Archive Online, Charles Booth, Poverty Map (1889-99), <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/cgi-bin/do.pl?sub=view_booth_and_barth&args=534200,178680,1,large,0> (accessed 7.7.10)

¹⁸⁴ LCC, *Report of SBL* (1904), pp. 58-88

¹⁸⁵ Duckworth, 'Walk 78 Friday 18th May 1900 with PC Clyne' pp. 295-298 in Charles Booth, *The Streets of London: The Booth Notebook : South East* (Deptford Forum Publishing Ltd, London, 1997)p. 297

stood like post-compulsory islands amongst a sea of ordinary Elementary Board Schools, Kilburn Lane and Beethoven Street located in separate wards were still only four streets away from one another (Image 2.2).

Opposite Chelsea, south of the river, Lambeth West was one of the largest divisions in London with 84,028 on its roll and while Surrey Lane was the only one of its kind in the north-west of Battersea, with notable blocks of poverty, the division was not short of post-elementary institutions.¹⁸⁶ Surrey Lane, for example, was one of seven Higher Grade Schools. It was situated between Lavender Hill pupil-teacher centre in the south and Battersea Polytechnic to the east. In this part of London, as much as Charles Booth's poverty map was underlined with the blue ink of 'chronic want' it was also punctuated by the grey blocks of SBL training centres and Higher Grade Schools (Image 2.5).

Members of the SBL had initially chosen schools that were near the boundaries of their educational division to become Higher Grades perhaps because of the opportunities this offered to a greater number of parents. Yet no matter the size or distribution of the Higher Grade Schools discussed in this study, they all nestled amongst streets which Booth characterised as 'Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.'¹⁸⁷ As the managers of Beethoven Street put it the school 'provides for a neighbourhood [shared by Kilburn Lane, that is] mainly attended by a superior type of the working class.'¹⁸⁸ If a school was deemed Higher Grade because of attendance and academic record then these were also factors which correlated heavily with the economic status of the surrounding

¹⁸⁶ LCC, *Report of SBL* (1904), pp. 147-183

¹⁸⁷ For Kilburn Lane and Beethoven Street see Charles Booth, *Poverty Map* (1889-99), <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/cgi-bin/do.pl?sub=view_booth_and_barth&args=524389,182811,1,large,0> (accessed 7.7.10)

¹⁸⁸ *Beethoven Street*, Managers' Yearly Report, (1901), quoted in LMA: LCC/EO/PS/6/60, *Kensal Green Group*, Minutes of Managers, Sept. 1896 to Sept. 1902, p.175

inhabitants. Passing Standard V was only the first step towards completing elementary education at a Higher Grade School, as staying there for a further two years would ultimately involve sacrificing extra income as the child could not work and incurring higher outgoings as the school began to introduce uniforms and extra-curricular activities. By not charging extra for the tuition offered and including children based on academic merit, the Higher Grade School was meritocratic in principal, but in reality it was developed amongst the comfortable working-class and lower middle-class streets that could afford to sustain a child's education past the age of compulsory attendance.

Ordinary Elementary Schools were situated throughout London neighbourhoods, including in those areas which some head teachers saw as 'special difficulty.' By contrast Higher Grade status tended to be awarded to schools in more comfortable neighbourhoods despite being open to children of all backgrounds. It suggests the Board's expectations of a school and understanding of its surrounding environment, as articulated in its development of the elementary system conflicted with the daily economic realities of local areas. How then had the Board imagined the Elementary School and what had shaped their vision?

Visualising the Elementary School (1870 – 1873)

In the School Board for London's emblem (Image 2.6) a single angel of enlightenment stands on the steps of a neo-classical structure. Her arms open, she personally welcomes a girl and a boy who, bearing the weight of daily chores, hold each other closely. Above them a book lies open on the page that

reads the SBL's motto "Lux Mihi Laus" ("Light is my Glory"). Behind them stands a young, working man, possibly the children's father, their neighbour or even a future. He doffs his cap politely as he remains standing on the muddied ground of a chimney-stacked city, with a reliable hay-laden donkey by his side. The sky is brimming with stars.

Designed before the Board had even determined the number of children it would be providing for, the emblem visualised the aims and ideals of the 1870 Elementary Education Act. Each figure was lined in symbolism, where the idealised role of the teacher was married in harmony with the urban, working, family. Three years after the seal was designed just under a hundred school buildings had been commissioned by the SBL. Their design and evolution were documented by the Board's Architect, Edward Robert Robson in his 1873 publication, *School Architecture: Being Practical Remarks on the Planning Designing, Furnishing of School Houses*. Robson charted the European, English and American styles of architecture used in elementary and industrial schools and his subsequent designs for the School Board for London. Robson, born in Durham in 1835 to a father who was both builder and town mayor, had worked as an architect for the Corporation of Liverpool and co-designed a number of gothic churches before becoming chief architect for the newly formed School Board for London in 1871. Here he was to stay until 1884 when he was appointed by the Education Department as an architectural consultant. In his time with the Board he supervised the building of over 300 Elementary Schools in London and while the Queen Anne aesthetic of red and yellow bricks and white, high, gables were found throughout English Elementary Schools, Robson

established an architectural vocabulary which became synonymous with the School Board for London's prudent and progressive approach to education.

Robson did not want to 'revolutionise' the existing system, but rather like the Education Act itself he aimed to, 'develop still further the principles of English school planning.'¹⁸⁹ New schools would take inspiration from existing models that were shown to be beneficial to child, teacher, budget and site. *School Architecture* was published, however, in 1874 when the newly commissioned schools had been opened less than a year and while the book acknowledged that certain designs contained in the book had sometimes been modified when built, Robson would only hint at how the new schools were received by child, teacher and neighbour. Through an examination of *School Architecture* and the SBL's seal, imagined versions of London Elementary Schools will act as comparative backdrops to the realities of these new houses of education and the relationships found within them.

On 15th February 1871 an Education Committee was appointed by the Board to draw up a scheme of recommendations concerning the 'methods' and 'nature' of the newly provided Elementary Schools. The committee returned its findings in June suggesting that for every 500 children in a school there should be 16 members of staff, including one principal teacher, four assistant certified teachers, and eleven pupil teachers.¹⁹⁰ Pupil teachers could, however, be as young as twelve, thus in reality the SBL expected a ratio of one qualified

¹⁸⁹ Edward. R. Robson, *School Architecture: Being Practical Remarks on the Planning, Designing, Building, and furnishing of School Houses* (John Murray, London, 1874), pp. 5-6

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Huxley, 'Scheme of Education – First Report', pp. 155-162 in LMA: 22.05, SBL, *Minutes of Proceedings*, (Dec. 1870 - Nov. 1871), p. 157

teacher to every hundred scholars.¹⁹¹ Far from the individual attention suggested in the Board's motif, elementary teachers would need to find the child in a room full of children. For Robson and HMIs, it was the physical detail of the school that would encourage 'easy supervision' and therefore more 'effective teaching'.¹⁹²

'The young and the ignorant' Robson believed, could be easily swayed by their environment; the space of the school, its furniture and architecture were opportunities to create, therefore, 'public' exhibitions in 'good and tasteful designs as well as of superior workmanship.'¹⁹³ Robson's paternal, democratic vision mirrored the classical architecture depicted in the SBL's emblem, in itself so reminiscent of the public exhibition spaces being built in the centre of London throughout the Victorian period. In 1834 the National Gallery, with its neo-classical portico, opened in Trafalgar Square, close to the riches and seats of power, but still accessible to the poor and newly enfranchised inhabitants of London. In 1857, in the heart of Bloomsbury and on the cusp of Holborn, the British Museum's esplanades of artefacts were opened to the public, while its courtyard contained a quietly exclusive library, housed in the sacred architecture of a Roman temple. These imperial institutions, free to all and close to many, had established themselves as the educational jewels in the metropolis's crown. With their high ceilings and dormers, these public spaces

¹⁹¹ The Board stipulated, however, that class sizes would be limited to 80 in new school houses see, 'Report of the Works and General Purposes Committee', pp. 348-355, in *Minutes of Proceedings*, (Dec 1870 – Nov 1871), p. 355

¹⁹² Robson, *Architecture*, pp.4-5, see also, 'the room assigned to the large second standard is too small, and is over-crowded with desks seven rows deep,' LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/6, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1879). Also, 'The second, fourth and fifth classes, which happen to be occupying the best lighted rooms, are the most efficiently conducted.' LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/C31/27, *Lant Street*, HMI Report, (1909)

¹⁹³ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 360

shed light on the world's histories, its crafts, sciences and moralities. The Board Schools, as they would become known, had to do the same.

In 1871, before the Higher Grade or Special Difficulty Elementary Schools had been developed, the SBL provided a list of 'essential subjects' to be covered in the new schools, they included:

- a. Morality and Religion
- b. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic; English Grammar (in Senior Departments) and Mensuration [sic] (in Senior Boys' Schools)
- c. Object Lessons in 'physical science'
- d. The History of Britain
- e. Elementary Geography
- f. Elementary Social Economy
- g. Elementary Drawing, leading up to Mechanical Drawing
- h. Plain needlework and cutting out (in Girls' schools).

A short list of 'discretionary subjects' was published for 'advanced scholars', these were:

- a. Algebra and Geometry
- b. Latin or a Modern Language¹⁹⁴

The subjects would echo the content available in the national museums and libraries, where information was systematised and displayed. Inspectors encouraged teachers to adorn their classroom walls like galleries, exhibiting maps, paintings and diagrams.¹⁹⁵ Meanwhile separate libraries for Boys and Girls Departments were established in the new Elementary Schools and like their ticketed equivalent at the British Museum, they proved popular amongst

¹⁹⁴ *Minutes of Proceedings*, (Dec 1870 - Nov 1871), p. 159

¹⁹⁵ 'The walls of the Girls' School are rather bare. A few diagrams and pictures should be obtained.' LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/4, *Orange Street*, SBL Inspector's Report, (1878)

their exclusive public.¹⁹⁶ The reality of the classroom, however, in which teachers could encounter over ninety children, meant that in the first thirty years of the Education Act, it was not individual pamphlets and objects which dominated educational aids, as the inscribed open book of the SBL emblem suggested, but rather the blackboard. Object lessons, for instance, in which the material make up of an artefact would be exhibited, did not necessarily involve a physical example of the object itself, instead the teacher would chalk illustrations on the blackboard in an attempt 'to make the instruction attractive.'¹⁹⁷ The blackboard, with its portable, wipe-clean surface, allowed teachers to present their knowledge to a large class. With around twenty subjects to be taught in the senior departments of a school the blackboard was used to flit between subjects like a gallery visitor between paintings (see image 2.7 and Image 2.8).

The blackboard was a rewritable picture book that in the hands of an enthusiastic teacher focused the majority of a class's attention. In Charles Morley's 1891 *Studies in Board Schools*, for example, he describes a teacher at Southwark's Lant Street School,

going up to the blackboard, and drawing upon it a series of rough sketches — in a minute or two I made out a regulation workhouse, a Board School, a free library, a lamp-post, a water-cart, a dustman, a policeman, a steam roller, a navy or two, and a long-handled shovel stuck in a heap of soil.

¹⁹⁶ 'The books in the libraries are well read by the children,' LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/C31/22, *Lant Street, Managers' Report*, (1904)

¹⁹⁷ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/O/012/34, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1898); LMA: LCC/EO/PS/O/012/29, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1895)

Morley's teacher then gives a lesson in rates and democracy. The boys are asked about what they see on the board, how those institutions, people and services are hired and paid for and by whom,

Then the teacher turns to the blackboard, and across his rough sketch of the workhouse — with a hint of an infirmary in the background — wrote the words ' Poor Rate.'

'Now,' he went on, 'suppose the poor rate is two shillings in the pound, how much will Mrs. Smith have to pay? '

'Forty shillins,' came the answer from at least half a dozen, without any hesitation.

'And if the rateable value of Mrs. Jones' shop over the way is 10*l.*, how much will she pay ?'

'Twenty shillins.'

For every 'half a dozen' who answered 'without any hesitation', however, Morley noted that there were those who were 'not so keenly interested in these matters.'¹⁹⁸ The blackboard may have encouraged flexibility amongst some teachers, but it was also at the centre of many a dull lesson. By 1911 lessons in the Boys' Department at Lant Street were reported to be:

conducted mainly by oral lessons of a formal kind where the teacher necessarily does most of the talking. The scholars have accordingly little opportunity of learning to observe accurately, to express their own ideas or to use their hands. The object lessons heard in the lower classes were poorly illustrated and dull, and the attention of the children was fitful.¹⁹⁹

For the inspector of 1911 it was not, as Morley had it, that some children 'were not so keenly interested' in the content of the lesson, but rather they were not so interested in the *style* of the lesson. The shape of the classroom and its furniture had limited pedagogical development.

¹⁹⁸ Charles Morley, *Studies in Board Schools*, (Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1897) pp. 22-25

¹⁹⁹ LMA: LCC/EO/PS12/C31/28, *Lant Street*, HMI Report, (1911)

The extensive use of the blackboard in the classroom, in which a teacher could command a class with a flat board and a piece of chalk, was encouraged by the need to house as many children as possible as efficiently as possible. In 1871 The New Code of the Education Department stipulated that there should be eight square feet of flooring per child, but Robson argued that given ‘the health of the children...requires exceptional care in the crowded parts of the Metropolis’, a minimum of nine square feet would be imposed.²⁰⁰ Despite the SBL’s power of purchase, with over a half a million children to be accommodated space remained at a premium.

Architects needed to find an arrangement that accommodated large groups of children, with ‘the mistress being able to see the expression of face of each child, and each child that of the mistress.’²⁰¹ Moreover the arrangement would have to ‘insure comfort—not for sitting at or for standing in—but for both.’ Without comfort, Robson argued, the teacher’s ‘influence is impaired and his teaching lessened in value.’ The problem was that, ‘If the bench and desk be made comfortable for sitting at and be immovable, then the child cannot conveniently stand up in it. If made with sufficient space for standing in (the usual practice hitherto), then it is wretchedly uncomfortable for sitting at.’²⁰²

²⁰⁰ LMA: 22.05 SBL, School Board for London, *The Work of Three Years (1870–1873)*, p. 5

²⁰¹ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 188

²⁰² Robson, *Architecture*, p. 169

Before the 1870 Education Act, galleries (tiered seats) had been popular in church schools, where lessons were also a 'theatre for the religious instruction.'²⁰³

Galleries did not allow teachers easy movement between scholars, nor did they always provide a hard surface for children to write or draw on, they also lacked a back, so after a period of sitting left children, as Robson put it, 'wretchedly uncomfortable'.²⁰⁴ Galleries did, however, deal with some of the Board's primary concerns, that of accommodation and cost. Thus while largely redundant in the higher standards, where children needed to write easily, and despite Robson's concerns, galleries still appeared in architectural plans for Infant Departments and in at least one room of a Senior Department to allow head teachers to address large parts of a school simultaneously (Image 2.9).²⁰⁵ Indeed even where classrooms were fitted with desks rather than galleries, the principal of tiered, rigid, seating pervaded elementary classrooms. This was because under the *Rules for Planning and Fitting-up Schools* issued by the Education Department in 1870, desks had to stand in fixed rows, a maximum of five rows deep, graduating in height according to the ages of the scholars.²⁰⁶

The design which Robson suggested (Image 2.10) and that proved a popular choice amongst London's Elementary Schools was the dual desk system where

²⁰³ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 13

²⁰⁴ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 169

²⁰⁵ Within four years of Droop Street's opening, the head mistress felt she would be able to accommodate more children if the gallery room was dismantled and replaced with dual desks see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/6/57, *Kensal Green Group*, Minutes of Managers, July 1877 to January 1886, 23rd May 1881 p. 97. Galleries were still in the process of being replaced well into the Twentieth Century, see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/M21/28, *Maryon Park*, LCC District Inspector's Report, (1913)

²⁰⁶ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 361

a child could leave 'his place without disturbing his neighbour.'²⁰⁷ The Dutch design meant a class could be neatly fitted within the recommended five rows, whilst also allowing the teacher to observe each child individually. Space was further maximised by creating a lifting flap that could be folded up when the child needed to stand behind their desk, and a lower shelf to ensure there was adequate writing space.

In Robson's classroom plans (Image 2.11) the room is framed with windows which, he had argued, must be 'ample' and placed, whenever possible, in the north east of the room to 'throw the light in the right places,' instead of in 'either eyes of teacher and children.'²⁰⁸ These rooms were the illuminated, transparent, portico of the SBL's emblem made real. Sunlight was presented as key in determining a healthy scholar, too much and a classroom 'produced results of light and glare painful in hot summer weather, either to pupils or teacher, or both.' Too little and the room would induce stale air and poor eye-sight. In a well-lit classroom, Robson argued, the child could see and could be seen, while a room warmed by sunlight would encourage windows to be opened and in so doing 'promote ventilation' and healthy air. A well-lit room meant, therefore, that a child could learn more effectively, could grow more efficiently. For Robson rays of sunlight 'are to a young child very much what they are to a flower.'²⁰⁹ The Board's motto 'Light is my Glory' signified not just the light that would be shed on knowledge but on 'hygiene' and 'physical training' as well.²¹⁰ Light would flood out of the SBL's seal and into the plans of classrooms and

²⁰⁷ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 130. For uses of dual desks see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/6/14, *Bolingbroke Road Group*, Minutes of Managers, Sept. 1886 to March 1894, November 29th 1888, p. 72; Kensal Green Group, *Minutes*, 1877-1886, 23.5.1881, p. 97 As Robson had suggested, however, in some schools with higher standards, where classes were smaller, single desks were felt to be more appropriate, see LMA: LCC/EO/DIV2/BEE/LB/4, *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1901-13), 28.8.1902, p. 42

²⁰⁸ Robson, *Architecture*, pp. 5 & 167

²⁰⁹ Dr Cohn, 'Research into the effect of German classrooms on rates of Myopia,' quoted in, Robson, *Architecture*, p. 167, pp.177-178.

²¹⁰ Robson, *Architecture*, pp. 368

playgrounds; to enlighten the child the Board aimed to literally brighten up the child's world.

In *School Architecture*, there are two illustrations of the site for the Board's first school building in Old Castle Street, Whitechapel. In the first illustration (Image 2.12) depicted an unpaved dead-end, where a mix of decaying commercial and domestic premises created a general dimness and where work carts were abandoned, while people lazed under the shadows of washing lines.

In the second illustration (Image 2.13) the new school building creates a paved, clear, thoroughfare, where scholars politely line up, while a mother and child look up in awe and others attend to their daily tasks. The school may cast shadows, but it reflects sunlight in equal measure. This was the city as depicted in the SBL emblem where education rather than urban decay shaped people's priorities. The Board and its architect envisioned the Elementary Schools as buildings that would encourage entire neighbourhoods to look upwards, as Robson stated, 'school-houses are henceforth to take rank as public buildings.'²¹¹ These public buildings were not, however about providing a space where civilians could exert their influence collectively, but rather providing a space which would exert influence on the civilians.

²¹¹ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 2

Group Identity and Architectural Limits

Devoid of the 'ecclesiastical' tropes that had underpinned previous school designs, Robson's schools had lacked the large, municipal space of a church hall, instead they were set out as a series of individual classrooms, with little central space, other than the playground, for child, parent, neighbour and teacher to meet. Initial designs may have emulated the secular enlightenment of the new 'public' spaces like the British Library, but they also aped the exclusivity of such buildings, accommodating a select group of individuals. By the mid-1890s, when schools could no longer look to the fee as a reason for absenteeism, head teachers were beginning to express doubt as to how effective their school houses were in encouraging shared interests amongst staff, student and families. Teachers, for example, needed to be able to work as a team if individual lessons were to be in the interests of the child. As the head master of Southwark's Monnow Road Higher Grade School pleaded, upon his retirement in 1907, 'any past successes achieved and any useful work accomplished, are largely due to the devotion which members of the staff have displayed in carrying out their duties and in seconding his efforts on behalf of the boys.'²¹² The Board's emblem had depicted a single angel of enlightenment, but the success of a Board School was dependent on the skill and devotion of a staff of educators and their ability to work as one.

Prior to the 1870 Education Act the majority of school buildings had been funded by 'those interested in the establishment of the new school - whether Churchmen, Roman Catholics, or Dissenters of some denomination.' A church school was in many respects a very public building, developed alongside a

²¹² LMA: LCC/EO/DIV8/MON/LB/1, *Monnow Road Boys*, Logbook, (1895 – 1909), 17.5.07, p. 417

church's need to hold 'lectures, concerts, tea meetings' for fundraising or congregational purposes, they were 'useful' municipal spaces but not necessarily 'useful' classroom spaces.²¹³ Robson corrected this, by focusing the internal design of the school house primarily on the need to create an effective teaching environment and its external design on creating a coherent public identity. There was, however, a disconnect, for while the school's exterior was of a bold Queen Anne architecture, which said to rate payers and parents, 'popular education [is] worth its great price' that it has 'civic' purpose, much of the building's design, as already been shown through its high windows and walled boundaries were intended to offer 'protection' from the hubbub of *civic* life.²¹⁴

At least a third of the SBL's 511 Elementary Schools were originally built without halls, whether this was due to a lack of funding, time, space or foresight is not clear, but by the 1890s it was apparent that the school's order, public image and curriculum were all being negatively affected.²¹⁵ At the ordinary Elementary School Bolingbroke Road, in Battersea, Mr Pink blamed an apparent lack of discipline on 'the very inconvenient structural arrangements of the school buildings, which makes it almost impossible for a head master to do anything but devolve the order on his assistants.' The chairman of the school's managers was in agreement commenting, 'we have no reason to be sure that another head master would do better.'²¹⁶ It was the building itself which was the cause of the manager's uncertainty. Plans of Bolingbroke Road (Image 2.13) show the

²¹³ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 4

²¹⁴ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 2; 'protect', p. 334

²¹⁵ LMA: 1537, 'Memorandum – Improving old schools' (undated, unnumbered) in Miscellaneous Reports on Buildings (1877-1904)

²¹⁶ Bolingbroke Road, in *Bolingbroke Road Group*, 1894-1898, 4th November 1894, p. 31

building to be essentially one continuous room divided by partitions. Robson had argued that where a 'corridor [is] considered only as a passage [it] should be eliminated as far as possible, because it increases the expense and renders the through ventilation and sometimes the proper lighting of the school-room more difficult.'²¹⁷ Without a thoroughfare for classes to separately exit into, however, there existed a strange paradox in Bolingbroke Road, where lessons could never be private, in that the sound of each lesson would bleed into one another, but also could never be observed unobtrusively or simultaneously by an inspector or a head teacher. This made the daily life of the classroom a closeted affair in which Mr Pink would have found it difficult to compare and standardise teaching practices.²¹⁸

The uncertainty of Bolingbroke's managers would have been exacerbated by the lack of a hall, which could have allowed scholars and staff to be addressed as one coherent group. Halls embodied the idea that the child and the teacher were greater than the sum of their parts. At Lant Street managers complained that without a space, 'in which such useful gatherings of parents could be properly held [it] is much felt.' Moreover no hall meant when the public were invited to the 'distribution of [sic] prizes, school concerts etc.' such events had to be 'held away from school.'²¹⁹ Extra-curricular events, which parents and neighbours could participate in were always well attended, but if the school building was not equipped to deal with the attendance or interest of families and

²¹⁷ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 166

²¹⁸ For example of lessons intruding on other lessons see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/D35/47, Droop Street, HMI Report, (1909)

²¹⁹ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/C31/5, *Lant Street*, Managers' Report, (1895)

neighbours, then the 'civic purpose' of the school was limited.²²⁰ Halls provided a large enough environment that was conducive to shared experiences between school and families, moreover they secured a collective identity within the school itself, with Southwark's Chief Inspector declaring at the opening of Lant Street's halls that they had brought 'unity to the school, preventing it being a mere series of classes, and made it one living whole.'²²¹

In 1894 Monnow Road Higher Grade School had also lacked a central hall and as a result 'the Drill in the Girls and Infants Departments' was considered by the HM Inspector to 'suffer...seriously.'²²² Ling's system of free standing exercises, or Swedish Drill, had been introduced in 1879, because it was thought that by 'providing systematised exercise of all the muscles in turn, a harmonious development of the whole body is secured, without violent exercise, and with a precision of movement.'²²³ Drill became a reoccurring theme in promotional material (Image 2.15 and Image 5.1) and public events, exhibiting children standing together as one. SBL-wide Drill competitions, for example, were hosted in the Royal Albert Hall, where children would take part in mass demonstrations that paid tribute to 'the board that had introduced the system and the teachers that had carried it out.'²²⁴ Drill enabled schools to present what their buildings did not: a series of individual parts that could be developed in unison to create an effective 'whole.' At the heart of the frustrations expressed by teachers and inspectors towards the lack of halls and the commitment to

²²⁰ For further examples of event attendance see, 'the interest taken by parents and children in the work of the school, was greatly promoted by the public distribution of numerous prizes,' LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/35, *Kilburn Lane*, Managers' Report, (1905); or, 'many teachers and parents were present and took great interest in the game,' LMA: LCC/EO/DIV9/SUR/LB/3, *Surrey Lane Girls*, Logbook, (1905-1913), 3.7.1908, p. 82

²²¹ Loose newspaper cutting, 21/12/01, in LMA: LCC/EO/DIV8/LAT/LB/1, *Lant Street Boys*, Logbook, (1901-1913)

²²² LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/M41/20, *Monnow Road*, HMI Report, (1894)

²²³ LMA: 22.05 SBL, *Report of the School Board for London*, (1889-1890), p. 49

²²⁴ Duke of Cambridge quoted in Nineteenth Century British Newspapers Archive Online (NCBNAO): 'School Board Drill Competition,' *The Morning Post*, (Thursday July 18 1889), p. 3

promoting Drill was the idea that the child was part of something bigger, part of an existing community, likewise school buildings had begun to be seen by managers and teachers as not needing to be set apart from the surrounding neighbourhood but be seen to be part of it. What role then had the Board originally envisioned for an Elementary School in a local community and how did the local community envision the school?

Building a School and Shaping a Neighbourhood: Orange Street

The Board decided in May 1871 that,

without waiting for the completion of the inquiries into the efficiency of the existing Schools, and into the social and religious condition of the whole of the Metropolis, they would undertake to provide forthwith a limited number of Schools in various divisions of London, where the deficiency is already ascertained to be great, and where there is no doubt that large provision for public Elementary Education must hereafter be made by the Board.

Under compulsory purchase twenty sites were chosen across the nine Board

Divisions as follows:

Chelsea	1
Finsbury	3
Greenwich	1
Hackney	2
Lambeth	1
Marylebone	4
Southwark	4
Tower Hamlets	3
Westminster	1

The sites had initially been settled on according to the 'local knowledge' of divisional members and the ease at which a site could be transformed into a

school.²²⁵ In three years 99 school houses had been commissioned and by the time the LCC took over in 1904 the Board had built a total of 513 schools in the following divisions:

City	3
Chelsea	48
Finsbury	60
Greenwich	69
Hackney	63
East Lambeth	52
West Lambeth	75
Marylebone	37
Southwark	33
Tower Hamlets	64
Westminster	7 ²²⁶

As the distribution in school houses between 1871 and 1904 suggests, London's population and needs changed dramatically in these thirty years. Whilst some divisions would swell, others shrank. Southwark had been considered a key over-populated and under-educated division in 1871, its child population was overflowing with the 'unlettered boys and girls' that were seen to be the Board's 'first task' and so were immediately assigned four schools.²²⁷ Most employment in Southwark was piecemeal, and labour-intensive, wages were so negligible that all members of the family took part in bringing in an income.²²⁸ The seasonal nature of much of the work meant that much of the

²²⁵ Report of the Statistical Inquiries Committee, 26th June 1871', pp.184-185 in *Minutes of Proceedings*, (Dec 1870 – Nov 1871), p. 184

²²⁶ LCC, *Report of SBL* (1904), p. xxxviii

²²⁷ Dr P.B. Ballard, 'Introduction: the work of the London School Board' pp.1-14, in Gautrey, '*Lux Mihi Laus*' p. 9

²²⁸ Occupations of female family members (aged eleven to fifty-eight) who occupied Princes Back Row alone, included: Laundress, Puller at Furrieries, General Domestic Servant, Hat Box Maker Labourer, Charwoman, Monthly Nurse, General Hawker. See Southwark Local History Library (SLH): RG10/595, Folio 79-81, *Princes Back Row*, Census (1871) RG10/595, Folio 44-62, *Orange Street*, Census (1871) and. See also 'Mrs Burgwin Examined' pp. 113-126 in *Royal Commission on the Workings of the*

population had always been nomadic, moving around London and its surrounding environs as work became available. By the time the LCC took control of Board Schools in 1904, however, Southwark was so under populated, around Blackfriars Bridge where living quarters had been systematically replaced with warehouses and small factories that schools in the area were merging to fill capacity.

One of the first new school houses to be completed in Southwark was Orange Street in 1874. Until 1871 the site accommodated 160 people, a third of whom were children, in sixteen rented properties known as 'Princes Back Row.'²²⁹ The school that replaced them was built to accommodate 809 pupils with 297 Infants on the ground floor, 250 boys on the first floor and 262 girls on the top floor. It was expanded in 1892 to make room for a potential 200 new scholars. In reality, however, the school's population peaked at the beginning of 1895 with only 953 pupils on its roll.²³⁰ At the turn of the Twentieth Century, as railway fares became cheaper, creating housing developments further south and job opportunities further east, the population in west Southwark began to disperse. By 1909 Orange Street's population had diminished to such an extent that the Infant's Department was able to house two temporary classes for 'mentally defective' children and still find room to welcome a further 100 boys, 106 girls and 53 infants from the discontinued, neighbouring Elementary Board School, Belvedere Place.²³¹ The history of Orange Street School's development, the ebbs and flows of its population and architecture, reveal how Robson's

Elementary Education Acts, (Cross Report) Second Report, 1887, (C.5056), London, Stationary Office, 17128, p. 120 and 17188, p. 117

²²⁹ SLH: Folio 79-81, *Princes Back Row*, Census (1871)

²³⁰ *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1895)

²³¹ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/50, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1910) and LMA: LCC Education Committee, Minutes of Proceedings, April- June 1909, p. 872

architectural plans and the School Board for London's aspirations were actualised and compromised when faced with the demographic realities and economic environment of a London neighbourhood.

Just under half a mile from the river situated equidistant between the markets of the New Cut and Lower Marsh in the west and London Bridge and Borough High Street in the east, Orange Street was surrounded in the 1870s by industrial and domestic premises (Image 2.16). Its residents would have breathed in an air thick with soot and oil from the surrounding engineering works, candle manufacturer and the steam trains that charged along the omnipresent viaducts. Tiny animal hairs would escape into the mouths of the inhabitants as fur was ripped from skin in factories and hat manufacturers. Sawdust sank into the muddied streets outside the timber yard and soaked up the haze of alcohol that drifted from the seven public houses surrounding Princes Row.

Six years before the Board had bought up part of Orange Street the weekly paper *Peeping Tom: A journal of Town Life*, described the surrounding streets as 'crowded, noisy' and 'dirty' where, 'shop-keepers are a peculiarly lazy, indolent, dozy, dead-alive looking class'.²³² By the time *Peeping Tom* had published their account in 1865, the area had been established in the minds of a literate public, as a place infested with salacious characters by Charles Dickens. In 1839 Bill Sykes fled to Jacob's Island just east of Borough in *Oliver Twist*, in 1850 David Copperfield's money was stolen just southwest of Orange

²³² SLHL:12254, Anonymous, 'London Concert Rooms, Borough Music Hall, Union Street' pp.17-18 *Peeping Tom*, Vol. 3, (1865), p. 17

Street and in 1857 Marshalsea, the debtor's prison in *Little Dorritt*, was just nearby.²³³

Southwark's dark fictions in the mid-Victorian period were founded in real lives. *The Standard* reported in 1855, for example, that Eliza Fee, who lived at 16 Orange Street, had become a witness to a local murder. Eliza had been 'sitting up with a neighbour' into the early hours of one hot, late-September night, when they had been interrupted by the 'great noise of a female screaming.' On opening the window Eliza saw her neighbour, 25 year old, Mary-Anne Lattemore, fighting with her partner, the 24 year old, George Pembley. The young man was known by Eliza as a petty thief, having stolen 'several pairs of boots' and now Mary-Anne was fighting with him for having stolen sheets from a neighbour. As she ran towards Eliza's home shouting, 'You English Sassenach, I would like to tear your liver out!' she threw mud at him. George followed Mary-Anne striking her in the face with 'his closed fist.' She fell against an iron post 'lifeless.'²³⁴ Transported beyond the neighbourhood – filling newspapers, journals and books – the dirt and crime that fuelled published accounts of Orange Street, smothered visions of poor London with a criminal, ignorant air.

In 1839 Dickens had described the aftermath of Nancy's murder in the tiny, shabby east-end room she had shared with Bill Sykes:

²³³ David Perdue, 'Charlesdickenspage.com', 1997-2010, <http://charlesdickenspage.com/dickens_london_map.html>, (accessed: 8/6/10)

²³⁴ NCBNAO: 'The Alleged Murder of a Female in Southwark', *The Standard*, (Issue 9707), (Thursday September 20th 1855), [unnumbered]

The sun – the bright sun that brings back not light alone but new life and hope and freshness to man – burst upon the crowded city in clear and radiant glory. Through costly coloured glass and paper mended window through cathedral dome and rotten crevice it shed its equal ray. It lighted up the room where the murdered woman lay. It did. He tried to shut it out but it would stream in. If the sight had been a ghastly one in the dull morning what was it now in all that brilliant light!²³⁵

The SBL wanted to take the ‘brilliant light’ of their motto and make it physical, make it permanent. The building of Orange Street School was illustrated (Image 2.17) as if it had ‘burst upon the crowded’ streets of Borough in ‘clear and radiant glory’, but just as it would ‘bring new life and hope and freshness to man,’ the building of Orange Street would also expose the ‘ghastly’ state of the environment and the limitations that lurked in the shadow of the Elementary School.

When Robson began designing Orange Street School in 1873 he noted how:

The confined nature of the neighbourhood, the narrowness of the streets, the desirability of allowing the rays of sun to enter the playground, all suggested that the building should be set back from the street to the furthest extremity of the land. As it happens, this arrangement also enables the passer-by to see the building better than if it had been brought up to the street-line.²³⁶

By setting the building back from the street ensuring light would shine down on the playground and on the school, the building would expand the physical and mental horizon of the inhabitants. It would, ‘with equal ray’, however, shed light upon the reality of the Board’s undertaking.

The Board had situated the early schools in what Robson described as ‘the vilest slums to be found in the whole metropolis.’ Across the river in Eagle’s

²³⁵ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Penguin, London, 2002, [1837-38]) p. 397

²³⁶ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 332

Court, Clerkenwell, for example, he noted how, 'so lawless were some of its inhabitants, that on the first commencement of the new school-house...it became necessary to protect the workmen from violence by a police guard.'²³⁷ When Robson had envisioned Orange Street it had 'open iron railings' between playground and street, but in practice he felt it necessary to build a 'high brick wall' so as to 'afford better protection in so rough a neighbourhood.'²³⁸ He may have wanted the 'passer-by' to be enlightened by an educational landscape, but for those who disturbed this vision, the school needed to keep them firmly out. Upon opening Orange Street, however, Mrs Burgwin, the head of the Girls Department until 1891, and her fellow head teachers, John Stanton of the Boys Department and Fanny Wayne of the Infants, quickly found that in order to educate their scholars in academic subjects, the school had to educate itself in the lives of its children. For example, when the school opened Burgwin found that the children were, 'so weakly and so restless, and that if I did succeed in getting them to attend they slept...I called in a doctor to talk about the children' Burgwin continued, 'and he said, "well they are decidedly hungry."' The doctor's diagnosis meant Burgwin felt obliged from as early as 1874 to 'have provided dinners for them quite free.'²³⁹ Robson had wanted to provide children with 'protection in so rough a neighbourhood,' but no matter the height of the wall, he could not 'shut it out,' for Burgwin the answer was to face the 'ghastly sight' head on.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 315

²³⁸ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 334

²³⁹ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17170 p. 117

²⁴⁰ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 334, Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, p. 397

In 1886 Mrs Burgwin was called as a witness to the Cross Commission which, as shall be shown in Chapter Four, was examining the workings of the Elementary Education Acts. She was asked to discuss the effect Orange Street School had on the area and how she had made it her duty to know what held her scholars back. Burgwin visited the homes of local families. She knew whose parents were out of work, who could not pay a fee and she was generally sympathetic about the plight of those families unable to send their child to school.²⁴¹ Faced with poverty-ridden excuse after poverty-ridden excuse, she felt 'obliged' to teach not just the children but the families, as a whole, 'self-respect'. Poverty, she argued, was no excuse for having 'pitched everything out of the window' or for using 'bad language.' At Christmas curtains were distributed to the families to hang in their windows, people now felt 'a sense of shame' she claimed, '...if they attempt[ed] to come near you dirty.' She gave 'help with clothes' to 'teach the children to feel a little pride in their dress in a school of that character.' By 1886 Burgwin noted how mothers now came to talk to her wearing aprons, and 'provided the people are sober...whatever quarrel is going on and they will be using bad language, if they see a teacher coming up the street it is instantly stopped and they would not give me a vile word as I pass them.'²⁴² If Burgwin considered the school to be 'a centre of humanising influence,' however, her descriptions suggest that in spite of her efforts people were still quarrelling, drunk and dirty. It was not that the inhabitants of Orange Street had become less brutal since the school had been built, but that the constant interaction between the school and its surroundings meant that early assumptions about so 'rough a neighbourhood' were

²⁴¹ 'I go carefully morning and afternoon into the reasons of the absences, and make it a very strong point in the school, and I really do find scarcely an unreasonable excuse given.' Burgwin, Cross Report, 17065, p. 114

²⁴² Burgwin, Cross Report, 17310 and 17310, p. 121

complicated. Gradually and unevenly, some inhabitants came to be seen as not just argumentative but also meek, confident but ashamed, caring but callous. It was not that they were humanized but that they were seen to be human.

Rights and Choices: Parent-Teacher Relations (1874 – 1914)

Burgwin's suggestion that there was a change in attitudes among local parents towards the teachers of their children, reveals that just as the school was assessing its neighbours, they too were judging the school as worthy of respect, scorn, or both. This two-way process is further illustrated by the implementation of two of the Board's policies across the elementary system: first the handling of school fees and absenteeism and second the regulation of corporal punishment. These issues exposed the priorities and values of both the school and the teacher; they forced mothers and fathers to justify their actions but encouraging both teacher and parent to define and assert their role in family life.

London Elementary Schools, as we have seen, kept records of the number of absentees and, until the abolition of fees in 1891, the number of children paying a school fee. Both Orange Street in Southwark and Bolingbroke Road in Lambeth West had high levels of absenteeism and, as the fee could be waived, high levels of remittance. Parents, whose children did not attend school, had to make their case to the head teacher and managers as to why the child's home circumstances prevented it from attending or paying for school. They had to prove their poverty worthy of sympathy. For head teachers the board offered flexibility about how to determine such cases. To waive the fee the SBL insisted that the parents be interviewed, usually by (or examined in front of) a committee

made up of Board members, the school's managers and head teachers, but this formal approach wasn't a prerequisite. At Orange Street, for example, Burgwin considered that at least one third to be in such poor circumstances that she felt the committee put an unnecessary strain on the family. After all, she continued, in the case, 'where we have a man earning 18s a week and there are seven children in the family...we did not require that man to attend before us' because she argued, 'I knew his wages. I know the family very well in the school.'²⁴³ Burgwin recognised that absenteeism and remittance were intertwined, arguing that 'the child who pays is possibly the better off child, and so would attend more regularly, because of her better home circumstances.' This did not prevent her from suggesting, however, that one third of families 'shirked the payment,' through either unauthorised absences or through succeeding to convince the Division's sub-committee that their child should be allowed to work 'half-time' at school and half-time in employment. While Burgwin sympathised with those who pleaded remittance, she thought 'half-time is a burden to the little thing' and told the Committee, any parent who would choose to seek a wage for their offspring over a waiver was being, 'very unkind to their children.'²⁴⁴

At Bolingbroke Road, the ordinary Elementary School in Battersea, ambivalence towards family poverty could be seen in its various approaches to absenteeism. The school was commissioned in the original cohort of sites by the Board, because the area was so 'notorious' for its lack of formal education and secure jobs that the SBL claimed 'the deficiency is already ascertained to

²⁴³ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17392, p. 124 and 17232, p. 119

²⁴⁴ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17442, p. 126

be great.²⁴⁵ It opened its L-shaped ground floor to Boys and Infants on 1st December 1873 and its first floor rooms for Girls the following month. Built for just over a 1000 children Bolingbroke Road lay close to the river, opposite streets which, according to the school's managers 'would have promptly' been described as 'Little 'ell' by the local children.²⁴⁶ Mr and Mrs Pink who, respectively, for some twenty years, ran Bolingbroke Road's Boys and Infants Department, became well-known by Board Members for taking a sympathetic approach to their school's surroundings. In 1894, for example, three years after the school had stopped charging a fee, money and attendance still remained an issue for local families. 'many of the boys of Standard III to VI' the managers reported, 'have little jobs as milk-boys, newspaper-boys and the like, which makes them unavoidably late and irregular, but with which it would be a great pity to interfere.' Instead the Pinks attempted to encourage good attendance through a regular prize distribution of 'books, toys, dolls and...sweets.'²⁴⁷ This approach was in stark contrast, to the Board's early handling of absenteeism. In 1878 the *Morning Post* reported that,

Robert Frost, of Elche-Street, Battersea, was summoned by Captain Pasley [sic] for not sending three children to school. The defendant did not appear, but he was represented by a woman who said she was the grandmother of the children and the wife of the defendant. The relationship of the parties was explained to the magistrate, from which it appeared that the defendant married a widow who had a daughter, the latter afterwards bearing him three children. Captain Pasley said the defendant was the stepfather, step-grandfather, and father of the children. Mr Bridge said the wife was the grandmother, step-grandmother, and stepmother. Captain Pasley observed that it was a remarkable case. He said all the parties were living together. A Visitor proved that the children, 11, 8, and 5, did not attend school. The defendant's wife said she could not send them when she had not the

²⁴⁵ 'Report of the Statistical Inquiries Committee' (1871), p. 184; *Bolingbroke Road, Managers' Yearly Report*, (1894)

²⁴⁶ *Bolingbroke Road, Managers' Report*, (1894)

²⁴⁷ *Bolingbroke Road, Managers' Report*, (1894)

money. Mr Bridge said they must go. He made an order for the children to attend Bolingbroke Road Board School.²⁴⁸

Bolingbroke Road had been opened just under four years when the Frost family were compelled to defend and explain themselves. Just as the case had been for the two-thirds of children at Orange Street, family income was a struggle. Many families at Bolingbroke Road were migratory moving along the riverside as work became available. For fathers who could find local employment it was typically seasonal, unskilled labour.²⁴⁹ As long as Bolingbroke Road was charging a fee, 40 per cent of children failed to attend, so however extraordinary Mr and Mrs Frost's domestic situation may have seemed to the magistrate, the three children were statistically far from 'remarkable.'²⁵⁰ These were the shirkers Mrs Burgwin of Orange Street thought 'unkind', but Mrs Frost reasoned they had no money, therefore, no choice but not to send them to school. She found out, however, that with no money, they had no choice *but* to send them to school. As much as the Education Act aimed to ensure parental choice, its by-laws of compulsion meant that it was only a choice for those who had already been sending their child to school. For those parents not accustomed to the habits of schooling the Elementary School challenged rather than asserted their parental authority.

The challenge teachers presented to the authority of the family was acutely played out in teachers' use of corporal punishment and parents' attitudes towards it. As discussed in Chapter One from its inception the SBL had been aware the school and its staff could be seen by some families as a rival. To limit

²⁴⁸ NCBNAO: 'Police Intelligence: Wandsworth,' *The Morning Post*, (Issue 33145), (Friday September 20 1878), p. 7

²⁴⁹ *Bolingbroke Road Group*, 1894-1898, 4th November 1894, 10th October 1894, p. 26

²⁵⁰ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B50/18, *Bolingbroke Road*, HMI Report, (1889)

this image the power of the classroom teacher was restricted by the SBL adamantly maintaining that corporal punishment could only be inflicted by the head teacher. Parents would be informed of the child's punishment through a written note and could ask to witness it. Teachers were only able to administer the punishment themselves if they received permission from the head teacher first, who would then witness the punishment as if on behalf of the parent. Many teachers, notably the London Teachers Association, whose membership was almost 20,000 by 1910 ('the largest association of its kind in the British Empire') took issue with the rigidity of the system.²⁵¹ They called upon the Board and its successor the LCC (who slowly agreed to their demands) to make the rules more flexible about who, when and how punishment could be administered.²⁵²

In all the schools discussed in this study when complaints about corporal punishment did occur, in the main it was when teachers had not sought the express permission of the head teacher. In July 1876, for example, Edward Ware a teacher in the Boys Department at Orange Street was summoned to Southwark Police Court to face charges of assault of the 'delicate-looking' ten year old boy Cowney.²⁵³ At around 3pm on Friday afternoon, just before the school would close for the weekend Cowney – who sat in 'fifth class or first division' – was caught asking to look at 'a picture' that his brother had sneaked

²⁵¹ Board of Education, 'Reports from Universities and University Colleges: Special Reports on Educational Subjects' Vol. II, pp. 76-98, in Paul Monroe (ed.) *A Cyclopaedia of Education* (MacMillan Group, London, 1918) p. 78

²⁵² For further discussion of the attitudes of the LTA and the LCC towards corporal punishment see Imogen Lee, 'Negotiating responsibility: Ideas of protecting and disciplining the child in London schools 1908-1918' pp. 78-97 in *Crimes and Misdemeanors: Solon online Journal* 3/2 (November 2009), pp. 89-90

²⁵³ The boy's first name is found in two sources, both newspapers, one of which has his name as John Cowney see NCBNAO: 'Orange Street Corporal Punishment,' *Daily News*, (Issue 9436), (Thursday July 20 1876), p. 3 and the other which has it as William Cowney, see NCBNAO: 'Orange Street corporal punishment,' *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (Issue 1757), (Sunday July 23 1876), p.4

into the classroom. Without gaining the head master's permission, Ware ordered Cowney to stand, hold out his hand, which Ware proceeded to cane, and 'after that took hold of [the boy] by the left arm, and threw him on his left side on to the desk, and then he hit him all over his legs.'²⁵⁴ By Monday, when the local medical officer was called by Cowney's mother to examine her son, he was found to have 'blue marks about his body, and his fingers were bruised and had blood marks upon them.' Moreover he was in a 'high state of fever, no doubt from the injuries he had received.' The medical officer considered, however, the child's background to be as much to blame for the severity of the injuries, arguing the boy had always been 'delicate...ill-fed' and living in 'dirty conditions' factors which would only worsen injury.²⁵⁵

Mr Ware's actions had a brutal effect on the body of the child but these were not the only bruises found on the boy. The doctor also found 'one mark on the shoulder, one long mark down the back and down the thigh, whilst there were some on the front of the legs.' Newspapers reported that these had been sustained ten days earlier when Mr Stanton, the then head master of Orange Street had punished Cowney for truanting. In this event the boy's mother fully consented to the punishment and asked to witness it.²⁵⁶ Thus it was not necessarily that Ware had just been overly rough with Cowney, but that by not giving the parents opportunity to witness the punishment, by not paying respect to their wants, Ware was perceived not to have punished the boy's disobedience but assaulted the mother's rights.

²⁵⁴ 'Orange Street', *Daily News*, p.3

²⁵⁵ NCBNAO: 'Orange Street', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, pg. 4

²⁵⁶ NVBNAO: 'Orange Street', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, pg.4

In February 1877 a neighbouring Board School was opened two streets south-east of Orange Street. Lant Street, like its neighbour charged a penny a week for every child in attendance. Pupils came from the same streets and family backgrounds as those at Orange Street. Fathers who could find work were mainly labourers, porters, sailors, bricklayers, with the odd one securing work as a policeman.²⁵⁷ Just as Orange Street had been, Lant Street was recognised by its managers as being in a 'low locality' and by the Board as one of the few schools in The Capital to be of special difficulty.²⁵⁸ And just like Orange Street, the work of the school and the actions of its teachers were discussed beyond the confines of local families. In 1897 Charles Morley published *Studies in Board Schools*, journalistic vignettes which documented the individual efforts and diverse communities of the work of the SBL for London, which were first serialised in the *Daily News* in 1896. Morley's account of Lant Street's handling of parent-teacher relations shows how in order to succeed schools in 'low localities' had to be seen to respond to the parents. Morley, for example, recalled how Mr Rudd, a haddock-smoker in Borough, having heard that his son, Teddy, had been caned by a teacher at Lant Street,

strode [down to the school]...in a towering temper. His rights as a Briton had been infringed. He had been metaphorically trampled on through his son. The class was suddenly startled by a thundering at the door, and in he walked with fiery face, and, shaking his fist at the teacher's face, demanded an explanation. "Don't you ever do it again don't you ever do it again!" he cried....He cooled down in a day or two, and in his calmer moments accepted the explanation, apologised for his hastiness, and gave Teddy another hiding.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ X095/403, *Lant Street Mixed*, Admission and Discharge Register, (1910-1922)

²⁵⁸ For examples of 'difficult' and 'difficulties' see *Orange Street*, SBL Inspector's Report (undated); *Orange Street*, SBL Inspector's Report, (1878); *Orange Street*, SBL Inspector's Report, (1881); LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/13 *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1883). 'The difficulties of this school are very great indeed,' LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/17, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1886). 'This difficult school,' LMA: LCC/EO/PS/O/012/20, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1888).

²⁵⁹ Morley, *Studies*, p. 54

Parental complaints were much lower in schools where parents had felt their demands were listened to. In Bloomfield Road Higher Grade School in Woolwich, for example, there was 'great anxiety among the parents to get their boys admitted.'²⁶⁰ In a twenty year period not a single parent complained to the school about the treatment of their child.²⁶¹ For those who were not successful in gaining a place at such a school, or for those whose children had been compelled to attend in spite of family income or in spite of their domestic circumstances, there had been no sense of choice. To redress the balance, therefore, when a teacher failed to consult or inform a parent of impending punishment, parents took it upon themselves to question or indeed complain. In complete contrast to Bloomfield Road, one of Woolwich's ordinary Elementary Schools, Maryon Park, for example, received eight complaints in just over five years.²⁶² Parents were drawing a line as to where they believed the school's authority ended and theirs began.

Engaging with Parents, Competing with Schools

At Lant Street Mr Rudd, who had strode into his son's school insisting that the teacher had no right to chastise his son, may have wanted ultimate say in the disciplining of Teddy, but he had no qualms about the school's academic role. The school's pioneering 'teachers at home to the parents' evenings (open evenings), in which alongside 'exercises in writing; exercises in arithmetic; maps and coloured drawings; boxes for soap, stands for tooth-brushes, trays for cards, boxes, picture frames, and a hundred other bits of skilful carpentry...' Mr and Mrs Rudd could be found listening to their son's prize exercise in

²⁶⁰ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B49/24, *Bloomfield Road*, Managers' Report, (1894)

²⁶¹ See LMA: LCC/EO/DIV6/BLO/LB1-2, *Bloomfield Road Boys*, Logbook, (1906-1913) and LMA: LCC/EO/DIV6/BLO/LB/6, *Bloomfield Girls*, Logbook, (1913-1928)

²⁶² See Lee 'Negotiating responsibility,' p. 91

composition. 'Turning the precious article over and over, upside down, down side up; and, as Teddy Rudd was not present, very loudly...both sang his praises.' Teddy's parents relished the way the school had nurtured his son's imagination, for 'what's the good o' eddication' Rudd argued, if the school couldn't teach his son to think for himself?²⁶³ Mr Rudd's positive response to the work of his child and the 'large number of the parents' who attended Lant Street's open evenings, suggest that families in one of the 'poorest part of Southwark' were fundamentally interested in education.²⁶⁴ Lant Street's open evenings were considered, therefore, to be a 'benefit' to teacher-parent relations because by 'having the work of their children and of the school carefully explained to them,' mothers and fathers were found to be 'evidently glad' to share in, rather than be alienated by, academic achievement.²⁶⁵

North of the river far from Lant Street's haddock smokers, Bolingbroke Road's 'little hell' or the complaints of Maryon Park and Orange Street's parents, the managers of Kilburn Lane burst with satisfaction that their Higher Grade School was attracting, 'a preponderance of well brought up pupils, encouraged by enlightened parents to regard their teachers as their best friends.'²⁶⁶ The school, which had opened in 1885, was populated with the offspring of skilled labourers, mechanics, foreman, clerks and grocers. Three years after Morley described how on some evenings the school of Special Difficulty, Lant Street, had kept its doors open until eight, to give parents the chance 'to see what the

²⁶³ Morley, *Studies*, p. 53-55

²⁶⁴ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/C31/2, *Lant Street*, Managers' Report, (1894) and *Lant Street*, Managers' Report, (1895)

²⁶⁵ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17442, p. 126; LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/C31/8, *Lant Street*, Managers' Report, (1897) and *Lant Street*, Managers' Report, (1895)

²⁶⁶ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/22, *Kilburn Lane*, Managers' Report, (1899); fathers' occupations included, Grocer, Postman, Porter, Breeches Maker, Grocer, Clerk, Stone mason, Warehouse leader see LMA: X095/132, *Kilburn Lane Infants*, Admission and Discharge Register, (1892-36)

Board School is doing for their offspring,' Kilburn Lane Higher Grade School began holding regular events 'for interesting parents in the work of the school.'²⁶⁷ There were not only onsite displays for 'parents and friends' and 'many an old pupil,' but children could also 'take home some of their best work and exercises for parents' inspection.²⁶⁸ Such demonstrations had begun in schools like Lant Street where the need to interest the parents was not just about proving the value of regular schooling, but creating common ground between teachers and parents through their shared achievements in shaping a child. What purpose, then, did parental engagement play in a school like Kilburn Lane? Rather than being viewed by its staff as 'the centre of moral influence,' it was considered to be 'best friends' with local families, the implication being that school and parent complemented each other's role.²⁶⁹

By 1884 open evenings had begun in the Infants' Department of Chelsea's Droop Street the ordinary Elementary School that sat four streets south east of Kilburn Lane and directly under Beethoven Street two streets north. The socio-economic backgrounds of these two latter Higher Grade Schools were broadly similar, with all three schools having to draw their scholars from the surrounding area.²⁷⁰ In addition each of these schools were regularly marked as 'excellent' by HMIs.²⁷¹ Opened in 1877, however, making it the eldest school in the north of the Chelsea Division, Droop Street prided itself on the pioneering role it had

²⁶⁷ Morley, *Studies*, p. 51, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/10, *Kilburn Lane*, Managers' Report, (1894)

²⁶⁸ *Kilburn Lane*, Managers' Report, (1894)

²⁶⁹ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17400, p. 124

²⁷⁰ For addresses and occupations see LMA: X095/126, *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Admission and Discharge Record, (1881-85); X095, *Kilburn Lane Infants*, Admission and Discharge Register, (1892-1901). Admission and Discharge records are not available for Droop Street.

²⁷¹ For Beethoven Street see *Beethoven Street*, HMI Report, (1886) in *Kensal Green Group*, 1877-1886, p. 141; *Beethoven Street*, HMI Report, (1905) in *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1901-13). For Kilburn Lane see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/1, *Kilburn Lane*, HMI Report, (1886); LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/6, *Kilburn Lane*, HMI Report, (1891)

in the lives of local families and the work of local schools. Following the annual success of its parents evenings in 1894, for example, the managers of this ordinary Elementary School (who would have also over seen the development of Beethoven Street and Kilburn Lane), suggested the evenings be 'imitated with advantage in other schools.'²⁷² Within the year Kilburn Lane followed suit.

The interest shown by parents of Droop Street scholars was recorded in the obituary of the first head master, Mr Bottle, as hinging on his personal commitment to the families of the school. He was described as taking a 'kindly interest ... in those who had passed through the school.' His success as a head master was evident in the 'almost daily meetings [he had] with his old scholars, many of whom hold very good positions in life.' The obituary also noted how the school museum was filled with 'odd formations' and 'specimens' sent in by parents keen to present their discoveries to the school.²⁷³ Bottle's approach to forming relationships with parents and former pupils hints at a head master's determination, to maintain a distinguished record in a neighbourhood which included two schools dedicated to attracting students capable of passing higher standards, Beethoven Street and Kilburn Lane.

After the death of Mr Bottle in 1892 and the appointment of his replacement, Mr Bower, an all-out rivalry developed between Droop Street and Beethoven Street, a rivalry that centred on the choices being made by parents. In 1897 Bower wrote to the school managers of Droop Street and Beethoven Street.

²⁷² LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/D35/19, *Droop Street*, Managers' Report, (1894)

²⁷³ Argus, 'The Late Mr E Bottle'

Bower argued that since one of the teachers of the Girls Department had decided to send her two sons to Beethoven Street and a scholarship had been won by another boy, which necessitated him attending the Higher Grade department, this in turn 'influenced' parents to reassess where their sons should be completing their elementary education. In sending them to Beethoven Street just before they completed their upper Standard work, however, Bower argued,

they go to B St. and find a different set of subjects, altogether being taught, and unless the boys are put right back, they have to pick up the work as best they can with the teachers completing the teaching of the subjects instead of commencing. Is it possible that such a change can be in any way advantageous? It seems to me a very sad case of 'falling to the ground between two stools' and I think parents would think twice if these things were pointed out to them before they transferred their children at such inopportune times.²⁷⁴

The negative effect of transferring before examination was, in Bower's eyes, two fold, as it would mean that for those boys who 'would doubtless be gaining credit for themselves, their teachers and their school, and [a] grant for the Board,' it would be credit and a grant that was not to be gained by the teachers or school that had supported those boys through the majority of their education. In light of this and because Mr Tate, headmaster of Beethoven Street, had failed to consult Mr Bower about the transference of seven boys, who had left Droop Street just before their examinations, Bower became increasingly suspicious that Tate was preoccupied with encouraging parents to transfer their child based simply on, 'a vague idea that *that* school is in some way better than Droop St.'²⁷⁵ Two years earlier Tate had brushed off a similar complaint made by Bower when a brother and sister, having begun their schooling at Droop Street, because Beethoven Street had been overcrowded, were finally admitted

²⁷⁴ *Droop Street Boys*, Monthly Report to Managers, 21st January 1897, pp. 1-3 in *Kensal Green Group*, 1896-1902, p. 2

²⁷⁵ *Droop Street Boys*, Monthly Report, (1897), p. 3 The relationship between school status and selection will be discussed in further detail Chapter Three

by Tate, but again without Bower's consent. Tate argued he wanted to 'remedy the injustice' brought about on the family and find them a place without delay. The headmaster of Droop Street and ultimately the managers of both schools, however, argued that gaining the signature of Mr Bower on the transfer form was hardly a time-consuming procedure.²⁷⁶

Both Droop Street and Beethoven Street presented themselves to families and managers as 'best friend' to both child and parent. Each decision these schools made about their intake was justified as an empowering act for parental choice and aspiration. Whether it was in inviting parents into the school to celebrate the child and therefore the family's achievements or encouraging the parent to see the benefits of one school over the work of another, Droop Street, Kilburn Lane and Beethoven Street were competing to win the hearts and minds of the parent. Similarly the work of Lant Street's open evenings, Mrs Burgwin's campaign for school dinners at Orange street and the leniency shown by Mr Pink towards the 'little jobs' his students undertook outside of Bolingbroke Road, were also attempts to gain familial trust, but there was one significant difference.²⁷⁷ While the schools of upper working-class families were competing with each other to be seen as a responsible 'best friend', in poorer neighbourhoods, where class distinction between teacher and parent was more acute, head teachers displayed a more paternalistic zeal. It was not about being seen to be equal with families but rather to be seen as an essential gateway to a better future.

²⁷⁶ Correspondence between Mr Tate, Mr Bower and the Managers is recorded in *Kensal Green Group*, 1891-1896, 20th November 1895, p. 187 and 27th January 1895, p. 206

²⁷⁷ *Bolingbroke Road*, Managers' Report, (1894)

Sharing Grief

In 1895, 826,371 children between three and thirteen attended Elementary Board Schools. Schools were now teaching the children and grand-children of former pupils; schooling – for the majority of Londoners – was part of their life and part of their family history. Moreover since the abolition of the school fee in 1891 attendance had risen by 20,614. The Board suggested that the rise in attendance was ‘no doubt to some extent due to the greater interest which the parents generally take in the education of their children.’²⁷⁸ The cause of this interest can be attributed to having freed families from the anxiety of higher outgoings which the fee placed upon them. Yet the interest of parents could also be explained by the twenty-five year habitualisation of the school in family life and the commitment teachers and head teachers showed to their students and families.

Through parental engagement, Board Schools were attempting to create a shared narrative, one which the communal rituals of celebration (in the form of parent evenings and as shall be discussed, concerts) and grief could lend themselves to easily. In doing so these schools began to weave themselves into neighbourhoods. Before the First World War this was most apparent when schools participated in the rituals surrounding death. In October 1900, for example, the head mistress of Lant Street’s Infants Department noted,

A very kindly spirit has pervaded the school in respect of Willie Poulter, who with his father and brother were burnt to death in the recent fire at Sturge Street. The infants’ farthings, half pennies and in a few cases pennies were collected and a wreath and two baskets of flowers sent to place on his coffin. The amount collected was 6/6 ½. Flowers were bought and wreaths made by the ~~children~~ [sic] teachers. A collection was

²⁷⁸ LMA: SBL/1522, SBL, *Report of the School Accommodation and Attendance Committee*, (1895), p. iii

made on the whole building, the whole staff subscribing, also the school keeper and workmen on the building who were most liberal. The money subscribed went to provide a home for two sufferers who escaped.²⁷⁹

The communality of the classroom, in which children and adults from across neighbourhoods were brought together into one building, meant the school's population was a focal point for a grieving community. At Monnow Road in Bermondsey, for example, when the Standard VII boy Frank Martin passed away,

A wreath was sent from the school, the assistant master, Mr Court, was present at the internment; and, as the cortege passed the school, the deceased's fellow scholars arranged at the edge of the pavement in front of the school, together with the head master, uncovered as a last token of the respect and affection which Martin had gained during his school career.²⁸⁰

Through collections, wreath making and funeral corteges, school staff publicly dealt with the death of a local child as a personal loss and by this mechanism were woven into family and neighbourly narratives. Similarly public responses to the death of a teacher suggested the school was a valued part of local identity. In the summer holidays of 1892, the death of Droop Street's first headmaster Mr Bottle, became the 'theme of conversation throughout that neighbourhood,' inducing a local paper to publish an obituary that managed to describe not only how as an individual he had been, 'so generally respected by the inhabitants of the locality and beloved as a brother by his fellow workers,' but also how as a professional he had supported his staff in such a way that it set them apart from the priorities of central government: 'the secret of Mr Bottle's administrative success was, that he believed in treating his fellows as men and not as mere

²⁷⁹ LMA: LCC/EO/DIV8/LAT/LB/2, *Lant Street Infants*, Logbook, (1900-1913), 26.10.00, p. 3

²⁸⁰ *Monnow Road Boys*, Logbook, (1895 – 1909), 4.2.07, p. 404

machines. If this policy were adopted at headquarters man a life would be happier and worth living.²⁸¹

With teachers being publicly affirmed as 'human beings possessed with the finer feelings and passions' the school itself became imbued with emotion and open to shared experiences.²⁸² By engaging with local families, inviting parents into the school, taking account of their circumstances, and sharing in public displays of grief, Robson's 1873 vision that schools were 'to hereby rank as public buildings' was finally being enacted.²⁸³

Lessons in Local Work

As has been shown in the honouring of the dead, the one to one engagement between teacher and parents, the introduction of Drill and open evenings to encourage a sense of group identity, schools went to great efforts to present themselves to local families as being responsive to their needs. This responsiveness can also be identified in the introduction of domestic and wood/metal work lessons in local Board Schools. Carpentry and metal work centres for boys, and laundry, cookery and domestic centres for girls, were all built into the playgrounds of the Higher Grade Schools of Beethoven Street, Kilburn Lane, Surrey Lane and the Special Difficulty School of Orange Street, sharing their facilities with surrounding schools. Yet the success of these centres to respond to the needs of a neighbourhood seemed to be determined less by local aspirations and more by parental experiences.

²⁸¹ Argus, 'The Late Mr E Bottle'

²⁸² Argus, 'The Late Mr E Bottle'

²⁸³ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 2

At the 1886 Cross Commission Mrs Burgwin, head teacher of Orange Street in Southwark, decided that she while she would 'quite agree' with the interviewers that for boys in Standard IV education on 'the tables of area and capacity' could be decidedly useful to their future employment, she could not think how 'they are of much good to girls.'²⁸⁴ As we shall see Mrs Burgwin argued she had not 'merely to turn out an educated woman, but I have to turn out a good and a happy woman.' What girls needed, therefore, were the skills and support that would improve their lives immediately, they would 'never be content to live the same kind of life as that which their mothers have led,' because their imaginations would have been cultivated to see a world without poverty and equipped with the practical skills that would make them consistently employable in industries Burgwin thought them capable of.²⁸⁵ Thus she argued detailed knowledge of subjects like arithmetic and even needlework were not necessarily relevant and employable skills for her girls, indeed as will be discussed in Chapter Four the constant examination of these subjects was leading to 'many of the children [being] over-pressured with the work.'²⁸⁶

It was a view that would be reiterated in the actions of parents throughout the first fifty years of Elementary Schooling. The mother of Mary Edwards in Woolwich's Maryon Park, for example, covered her bruised pride in 1919, by expressing a desire to limit Mary's education. Mrs Edwards had remonstrated with her child's teacher, Mrs Smith, believing her to have been 'pulling Mary about in the playground.' Upon hearing the teacher's excuse that, 'she had had a talk with the child over her difficulties in Arithmetic and while speaking to her

²⁸⁴ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17088-17089, p.114

²⁸⁵ Both quotes, Burgwin, Cross Report, 17262, p. 120

²⁸⁶ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17108, p. 115

had held her hand,' Mrs Edwards replied 'the education her other children had received was quite sufficient, she did not wish Mary to have any more.'²⁸⁷ If Mrs Edwards wanted her daughter to be treated as her other siblings had, then she ultimately did not want her daughter to gain potentially false hope about where academic skill could take her. After all, historically, once Mary had reached her fourteenth birthday at Maryon Park Girls Department, further formal schooling was statistically unlikely.²⁸⁸

In 1888 out of the 847 children on Orange Street's roll, in Borough, girls aged twelve and over totalled 77, while the number of boys who continued their education past the compulsory age of attendance was only 44. The low age at which children left school was not just confined to those with special difficulties, across the Elementary School population, only 16 per cent were over twelve years of age.²⁸⁹ The problem continued well into the Twentieth Century with the Higher Grade School Monnow Road reporting in 1926 that the, 'school draws its scholars from a very poor district in which the parents have often to make a real sacrifice to keep their children at school for an extra year, and it suffers by the loss of many promising pupils soon after they become fourteen.'²⁹⁰ Elementary Schools needed to ensure, therefore, that the education delivered proved not only useful to the child when it left school but valuable and important to the parents while it was still *at school*.

²⁸⁷ LMA: LCC/EO/DIV6/MAY/LB/4, *Maryon Park Girls*, Logbook, (1913-1921), 25.6.19, p.190

²⁸⁸ In a sample of fifty girls registered at the school in 1896 only two qualified for a Labour Certificate. See *Maryon Park*, Admission Registers, p. 3

²⁸⁹ This is based on statistics given in SBL: *School Management Committee Report*, (1888) pp. 386-425. Details for Maryon Park were unavailable. See also 'a great many boys leaving. The impression is among them that they can do so as soon as they are 13 years of age,' *Kilburn Lane Boys*, Logbook, 1885 -1906, 16.9.98 p. 243

²⁹⁰ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/M41/53, *Monnow Road*, HMI Report, (1926)

In 1893 Orange Street underwent a systematic expansion of its facilities, cutting through the remaining properties that backed onto the north side of the school's playground to create three halls, a further nine classrooms and a Manual Training centre for the Boys and a Laundry work and Cookery centre for the girls. Attendance initially increased with the new facilities proving such a draw for local families that Lant Street's managers, for example, expressed concern that without their own centres they stood 'at a disadvantage in comparison with neighbouring schools.'²⁹¹ Orange Street's attendance, however, soon trailed off without vigilance on the part of its teachers, to the point that in 1897 the Inspector 'demanded an enquiry on the part of the Board' as to why so many girls who were registered for cookery lessons had failed the annual examination. Irregular attendance and too much emphasis on practical work were the official explanations.²⁹² For Orange Street girls in the 1890s, training in domestic work was neither expanding their employable repertoire nor refining their skills.

In the Boys Department, despite all students receiving lessons in woodwork before they completed their time at Orange Street, 'only about 5 per cent of the boys secure[d] lasting and progressive employment on leaving school.' Hence the need, HMIs argued, to utilise the centres as much as possible, 'this percentage is not likely to be increased unless the boys in a school like this are kept as far as possible at manual work during the last months of their school lives.'²⁹³ Further east at Monnow Road Higher Grade School the head teacher

²⁹¹ *Lant Street, Managers' Report (1895)*

²⁹² LMA: LCC/EO/PS/O/012/33, *Orange Street, HMI Report, (1897)*

²⁹³ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/50, *Orange Street, HMI Report, (1909)*

was informed by one parent that such vocational training was making students more employable, seeing the work in relation to his own:

Mr Priest (father of a scholar and foreman of a large joiners' shop) called this morning and the head teacher spent some time discussing industrial work with him. He expressed strong approval of what is being done and stated that it was exactly what is wanted in the building trades.²⁹⁴

Likewise at fellow Higher Grade School Beethoven Street, which had proved popular amongst the families of skilled labourers, the managers and head teacher spoke publicly about 'the benefits derived by attendance at Board Schools.'²⁹⁵ It was the first Elementary School to open a carpentry centre in the country and soon came to be seen by national and international educators as a place which provided an effective take on practical education in which, 'beside making the boys handy, it quickens their perceptive faculties and stimulates their intelligence.'²⁹⁶

Compare the flash interest shown by families at Orange Street Special Difficulty School in the development of its centres, followed by its poor employment and attendance figures, with the support for manual work championed at Monnow Road and Beethoven Street. Both Orange Street and Monnow Road operated in areas which relied heavily on unskilled, seasonal labour. But while the majority of Orange Street's families struggled to maintain regular employment, Mr Priest had succeeded in gaining steady, skilled, work. Taken with the upper working-class intake of Beethoven Street it suggests that in building facilities that attempted to develop the practical skills of local children, their success

²⁹⁴ *Monnow Road Boys*, Logbook, (1895 – 1909), 20 .1.09, p. 468

²⁹⁵ *Beethoven Street*, Managers' Yearly Report, (1901) quoted in *Kensal Green Group*, 1896-1902, p. 175 and LMA: LCC/EO/DIV2/BEE/LB/2, *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1881-1901), 1, 15.12.1886, p. 84

²⁹⁶ *Beethoven Street*, HMI Report, (1887) quoted in, *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1881-1901), p. 91 for national approval see 4.11.1892, p. 157 and for international approval see, 23.1.1885, p. 63

relied on families having already secured skilled employment. For those families who were not reaping the financial reward of skilled labour it was that much harder to see any benefit the centres offered their children.

Summary

On that autumnal morning in 1896 when Cassells came to photograph Kilburn Lane's morning assembly (Image 2.1), the October light filled the large municipal hall, bleaching out individual faces as their detail was exposed to the camera's plate. The boys, with their instruments in hand and their teachers, surrounded by the tools of their trade, were presented as one harmonious group, in which the key to successful schooling was to create 'reverent interest...in the proceedings.'²⁹⁷ It was not, however, just about securing the interest of the boys, but those not pictured in the photograph. The ones who would want to buy the book, the ones who were visible in the clothes the boys wore, in the violins they held, in the hall they stood in and in the outside world that streamed in through its windows. It was the families of the boys and the concern exhibited by teachers to secure their interest, which belied the group identity presented in the photo.

The image of the Elementary School, embodied in the Board's emblem and made manifest by Robson's early architectural designs, sought to make the work of the school interesting to parents, neighbours and rate-payers alike. Schools would be 'set back from the street' to enable 'the passer-by to see the building better,' devoid of ecclesiastical iconography their 'civil... character'

²⁹⁷ Anonymous, *The Queen's London*

would be clear.²⁹⁸ Yet it was only once the doors of the classroom had been opened that head teachers and local managers began to consider that a school's success was as much about cordial relations with families, as it was about academic achievement and presenting a clear purpose. Pedagogic purpose in each school fluctuated depending on how the neighbourhood was viewed by its staff. For schools like Kilburn Lane its relationship with local families was seen, by its managers and inspectors, as one that complemented the values of an upper working class area. In the poor neighbourhood of Orange Street, meanwhile, the house-visits made by Mrs Burgwin and the concern she showed for the self-discipline of parents and neighbours, exposed her belief that the values of the school and its families were divided by poverty.

Some parents and teachers, however, did have similar values, but the security of these shared principles was highly dependent on the perceptions teachers and parents had of one another. There was, for example, a shared belief amongst the majority of teachers and parents that disobedient children should receive corporal punishment. This common ground was tested, however, when teachers sought their right to administer it, over that of the parent's. The poorer the neighbourhood, the more parents, like Mr Rudd at Lant Street or the parents at Maryon Park, were prepared to verbally assert their own authority in order to question that of the teacher's. It was not, therefore, that the values of parents and staff were affected by poverty, as Mrs Burgwin had seen it, but that a teacher's perception of poor families and the poor family's perception of the school, heightened a sense of rivalry about their role in the child's life.

²⁹⁸ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 332 and 321

The role of the school in neighbourhoods and families became more secure as schools began to participate in shared rituals that exposed fundamental emotions of happiness and loss. By publicly displaying care for the lives and deaths of local people, the schools attempted to create relationships with the children's families and lives. By the 1890s teachers, inspectors and managers were campaigning to create schools which not only secured the interest of the family but responded to their needs and aspirations. In Higher Grade Schools, for example, where mainly upper-working class parents sent their child, if they could afford to, the introduction of manual and domestic centres were seen as developing another employable skill. For those parents, however, who had to rely on a job market that was made up of seasonal, unskilled labour, these families could not relate the work of the centres to their own lives, the non-committal approach of the children suggesting the school had miss-judged their aspirations and priorities. If schools were to present themselves as relevant to family life and achieve high attendance, teachers had to maintain a high level of engagement with not only the family, but also the child. As shall be discussed in chapter three, teachers would need to use their lessons as a place to continually reassess their understanding of the child's needs and its aspirations.

CHAPTER THREE

Curriculum and Funding: The Evolution of Special Difficulty and Higher Grade Schools 1870 - 1914

One of the few remaining photographs (Image 3.1) of Southwark's Orange Street School is of an Infants class taken in 1894. Photographed under the glare of a fierce sun, less than a year after the school had doubled its capacity, thirty-six faces stare into the camera's eye, some with solemn hesitancy, and others with sweet gusto, each one a different story. In the front row, among boys with boots and collars, a boy and girl sit, legs uncrossed in their androgynous smocks of infancy; in the second row, alongside her classmates, who all wear clean pinafores, one girl wears a formal dress, echoing the formality of the teacher's corset and ruffles; in the third row one child wears a skull cap, another a pill-box hat, the latter standing a full head above the shawls and neckerchiefs of her classmates. Finally the back row poses on a bench, standing shoulder to shoulder with their teacher.

The clothes and body language captured in the photo of Orange Street reveal the diversity of backgrounds and temperaments that might populate a School Board for London (SBL) classroom. The mix of children small enough to fit into infant smocks with those tall enough to stand alongside their teacher reflects a time in the 1890s where despite school attendance being compulsory for London's 826,371 three to thirteen year olds, 11,129 children were routinely absent or attended irregularly. Whether caused by illness, disability, work or

family, absence left many children 'backward' in their academic progress.²⁹⁹ As shall be discussed in Chapters Four and Five respectively, with academic classification and special instruction in their infancy, in the first twenty-five years of the SBL, ages and development could vary widely within a classroom as schools succeeded and failed to recognise the individual circumstances and abilities of each child. In *Growing Up Poor*, the historian Anna Davin drew attention to how ideas of gender affected the aspirations for girls' education between 1870 and 1914. Through her examples of schools, which closed when girls worked, or opened crèches so the education of older siblings was not forsaken for familial responsibility, Davin showed how SBL staff responded to the diverse socio-economic realities of London's children.³⁰⁰ This chapter examines this socio-economic diversity in the context of inspection and funding. In so doing the chapter unpicks perceptions of children's academic development and how they shaped the academic ambition of different schools. The adult and children photographed at Orange Street, among the pots of geraniums and ferns, a common feature of Botany and 'Object' lessons, were a vision of a new education system, one in which all of London's 880,000 children, were entitled to a place at a local school staffed by trained teachers.³⁰¹ The photo is representative of a new form of institutional portraiture, born out of the 1870 Education Act. Unlike the majority of photographs of working-class people from prisons and hospitals, Elementary Schools had wards photographed with employee. Individuals, recast as students and teacher, a united class. With their names and voices invisible to the camera's eye, the

²⁹⁹ 'Table B: Children Absent from School', in London Metropolitan Archive (LMA): School Board for London (SBL)/1522, School Board for London, Report of the School Accommodation and Attendance Committee: School Attendance Report (1895) p.vi

³⁰⁰ Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor home, school and street in London 1870-1914* (Rivers Oram Press, London, 1996), pp.90-102 and pp.149-152

³⁰¹ Stuart Maclure, *One Hundred Years of London Education 1870-1970* (Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1970), p.38

stories of this adult and these children are lost amongst registers, caught in logbooks and captured in the reports of managers and Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs). As scattered fragments of other people's perceptions only a part of them is seen. By piecing these fragments together, however, we are at least able to see the lives of these children through a developing education-system, one in which curriculum and classroom life shaped and was shaped by evolving ideas of the student, the teacher and the school.

This is the first chapter of its kind to trace the connections between the curriculum, structure and management of London's Board Schools, in order to understand the relationship between the perceptions of neighbourhood, class and gender and the classification of children's abilities.³⁰² It examines how schools were shaped by their different sources of funding, from the weekly fees parents were expected to pay, until 1891, to send their child to school, to the Education Department's 'payment by results' policy. The chapter explores how the SBL negotiated the curriculum and intake of its schools in a bid to balance the nationalised academic Standards and the financial goals set by the Education Department, with the progress made, and challenges faced, by local teachers and students. In so doing it becomes apparent that while the 1870 Education Act helped to create the first fully literate generations, the

³⁰² Classification began to be commonly used in Education circles in the 1880s. The SBL believed 'classification by abilities and attainments is obviously a more suitable one than that of age only, and where, as in the Board Schools, the physical condition and social surroundings of the children are so diverse, some such classification appears absolutely essential.' See LMA: SBL/1466, *School Board for London Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board*, (SBL, London, 1885), p. x. The Education Department referred to 'classification in regard to age and capacity' to mean the child's intellectual capability. See Article 9, par. 3, quoted in Thomas Edmund Heller, *The New Code 1886-87 of minutes of The education Department with the revised instructions to Inspectors with Explanatory notes* (London, Bemrose and sons, 1886), p. 81 While teachers from the 1880s through to the 1910s tended to use classification in the context of deciphering the appropriate Standard to put a child in, see LMA: LCC/EO/DIV2/BEE/LB/2, *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1881-1901), 9.5.1881, p. 3 or LMA: LCC/EO/DIV2/KIL/LB/12, *Kilburn Lane Infants*, Logbook (1913 – 1920) 27.11.16, p. 285

achievement was complicated by the various levels of ability, household incomes and local priorities encountered in the classroom.

In February 1871 the newly created School Board for London appointed a Scheme of Education Committee to take,

evidence of able and experienced teachers, with the view of ascertaining the amount and the quality of the instruction which it had hitherto be found practicable to give to children of the same age and condition as those which whom the London School Board will have to deal.³⁰³

The Committee was chaired by the liberal-leaning, Progressive SBL Member, Thomas Huxley, the distinguished scientist. The Royal Institute's Professor of Physiology had come to educational prominence in the 1850s and 1860s, having devised training-schemes for Science teachers at the Department of Science and Art and for annually conducting lectures for the public in the poorest London districts.³⁰⁴ Huxley was elected as one of Marylebone's first seven Board Members in the winter of 1870, and his involvement in developing pedagogic practice at the Department of Science and Art made him an appropriate choice to chair a committee that would spend four months deliberating the management and curriculum of London's new Board Schools. The Huxley Committee, as it became known, had two objectives, first to understand the 'nature of the schools' thought 'desirable that the School Board should provide'; this covered the management of, and rules for, Departments, classrooms and teachers in 'Public Elementary Schools.' Its second objective was to research 'the methods of instruction which should be adopted in such schools.' This SBL committee spent eight out of its sixteen sessions

³⁰³ Thomas Huxley, 'Scheme of Education – First Report', pp. 155-162 in LMA: 22.05, SBL, *Minutes of Proceedings*, (Dec. 1870 - Nov. 1871), p. 155

³⁰⁴ Adrian Desmond, 'Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895)', in *Oxford Dictionary National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/14320> (accessed 8.10.2012)

interviewing, 'able and experienced teachers' and in June 1871 delivered a 'Scheme of Education' to be administered by each Division and managed by every head teacher.³⁰⁵ The subjects and the financial context of this scheme are detailed below. This is followed by an examination of how schools with different socio-economic priorities adapted to suit the financial and educational expectations placed upon them. Through this examination of economic and educational structures, debates about what children should learn and how to measure their progress are shown to have shaped the priorities and structures of education.

The Huxley Committee's 1871 'Scheme of Education' attempted to strike a balance between prescriptive and discretionary policy. This emulated and responded to, the pedagogic ethos and funding strategies of the Education Department's existing Education Codes. Since 1862 the Education Department had funded schools through a system of payment by results, whereby teachers and in turn their school, were awarded grants according to the number of students who passed the Annual Examination. This exam covered subjects published in annual Education Codes, which teachers were expected to cover.³⁰⁶ Whilst payment by results was in operation schools were part-funded through the achievements of their students and with HMIs focused on examining children to ascertain the teachers' ability to teach, the child's ability to learn was made secondary. HMIs did not have to keep systematic records of how they examined children's progress. Pedagogy and school management

³⁰⁵ Huxley, 'Scheme of Education', p. 155

³⁰⁶ For a potted history and historiography of payment by results, its advocates and critics, see David Mitch, 'Did High Stakes testing policies result in divergence or convergence in educational performance and financing across counties in Victorian England?' in *Economic History Society Annual Conference 2010*, (University of Durham, Durham, 2010), <<http://www.ehs.org.uk/ehs/conference2010/Assets/MitchFullPaper.pdf>> (accessed 30.09.2012)

could remain unchanged if the majority of children in a class were passing the Annual Exam. Consequently a child's progress relied as much on the opinions and social and academic priorities of individual inspectors and head teachers, than it did on a standardised form of assessment.

In 1882 the Education Department provided further opportunity for funding through the introduction of the Merit Grant. HMIs calculated this award according to their view of a school's 'excellent', 'good' or 'fair' features, such as attendance records and resources (school-libraries, trips etc.). From its inception, however, controversy surrounded the Merit Grant, with teachers arguing that it failed to acknowledge the progress students were making, given their socio-economic circumstances. As this chapter will discuss, the controversy resulted in the SBL introducing Special Difficulty status to subsidise teachers' pay and school funding who, despite their best efforts, were failing to receive the Merit Grant. The introduction of the Merit Grant and Special Difficulty status represented the complex web of funding schools relied on while payment by results was in operation. Even once the system of payment by results was substituted for a fixed grant in 1890, however, the funding of schools and the expectations of HMIs had become reliant on the perceptions of children's abilities and backgrounds.³⁰⁷

Schools were inspected at least twice a year, first by an SBL inspector, to ensure classes were progressing as the SBL had envisioned, and then by an HMI, who conducted the Annual Examination of individual children in all Government-funded subjects. This examination had three main elements: an

³⁰⁷ LMA: 18.7 (1), 'Report of the Education Committee for the year ended 31st March 1905' pp. 38-85 in *London County Council Annual Report of the Proceedings of the Council, (1905)*, p. 44. Payment by results continued in other subjects, however, see David Mitch, 'High Stakes', p. 2

arithmetic test; a reading test, in which the child was given a text to read aloud; and a writing test, where the child wrote out a piece of prose dictated by the HMI.³⁰⁸ Just so long as children were able to pass the annual examination, however, it was up to individual teachers how the subjects of the Code were taught.

Under the system of payment by results, the Education Codes stipulated that there were four 'Elementary' Subjects, which schools had to be examined in. These were, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and (for girls) Needlework. For every 1 per cent of a class that passed an Elementary subject, the school received 1d. The Education Department made all other subjects optional, but from 1876 began providing financial incentives to teach them. These optional subjects were divided into two tiers: Class Subjects, which received 2/- for every exam passed and Specific Subjects, which received 4/-. Class subjects, consisted of Singing, English, Drawing, Geography, History and Elementary Science and could be taught to all children. Specific Subjects, meanwhile, were more academically demanding and were therefore only intended for older children (ten years and upwards) in Standard V or above.³⁰⁹ In some cases Specific Subjects such as, Algebra, Euclid and Mensuration related directly to an Elementary Subject, in this case, Arithmetic. Likewise the Specific Subjects of Chemistry, Animal Physiology, Botany and for girls' Domestic Economy and for boys Mechanics, built upon the Class Subject of Elementary Science. Other Specific Subjects, such as French and Latin, however, were only part of the

³⁰⁸ A teacher at Bellenden Road school in Peckham provided an account of the routine of the Annual Examination in, 'Mr Arthur Clement Rogers Examined' pp. 446-459 in *Royal Commission on the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts*, (Cross Report) Second Report, 1887, (C.5056), London, Stationary Office, 28217, p.448

³⁰⁹ For a breakdown of funding see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B28/1-14, Beethoven Street Reports (1889-1894). For a list of Education Code subjects see Heller, *The New Code 1886-87*, pp.10-11

curriculum once children had entered the upper Standards, giving them little opportunity to build on previous knowledge.

Under the Huxley Committee the Education Codes were edited down into a five hour a day 'Essential Curriculum' to be followed by all SBL schools. This meant London's children were taught not only the four compulsory Elementary Subjects but also those subjects that the Education Department had thought were not essential. The SBL's ambitious curriculum meant that when the Education Department introduced the new system of funded Class and Specific Subjects in 1876, London's children were already being trained in the basics of many of the subjects, providing the school with extra funding. Under the Essential Curriculum, for example, the Class subject of English was introduced as 'English Grammar', History focused on 'The History of Britain', while Geography was taught as a more basic 'Elementary Geography.'

The use of Class and Specific subjects meant that the curriculum of the Education Department was staggered, with children being introduced to a subject at a Class level in Standard II and then, hopefully as they progressed undertaking the more advanced Specific versions in addition, from Standard V upwards. Likewise the Huxley Committee's Essential Curriculum included Class Subjects so as to prepare students for similar, but more advanced, Specific Subjects. As can be seen by the depiction of a 'Lesson on Daffodil' (Image 3.2), the Essential Curriculum gave space in the timetable to explore, 'the origins, composition and purpose of domestic, animal, plant and mineral groups,' in a bid to provide, 'elementary instruction in Physical Science.' With the focus of these 'Object Lessons' left mainly in the hands of the teacher, they were an

effective way to prepare children of both sexes for a range of more demanding Class and Specific subjects.³¹⁰

As this chapter will discuss, however, the Huxley Commission's inclusion of Mensuration and Elementary Drawing suggests that while all Specific Subjects were given equal economic weight, there was a bias towards preparing boys for the Specific Subject of Mechanics, leaving girls with an arguably unnecessarily prescriptive workload. While some Specific Subjects were over-represented in the Essential Curriculum, others, such as Latin, were left purely to the timetabling-skills and resources of individual head teachers and their staff. As a result in 1903, when the SBL's work was handed over to the LCC, of the 163,582 children in Standards IV-VII only 313 were being taught Latin.³¹¹ The adaptation of Class Subjects into the Essential Curriculum broadened opportunities for government-funding. But with Specific Subjects still optional, London's children were not guaranteed a broad curriculum. Instead the focus on natural sciences and practical and vocational subjects in the Essential Curriculum had to be managed in conjunction with the priorities of schools in which head teachers, driven by their inspectors' reports (both HMI and SBL), weighed up the needs of different groups of children, which varied according to the income and culture of the households and neighbourhoods from which the children came. The result was that the majority of SBL students were provided with a limited course of education that focused on entering a labour market, rather than a secondary school, upon completing their elementary schooling.³¹²

³¹⁰ See Huxley, 'Scheme of Education,' p. 159 for an account of an Object lesson based around the 'common house fly' see Charles Morley, *Studies in Board Schools*, (Smith, Elder & Co, London, 1897) p.14; for a full list of objects, including 'coal' and streets, see Huxley, 'Scheme of Education', pp. 155-162

³¹¹ LMA: 22.05 SBL, *Report of the School Board for London (1902-1903)*, p.40

³¹² For all requirements see, LMA: SBL/1502, *SBL Code of regulations and instructions for the guidance of managers, correspondents and Teachers* (1893) p. 66. The Huxley Commission included only two subjects in their Essential Curriculum which were not based on the Education Codes. These dealt with

This chapter examines how funding and curriculum were managed through exploration of the ten Board Schools that were introduced in Chapter Two, though it deals too, necessarily, with schooling as it developed across the Capital. These ten schools offer insights into how the SBL managed the economic and academic priorities that were perceived to affect different neighbourhoods. Particular prominence is given to Lant Street and Orange Street, which as shown in Chapter Two, were built in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Southwark. Fathers of students worked in unpredictable trades, at the docks or on the streets, as hawkers, while mothers worked as char-women and populated cottage industries. The poor location of Orange Street and Lant Street was central to them being recognised under an SBL initiative, as ‘schools of Special Difficulty’ in 1884. Indeed Southwark itself was a Division which had the highest proportion of Special Difficulty Schools per child in London. To qualify as a ‘Special Difficulty’ the school’s weekly fee had to be no more than 1d. Alongside this stipulation there was a notoriously vague four-point criteria. Children over eleven (and thus over the compulsory age of attendance), had to be ‘very few’ in number at the school. A small number of ‘over-age’ (to mean above the age of compulsory attendance) students was used as evidence of children sacrificing continued education for early employment. Similarly the school had to have a low attendance record caused by migrating families, looking for work or being sent to the workhouse, rather than because of ‘any defect on the part of the teacher,’ which could cause, ‘a large and unusual number of children [to] pass through the school annually.’

social rather than academic or vocational training: the first was, Morality and Religion, which helped to formalise a school’s moral compass and included morning assemblies and scripture lessons. All teachers were expected to teach this subject, but under the 1870 Education Act families were entitled to remove their child from this subject if they wished. The second subject, instigated by the SBL was Social Economy, which aimed to provide practical lessons in the production, distribution and exchange of wealth.

Finally the school and its managers had to prove that a failure to achieve an 'excellent' Merit Grant was due to 'the circumstances and the character of the children and their parents,' which could be seen to 'impose special difficulties on the teacher.'³¹³ In 1937 the retired SBL inspector Thomas Gautrey recalled Special Difficulty status as a way of making, 'work in schools in slum areas more attractive to the best teachers,' by ensuring they were financially rewarded for their efforts.³¹⁴ Through an examination of the curriculum and HMI reports of Orange Street and Lant Street, however, it becomes clear that Special Difficulty status did not always have the intended affect and along with affecting the aspirations of teachers, it could lower the academic expectations of HMIs.

Alongside the Special Difficulty Schools of Orange Street and Lant Street the chapter is concerned with the Higher Grade Schools of Monnow Road, also in Southwark, Surrey Lane in Lambeth West, Kilburn Lane and Beethoven Street in Chelsea and Bloomfield Road in Greenwich. As discussed in Chapter Two, all of these schools were located along streets where families tended to have more stable working-class incomes, where fathers were clerks, policemen and skilled labourers. In fact, despite Monnow Road's near-dockside location, in contrast to its Special Difficulty neighbours, the school was built on a leafy square of late-Georgian terraces, that according to the social investigator Charles Booth housed people from 'comfortable' backgrounds.³¹⁵ The location of these five schools meant that their intake was more likely to come from families where literacy was a necessary part of paid employment and where a school fee of between 3d and 6d a week was mainly accepted as a necessary

³¹³ LMA: 22.05 SBL, *School Board for London School Management Committee Report*, (1888) p. 455

³¹⁴ Thomas Gautrey, *'Lux Mihi Laus' School Board Memories*, (Link House Publications, London, 1937), p. 94

³¹⁵ Booth Archive Online (BAO), Charles Booth, B365, pp232-233 <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/notebooks/b365/jpg/233.html> (Access: 10.08.2012)

expense. As this Chapter will show, the skill of the teachers and the abilities of the students were not, however, necessarily more advanced than their Special Difficulty neighbours. To understand why these schools were chosen as Higher Grade, therefore, the Chapter explores why the status was created and the implications it had for the education of local children.

The SBL's introduction of Special Difficulty and Higher Grade status in the 1880s came at a time when the Education Department and the SBL were, between them, developing the organisation of the Elementary School. The 1870 Education Act enabled the SBL to compel children to enter a mixed-sex Infants Department aged five and upon their seventh birthday have them enter a school's Senior Department, which were typically single-sexed. It was not, however, until the 1890s that the age of attendance, nationally, was extended past the age of ten, beginning with the School Attendance Act of 1893, which compelled children to continue their studies until they were eleven, this was raised to twelve under the School Amendments Act in 1899 and then to fourteen under the 1900 Elementary Education Act. The rising age of attendance echoed the slow development throughout the 1870s and 1880s of the Standards system that was used to organise a school's population. Standards were Government-assessed, graded classes, by which a Senior Department was organised, each Standard in a London Board School typically comprised of two to three classes that contained an average of 48 children.³¹⁶ In 1870 there were five Standards in a Senior Department, by 1904 there were seven and a half.

³¹⁶ *Report of the School Board for London (1902-1903)*, p. 39

Every Senior Department was attached to an Infant Department, the latter being exempt from the Annual Examination. Infants were typically aged between three and six, but as glimpsed at through Image 3.1, Infant Departments could retain children past the age of six by creating Standard I classes or a 'preparatory' Standard.³¹⁷ Even once the child had made it into the Senior Department, however, her progression into subsequent Standards was not absolute, determined as it was, by her performance in the Annual Examination.³¹⁸ Without guaranteed progression large classes (up to 90 children) were only found in the lower Standards (I, II, III), where lessons could be limited to the SBL's Essential Curriculum or even just the Education Department's Elementary subjects. By contrast, because compulsory schooling ended before twelve, and in 1899, before thirteen, as Table 3.1 shows, the smallest classes were typically found in the upper Standards (IV – ex-VII), where schools would have had an opportunity to teach the more financially rewarding Specific Subjects.

In the first twenty years of the SBL London's head teachers and their staff had little control or guidance about how to identify or deal with children who progressed more slowly or more quickly than their peers, other than to keep children in the Infants Department. This is not to say the Education Department and the SBL did not recognise that within one Standard there could be many different speeds and ways of learning. As shall be discussed in Chapter Five, as early as 1873, the SBL had pioneered special instruction in Elementary Schools

³¹⁷ For examples see, the creation of a 'preparatory Standard II' class in LMA: LCC/EO/DIV6/MAY/LB/8, *Maryon Park Infants*, Logbook, (1896-1913), 20.7.10, p.300; At Beethoven Street Higher Grade School First Standard was limited to the Infants' School due to the introduction of an entrance examination, see *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1881-1901), 2.7.1891, p. 138

³¹⁸ For examples of why children were held back by head teachers and the use of examination see, SBL, *Question of Overpressure* pp. 261-267

for children classified as Blind, Deaf and Dumb, and by the late 1880s it was developing classes for children described as Mentally Defective. This work in classification was paralleled by the extension of the Standards by the Education Department, first in 1871 with the creation of Standard VI and then just over ten years later in 1882 with Standard VII. The government provided no extra funding to pay for these new Standards, instead schools were expected to find their own ways to fund extra staff and manage these classes, despite their variable and sometimes tight budgets. The SBL believed that 'the object' of schooling was 'as far as possible to give individual care of each child.' By 1889, however, the Board argued that many 'ordinary' and Special Difficulty Schools were struggling to balance the individual care of the child with the collective priorities of the school. Consequently the SBL asked its members to nominate schools to be converted into Higher Grade Schools, which taught up to Standard VII and could take children in from across the Division, thus easing the need for surrounding schools to teach all seven Standards. With focus given to preparing children in Higher Grade Schools for, 'secondary education' or 'special employments', the SBL was attempting to meet, 'the special wishes or needs of individual children... by promoting a forward child more quickly than a dull one and by giving teachers and managers limited powers of classification.'³¹⁹

In 1900 the Education Department's successor, the newly created Board of Education (BOE), allowed the SBL to continue its Higher Grade Schools, but only on a selective-basis. The upper Standards (IV- ex VII) of Higher Grade Schools now only took children aged between eleven and fifteen, rather than

³¹⁹ LMA: 22.05, SBL, School Board for London, *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June-Nov 1889), pp. 632-633

ten and fourteen, and only once they had passed an entrance exam. The rise in ages for Higher Grade upper Standards meant that only the 'forward' children who had finished compulsory attendance and whose families did not need them to contribute to the household income were able to attend. Consequently schools struggled to justify the management and expense as numbers inevitably dipped.³²⁰ By the coming of the LCC in 1904, of the seventy-nine Higher Grade Departments formed under the SBL, only seven remained and by 1915 all the Higher Grade Schools in this study had reverted back to 'ordinary' Elementary Schools or were in the process of being converted into the LCC's new, much larger and more vocationally focused Central schools.³²¹

The development of Special Difficulty Schools, the rise and fall of the Higher Grade Schools and the differences and continuities in the curriculum of both reveal the extent to which the ability and ambitions of the Board School child were shaped by the perceptions of the SBL, HMIs and head teachers. Moreover the stories of these schools and the management of their students and curriculum raise questions about the classification of ability and how the identification of circumstances of 'special difficulty' and the separation of 'forward' children affected the 'individual care' of students. Then as now, head teachers had to balance the academic needs of individual children with the ambitions of an entire school and its economic realities.

³²⁰For the difficulty of attending schools after the age of compulsory attendance, due to the cost of uniform and its reliance on household income see Sally Alexander, *Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Feminist History*, (Virago, London, 1994), pp.213-215

³²¹For general rates of conversion see Maclure, *One Hundred Years*, p. 50; for Beethoven Street see LMA: LCC/EO/DIV2/BEE/LB/4, *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, 1901-13, 18.11.1910, p. 290; for Bloomfield Road see LMA: LCC/EO/DIV6/BLO/LB/5, *Bloomfield Road School Girls*, Logbook, 1906-1913, 20.11.1911, p. 105; for Kilburn Lane see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/42, *Kilburn Lane*, HMI Report (1911); for Monnow Road see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/M41/49, *Monnow Road*, LCC Report (1914); for Surrey Lane see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/S106/40, *Surrey Lane*, LCC Report (1914)

Orange Street Special Difficulty School: The Impact of Funding

In 1881 the SBL reported that of the four teaching positions available in the Boys Department at Southwark's Orange Street School there had been 'no less than twelve' changes in staffing that year. The Board's inspector commented that 'poor attendance and the difficulty of obtaining good assistants, keep the school sadly behind.' By contrast the inspector argued that the Girls Department was doing well, because Mrs Burgwin, the head mistress had 'managed to secure and retain an effective staff of assistants.' As head mistress of Orange Street Girls since 1873, as a member of the Metropolitan Board Teachers Association (MBTA), who represented 60 per cent of London's teachers, and as the first woman elected to the National Union of Elementary Teachers, which represented 17 per cent of the nation's teachers, Burgwin was all too familiar with the issues faced by the Boys Department and, as shall be discussed in Chapter Four, was keen to speak on the matter.³²² On 24th November 1886, Burgwin was called to give evidence to the Cross Commission based on her experience as both head mistress and union member. Set up in 1885, the Commission attempted to examine the workings of the elementary Education Act. When asked about the impact of payment by results was having, Burgwin explained it was difficult to retain teachers because the system left teachers feeling that, It was a sort of stigma cast upon them, that they were teaching in a poor school, that is, a school in a poor neighbourhood.³²³

According to Burgwin under the system of payment by results a school in a 'poor neighbourhood' created a financially poorer staff. This was because, Burgwin argued, the Annual exam was assessed in relation to the progress of

³²² Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930* (Routledge, London 1996), p.80

³²³ 'Mrs Burgwin Examined' pp. 113-126 in *Royal Commission on the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts*, (Cross Report) Second Report, 1887, (C.5056), London, Stationary Office, 17128, p. 116

Board Schools nationally, thus the progress of individual children could go unnoticed. Moreover, given that the exam passes were used to judge the teacher, standardised attainment ironically meant there was little room for HMIs to award teachers for the progress they made, with regards the health, attendance and knowledge of individual children. As a consequence, staff turnover at a school like Orange Street was high, because as Burgwin made clear, staff morale could be low. This frustrating cycle was particularly evident in the struggle of Orange Street's pupil-teachers.

Pupil-teachers were children who, having completed the Standards worked as a teacher's assistant for five years, for a small wage, whilst also attending teacher-training college. In 1873, when Orange Street School opened, many local eleven-year-old girls in Borough asked Mrs Burgwin if they could train in her classrooms. Burgwin was happy to oblige, since she knew the girls to be 'robust and strong' local characters. Within six months of opening, however, she found her young staff dealing with an ominously vague mix of, 'things which should not be brought under the notice of young girls.'³²⁴ While the girls would have grown-up around the streets of Borough, which were dominated by pubs and poor housing, and attended Orange Street, which sat in the shadow of a workhouse, as pupil-teachers they would have been expected to assist teachers, who as was discussed in Chapter Two, could face outright ridicule from local inhabitants and as suggested were inclined to leave. Moreover the pupil-teachers were having to support students who, because of limited household income, were likely to struggle academically on account of their own work, migration and, as shall be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four,

³²⁴ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17055, p. 113 Burgwin is not explicit about what the 'things' were, but the issues of poverty and also family abuse Burgwin witnessed amongst her pupils may provide context. For example see, Burgwin, Cross Report, 17387, p.123

malnourishment. Burgwin suggested the pupil-teachers should be transferred, but because, 'the parents thought they would like them to remain, the girls worked on.' Unable to financially reward experienced staff, Burgwin struggled to retain teachers to lead these pupil-teachers through the challenges of a 'school in a poor neighbourhood.' As a result the pupil-teachers were overworked and under-supported, meaning that, 'though robust and strong when they had entered...were not so when they had finished.'³²⁵

In an attempt to limit the inequality of payment by results, the Education Department introduced the Merit Grant in 1882, which was 'meant especially to aid poor schools from getting out of this difficulty.'³²⁶ Inspectors were encouraged to look to 'the quality as well as the number of passes...as the most important factor in determining' this new award.³²⁷ The Grant was awarded on a sliding scale to any Senior Department of a Board School. If the HMI considered the general progress to be 'excellent' it resulted in the highest award of 3/-; a 'Good' remark produced 2/- and 'Fair' resulted in an award of 1/-.³²⁸ The HMI based their decision upon four amorphous factors: attendance, discipline, pedagogy and school resources; of these four only attendance was measured systematically and clearly recorded in inspectors' reports.³²⁹ This was because attendance was used to determine if a child would be entered for examination and thus contribute to the school's basic income. Originally attendance for examination was based upon whether the child had attended at least 255 times

³²⁵ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17055, p. 113

³²⁶ 'Paragraph 48 of the Instructions to Inspectors' quoted in 'Mr R. Wild Examined' pp. 1-17, in Cross Report, 13723, p. 4

³²⁷ 'Paragraph 48'

³²⁸ Schools able to achieve 'excellent' on a regular basis included, Beethoven Street Higher Grade, see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B28/8, Beethoven Street, HMI Report (1889); 3d-fee Ordinary Elementary School Droop Street, see, Argus, 'The Late Mr Bottle', *The Indicator*, August 26, 1892, in LCC/EO/PS/6/59, *Kensal Green Group*, Minutes of Managers, June 1891 to July 1896, p. 68; and Bloomfield Road Higher Grade School that also charged between 3d and 6d, see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B49/20, *Bloomfield Road*, HMI Report, (1889) CONFUSING?

³²⁹ See for example, Heller, *The New Code 1886-87*, p. 81

in the school year, but from 1882 the only qualification for examination was that the child had been enrolled for at least 22 weeks of the school year. Whether based on 255 attendances or having spent 22 weeks on the school register, there was no opportunity for schools to explain or receive compensation for a child's absence.³³⁰

A more holistic approach was taken towards the assessment of discipline, pedagogy and school resources. The Education Department's 1886 Code argued that a school worthy of the highest Merit Grant of 'excellent' would, 'where circumstances permit...[have a] lending library, saving bank, and an orderly collection of simple objects apparatus.' The Code stated that 'above all' a school would be awarded for teachers who,

awaken[ed] in [their students] a love of reading, and such an interest in their own mental improvement as may reasonably be expected to last beyond the period of school life.³³¹

The Code suggests, therefore, that resources could be secondary to the talent of the teacher. Yet because reasons for absences were not taken into consideration and because individual HMIs had ultimate say in whether teachers and/or 'circumstances' permitted effective use of resources, the degree to which a school was seen to be capable of managing with, or without, libraries, objects and savings banks, was subjective.

At Orange Street the introduction of the Merit Grant contributed to an already destructive cycle, where, unable to achieve the higher grants from the Education Department, the school had less money to spend on resources. This in turn negatively affected staff morale further, and with it opportunities to, as

³³⁰ See for example, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/28, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1888)

³³¹ Heller, *The New Code 1886-87*, p. 81

Thomas Heller, the National Union of Elementary Teachers (NUET) secretary and SBL member argued, 'awaken...an interest in their own mental improvement.'³³² For Burgwin the Merit Grant was a continuation of payment by results as it depended 'upon circumstances over which the teacher has no control. It depends on the regularity of attendance, health of children, sufficient staff.' Consequently 'schools in poorer areas have an unequal competition with schools situated in amongst the comparatively well-to-do.'³³³ The argument was echoed by Mr Wild, a Board School head master and former president of the NUET who said, 'speaking for teachers...the word "quality" has been interpreted [by HMIs] to mean, say, in arithmetic, the getting of three or four sums right, instead of one or two.' In other words the Merit Grant had only increased expectation rather than support.³³⁴

As shall be discussed in Chapter Four, the NUET linked the Merit Grant to cases of overpressure. This was a term used to describe the stress experienced by children and teachers faced with the rigidity of the Annual Examination and the frustration felt when their efforts through the year were not recognised. The overpressure crisis, as we shall see in the following chapter, prompted the SBL to commission the *Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board*. The report reminded SBL inspectors 'not to vary the assessment' from HMIs 'as expressed in the Merit Grant.' This statement preceded a recommendation, however, that Board inspectors should be able to deviate from the opinion of an HMI, if they considered 'all the circumstances of the school...and of the children' to be 'special'.³³⁵ The

³³² Heller, *The New Code 1886-87*, p. 81

³³³ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17118-17122, p.115

³³⁴ Wilde, Cross Report, 13723, p. 4

³³⁵ SBL, *School Management Committee Report*, (1888), p. xvii

statement gave credence to the need of schools like Orange Street to be recognised as having ‘special difficulty.’

In 1884, two years after the introduction of the Merit Grant, the SBL ‘generously offered a little extra money’ to see if Mrs Burgwin ‘could retain the services of efficient teachers.’ For Burgwin the introduction of the Special Difficulty status, as it would become known, meant ‘that sort of stigma’ that had prevented many experienced teachers working at the school ‘passed away.’³³⁶

With the SBL’s Special Difficulty status running parallel to, rather than in place of the Merit Grant, however, HMIs continued to fail at fully-recognising the negative impact of the poor circumstances of Orange Street’s students could have on the child and the school. This was partly because the Education Department tended to frame poverty as a lesson in itself. As shall be discussed further in Chapter Four, in 1884, for example, the Chief Inspector of Schools Mr Fitch, who regularly worked in Lambeth and Southwark, argued that for many children in Borough,

attendance is more regular, the progress more rapid, the scholars’ interest in their work more marked, than in many schools filled with children of superior social rank. The unhappy circumstances of their outdoor lives have done something to sharpen their faculties, and to make the pursuits of school more of a relief and pleasure to them than to other scholars.³³⁷

For Fitch a ‘poor neighbourhood’ was not an excuse for a poor school, indeed it was such neighbourhoods that could guarantee academic aspiration. For schools unable to achieve the higher grants from the Education Department it only showed that the teachers’ were unable to harness the scholars’ ‘interest’.

³³⁶ Gautrey, *Lux Mihi Laus*, p. 94

³³⁷ Education Department, Joshua Girling Fitch, *Memorandum relating to Dr Crichton-Browne’s Report*, London,(1884),Volume 69, HC 293, p. 60

This was an attitude that disseminated amongst HMIs on the ground, reflected as it is in Orange Street's HMI reports.

In 1894 the managers of Orange Street commented in their Annual Report that there had been a high rate of absences caused by 'Measles, Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, etc.' which had affected not only students but also 'members of the Girls staff.' In agreement the HMI report commented that, 'the year has been one of difficulty' for the Girls Department. Yet, argued the HMI, 'even considering all the circumstances, the results, whilst very fair on the whole, do not justify the recommendation of the higher grant.' His reluctance to award the Department further income was driven by the improving circumstances of the school, as compared with that of the children. The previous year, for example, Orange Street had expanded its premises to include halls, a laundry, a woodwork and cookery centre. Through this expansion the Girls Department showed 'steady improvement in the acquirements and discipline, in spite of the adverse conditions arising out of the structural alterations.' By 1894 the impact of the new premises was felt so positively in the Boys Department that the HMI commented that,

much more satisfactory premises, shows so much improvement in organisation, discipline and attainments that there is little hesitation in recommending the award of the higher principal grant in its favour.³³⁸

With the Boys Department continuing to go from strength to strength the HMI saw no reason as to why illness should prevent a now equally well resourced Girls Department from making the most of their new environment, even if staff were absent.

³³⁸ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/26, Orange Street, HMI Report, (1893) and LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/28, Orange Street, HMI Report, (1894)

When the Merit Grant was introduced in 1882, HMIs were encouraged to consider that,

A shifting, scattered, very poor or ignorant population, any circumstance which makes regular attendance exceptionally difficult; failure or health, or unforeseen changes among the teaching staff, will necessarily and rightly affect your judgment. It is needful, however, in all such cases, to have regard not only to the existence of special difficulties, but also to the degree of success with which those difficulties have been overcome.³³⁹

From the perspective of the Education Department, therefore, the Merit Grant was not about what resources the school had available but how those resources were adapted to suit the circumstances of the student. Yet as the introduction of Special Difficulty by the SBL in 1884 suggest, there was contention between HMIs and those working in schools on a daily basis about how, and the degree to which, teachers were able to 'overcome' these 'difficulties'. For many teachers, it was not the circumstances of the students that made their job difficult but the circumstances of their student's assessment.

Throughout the 1870s and early 1880s the NUET protested against payment by results to the Education Department, believing that teachers and students were expected to achieve 'a uniform rate' in exam passes, 'regardless of [children's] mental, physical, social and intellectual capacities.'³⁴⁰ For the Education Department and HMIs, however, the Education Codes, which the Education Department devised, and the Annual Exam, which the HMIs assessed, were there to guarantee that children across the country received a uniform standard of education, no matter where they lived.

³³⁹ Heller, *The New Code 1886-87*, p. 81

³⁴⁰ National Union of Elementary Teachers (NUET), 'The New Code and Over-pressure in Elementary Schools: Containing the Recent Correspondence Between the Education Department and the National Union of Teachers and Suggestions for the Amendment of the Code' (NUET, 1884, London) in British Library: BL8304 b 31, *Chadwick Tracts on Education 1870-1901*, p. 3

In June 1883, prompted by the growing criticism amongst teachers regarding the Merit Grant and payment by results, Thomas Heller, the NUET's secretary and SBL member wrote to the Education Department criticising, 'the excessive requirements of the Code' and 'some of the present conditions of examination.'³⁴¹ The Civil servant, Sir Francis Sandford, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Committee of Council on Education did not respond to the letter until November. In his reply he argued that any perceived exam-related stress students and teachers were experiencing was induced by misguided head teachers and managers, who believed that 'sufficient grant is to be earned only by teaching a large number and variety of subjects.' In fact, Sandford argued, children could learn from, 'regular lessons, some elementary acquaintance with the language which they speak, and with the world in which they live'. Sandford felt it necessary to point out that neither, 'English nor Geography is an obligatory subject and managers are quite at liberty to omit these from the course,' further noting that,

in fixing the course of instruction for a school, sufficient attention does not always seem to be given to the character of the district and of the population, as affecting, not only the physical and mental powers of the children, but also the resources available for the maintenance of an adequate and efficient school staff.³⁴²

In the eyes of the Secretary of State, to undertake optional, more demanding Class Subjects, when students of a school were not necessarily attending regularly and when government funding was limited because of low exam results, a head teacher was at best naïve and at worse irresponsible.

Less than a year after Sir Francis Sandford had issued his directive that encouraged head teachers to tailor their curriculums according to the 'character'

³⁴¹ Sandford quoted in NUET, 'The New Code', p. 11

³⁴² Sandford quoted in NUET, 'The New Code', p. 13

of the district and powers of the child, the HMI for Orange Street Girls Department questioned if, 'perhaps too wide a course has been attempted, as home circumstances tell sadly against the children.'³⁴³ Yet while Orange Street's HMI believed the teaching of the Class Subjects of English and Geography in the Girls Department was only 'fair', he also commented that the girls' spelling and writing 'deserve praise throughout.' The Boys Department offered an almost identical timetable to the Girls, with English and Geography also being taught as Class Subjects. The attainment in these subjects also faced criticism from the HMI in 1884, who commented that, 'more might...be made...[of] recitation, both in expression and intelligence,' and observed that Grammar, in 'the Fourth Standard is backward in parsing and the Fifth Standard in analysis.' Yet in this Department the HMI was prepared to show 'leniency in assessing...on account of the class of children,' and consequently the Boys Department was commended for 'making sound progress,' with no comment made about the breadth of the curriculum.³⁴⁴ The only noticeable differences between these Departments were the genders they taught, and the fact that in the spring of 1884 the SBL inspector had noted that while 'the children are very irregular in all departments' they were 'especially so in the Girls'.³⁴⁵ Given the attempts made by Orange Street to get girls into school by, as was shown in Chapter Two, creating a crèche for younger siblings, and given the acceptance that girls would enter domestic service upon leaving school, it is perhaps no wonder that the HMI saw little need to teach girls Class subjects, despite evident ability. The HMI's acceptance of the Boys Department's curriculum, meanwhile spoke of the skilled-labour force and growing industry of clerks that they were expected to contribute to upon leaving school.

³⁴³ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/15, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1884)

³⁴⁴ *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1884)

³⁴⁵ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/14, *Orange Street*, SBL Inspector's Report, (February, 1884)

As headmistress of Orange Street, for Burgwin the teaching of Class subjects had little to do with the money it generated as had been suggested by Sandford and everything to do with responding to, 'a shifting, scattered, very poor or ignorant population'. When asked at the Cross Commission if she felt that she had 'liberty enough of choice' to teach Class Subjects, she argued,

No, I do not; I feel very strongly on that point...I should like to have the liberty of choice between English and Geography. I should prefer Geography, because to my mind it stimulates the imagination more; it enlarges the vocabulary and is more permanently useful; but I do not wish to drop the repetition of poetry, but grammar with its rules and logical analysis might I think, be safely dropped.³⁴⁶

Over 90 per cent of Orange Street's students were capable of passing the Elementary Subjects of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.³⁴⁷ Yet as already suggested its success in the optional, more challenging, Class Subjects of English and Geography was inconsistent. HMI comments varied year to year from 'good' to having, 'scarcely reach[ed] the standard of fair.'³⁴⁸ In 1884 the inconsistency caused the HMI to ask whether 'perhaps too wide a course has been attempted, as home circumstances tell sadly against the children.'³⁴⁹ For Burgwin, however, the school's failure was not brought about by the breadth of its curriculum, but yet again by the constriction of payment by results.

By expressing a desire to teach Geography and Poetry she highlighted how under the current system of payment by results the basics of English – vocabulary, grammar, imagination – could not be taught effectively, because as a Class subject, she found English focused on grammar as something to be

³⁴⁶ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17095, p. 114

³⁴⁷ For example see *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1888)

³⁴⁸ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/16, *Orange Street*, HMI Report (1885). For examples of 'good', 'fair', 'very fair' see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/1-15, *Orange Street*, Reports (187?-1884)

³⁴⁹ *Orange Street*, HMI Report (1884)

tested in an exam, rather than something that contributed to English and in turn daily life as whole. Orange Street School had been open thirteen years when Burgwin spoke at the Cross Commission, in 1886. An estimated two thirds of its students were from families who had lived in the area for generations, which meant that Burgwin was, as she put it, still teaching 'the same families' as when it had opened in 1873.³⁵⁰ Grandfathers, fathers and sons in the families around Orange Street School, were 'hawkers, bankside labourers, Billingsgate men,' while generations of married women worked in several jobs, part-time or seasonal: 'in a pickle warehouse, if she is a better class woman, and she goes out charing [sic] or she goes out step-cleaning during the day ... the little girl takes the place of the mother of the family.'³⁵¹ For Burgwin, therefore, providing lessons and examinations in the finer points of grammar added nothing to what had been, and what seemingly always would be, labour-intensive lives. Burgwin believed that the rudiments of the English language needed to be integrated more carefully into the Annual Exam and curriculum. By focusing on the vocabulary of Geography and the recitation of Poetry, she wanted to show her students that using language imaginatively and appropriately was 'permanently useful' to becoming 'not merely...an educated woman, but...a good and happy woman'.³⁵²

Under the system of payment by results, however, in which each individual child represented the teacher's ability to teach, students and teachers were left, 'constantly rehearsing the performance' of 'the standard examination' to guarantee the school's income.³⁵³ As a result, Burgwin argued, 'intellectual

³⁵⁰ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17229, p. 135

³⁵¹ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17281, p. 120 and 17188, p. 117

³⁵² Burgwin, Cross Report, 17202, p. 120

³⁵³ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17264-17265, p. 120

teaching does not pay at all.’ She argued lessons where children were, ‘in rapt attention, and you know by their faces that they thoroughly enjoy it,’ could not be assessed accurately through the Annual Exam, because the child had no opportunity, ‘to give utterance to the feelings which the lesson has prompted.’³⁵⁴ Burgwin found, therefore, that her staff, ‘would rather I did not go into the (teaching) rooms, especially if I am going to take up literature...because...these discursive remarks of mine do not tell in the end at the examination quite so brilliantly as the hard-and-fast line which she would have worked upon.’³⁵⁵

The difficulty Burgwin and her staff faced in creating a curriculum that balanced their own aspirations for their students with the HMI’s perception of those students and their needs, reveal the sometimes contrary structure teachers were expected to work in. For the Education Department the circumstances of students, for example, could at once be central to the breadth of the curriculum taught and the progress students made and simultaneously, under the system of payment by results and the Merit Grant, considered irrelevant to the teacher’s ability to teach. Moreover the debate surrounding the teaching of Class Subjects at Orange Street hints at how the school itself was debated and constructed as a suitable environment for certain subjects, raising the question as to whether certain academic pursuits were considered only acceptable for certain types of students in certain types of schools.

Lant Street School and the Limiting of Specific Subjects

When the SBL introduced Special Difficulty status in 1884, as previously mentioned, they argued the extra funding was in part based upon, ‘the

³⁵⁴ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17263, p. 120

³⁵⁵ Burgwin, Cross Report, 11712, p. 115

circumstances and the character of the children and their parents,' which had to be seen by the SBL as to 'impose special difficulties on the teacher.'³⁵⁶ For Orange Street's Special Difficulty neighbour Lant Street, this meant, for example, the managers explaining how the, 'poverty of the parents [shows] itself in the tone and weak physique and mental calibre of many of the children attending.'³⁵⁷ Yet the 'tone' of the students may very well have been reflective of the economic 'special difficulty' the school itself placed upon the children and parents. At Lant Street, like Orange Street, fathers worked as unskilled dock labourers or as hawkers, with such unreliable trades it is little wonder that nearly a quarter of students were unable to pay the penny school fee.³⁵⁸ In one newspaper article reporting upon the weekly work of the Board in 1886 children at the school were reported to cry when they 'saw the preparations made to send the paper Notice' to their parents investigating the remittance of their fee. One father responded to the stress the school's fee caused his family and his neighbours by refusing to make, 'any further payment beyond what I now pay in my rates and taxes,' claiming that he had, 'the same right to have my children educated free as is now accorded to the aristocracy.'³⁵⁹

As already suggested the economic strain schooling caused, with or without a fee, helps to explain why the SBL looked to the number of students who were above the age of compulsory attendance (and therefore able to enter full-time employment), when formulating their criteria for Special Difficulty. The SBL did not state a precise figure, but in 1888 only 37 per cent of Orange Street's students and 36 per cent of the Lant Street's students were 11 or older. Despite

³⁵⁶ SBL, *School Management Committee Report*, (1888), p. 455

³⁵⁷ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/C31/2 Southwark: Lant Street, *Managers' Report* (1894)

³⁵⁸ SBL, *School Management Committee Report*, (1888), p. 377

³⁵⁹ The Times Archive Online (TTAO): Anonymous, 'The London School Board and Fees', *The Times*, (Wednesday, Oct 13, 1886); pg. 13

the Special Difficulty status of these two schools, however, their per centage rates of older students were not dramatically lower than any of the other schools discussed in this study, indeed, as will be shown later, they were not even the lowest (Table 3.2). What is noticeable about Orange Street and Lant Street, however, was that these figures were matched by equally low numbers of students in the upper Standards. Only 19 and 24 per cent of students at Orange Street and Lant Street, respectively made it to Standard V or above (Table 3.2), giving further credence to the belief (which will be discussed at length in Chapter Four) that circumstances external to teaching were limiting children's academic development.

In *Studies in Board School*, Charles Morley, used his journalistic flair to detail how one Southwark boy was up at five working 'in the paper business' and helping his sick, single, mother with his little brother. With his day beginning so early with work and familial responsibility, by the beginning of morning prayers when school began at 8:45 the boy, 'very drowsily...[sung] the morning hymn, those big eyes of his drooped; his head bobbed this way and that; his lips moved mechanically; and at the word ' Amen ' he sank down into his seat and fell off into a dog's dose one eye half open.'³⁶⁰ It was such children, who were seen to have special difficulties in making academic progress and it was for these children that some schools were prompted to limit academic attainment.

With so many students struggling to pay the school fee or make it past Standard IV before leaving, it is perhaps little wonder that neither Lant Street, nor Orange Street, taught Specific Subjects in the first twenty years of elementary

³⁶⁰ Morley, *Studies in Board Schools*, p.19

schooling. These optional subjects supplied by the Education Department, would have brought in more money but then they could only be taught to children in the upper Standards, who in this case were not likely to see it through to completion.³⁶¹ The decision of these two schools not to teach the more demanding options was reflected in the SBL's decision to introduce Higher Grade Schools in 1889 and limit the number of schools with the full range of upper Standards. The Board believed that, 'a sufficient staff of competent adult teachers is of vital importance if individual children are not to be lost in the crowd.' But, the SBL argued if all schools, no matter the academic progress or age of their intake, had to teach through to Standard VII, then head teachers and managers were left having to employ, 'staff beyond the normal strength adequate for the average attendance of the school.' As a result, argued the SBL, schools had to choose between the 'costly' expense of hiring a teacher specifically to teach the upper Standards or asking one of their existing teachers to manage an upper Standard in addition to a lower one. To deal with this 'difficulty' and ensure that teachers could focus on the, 'individual care of each child,' rather than having their time split between classes, the SBL asked that in a 'group' of schools represented by the same managers, only one of the schools, whether a Higher Grade, Special Difficulty or otherwise, could be allowed to teach Standards V-VII, while the remaining schools in the group could only teach up to Standard VI.³⁶²

When the SBL adopted the resolution to limit the full seven Standards to one school per 'group', no criteria was given as to how these schools should be

³⁶¹ See *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June-Nov 1889), p. 632 and LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/1-14, *Orange Street*, HMI Reports (1874-1884)

³⁶² *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June-Nov 1889), p. 632-633

chosen. Through an examination of Lant Street's decision to start teaching a Specific subject on a limited basis, however, it becomes clear that just as the HMI framed Orange Street's use of Class Subjects in the 1880s, as 'too broad a curriculum' for a Special Difficulty School, the teaching of Specific Subjects and thus 'promoting' the educational needs of a 'forward child' was not the responsibility a school with Special Difficulty status.

Lant Street began teaching Mechanics to the ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen year old boys in Standards V and VI in 1900. Despite the income that would be generated by these boys passing the subject and the fact Lant Street was only teaching up to Standard VI, the HMI was concerned that Lant Street had overstretched itself. This was because when the HMI visited the school a class, for children who struggled in Standards I and II, known as the 'special difficulty' class had been discontinued. Just as the SBL had been concerned eleven years earlier, the HMI interpreted the discontinuation as forsaking weaker children for stronger ones. He argued that Mr Powell who had been chosen to teach the elder boys did it 'very well', but it was,

at the expense of his removal from the charge of the special difficulty class which he had been managing with such peculiar success, and which has been now abandoned altogether.

The HMI concluded his report by questioning whether dropping mechanics was,

good educational policy in a school of Special Difficulty? If it was desirable to teach Mechanics, why not have taught it as a Class Subject under the circumstances?

In response to the HMI's report, however, the SBL's own Inspector, Mr Girling, who had been inspecting the school for almost ten years, argued that whilst Lant Street's Special Difficulty status had remained constant in that time, the

'special difficulties' of individual children varied 'year by year.'³⁶³ Indeed of the children attending the 'special difficulty' class at the time of the HMI's report, Girling noted that 'twenty-one have left the school, six are in Standard II and sixteen in Standard I, the class has therefore ceased to exist as a special one.' Thus, he argued, even 'if it is necessary to form another [special difficulty] class,' it 'does not affect the question of Boys in the upper Standards taking a Specific Subject.'³⁶⁴

This exchange between the HMI and the SBL inspector demonstrates the ambiguity that surrounded the definition and thus the educational implications for the SBL's Special Difficulty status. In 1888 Lant Street had been designated Special Difficulty because it was a penny-fee school, with only 5 per cent of its students continuing past the age of thirteen. By the beginning of the Twentieth Century, however, fees were no longer being paid and 28 per cent of its students were staying on past their thirteenth birthday.³⁶⁵ For the HMI in 1900, Lant Street's Special Difficulty status meant that the school needed to forsake developing the curriculum in the upper Standards so that children in the lowest Standards did not have to lose a good teacher. For the SBL's inspector, however, because the numbers of children who needed closer help with basic subjects fluctuated in Lant Street the status provided funding to allow for flexible classroom management, in this case hiring a teacher, who was flexible enough to teach a special class and a Specific Subject. In so doing Special Difficulty status enabled the wide variety of needs in Lant Street to be met by careful

³⁶³ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/C31/16, *Lant Street*, HMI Report, (1900); Girling was recorded as the local inspector in 1889 see, LMASBL:793, SBL, *Minutes of Special Subcommittee to Consider and Draft Memorials and Circulars on Questions arising out of the Report of the Special Committee on the Subjects and Modes of Instruction*, (1889), p. 621

³⁶⁴ *Lant Street*, HMI Report, (1900)

³⁶⁵ LMA: SBL/1500, London County Council, *Report of the School Management Committee of the Late School Board for London* (1904), p. 384

allocation of teachers as and when necessary, helping to ensure that no matter what Board School a London child attended, whether 'forward' or 'backward' the child's educational ability would be responded to.

Lant Street's decision to teach Mechanics as a Specific Subject was indicative of the educational present and the perceived future of its male students. Whether taught as a Class subject or at the more demanding Specific level, Mechanics explored five categories of applied physics: Mechanics, such as weight, velocity and energy; Heat, which included the transference and quantity of temperature; Light, which covered shadows; photometry, prisms and the spectrum; Magnetism, which included 'the earth as a magnet' and the magnetic compass; and finally Electricity which explored the 'development' and 'the effects of the electric current.'³⁶⁶

The subject relied, therefore, upon a sound understanding of arithmetic, physical science and mensuration, all of which under the SBL's Essential Curriculum had been part of a boy's education since entering the Senior Department. By choosing to teach a subject which built upon their existing knowledge, therefore, it increased the likelihood that even if boys at Lant Street missed lessons or were only able to study in the upper Standards for a year, they stood a chance at passing the Specific Subject and generating the extra income for the school. Meanwhile the combination of theoretical and practical knowledge in Mechanics meant that schools could offer both the boy who continued their formal education and the boy who entered an apprenticeship or the labour market relevant knowledge and skills. For a school like Lant street,

³⁶⁶ Board of Education, Regulations for the instruction and training of pupil-teachers, cd.2607, (1905), p. 48

where the number of children who won secondary-school scholarships (or perhaps even applied for them, the figure is not known) were so few in number that managers individually named the children in their annual Report, the Specific Subject of Mechanics fulfilled the SBL's ambition to provide 'forward' children with at least a subject that could prove useful to a 'future life' in 'industries'.³⁶⁷ As Chapter Two showed when Orange Street built its laundry and cookery centres in the 1890s it did so with a view to supporting girls in subjects thought to be relevant to their immediate employment upon leaving school (despite the questionable reality). When the HMI suggested Mechanics be taught at Lant Street as a Class Subject, it suggests that, while he took issue with the need to provide a more demanding level of training, Mechanics itself was a relevant subject at any stage in a boys' education.

Yet while Mechanics was seen to be relevant and practical to the education of Boys, Mrs Burgwin, the head mistress of Lant Street's neighbour, Orange Street, had argued in 1886 that the subject had a negative impact on the education of Girls. She argued that the SBL's Essential Curriculum gave undue weight to the themes covered by a subject like Mechanics and the perceived vocations of boys. Discussing Drawing, she argued that while the girls thought the subject itself 'very interesting,' the scheme was really only 'very well adapted to boys who will have to enter workshops.'³⁶⁸ For Burgwin this was not 'at all helpful to girls,' because, she argued, 'the girls like pretty things if I may so put it' and given that they would never undertake 'Mechanical Drawing' she

³⁶⁷ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/C31/1-28 *Lant Street*, (1894-1911); LMA 22.05: SBL, *Minutes of Proceedings* (June 1889 to November 1889), p.633

³⁶⁸ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17197, p. 118

wanted 'the artistic side left for' her to interpret to her students.³⁶⁹ As we have seen Burgwin's worldview was grounded in the current economic realities of her female students, in which she aimed to, 'not merely' turn out 'an educated woman, but...a good and happy woman'.³⁷⁰ For Burgwin schools needed to be able to adapt the Essential Curriculum to suit the interests of their students rather than simply the perceived vocations of a select group.

When the SBL introduced Higher Grade Schools they too recognised that, 'so far the education for both sexes is practically the same.' It was indeed, just as Burgwin had commented three years earlier, only when children undertook 'class and specific subjects the work of each sex diverges from that of the other.' For the SBL, however, they were not interested in gendering the curriculum at an earlier age, but rather whether it was, 'practicable to go further and to separate the work of the boys and girls amongst themselves, so as to meet the special wishes or needs of individual children?' It was, argued the SBL, by giving 'teachers and managers limited powers of classification' of children's abilities that 'the object...to give individual care of each child' could be met.³⁷¹

The SBL believed that Higher Grade Schools would help to develop the powers of classification, because,

children with a view either to secondary education or to special employments, [would be able to] select the specific subjects useful in

³⁶⁹ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17197 p. 118. The implicit bias towards the apparent interests of boys over girls also concerned some managers and inspectors. From Special Difficulty to Higher Grade Schools concern was expressed in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries that the material in school lending libraries did 'not appeal to the girls' and that effort should be made to offer separate reading material for boys and girls. See for examples, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/S106/14, *Surrey Lane*, Managers Report, (1894); *Orange Street*, Managers Report, (1894); for Monnow Road see: LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/M41/51, *Bermondsey Central LCC Girls' school* (1917)

³⁷⁰ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17202, p. 120

³⁷¹ *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June-Nov 1889), p. 632

future life; on one hand for industries, Mechanical Drawing, Mathematics, Arithmetic, Elementary Science, Mechanics and manual work; and on the other for Commerce, Commercial Arithmetic, elements of Book-keepings, Letter Writing, Shorthand and French.

By promoting either specific subjects useful for 'industries' or 'commerce', Higher Grade Schools could be self-selecting, with students gravitating towards a Higher Grade School that played to their strengths.

Higher Grade Schools and Specific Subjects

In 1889 the SBL stated that Higher Grade Schools would be formed from existing, 'large schools where children remain until fourteen' and where 'the number of elder children is sufficient' enough that a teacher could be assigned to 'each section' of the seven Standards.³⁷² Of the ten schools covered in this thesis, however, the two schools with some of the lowest proportion of upper Standard students were found in, what would become, Higher Grade Schools (Table 3.2). From the managers' reports of these Higher Grade Schools it becomes clear that nominations for Higher Grade status had been made based, not just on current student figures but on their social class and potential, not just of the students but the school itself. By unpicking the Specific Subjects these schools did or did not undertake, however, it becomes clear that while the SBL envisioned Higher Grade Schools as training for 'secondary school', 'special employments' 'industry' and 'commerce' the reality left many schools focusing on the same subjects as that of any other Elementary School.

In 1888, as can be seen in Table 3.2, Surrey Lane in Lambeth West only had 17 per cent of its 3-6d paying students in Standard V or above. Just five minutes away, at Bolingbroke Road, where children were expected to pay 2d for their

³⁷² *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June-Nov 1889), p. 632

schooling, 24 per cent of students were working in upper Standards, undertaking a range of Specific Subjects from Algebra to Physiology.³⁷³ Despite Bolingbroke's higher per centage rate, it was Surrey Lane which was chosen by the SBL to be a Higher Grade School. As discussed in Chapter two, Lambeth West was an economically diverse Division of the SBL, stretching from the dock-side slums of northern Battersea, snaking down through the modest commuter terraces of Lavender Hill and ending in the grand villas of Clapham Common and West Dulwich. On the borders of Battersea and Lavender Hill, Surrey Lane (Image 2.5) was built somewhere between the respectable and not so respectable, by contrast Bolingbroke Road (Image 2.5), which despite being situated only a few streets closer to the docks than its Higher Grade neighbour, was decidedly poorer with children describing the area as 'Little 'ell.'³⁷⁴ The environmental differences were represented in the development of these schools. When Surrey Lane opened in 1886 the HMI considered it 'likely to attain a high standard of efficiency.'³⁷⁵ Throughout the first five years of its existence it charged a 4d attendance fee and was consistently commended for its excellent discipline and its excellent attendance rate well above 80 per cent even in the highest Standards.³⁷⁶ By comparison the neighbouring school of Bolingbroke Road was the only school, prior to the abolition of the school fee, to teach Specific Subjects and charge less than 3d a week. This was despite the fact it struggled to maintain a high attendance rate (known to dip to as low as 70 per cent) and had been told by its managers that while Standard VI and VII had

³⁷³ For Bolingbroke Road see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B50/1, *Bolingbroke Road*, HMI Report (1874); LCC/EO/PS/12/B50/2, *Bolingbroke Road*, HMI Report (1876). By 1900 the Boys are only being taught Algebra as a Specific Subject but the girls are being taught Domestic Economy, Physiology, Drawing and Singing see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B50/40, *Bolingbroke Road*, Manager's Report (1900).

³⁷⁴ LMA: EO/PS/12/B50/29, *Bolingbroke Road*, Managers' Yearly Report, (1894)

³⁷⁵ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/S106/1, *Surrey Lane*, HMI Report (1886)

³⁷⁶ See LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/S106/12, *Surrey Lane*, HMI Report (1892); LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/S106/16, *Surrey Lane*, Managers Report, (1895);

'permission' to learn a Specific Subject they 'expected better results.'³⁷⁷ Bolingbroke Road may have had ambitions to provide a broad academic curriculum, but for the managers, who were also responsible for the development of Surrey Lane, it was the school which had the better attendance, better discipline and higher fee, which was worthy of teaching Specific Subjects at the highest level.

While the differences between Surrey Lane and Bolingbroke Road were marked, in the Chelsea Division, in the north of the Capital, there was little difference between the fees, attendance and achievements of the Higher Grade School Kilburn Lane and its 'ordinary' neighbour Droop Street (Image 2.4). The SBL claimed that Higher Grade Schools would be opened where the number of 'elder children [was] sufficient' to make it worth the expense of staffing each of the seven Standards individually. Yet, just as it had been found in Lambeth West, in the SBL's Division of Chelsea, Kilburn Lane had a much smaller upper Standard than its ordinary neighbour, with fewer than 15 per cent of children attending Standard V. Just like Surrey Lane, however, Kilburn Lane had been built on a much larger plot, giving it potential to expand.³⁷⁸ Moreover the school too was perceived favourably by its managers, who noted that, along with its fellow Higher Grade neighbour, Beethoven Street, the intake was considered to be from 'a superior type of the working class,'³⁷⁹ Without clear evidence as to whether this was actually the case at Kilburn Lane, it suggests that the decision to manage a school as Higher Grade relied in part on the perceptions and

³⁷⁷ For example see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B50/9, *Bolingbroke Road*, HMI Report (1880); LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B50/18, *Bolingbroke Road*, HMI Report (1889)

³⁷⁸ See LCC, 'Report of the Late SBL,' (1904), Bolingbroke Road p. 149; Droop Street p. 8; Kilburn Lane p. 14; Surrey Lane pp. 174-175;

³⁷⁹ The quote is referring to Beethoven Street School, but the schools catchment areas overlapped hence why they shared the same Managers see, 'Beethoven Street, Managers Report', (1901), quoted in, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/6/60, *Kensal Green Group*, 1896 - 1902, p.175

opinions of the managers and SBL members. Indeed the achievements and perceived superiority of Surrey Lane and Kilburn Lane, belies the poverty of some of their students and the effect this had on the development of the curriculum in these two schools.

Until the abolition of school fees in 1891, an accurate indicator of poverty was the number of students whose fees were waived by the head teacher and the school's managers. The majority of Higher Grade Schools in this study had low levels of students who remitted on their fees. Bloomfield Road Higher Grade School (Image 3.3) in the Greenwich Division, south east London, for example, had only 1.5 per cent of students who failed to pay on time. Similarly, 3.6 per cent of students failed to pay the school fee at the Higher Grade School Beethoven Street in the Chelsea Division on the western side of the County, north of the Thames. At Kilburn Lane, however, where 13 per cent of its students had to remit the school fee, compared with only 10 per cent of students at the Ordinary Elementary School Droop Street. Meanwhile in Lambeth West, Surrey Lane had a remittance rate of 16.8 per cent, this was certainly lower than its neighbour Bolingbroke Road, which had a rate of 42 per cent but it was almost five times greater than a similarly placed Higher Grade School like Monnow Road in Southwark. Despite Monnow Road being in a Division where up to 85 per cent of students could remit on a school fee, this Higher Grade School had a rate of less than 4 per cent.³⁸⁰ The pressure of the school fee at Kilburn Lane and Surrey Lane was echoed in the fact that once children at the school turned thirteen, when they were legally allowed to enter full-time employment, their attendance dropped by over 80 per cent (Table 3.2).

³⁸⁰ LMA: SBL, *Management Report*, (1888), Chelsea, pp. 358-359; Greenwich, pp. 362-363; Lambeth West, pp 371-372; Southwark, pp. 376-377

Yet both Kilburn Lane and Surrey Lane were still encouraged to teach Specific Subjects.³⁸¹ It is only when examining which Specific Subjects were taught in the schools of this study that it becomes clear how Kilburn Lane and Surrey Lane were able to balance the extra funding and pressure that came with Higher Grade status and the teaching of Specific Subjects, with the teaching of children who might leave school before reaching Standard VII.

At Surrey Lane the only Specific Subjects taken were Mechanics in the Boys Department and Domestic Economy in the Girls Department (Image 3.4).³⁸² Kilburn Lane's choices were broader but still offered Mechanics and Domestic Economy alongside Algebra and Animal Physiology in the Boys Department and Botany and French in the Girls Department.³⁸³ Under the SBL, of the eight schools in this study teaching Specific Subjects, Mechanics was taught in seven of the Boys Departments.³⁸⁴

As already discussed, once children began undertaking Class Subjects at Standard II and Specific Subjects from Standard IV, the Education Department's curriculum diverged according to gender, with Boys able to take Mechanics, but not Domestic Economy, and Girls able to undertake Domestic Economy but not Mechanics. And just as the Essential Curriculum geared itself towards preparing boys for Mechanics at an advanced level, it prepared girls for the Specific Subject of Domestic Economy. Students, for example, needed

³⁸¹ For Kilburn Lane see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/1, *Kilburn Lane*, HMI Report (1886); LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/6, *Kilburn Lane*, HMI Report (1891). For Surrey Lane see, *Surrey Lane*, HMI Report (1892)

³⁸² *Surrey Lane*, HMI Report (1892)

³⁸³ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/10, *Kilburn Lane*, Managers Report, (1894)

³⁸⁴ For Surrey Lane see *Surrey Lane*, HMI Report (1892); Bolingbroke Road see, 'West Lambeth: Bolingbroke Road School Managers Report, (1902)' in, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/6/17, *Bolingbroke Road Group*, Minutes of Managers, Dec. 1901 to Dec. 1904; Droop Street see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/D35/12, *Droop Street*, HMI Report, (1889); Kilburn Lane see, *Kilburn Lane*, Managers Report, (1894); Monnow Road see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/M41/???, *Monnow Road*, HMI Report, (1889); Lant Street see *Lant Street*, HMI Report, (1900). Bloomfield Road see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B49/25, *Bloomfield Road*, HMI Report, (1894)

Arithmetic to understand Household Expenses; Elementary Science to explore Human Physiology and Domestic Hygiene, and Needlework for Domestic Economy's focus on clothing.³⁸⁵

As discussed in Chapter One, historians such as Anna Davin, Carol Dyhouse and Deborah Weiner have all helped to explain the ideological reasoning for the SBL's focus on Domestic Economy and its perceived economic and political purpose for the Nation. The popularity of Mechanics and Domestic Economy in these Higher Grade Schools, however, reiterates the economic reality and the academic ambition all schools, no matter their status, at a local level, were attempting to balance. With many students at Kilburn Lane and Surrey Lane likely to leave before they reached Standard VII, these schools, just like Lant Street, needed Specific Subjects that could be learnt quickly and relatively easily, to ensure passes and therefore school funding.

Only two schools in this study did not offer Domestic Economy as a Specific Subject. Given the scepticism voiced by the HMI when Lant Street introduced Mechanics as a Specific Subject in 1900, it is perhaps not surprising that despite a Laundry and Cookery Centre, fellow Special Difficulty School Orange Street, only taught Domestic Economy at Class level. At the other end of the educational spectrum, the mixed-sex Higher Grade School Beethoven Street in Chelsea also did not offer the subject. As already noted, Beethoven Street was a school where the fee was rarely remitted, where over a third of students were in Standard V or above, where attendance was good and staffed liberally. While the majority of classes were mixed-sex, the school still gendered its curriculum

³⁸⁵ See Joseph Hughes, *Domestic Economy*, (Joseph Hughes and Co, London, 1891)

to an extent, girls, for example, were taught Domestic Science, while boys were given the first Carpentry lessons in the country.³⁸⁶ Yet when it came to Beethoven Street's most advanced subjects, in the early 1900s all the children in the upper Standards were taught Mathematics, Botany, Chemistry, Freehand and Model Drawing.³⁸⁷ These were all subjects that, like Domestic Economy and Mechanics, had a basis in the SBL's original Essential Curriculum, but, the school's choice of advanced subjects spoke of academic aims that went beyond immediate employment. This was a school where, as one HMI commented, 'a high standard of work might be expected' for both boys and girls, 'and is actually attained.'³⁸⁸ The academic ambition for Beethoven Street's students and their ability to achieve it was indicative of the social expectations HMIs and staff had for children who could afford not to miss school. This can be seen not only in the choice of more advanced subjects, but also in the management of the school itself, as a Mixed-sex school and the subjects thought suitable for its younger students.

Specific Languages for Specific Schools

Beethoven Street was one of only a handful of schools managed by the SBL which were mixed-sex. These Mixed Senior Departments made up only 4 per cent of London's Elementary Schools, none of whom charged less than 3d a week fee.³⁸⁹ When the Huxley Commission had envisioned the management of Board Schools in 1871, they argued that for,

³⁸⁶ LMA: EO/DIV2/BEE/LB/4, Beethoven Street Mixed, Logbook, (1901-13)

³⁸⁷ Beethoven Street did teach Laundry and Cookery, but these were only taught as Class Subjects, see LCC/EO/PS/12/B28/ Beethoven Street Higher Grade School, HMI Report, (undated) and *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1901-13), 17.10.1901, p.7

³⁸⁸ Beethoven Street, HMI Report (1907), in *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1901-13), p. 201

³⁸⁹ The SBL did not keep comprehensive records of what schools were mixed and what fee they charged, but the two schools in this study with mixed-sex Senior Departments, Beethoven Street and Bloomfield

so much depends upon the previous training of the children, and upon local circumstances, that we do not think it advisable to lay down any general rule regarding them. While evidence has been brought before us tending to show that, under certain conditions, Senior Schools may be mixed [sex], we are decidedly of opinion, and we recommend, that the Senior Schools provided by the School Board for London should be separate.³⁹⁰

The commission did not detail the 'previous training' or 'local circumstances' that might make it appropriate to have a mixed-sex senior Department, but through closer examination of Beethoven Street it becomes apparent that the minimum fee of 3d per week to attend a mixed-sex school, was not only indicative of the economic class of the child, but perhaps more importantly the shared aspirations of family and school and what this meant for their learning.

In May 1881 Beethoven Street was officially opened with an Infants Department and a Senior Department that had been built specifically as a Mixed School for 1259 seniors and infants.³⁹¹ Other than a single demonstration room and a laboratory (Image 3.6), its lessons would be confined to ground-floor classrooms, built around the unifying space of the school hall (Image 3.5). The school quickly became an educational and architectural jewel in the School Board for London's crown, with Robson, the school Board's chief architect, for example, organising tours for members of the Royal family.³⁹²

When the social investigator Charles Booth described the location of Beethoven Street School, he commented that while Beethoven Street itself was decidedly

Road charged up to 6d. Similar fees were charged at other schools with mixed-sex Senior Departments, see Lordship Lane School, East Dulwich in LMA: 22.05, SBL, *Minutes of Proceedings*, (Dec 1879 to May 1880), p. 260. See also Davin, *Growing Up: Home*, p.119 on Hampstead's Fleet Road School

³⁹⁰ Huxley, 'Scheme of Education', p. 156

³⁹¹ See LMA: LCC/EO/DIV2/BEE/LB/1, *Beethoven Street Boys*, Logbook, (1880-1881), 30.8.1880, p.1 and *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1881-1901), 2.5.1881, p. 1

³⁹² 'Mrs Westlake Madame Lofring and ER Robson Esq. visited the schools to make arrangements for a proposed visit of the Princess Louise to the school', *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1881-1901), 7.6.1881, p. 7. For international visits of the building see *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1881-1901), 18.8.1890, p. 127. 'Mr Alexander Froetz of Vienna made a visit to the school, inspecting, the buildings, workshops and playground and expressed his satisfaction with all he saw.

purple (mixed incomes), with practically every three-story dwelling operating as a laundrette, the surrounding streets, from which many of Beethoven's students came, such as Kilburn Lane, were 'becoming busier and more prosperous every year as the district fills,' and were commonly coloured a 'comfortable' pink on Booth's poverty maps.³⁹³ Queen's Park was an area where its growing respectability, argued Booth, meant that even the common lodging house, although 'very low and rough' could not be 'a brothel.'³⁹⁴ The laundrettes mainly employed married mothers who came from the nearby Kensal Green estate. These were families where despite many couples living only 'upon their [wife's] earnings', still sent their children to the local fee-paying LCC nursery.³⁹⁵ The parents of Beethoven Street's students could, therefore, not only afford to send their children to school, but actively chose to use similar government-funded services from an early age. These academically ambitious and economically stable families were reflected in the school's own ambition for its curriculum.

As noted in the introduction, in 1871 certain subjects, such as French and Latin, were omitted from the Essential and Class curriculums of the SBL and Education Department respectively. In consequence the Specific Subjects of French and Latin were seldom taught. Latin, for instance, was only taught in one of the ten schools of this study. Bloomfield Road in Woolwich charged a hefty 6d to attend its upper Standards and like Beethoven Street had a mixed-

³⁹³ BAO: Charles Booth, B359, 13th January 1899, pp.48-52, <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/notebooks/b359/jpg/61.html> (accessed 30.8.2013) for student addresses see LMA: X095/126, Admission and Discharge Beethoven Street Mixed (1881-1885)

³⁹⁴ Booth, B359, p.49

³⁹⁵ Booth, B359 p.49 Booth commented that the husbands of those working in the laundrettes had a tendency to do 'nothing all day'. See also Anna Davin who shows how state-funded nurseries were not universally approved of and was highly dependent on nursery and neighbourhood. Davin *Growing Up*, pp.91-93

sex senior Department.³⁹⁶ Even at Bloomfield Road, however, Latin was only taught in the first year of opening, having failed to prepare enough pupils in time for the examination.³⁹⁷ With so few students undertaking Latin as a Specific Subject across London, it could suggest there was little in the way of linguistic preparation for secondary schooling in SBL schools. It is worth considering, however, the popularity of French, particularly among the mixed-sex schools which, as already suggested, were typically located in more economically stable environments. In 1887, for example, 679 students in London's Board Schools undertook French as a Specific Subject, the majority of whom came from Mixed Senior Departments, such as Bloomfield Road in Woolwich and Beethoven Street which had been preparing students in French since Standard II.³⁹⁸ Throughout the period of the SBL the children undertaking French remained dominated by those who could afford to attend a school with a middling-to higher fee, but the number of pupils studying French did increase following the introduction of the Higher Grade Schools in 1889. The decision of Higher Grade Schools to teach French was indicative of the SBL's desire to offer a curriculum to those 'forward' children interested in pursuing secondary schooling or skilled employment by appealing on the one hand to 'industries', through the teaching of 'Special Subjects' (not to be confused with Specific Subjects) such as 'Mechanical Drawing, Mathematics, Arithmetic, Elementary Science, Mechanics and manual work; and on the other hand, training children in the basics of 'Commerce' through lessons in: Commercial Arithmetic, elements of Book keepings, Letter Writing, Shorthand and French.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ See LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B49/3, *Bloomfield Road*, HMI Report, (1879). See also LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B28/8 *Beethoven Street*, Higher Grade Board School, HMI Report, (1889)

³⁹⁷ In the first year of opening only one boy was prepared in time see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B49/1, *Bloomfield Road*, HMI Report, (1877); LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/B49/2, *Bloomfield Road*, HMI Report, (1878)

³⁹⁸ LMA: 22.05 SBL, *SBL Annual Report* (1887) p. 36; *Beethoven Street School*, Government Report, (1904), in *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1901-13), 21.9.1904, p. 112

³⁹⁹ *Minutes of Proceedings*, (June-Nov 1889), p.633

By the 1900s all Higher Grade Schools in this study offered French in their upper Standards.⁴⁰⁰ If a child did not attend a Higher Grade School, however, 'Special Subjects' were not part of their education. By attending an ordinary or Special Difficulty Board School, a child's knowledge of language remained, therefore, limited to English. English, however, was a subject which due to its subjective purpose and the pressures of the Education Codes, resulted in further curriculum restrictions for both the focus of teachers and the opportunities of children. By focusing on how English, in the first forty years of the 1870 Education Act, was integrated into the curriculums of London's Board Schools and how this was influenced by changes in examination and pedagogy, the wider and more subtle implications of SBL policies and Education Codes become apparent.

English

Jacqueline Rose in *The Case of Peter Pan: The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, compares circulars regarding English lessons in Elementary Schools and those in secondary schools produced by, the Education Department's successor, the Board of Education [BOE] in the first two decades of the Twentieth Century.⁴⁰¹ By 1910 both elementary and secondary taught children aged between twelve and fourteen. In Elementary Schools ten to fourteen year olds were taught in the upper Standards (V-VII), while secondary education,

⁴⁰⁰ Beethoven Street HMI Report [1904] in, LCC/EO/DIV2/BEE/LB/4 Beethoven Street Mixed 1901-13, October 21st 1904, p. 112 FORMAT?; *Bloomfield Road Girls*, Logbook, (1906-1913), p.38 January 29th 1909; LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/10, *Kilburn Lane*, Managers Report (1894); Monnow Road, HMI Report, (1889); LCC/EO/PS/12/S106/31, *Surrey Lane*, Managers Report (1902)

Kilburn Lane discontinues French when it loses its Higher Grade status see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/KIL/42, *Kilburn Lane*, HMI Report, (1911)

⁴⁰¹ See 'Chapter Five: Peter Pan Language and State – Captain Hook Goes to Eton,' pp.115-136 in Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, (MacMillan Press Ltd, 1984)

such as Grammar schools, focused on the education of twelve to sixteen year olds only. Despite the overlap in ages, Rose showed that the BOE had different educational and social aims for these two types of school. English lessons in an Elementary School's upper Standards, for example, were not to tamper with the 'unsophisticated virtues of children's language.' Elementary teachers were discouraged from using anything other than 'a direct, simple, unaffected style' with 'written composition...subordinate to oral.' The aim, the BOE argued, was to help the child 'understand and remember' and to ensure an elementary child's 'natural taste' was not 'corrupt[ed].' By comparison the BOE stated that English lessons for twelve to fourteen year olds at secondary schools, 'aim...at training the mind to appreciate English literature, and at cultivating the power, using the English language in speech and writing.'⁴⁰² The Board observed that in Secondary schools, 'without training in the use of language, literature cannot be fully understood or properly appreciated. Without the study of literature there can be no mastery over language.'⁴⁰³

Rose argues that given the overlap in ages between elementary and secondary students and the differing pedagogies circulated by the BOE, the schools ran in parallel to one another, rather than as part of a sequential education system. With compulsory elementary schooling in the 1900s occurring between the ages of three and fourteen year olds, Rose argues that this was, 'considered the appropriate educational span for the working-class child.' The implication being that, under BOE the child of the Elementary School was not encouraged to have a 'mastery' of language, when their schooling was soon to finish, but

⁴⁰² Board of Education (BOE) 'Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools,' (Circular 808, BOE, London, 1912), pp. 31-2 quoted in Rose, *Peter Pan*, p.119

⁴⁰³ BOE, 'The Teaching of English in Secondary Schools' (Circular 753, BOE, London, 1910), p. 3 quoted in Rose *Peter Pan*, p.119

merely to 'understand' and 'remember'.⁴⁰⁴ Yet through an examination of the teaching practices and management of London's Board Schools a more complex image of the working-class child and its schooling is revealed.

Since the 1870s, as we have seen, the Education Department had been particular about how the elementary curriculum developed appropriately to fit the needs of the nations' children and industries. Each subject had been carefully graded, and the child in the classroom with them. Both the Education Department, its successor BOE and the SBL had ensured that the more advanced levels, such as Specific Subjects and Standard VII were something that schools had to opt into rather than out of. As was shown in the case of Orange Street, HMIs and head teachers were not adverse to questioning or limiting the course of study if it was felt too advanced for the 'class' of child. Indeed the use of libraries and thus reading within Elementary Schools was also restricted with the SBL's own Code stating that libraries should only be accessed by children in Standards III-VII and used by teachers as a way to, 'reward conduct and regular and punctual attendance.'⁴⁰⁵ If teachers were to awaken 'a love for reading...beyond the period of school life' as the Education Department had claimed in 1886, then for working-class children in irregular attendance or below Standard III this had to be achieved through lessons alone, not by encouraging free use of the library, such as it was.⁴⁰⁶

The creation of Higher Grade Elementary Schools in 1889, however complicates, the image of a working-class education as limited in scope and

⁴⁰⁴ Rose, *Peter Pan*, p. 120

⁴⁰⁵ SBL/1501, *Code of Regulations and Instructions for the Guidance of Managers, Correspondents and Teachers*, (SBL, London, 1880), p. 20

⁴⁰⁶ Heller, *The New Code 1886-87*, p. 81

focused only on employment from fourteen, for, as we have seen, these were Elementary Schools which were created to offer the 'forward' working-class child preparation in secondary schooling. For every Surrey Lane Higher Grade School, with its focus on Domestic Economy and Mechanics, there was a Beethoven Street Higher Grade School or a Monnow Road Higher Grade School (Image 3.7), with their expansive range of special and Specific Subjects intended to be used for secondary schooling. By reconstructing the focus and examination of English lessons prior to the BOE circulars, therefore, a longer and more layered historical-perspective becomes apparent. One in which the circulars are shown to be not necessarily evidence of separate middle-class and working-class education systems, but the result of the changing perspectives of HMIs during and after payment by results and the pedagogic priorities of a diverse and evolving elementary system.

Rose argues that the production in 1910 of two separate circulars for secondary and Elementary Schools by BOE reinforced the child's assumed socio-economic class. The focus on the 'natural taste' of the child in Elementary School may very well be assumptive, but it also suggests a concern for building a child's interest in language by beginning with what it knows. By placing the 'unsophisticated virtues of children's language' at the heart of elementary teaching, as we shall see, Government policy was finally responding to the observations made by head teachers and HMIs regarding how children were learning, nearly thirty years earlier.

Throughout the period of the SBL, beyond the Specific Subject of Literature, the topic of English in Elementary Schools was broken down into its mechanical

components of reading, recitation, writing, dictation, composition and grammar. Reading was dominated by lessons in recitation, with children (either in unison or as an individual) expected to recite, first from sight and then from memory, a piece of text. A text was allocated to each Standard by the head teacher; in the Boys Department at Lant Street school in 1902, for example, children in Lower Standard I began recitation with *The Fountain* by Lowell, then in upper Standard I, *A Green Cornfield* by Rossetti. By the time they reached Standard V, the boys were expected to recite the entirety of *Charge of the Light Brigade*, by Tennyson and if they continued past their eleventh birthday into Standards VI and VII, they were taught extracts from *Richard III*.⁴⁰⁷ Under the SBL many schools also relied on essay-writing in competitions and in other lessons, such as Geography and History, to help develop and reinforce lessons in spelling, handwriting, grammar and composition. By the Twentieth Century essay writing was a regular feature of an upper Standards' timetable, with at least two hours a week devoted to writing on topics ranging from animal cruelty to Alfred the Great.⁴⁰⁸ Despite regular use of essay writing in lessons, however, throughout the first thirty years of the 1870 Education Act the annual school inspection, judged a school's ability to teach English, in whatever form (Elementary, Class or Specific) almost wholly on children's ability to recite spelling, answer grammatical questions orally and write what the HMI dictated.

The limited focus of the inspection was a cause for concern for Mr Adams, the headmaster of Fleet Road. Fleet Road was in one of the largest Divisions in

⁴⁰⁷ LMA: LCC/EO/DIV8/LAT/LB/1, *Lant Street Boys*, Logbook, (1901 – 1913), 29.08.02, p. 21 There are no records of what the girls learnt to recite at Lant Street, nor indeed for its other special difficulty neighbour Orange Street. At the mixed-sex school, Fleet Road in Hampstead, however, girls in Standard VII were also learning Shakespeare, reciting Henry V alongside their male counterparts. See Morley, *Studies in Board Schools*, p. 91

⁴⁰⁸ *Lant Street Boys*, Logbook, (1901 – 1913), 1.10.02, p. 24; Beethoven Street HMI Report (1901) quoted in, *Beethoven Street Mixed*, Logbook, (1901-13), 30.10.01, p. 10; LMA: LCC/EO/DIV2/KIL/LB/7, *Kilburn Lane Girls*, Logbook, (1900 – 1913), 30.11.00, p. 22

London, Marylebone, just east of the Chelsea Division. The School had parallels with the Chelsea Division school of Beethoven Street, both were Higher Grade Schools, charging up to 6d for attendance in the upper Standards, both were one of the few SBL schools to have mixed-sex classes, and both were situated in upper-working class communities. Similar to the majority of parents at Beethoven Street, Fleet Road's students came from homes with, 'highly-skilled artisans' who were, as Mr Adams described, 'in receipt of high wages' producing 'the most clever and intelligent' children.⁴⁰⁹ The result of Beethoven Street's annual inspections are unknown prior to 1905, but the experience of its Marylebone equivalent, Fleet Road, suggest, that an HMI examination, in the late Nineteenth Century, could negatively affect the development and teaching of English even in Higher Grade Schools. At the Cross Commission in 1886 Mr Adams argued,

The dictation test, in the lower Standards especially, is too severe, and too exacting; and instead of the teacher having time to bring out the intelligent points of the reading lesson, the attention of the children is constantly concentrated on spelling lists of difficult words, words that they are not likely to meet with in ordinary conversation, or in ordinary reading books.⁴¹⁰

Adams thought the dictation exercise needed to be substituted for 'an easy composition test, or a short letter, or a short abstract of the reading lesson.'⁴¹¹ As it currently stood, with teachers' salaries reliant on student passes the inspection process meant motivation to read or write was sacrificed for the sake of passing the Annual Exam. For Mr Adams, 'children become good spellers in proportion to the encouragement that is given to their love for reading.'⁴¹² The implication being that an examination that corresponded more closely with day-to-day life would capture more accurately what a student was capable of.

⁴⁰⁹ Morley, *Studies in Board Schools*, p. 88

⁴¹⁰ 'Mr W.B. Adams Examined' pp. 45-67 in Cross Report, 14961, p.45

⁴¹¹ Adams, Cross Report, 14961, p.45

⁴¹² Adams, Cross Report, 14961, pp.45-46

Moreover by diversifying the focus of the exam and reading opportunities, it would mean students would no longer associate a 'reading lesson with a constant dinning in [the] ears of a variety of difficult words seldom used in ordinary conversation.'⁴¹³

In 1910 the BOE's circular had requested that Elementary Schools rely on a 'direct, simple unaffected style', to help ensure that the child could 'understand and remember' language. By then payment by results had long been phased out. In the first decade of the Twentieth Century, the change in funding and inspection caused HMIs to reflect upon how children were taught effectively and the factors that shaped it. In 1905 Edmond Holmes was appointed by the BOE, as the Chief Inspector of Schools. After five years, he resigned and used his experience as an Inspector and Government civil servant as evidence for his treatise on the British education-system, entitled *What Is and What Might Be* (1912). Writing in the aftermath of payment by results, Holmes observed that it was only once Inspectors had 'ceased to examine (in the stricter sense of the word) [that] they realised what infinite mischief the yearly examination had done.'⁴¹⁴ Holmes argued that the root cause of inequality both in and outside of schooling was due to 'Western' Civilisation's obsession with measuring 'inward worth...by outward Standards.'⁴¹⁵ For Holmes' teachers and Inspectors had to be careful that the use of exams in Elementary Schools did not encourage subjects like English to be,

based on the passivity of the child, [where] nothing matters to him or to his teacher except the accuracy with which he can reproduce what he has been taught.

⁴¹³ Adams, Cross Report, 14961, p.45

⁴¹⁴ Edmond Holmes, *What Is and What Might Be; a Study of Education in General and Elementary Education in Particular*, (E. P. Dutton & Co, New York, 1912), p.107

⁴¹⁵ Holmes, *What Is*, p. 18

Just as Adams had explained at the Cross Commission in the 1880s, that a good speller was better measured by their love for reading, than their ability to recite words by wrote, Holmes argued that just because a child, 'can repeat what he has been told' was no guarantee of quality teaching or indeed learning. 'The real "results"' argued Holmes, 'are in the child's heart and mind and soul, beyond the reach of any measuring tape or weighing machine.'⁴¹⁶

BOE's insistence in 1910 that elementary English should subordinate 'written composition to...oral,' in order that children could learn to 'remember', however, reveals that dictation remained a key feature of elementary education. On the one hand the focus on oral rather than written composition could suggest that BOE were restricting children in the upper Standards from learning to read and write at a more advanced level, as compared with their secondary-school peers. But ironically, despite concern about the focus of the Annual Exam among head teachers, such as Adams and Burgwin, oral composition, as we shall see, had been used for decades in the classroom by teachers as a way to ensure children understood what they were being taught. The explicit mention by BOE in 1910 that children needed to 'understand' English, therefore, perhaps suggests that the pedagogy of the elementary teacher was being supported rather than dictated by BOE.⁴¹⁷

Elementary schooling had always been concerned with literacy or curtailing the number of, what Thomas Gautrey - the SBL member - described as, 'unlettered boys and girls.'⁴¹⁸ To make the illiterate literate, however, verbal communication has been central to developing and judging a child's ability to read and write.

⁴¹⁶ Holmes, *What Is*, p. 52

⁴¹⁷ BOE 'Suggestions' quoted in Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, p.119

⁴¹⁸ Gautrey, *Lux Mihi Laus*, p. 9

Historian David Vincent notes in *Literacy and Popular Culture* that church schools in the early Nineteenth Century were dominated by lessons in which teachers spoke to their students, as a Priest to his congregation, and students read aloud to the whole class. Vincent argues that most children learnt to speak quite naturally before they had started school, thus by focusing on the spoken word when they began attending lessons it, 'helped to reduce the unfamiliarity of the school experience.' Yet this pedagogy also 'focused attention on the issue of pronunciation. If reading was learned though talking, how the child articulated language became the legitimate concern of the schoolmaster.'⁴¹⁹

Vincent was discussing a pre-1870 education, in which the slow development of England's Elementary Schools 'coincided with the final stages of a creation of standard English' through the development of the dictionary. By the end of the Eighteenth Century Doctor Johnson had collected and correlated words into the first dictionary, and as elementary education spread across all classes of society, teacher and pupil could share a common language through standardised publications, such as dictionaries. Yet the English of the dictionary had been collected and disseminated by educated and merchant classes making their speech and their spelling 'the touchstone by which all the dialects of popular culture were judged and found wanting.'⁴²⁰ By the coming of the SBL, teachers and HMIs viewed the retraining of working-class children's dialect as a central feature to developing the skills of the Board School child.

In 1886 Mr Adams, the head master of Fleet Road, commented that,

⁴¹⁹ David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 80

⁴²⁰ Vincent, *Literacy*, p. 80

to that part of the English scheme which we speak of as “recitation,” I attach the first importance...but...I would reserve the grammar of the language really to the highest Standard of the school; I would teach children to speak and write correctly; and afterwards let them apply the rules.⁴²¹

Adams believed that the sounds and sights of words needed to be taught before the rules that connected them. If children could pronounce and recognise words correctly, it gave them the first step to understanding their meaning. For those children unable to mimic the sounds of their teacher, it was taken as evidence that the child would or already did struggle to master connecting words at their own accord. Mrs Burgwin, the head mistress of the Girls Department at Orange Street, for example, found that the first step to reading was to correct what she heard as short-comings in the local dialect,

You can imagine what the vocabulary of the coster or bankside labourer is. I have great difficulty in teaching reading even in the Seventh Standard; the reading is always a difficulty, the children enunciate their words so badly.⁴²²

As shall be discussed in further detail in Chapter Five, in a school system where knowledge of the spoken word was interpreted as knowledge of a written one, those unable to mimic their teacher’s speech, became indicative, for schools, not of the child’s difference, but of its needs, both academically and socially.

Focus on speech, for example, was not necessarily, just about improving literacy. In 1888 the HMI at Orange Street commented that, ‘a great deal is done for the benefit of the poor girls attending this School, and the utmost pains are taken to improve their manners, dress and speech.’ For the HMI the focus on pronunciation alongside manners and dress were indicative of the school’s attempt to improve the ‘sad cases of dirt and disease.’ It did not, however,

⁴²¹ Adams, Cross Report, 14967, p.46

⁴²² Burgwin, Cross Report, 17265 p. 120

improve the children's literacy skills, for while the HMI considered the girls' recitation to be 'good', their actual ability to read and spell showed 'weakness.' In contrast to the belief held by both Adams and Burgwin that recitation was central to learning to read, they provided little evidence that it was central to a child's ability to understand. For Orange Street's HMI, however, the culprit of this discrepancy between sound and meaning was not that teachers were preoccupied with articulation, but that the school's choice of 'reading books' in Standard II, which were, 'somewhat too advanced for the class of children' and thus were affecting children's ability to spell well into the upper Standards.⁴²³

When the HMI at Orange Street suggested that the books were not appropriate for the 'class of children', it is not clear if this was a reference to their social class or academic ability – or, as shall be discussed in Chapter Four, whether the HMI made such a distinction between the two. Either way with both Burgwin and the HMI relating the class of the child to its academic state, it reinforces the view that when BOE published its circulars some twenty-two years later, elementary education was being restricted because the recipients were likely to be working class. Yet as already suggested by the development of Higher Grade Schools, and as shall be discussed in Chapter Four, there was not one generic form of Board Schooling for working-class children. Instead, as we have seen, the perceived 'tone' of a family, the socio-economic status of a neighbourhood and in turn the affect these factors were thought to have on a child's ability, all shaped how subjects like English were taught and why. For example, as shall be discussed in Chapter Four, 'backward' was a vague term used to refer to children who were behind on their studies due to apparent

⁴²³ All quotes from *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1888)

'neglect' at home or an inherent 'dullness'.⁴²⁴ As we have seen in the development of Special Difficulty Schools, limited academic progress was more likely to be found in schools in poorer areas. For these 'backward' children their education was decidedly restricted, because as the SBL's 1893 Code argued, 'much time is necessarily given to prepare them in reading, writing and arithmetic.'⁴²⁵ These children were taught a limited timetable that only broke from the three Rs for two and a half hours a week of Object Lessons in, 'familiar objects or animals.' These lessons were seen as a way to, 'relieve the more mechanical work, refresh the children's minds, and improve their general intelligence.'⁴²⁶ As was shown with the disbandment of Lant Street's class of 'special difficulty' in 1900, it was not that the 'backward' child could never improve, but in order for improvement to occur they first needed to focus their attention, whether by staying in the Infants as seen in Image 3.1, with a more basic curriculum, or by entering a 'special' class in the Senior Department, with a limited curriculum. To focus the education of these children was to, 'improve their general intelligence,' prepare them for the work of the upper Standards and even, maybe one day, the work of a secondary school.

Summary

In 1900 a photographer returned to Orange Street Special Difficulty School and photographed the eldest students in the Infants Department, sitting behind their graded desks in Standard I (Image 3.8). The ramshackle mixture of boys and

⁴²⁴ For examples of inspectors' use of 'backward' as symptomatic of 'neglect' and 'dullness' see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/17, *Orange Street*, HMI Report (1886); *Kilburn Lane*, HMI Report (1886); LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/D35/47, *Droop Street*, HMI Report, (1909); See also 'Dr Francis Warner, MD, FRCP, called in and examined' (12th February 1897), pp. 25-39 Education Department. *Report of the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children* (EDCDEC), Vol. I, 1898, (C. 8746-7) London, Stationary Office, par. 681, p. 25 in which Warner discusses his classification of ability commenting, 'the fourth class [of 'defect'] is mental dullness, as to which we took the report of the teachers on each case that had been noted...dull, backward or of low mental power.'

⁴²⁵ SBL, *Code of Regulations*, (1893) p. 165

⁴²⁶ SBL, *Code of Regulations*, (1893) p. 165

girls that sat and stood in the playground in 1894 had been replaced by an ordered twentieth-century classroom, where children no younger than six and no older than eight sat in single-sex rows, underneath walls that loomed large with the results of Object, Drawing, Geography and Botany lessons. Just like the photo of Surrey Lane Higher Grade School's Housewifery lesson (Image 3.4), or the photos of the demonstration rooms at Beethoven Street (Image 3.6) and Monnow Road (Image 3.7) Higher Grade Schools, the photograph of Orange Street highlights the school's curriculum, with children holding their knitting and card-cutting for all to see. Like all the photos used in this chapter, it depicts the practical and ordered skills that the Huxley Commission had set out to encourage when the SBL began its work in 1871.

In the 1870s the judicious introduction of the SBL's compulsory Essential Curriculum and the Education Department's optional Class and Specific subjects were, in principle supposed to balance the perceived needs of children and their neighbourhoods with a school's need for funding. The establishment and evolution of Special Difficulty and Higher Grade Schools, however, reveals a complicated legacy. Head teachers may have had some autonomy in choosing their curriculum, teachers may have also been free to teach as they so desired, so long as the HMI felt children were progressing, but the academic fortunes of individual children were bound up in the social and economic conditions of their neighbourhoods. Consequently this influenced the expectations of all responsible for the child's education and thus affected how the school itself was judged as failing or supporting its students in their current and future endeavours. As Special Difficulty Schools, for example, both Lant Street and Orange Street in Southwark were questioned by HMIs for the

breadth of curriculum and the academic demand they placed on their students. From the perspective of their local Board inspector, their managers and staff, however, these two schools were attempting to respond to the individual abilities and ambitions of their students. By contrast those schools rewarded with Higher Grade status, such as Surrey Lane and Kilburn Lane were not always as academically ambitious with their students as HMIs and the SBL liked to imply, bound as they were by a student body that rarely stayed beyond the age of compulsory attendance.

The development of curriculum and funding in London's Board Schools between 1870 and 1914 was convoluted and piecemeal. The evolution of the 'ordinary' Board School, its diversification into Special Difficulty status and Higher Grade status in the 1880s reflected the shifting focus of head teachers and the SBL as they attempted to adapt their management to suit an increasingly three-dimensional understanding of children and how their learning affected the classroom and funding. Yet the creation of both Higher Grade and Special Difficulty were catalysed by the failings of the Education Department's system of payment by results and later the Merit Grant.

Payment by results, along with both the curriculum of the Education Department and the SBL, helped to standardise the level of attainment expected by both teacher and child, by providing a shared framework from which to teach. Yet the creation of uniform curriculums and Standards, failed to match the diversity of London's near-million child-population of the 1890s.

Until the introduction of the Merit Grant in 1882, schools were judged on academic merit alone, which although relied on the individual exam passes of students, gave no scope to reward the progress teachers had made with individual children. The Merit Grant was introduced to encourage Inspectors to look beyond the classroom, by looking to attendance and resources. Yet the evidence is that few HMIs were sympathetic to the affect illness and poverty could have on a school's attendance record. Teachers were judged by factors over which they often had little control. Outbreaks of Measles, Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria, Whooping Cough in 1894, for example, as occurred at Orange Street in Southwark, a notoriously unhealthy borough, could wreck attendance records and with it the ability of a child, a class or a Department to progress, and thus the school's chance of receiving the Excellent Merit Grant. Likewise, the familial responsibility undertaken by children could also leave them 'backward', unable to find the energy or time to concentrate on school work. The Merit Grant, therefore, reinforced a vision of education in which the ability of the teacher (and in turn the child) was based on individual will-power and adaptability. But while the Education Department may have been keen to view the failings of a school, as the failings of the teacher, the creation of Special Difficulty status suggests the SBL were more willing to accept that issues of poverty and local neighbourhoods could affect, if not the child itself, then certainly the teacher's ability and desire to teach. Similarly the creation of Higher Grade Schools reflected the economic and social difficulty schools had in teaching the Education Department's full seven Standards, when funding could be so dependent on exam passes and neighbourhoods. Yet they also pointed towards a vision of the Board School child as one which did not simply

'remember' and 'understand' what they were taught, but if given the right resources and encouragement could 'master' what they were taught.

B.—Standards Table.										
Number and percentage of children in each standard on the Roll, and the number below Standard I. on the Roll, for 11 years.										
At Loay Day.	Below I.	I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.	VI.	VII.	Ex.-VII.	TOTAL.
1893	142612	85542 25.7	67626 20.3	60919 18.3	50631 15.2	36632 11.0	21676 6.5	8026 2.4	2159 .6	475823
1894	145477	87020 25.6	68794 20.3	61154 18.0	52160 15.4	37263 11.0	22363 6.6	8285 2.4	2544 .7	485066
1895	147028	85672 24.6	70403 20.3	62835 18.0	53445 15.3	39226 11.3	23673 6.8	10060 2.9	2778 .8	495120
1896	151344	84188 23.6	70830 19.9	64057 18.0	55056 15.4	41470 11.6	25899 7.3	11521 3.2	3724 1.0	508089
1897	155270	83170 23.0	69140 19.2	64555 17.8	56494 15.6	43569 12.0	27591 7.6	13017 3.6	4298 1.2	517099
1898	167296	83520 23.7	67963 19.3	63160 18.0	54799 15.6	41563 11.8	25617 7.3	11529 3.3	3673 1.0	519011
1899	171205	83463 23.4	69812 19.6	63348 17.8	54736 15.3	42706 12.0	26142 7.3	12552 3.5	3865 1.1	527829
1900	170433	81945 23.0	68286 19.1	62990 17.7	55857 15.7	42616 11.9	27498 7.7	13236 3.7	4218 1.2	527179
1901	167120	82928 22.7	68130 18.6	64002 17.5	56159 15.4	45262 12.4	29220 8.0	15382 4.2	4399 1.2	532602
1902	163061	83817 22.1	69060 18.2	65343 17.3	57562 15.2	47679 12.6	32736 8.6	18103 4.8	4713 1.2	542014
1903	160064	85268 22.2	70502 18.3	65059 16.9	58560 15.2	48215 12.6	33076 8.6	18432 4.8	5299 1.4	544475
1904	155756	83595 21.5	71128 18.3	66508 17.1	59248 15.2	50282 12.9	34046 8.8	18496 4.8	5272 1.4	544331

(Table 3.1) 'Standards Table' in LMA: SBL/1500, London County Council, Report of School Management Committee of the late School Board for London, (1904) p. viii

Division	School	Dept.	Below stand. I	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	Ex VII	Total
Chelsea	Beethoven Street	(Mixed) B	...	50	71	83	74	68	72	24	4	446
		(Mixed) G	...	25	69	80	64	39	44	16	...	337
		Infant	380	133								
	Droop Street	B	..	59	78	67	66	67	46	8	...	391
		G	..	52	68	66	54	63	39	10	...	352
		I	330	122								
	Kilburn Lane	B		129	123	93	67	57	11	1	...	481
		G		97	82	67	60	39	13	3		361
		I	295									295
Greenwich	Bloomfield Road	B	...	21	51	48	45	48	39	23	10	285
		G	...	14	65	53	38	48	48	31	8	305
		I	349									349
West Lambeth	Bolingbroke Road	B		55	73	70	74	54	32	10		368
		G		46	77	83	45	42	20	3		316
		I	122	169								291
	Surrey Lane	B		87	140	127	68	51	23	5	..	501
		G		70	133	125	79	55	28	4	2	496
		I	397	116								513
Southwark	Monnow Road	B		42	106	103	72	92	70	33	2	520
		G		58	95	94	77	73	68	21	1	487
		I	408	170								578
	Orange Street	B	37	40	55	42	39	20	11			301
		G	30	54	65	46	49	41	13	3	...	
		I	303									
	Lant Street	B		71	99	92	82	59	33	9	..	396
		G		73	80	96	61	47	33	5	1	378
		I	240	138								

Table 3.2, 'Return showing [sic] the number of children on the roll in each standard and according to ages on the 25th 880 6721 March 1888', pp. 386-425 in 22.05 SBL: School Board for London School, Management Committee Report (1888)

CHAPTER FOUR

Overpressure and Classification

The diversity of children, their backgrounds and abilities, that were encountered in the London Elementary School following the 1870 Education Act, challenged the education system, its curriculum, funding and examination. As we have seen in Chapter Three the School Board for London (SBL), responded to this diversity with the creation of Special Difficulty and Higher Grade Schools. In so doing the SBL attempted to support both the 'backward' and 'forward' child by classifying schools to ensure better funding. With guaranteed pay teachers were encouraged to achieve more with their students. Moreover by classifying schools as Higher Grade or Special Difficulty, it attempted, if it did not always succeed, in framing the HMI's view of the child's academic achievement by local rather than national circumstances. In so doing the child itself was classified, either by her socio-economic background in the case of Special Difficulty, or, in the case of Higher Grade Schools, her academic potential. This mix of methodologies in classifying children was indicative of the confused and sometimes convoluted responses to the achievements and difficulties faced by the Board School and its children in the fin de siècle. This confusion was exposed in the mid-1880s as ideas about classification became embroiled in debates about if and why children were experiencing stress at school. Overpressure, as it became known, revealed how classification was influenced by environment and nourishment (intellectual or otherwise) both inside and outside of the classroom. Moreover it exposed how different authorities were themselves sometimes in the dark or denied their influence or responsibility

towards the child, resulting in piecemeal and sometimes ineffectual or even dangerous education policy.

In 1862 the Education Department published its Revised Code introducing the system of 'payment by results.' All children who had attended for 255 days of the school year would be examined by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) in order to gain evidence of the teacher's skill. From the outset, however, cracks began to appear. The National Union of Elementary Teachers (NUET) were quick to warn the Education Department that the new economic emphasis on exam results meant teachers felt obliged to, 'force all scholars forward at a uniform rate, regardless of their mental, physical, social and intellectual capacities.'⁴²⁷ As Board Schools developed in the 1870s, the Education Department itself became aware that teachers could easily ignore or even neglect the 'irregular and backward' child without the HMI knowing, given that only children who had attended for 255 days would be examined.⁴²⁸ Chapter Three touched upon how the Education Department made an attempt to remedy the irregularities of payment by results with their introduction of the Merit Grant in 1882. The grant aimed to reward school management as much as exam results. This emphasis on school management was reinforced by the development of the Standards system. In a bid to ensure that 'clever boys were not driven out of the school,' schools were now able to introduce Standard VII. Anthony Mundella, the Vice-President of the Committee on Education argued that because Standard VII offered children the opportunity to 'do something better in reading, writing and

⁴²⁷ National Union of Elementary Teachers (NUET), 'The New Code and Over-pressure in Elementary Schools: Containing the Recent Correspondence Between the Education Department and the National Union of Teachers and Suggestions for the Amendment of the Code' (NUET, 1884, London) in British Library: BL8304 b 31, *Chadwick Tracts on Education 1870-1901*, p. 3-4

⁴²⁸ Sydney Buxton, *Over-pressure and Elementary Education*, (Swan Sonnenschein and Company, London, 1885), p. 29

arithmetic,' it would encourage them to complete their elementary education and in the process 'raise the whole tone of the ordinary work of the school.'⁴²⁹

The 1882 Education Code also acknowledged the NUET's concerns that 'there have been many well-founded complaints of undue pressure on backward scholars.'⁴³⁰ To remedy this problem the Code declared that if an Inspector found a child to be suffering,

delicate health, or prolonged illness; obvious dullness or defective intellect; temporary deprivation, by accident or otherwise, of the use of eye or hand,

then she should be placed on an 'exemption schedule', which meant withdrawing her from the annual examination and preventing her from entering the next Standard.⁴³¹ Exemption, however, relied on the child being identified in the first place by either a teacher or independent doctor, then having the diagnosis verified by the head teacher and finally, by identifying the child to the HMI, who had sole power to confirm or veto the proposed exemption. To ensure that teachers did not abuse these schedules the 255-day proviso was replaced with a new 22-week rule. Under this rule, rather than entering children into the exam if they had attended regularly, they were now entered based upon how long they had been enrolled in the school year. This chapter focuses on the consequences of the Revised Code, the impact it could have on the classroom and the refusal of Government authorities to accept its consequences. The latter were instead more inclined to look to the health of the child itself rather than the health of the Education Code.

⁴²⁹ HC, Deb, (03 April 1882), Vol. 268, Cols. 598-641, Col.634

⁴³⁰ Education Department, Dr. Crichton-Browne, *Copy of the Report Upon the Alleged Overpressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools in London*, (1884), Volume 69, HC 293, London, Stationary Office, p.

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⁴³¹ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 50

Since teachers' pay was still determined by exam results and exemption schedules were still reliant on annual HMI approval, the NUET argued that the 1882 Education Code, in fact, only exacerbated 'undue pressure.' Teachers and increasingly doctors argued that the 22-week rule forced examinations on children who, due to poor attendance caused by illness and poverty, had no time to learn. Meanwhile the need for teachers to wait for the Annual Exam until HMIs approved or vetoed their suggested exemptions meant children were being prepared for exams that they may never have to take. By 1884 the stress of being illprepared for an exam and the unnecessary pressure of being prepared for an exam that may not happen were being linked to cases of children whose 'health' was being temporarily or even 'permanently damaged by schooling.'⁴³²

Concerns from teachers and independent doctors that some students were being 'over-pressed' by the stringent demands of the Education Codes highlighted the ambiguous responsibility schools had towards their students' physical and emotional welfare. The ambiguous health of scholars magnified longstanding parliamentary debates about what and who the Board Schools were for. Throughout 1884 overpressure was debated in parliament, newspapers, schools boards and classrooms. This chapter is concerned with how overpressure was identified and defined at a national and local level, what were considered its origins and solutions, which children were considered vulnerable to being over-pressed and why. The classification of children as 'dull', 'backward' or 'forward' was shaped by understandings about the child's physiology and shifting ideas of parental and educational responsibility.

⁴³² Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 7

Overpressure was not confined to London but as the debate unfolded the School Board for London (SBL) became a regular feature of parliamentary debates in the 1880s. For some parliamentarians, suspicious of the SBL's proliferation, overpressure was symptomatic of the strain felt by the poorest children, whom they believed were compelled to attend school regularly in order to pass unnecessarily demanding exams, all for the sake of extra Government funding. The SBL's supporters however, argued that the questionable numbers of overpressure cases were insignificant in a system of up to 600,000 children. The Capital's education system was testament to the aims and achievements of the Board and the 1870 Education Act which had brought it into being.⁴³³ The focus on London's Board Schools was crystallised in the spring of 1884 when after a year of accusation and rumours, the Education Department invited the Government's Visitor in Lunacy, Dr Crichton-Browne, to see first-hand the work of the Elementary Schools. Crichton-Browne visited fourteen Elementary Schools in total, focusing on those in Southwark and Lambeth. From these visits he concluded that the culture of Board Schooling and the circumstances of the poorest in London, left many children vulnerable to 'overpressure. In particular, malnourished children needed to be either fed or made exempt from the Annual Exam. This chapter explores his *Report Upon the Alleged Over-Pressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools* alongside parliamentary debates and three other sources, including the voices of HMIs, the SBL and head teachers which were produced in the wake of his report. It follows their debates on overpressure chronologically because so much of their arguments

⁴³³ For an analysis of overpressure prior to 1883 see J. Middleton, 'The Overpressure Epidemic of 1884 and the Culture of Nineteenth-Century Schooling', pp.419-435 in *History of Education*, Vol.33, No. 4 (July 2004) pp. 419-421; also see The Times Archive Online (TTAO): Sophia Jex-Blake, Letter, 'Educational Pressure', *The Times*, (Thursday 15th April 1880), pg. 11 and, NUET, 'The New Code', p. 4

regarding its relationship to the Education Codes, malnourishment and classification overlap and yet equally contradict or deny one another's accounts.

James Crichton-Browne was the former superintendent for the West Riding Lunatic Asylum and in 1883 had published a small treatise on *Education and the Nervous System*, in which he argued (without actually entering a school) that teachers needed to treat their vocation more as a science and less as an art, by recording 'observations which may serve as guides to other members of their calling, and contributions to the general storehouse of scientific truth.' Just on the cusp of eugenics, his faith in record-keeping was indicative of a Darwinian generation of medical doctors, for whom the evolution of a biological subject could be understood and even determined by detailed classification of its physical and environmental makeup. He argued, for example, that habitual medical examinations in schools would 'enable us to determine the rate of growth of children in different districts, of different racial origin, and of different social position from year to year.' Such information could then be used to establish, he went on, 'the physical proportions most favourable to good health and most suitable for various employments as in factories or in the naval and military services of the country.'⁴³⁴ The implications of Crichton-Browne's medical inspections were clear: medical examination and close observation of children would lead to affinities between racial, social characteristics and appropriate occupations. The publication in 1883 of his treatise, however, initially went unnoticed with, for example, the SBL continuing only to use doctors to confirm individual cases that were suitable for exemption from either examination or schooling all together. In 1884 as Crichton-Browne's profile

⁴³⁴ Crichton Browne, 'Education and the Nervous System', pp. 271-347 in Malcolm Morris (ed.), *Book of Health* (Cassell & Co, London, 1883), p. 20

rose, so his vision for a school system based upon physiology alone would be challenged by educational authorities.

In 1884 Crichton-Browne used his *Report Upon the Alleged Overpressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools* to reiterate his support for the creation of school medical records, but his contempt for teachers who, 'failed to recognise the duty...to study the principles of their art,' was replaced with a contempt for the system of payment by results, Merit Grants and HMIs, which he believed failed to ensure the mental and physical health of children.⁴³⁵ He argued that London's Board Schools contained up to '20 or 30 per cent of backward children' who were being 'hard pressed.' Their difficulties, he argued, were caused by the teachers' lack of autonomy in exempting students from examination. Children were 'hard pressed' at both ends of the academic spectrum because payment by results forced teachers to push children to secure their income. For children in the lower Standards, argued Crichton-Browne, many were too malnourished to cope with this pressure to perform, whereas children in the upper Standards could be easily overwhelmed by the sudden increase in work. Moving from Standard VI to the newly formed Standard VII meant taking on more subjects and increasing the school's opportunity for income.⁴³⁶

In response to Crichton-Browne's Report, the *Memorandum Relating to Dr Crichton Browne's Report* by Joshua Fitch, the Chief Inspector of Schools was added as an attachment by the Education Department. Fitch had been shadowed by Dr Crichton Browne on his rounds as an HMI in Walworth. Chief

⁴³⁵ TTAO: 'Sir Edmund Currie and Doctor Crichton-Browne', *The Times*, (Wednesday October 29th 1884), p. 10

⁴³⁶ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 7

Inspector Fitch had grown up in Southwark and had studied at Borough Road Training College, where he was appointed principal in 1856. He became an HMI in 1863, first for West Riding of Yorkshire, then for Lambeth in 1877, before being made Chief Inspector for the Eastern Counties in 1883. As principle of Borough Training College, Fitch had criticised the introduction of payment by results, on the grounds that it's criteria for awarding teachers was too narrow, and as Chief Inspector he attempted to broaden the Inspection by developing the Merit Grant with the Education Department.⁴³⁷ Fitch's *Memorandum Relating to Dr Crichton Browne's Report*, however, argued that if overpressure existed it was not caused by payment by results nor indeed, unsurprisingly any amendment to the Revised Education Code. Instead, 'the possibility of undue pressure' was inevitable when, 'in every department of human activity, cases occasionally occur, in which the strength of the workers is over-taxed, either through their own zeal, or through the exactions of those who control them.' Schools, Fitch argued, had not 'created sickness and poverty' but they had, 'undoubtedly brought into view much of both, which was previously unknown or disregarded.'⁴³⁸ Fitch used his Memorandum to undermine Crichton-Browne's opinion that malnourished children were more vulnerable to overpressure. Fitch believed that feeding children in schools not only discouraged parental responsibility but also failed to encourage healthier bodies. Instead it was only when a school, its head teachers and assistants, focused on attendance and lesson-planning that 'the well-known physiological truth that intellectual effort is

⁴³⁷ A. B. Robertson, 'Sir Joshua Girling Fitch (1824–1903), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/33149?docPos=1> (accessed, 21.11.2012)

⁴³⁸ Education Department, Joshua Girling Fitch, *Memorandum relating to Dr Crichton-Browne's Report*, London,(1884),Volume 69, HC 293, p.61

not only helpful but almost essential to physical well-being' would manifest itself in, 'signs of health and cheerful activity.'⁴³⁹

In the wake of Crichton-Browne's Report, it was not only Fitch who felt compelled to defend the work of the Education Department, but at the end of 1884 the SBL went one step further and compiled a *Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board*, which correlated over two hundred and seventeen responses from head teachers of their Departments. As this chapter will discuss, this report revealed that teachers recognised a variety of symptoms among their scholars and suggested equally varied causes of overpressure. *The Question of Overpressure Report* produced several recommendations for both the SBL and the Education Department and while some of these would remain just words on paper, others had wide reaching consequences for the structure and development of London's Board Schools. In *The Question of Overpressure Report* the SBL made explicit and systematic use of the experiences of their teaching staff, asking head teachers to fill out surveys. Yet these provided little space for more detailed responses.⁴⁴⁰

The emotional and pedagogic impact overpressure, its causes and effects, had on those working in the classrooms was, however, revealed through interviews with London head teachers and Inspectors recorded in the 1886-7 *Royal Commission on the Workings of the Education Act*, otherwise known as the Cross Commission. As shall be discussed below, the Commission was vast in scope, but its principal focus was on a school's socio-economic circumstance

⁴³⁹ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p.59

⁴⁴⁰ London Metropolitan Archive (LMA): SBL/1466, School Board for London (SBL), *Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board*, (SBL, London, July 1885)

and how this affected its inspection and, in turn, teachers and scholars. Five SBL head teachers gave evidence to the Cross Commission, including Mrs Burgwin, the head mistress of Orange Street's Girls Department in Southwark. Orange Street was of unique interest to the Cross Commission, given that it was the only school of Special Difficulty represented by the witnesses and the only one to offer free school meals.⁴⁴¹ Burgwin herself was of particular interest to the Commission, because as was shown in Chapter Two, she had found, 'a marked improvement in the child, in its tone and in its whole bearing' by devising a feeding programme at Orange Street when it first opened in 1874.⁴⁴² While she was not the first to offer hot meals to Board School children, she was the first to offer it to them free of charge. In 1880 her dinners had become a public campaign, receiving financial backing from the investigative journalist George Sims and his newspaper *The Referee* for the newly created 'Children's Free Breakfast and Dinner Fund'.⁴⁴³ Burgwin's commitment to free-feeding was buoyed by her concerns about overpressure. In 1885 she was elected as the first woman to the NUET's Executive Committee and that spring she produced a paper on Overpressure for the NUET's National Conference. In it she outlined the limitations of payment by results and the need for accurate classification by teachers and doctors. Her treatise was covered by newspapers throughout the country and was used by the leader of the National Union of Elementary Teachers, Thomas Edmund Heller when introducing his motion to the NUET to call for a Royal Commission into 'the existence, cause and extent of

⁴⁴¹ For Sydney Street see 'Miss Wittenberg Examined' pp. 67-70; For Harrow-on-the-Hill see, 'Mr Wilkinson Examined' pp-440-446; For Fleet Road' see 'Mr Adams Examined' pp. 45-67 and for Orange Street, see 'Mrs Burgwin Examined' see 113-126 in *Royal Commission on the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts*, (Cross Report), 1887, (C.5056), London, Stationary Office, 17281

⁴⁴² Burgwin, Cross Report, 17177, p. 117

⁴⁴³ Pamela Horn, 'Elizabeth Miriam Burgwin [née Canham] (1850–1940), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/51776?docPos=1> (accessed 21.11.2012)

overpressure.’⁴⁴⁴ While a Royal Commission specifically on overpressure failed to materialise, Burgwin and Heller’s subsequent involvement in the Cross Commission imbedded their ideas into the political consciousness.

Burgwin’s critique of payment by results and her high-profile involvement in setting up school dinners anticipated the debate that erupted between Crichton-Browne and Fitch in 1884. The recommendations of the SBL’s Special Committee on Overpressure in 1885 were put to the test in her management of Orange Street as a Special Difficulty School. Furthermore, her unrelenting interest and commitment to accurate classification and effective pedagogic practice revealed the role that head teachers could play in negotiation with the local and national governments, if they could make their voices heard. Through these sources the contested causes, solutions and victims of overpressure are recounted to reveal a debate that encapsulated the challenges of public Elementary Schools. They reveal an evolving understanding of how a child’s progress was shaped by doctors, HMIs and head teachers alike as they attempted to manage the development of schools and their priorities

Parliamentary Ideas of ‘Overpressure’ (1882 - 1884)

Throughout the 1870s, as already mentioned, the NUET had warned the Education Department that their approach to school inspection was placing unnecessary pressure on student and teacher. Newspapers routinely reported upon the NUET’s annual conferences and their calls for reform of payment by results. The NUET’s focus on the structure of education was balanced by the

⁴⁴⁴ Nineteenth Century British Newspapers Archive Online (NCBNAO) : ‘Elementary Teachers’ Conference,’ *The Leeds Mercury*, (Saturday 11th April 1885) p.8. See also, NCBNAO: ‘Echoes Of The Week,’ *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, (Friday 10th April 1885), p.4; NCBNAO: ‘Educational Conference At Norwich’, *The Morning Post* (Thursday 9th April 1885), pg. 2

occasional letter printed in *The Times*, which focused on the environment of education. Doctors and school medical officers alike, argued that 'overstrain' was preventable if 'the physiological conditions...were...thoroughly fulfilled,' by ensuring that 'the food was good and abundant, the bedrooms were well aired, the periods of study were judiciously varied.'⁴⁴⁵

The issue of 'overstrain' came to a head in 1883, one year on from the introduction of the Revised Code, its Merit Grant, exemption schedules and 22-week proviso. On 26th June 1883 Thomas Heller, SBL member and Secretary of NUET, wrote to the Education Department to ask them to consider,

that the excessive requirements of the Code, some of the present conditions of examination, and the great irregularity of attendance at school are causes which lead to great pressure upon the children in Elementary Schools, and place specially heavy burdens on weak and dull children.⁴⁴⁶

The Education Department did not respond until November, when they blamed the delay on the need to gain 'some practical experience of the working of the Code, which had come into operation so very shortly before this opinion of your committee was formed.'⁴⁴⁷ It was only later that summer, when questions began to be asked in the Lords that the concerns of the NUET and doctors began to be listened to in parliament.

In the House of Lords on 16th July 1883, the cross-bencher, Henry Stanley, Baron of Alderley, asked if an alleged increase in the number of people suffering 'insanity' might prompt Lord Carlingford, the Lord President of the

⁴⁴⁵ TTAO: Robert Farquharson, Letter, 'Brain Exhaustion', *The Times*, (Monday, 19th April 1880), pg. 12. See also Jex-Blake, 'Educational Pressure', pg. 11; NCBNAO: Rev. R. A, Armstrong, 'The overstrain in Education', *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, (Monday, 16th April 1883), p.6

⁴⁴⁶ NUET, 'The New Code,' p. 11

⁴⁴⁷ TTAO: Lord Sandford, Letter, 'Overwork in Elementary Schools Lords Report', *The Times*, (Saturday, 17th November, 1883), pg. 6

Council of Education, to consider, 'the effects of overwork in Elementary Schools alleged to have occurred by various letters in the daily press.'⁴⁴⁸ The Baron was the older brother of Llyulph Stanley, the secular, Liberal Chair of the SBL, who would later contest claims that the SBL was suffering an epidemic of overpressure.⁴⁴⁹ The Baron had been deeply suspicious of the state's increasing role in religious education and unlike his brother Lyulph, Henry had been critical of a shared religious syllabus for Board Schools and opposed the Education Act's 'conscience clause.'⁴⁵⁰ His readiness to discuss the 'overwork' of children was indicative of a man critical of the state's involvement in education.

For Henry Stanley 'overwork' was just another example of the perils of Government-funded education. He argued that 'there could be no doubt' that where children 'died of brain fever, and where...teachers had broken down,' overpressure if it existed at all was 'due to the increased severity of the Revised Code, and the difficulty of satisfying the School Inspectors so as to obtain the grant.' He was particularly concerned that the Education Department had not prohibited but endorsed 'home lessons' (homework) and unscheduled lesson-extensions.⁴⁵¹ The irony was, Stanley argued, that while 'every new edition of the Revised Code, raised the standard of learning,' it also made it increasingly 'wrong' for schools to aim at 'excellent.' This was because 'teachers said' that to prep children suitably for examination homework and

⁴⁴⁸ HL, Deb, (16 July 1883), Vol. 281, Cols. 1465-1473, Col. 1465

⁴⁴⁹ TTAO: 'Obituary Lord Stanley of Alderly' *The Times*, (Friday 11th December 1903), pg. 6

⁴⁵⁰ Muriel E. Chamberlain, 'Stanley, Henry Edward John, third Baron Stanley of Alderley and second Baron Eddisbury (1827-1903)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/36246> (accessed 02.11. 2012)

⁴⁵¹ HL, Deb, (16 July 1883), Vol. 281, Col.1466

lesson-extensions had become, 'the only way in which they could get "excellent" for their schools, and earn the grant.'⁴⁵²

Lord Carlingford, representing the Education Department, responded by pointing out that any pressure for children to undertake homework or continue lessons after official classes had ended was, 'entirely the doing of the local managers' and 'over-zealous' teachers.⁴⁵³ Stanley had, however, punctuated his claims with medical warnings from different sources; the first from a speech made in 1879 at the Annual Conference of the British Medical Association by Dr J.B. Hack Tuke, in which, 'brain-fag' and epilepsy were linked to 'educational strain'; the second from a letter he had received from Dr Andrew Clarke, who had witnessed at least two people die of 'brain fever' caused by 'educational overpressure'; and finally the third from a speech made by Dr Crichton-Browne, one of the Government's Visitors in Lunacy. The latter stated at the Annual Medical Meeting, in August 1880, that 'injudicious haste or ill-considered zeal may work serious mischief among fragile or badly nourished children, by inducing exhaustion of the brain.' Stanley used these comments to try to persuade his fellow peers that an, 'increase of brain disease...might shortly be expected, unless the warnings given by some of the highest authorities in the Medical Profession were to be disregarded.'⁴⁵⁴ The historian Jane Middleton has shown how Stanley shrouded the 'rumour and anecdotes' of newspaper reports in the guise of medical gravitas.⁴⁵⁵ While the use of doctors to support the existence and epidemiology of overpressure would soon be replicated in the House of Commons, it is worth noting that Stanley's conflation of overpressure

⁴⁵² HL, Deb (16 July 1883), Vol. 281, Col.1467

⁴⁵³ HL, Deb (16 July 1883), Vol. 281, Col.1469; Col.1471

⁴⁵⁴ Crichton-Browne and Stanley, HL, Deb (16 July 1883), Vol. 281, Col.1466

⁴⁵⁵ Middleton, 'Epidemic', p. 421

with insanity was rejected by Carlingford of the Department of Education, who accused him of 'gross exaggeration' as well as by Lord Shaftesbury who was the Chairman of the Lunacy Commissioners and so would have been aware of the Lunacy Governor Crichton-Browne. For the Earl of Shaftesbury, any statistical increase in cases of insanity was, and would be, due to a more robust set of institutions which now recorded cases which 'had hitherto been left out of the reckoning' and now were identified and dealt with.⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore, argued the Earl Shaftesbury, even if there was 'a special kind of insanity...produced by overstraining of the intellectual powers, especially among those just rising into adult life,' it was too rare to affect national averages.⁴⁵⁷ For the time being overpressure remained nothing other than a controversial medical hypothesis that was easily prevented by good teaching. Taken with the letter of the NUET, however, the issue was building political momentum which the Government felt needed a more substantial response.

Ten days after the debate in the Lords at the end of July 1886, the Liberal Vice President of the Committee of Council on Education, A.J. Mundella was called to the House of Commons to explain why the Education Department's spending had increased by 5.3 per cent in less than a year. Mundella argued that the increase was in line with the rise in attendance following the 1880 Education Act, which had made schooling compulsory in England and Wales, and the introduction of the Merit Grant in 1882, which rewarded regular attendance. Increasing attendance meant that more classrooms were needed, while

⁴⁵⁶ HL, Deb (16 July 1883), Vol. 281, Col.1468

⁴⁵⁷ HL, Deb (16 July 1883), Vol. 281, Col.1471

increasing regularity meant more children were passing Standard IV and as a result undertaking the costlier Class and Specific Subjects.⁴⁵⁸

Concerned that ‘the best friends of education think we are pressing too hard for intellectual work,’ Mundella was also keen to respond to the negative accusations regarding payment by results and the underfeeding of the Board School child.⁴⁵⁹ The subsequent debate in the Commons lasted four and a half hours and continued into the following day. At the end of the first day Mundella commented that the debate had ‘ranged over a great many subjects relating to education, and, for the first time that Session, the friends of education in the House had retailed a long list of grievances.’⁴⁶⁰ The diversity of ‘subjects’ and ‘grievances’ revealed the extensive social and medical opinions that informed the overpressure debate – and indeed the much wider question of compulsory education, what it was for, whom it should serve - in Parliament. Furthermore, the Liberal educationalist Mundella’s acknowledgement that even ‘the friends of education’ were articulating concern, revealed the complex political web in which Board Schooling was caught. Overpressure was becoming a question of extent, cause and political interest.

Focused on, ‘the health and the progress of our school population’, Mundella drew the House’s attention to ‘two phases of this question’. Firstly, the claims that payment by results drove teachers to ‘overwork’ children in their bid for a high pass rate. Mundella had found that such cases were ‘quite as bad where the teachers are paid a fixed salary,’ thus if teachers felt pressed to press

⁴⁵⁸ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Cols. 566-667, Col.566; For Standards Col.566 & c.569; for accommodation Col. 570

⁴⁵⁹ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 576

⁴⁶⁰ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 650

children, it was purely self-inflicted 'for mere ambition—from the desire to be successful in competition, and a desire to stand well with the managers of school boards.'⁴⁶¹ Secondly how health and progress was affected by 'the wretched homes in which the mass of the children live, and the question of under-feeding.' For Mundella underfeeding was 'by far the most serious question,' because it struck at the heart of thirteen years of lingering criticism that Board Schools were not attended by the poorest and therefore were not attended by children who would be vulnerable to the effects of malnourishment.

Mundella continued in his statement to the House of Commons 'there is an impression among many people that education in London has not reached the class for which it was intended; that we are not dealing with the poorest classes; and that the School Board of London is not bringing under the system the very poorest, most wretched, and most miserable among the outcast population.' This, Mundella argued, was a 'mistaken notion' given that 'the wretched character of the surroundings of the children, and the wretchedly-fed children who are to be found in those schools' of Whitechapel, Finsbury, Marylebone, Walworth, and Bethnal Green had left critics 'astonished'.⁴⁶² Research by one SBL inspector, Marchant Williams, for example, had revealed that upwards of 80 per cent of children in some schools, across these Divisions were living in one bedroom.⁴⁶³ These children were 'sometimes found faint from want of food' and in 'many cases, persons have gone out to buy bread for the children, in order to enable them to stand the school labour.'⁴⁶⁴ It was not, therefore, that the Board School and its exams caused overpressure, leaving the child to feel

⁴⁶¹ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Cols. 581-582

⁴⁶² HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 576

⁴⁶³ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 576

⁴⁶⁴ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 580

faint; it was that the Board School revealed the extent of malnourishment and it was schooling which could help to curb it.

The Board School was, in Mundella's view,

the one bright spot in the child's existence; it is his only place of happiness and comfort, and he is under good sanitary regulations while he is at school. He is warm, and well fed, and is subject to cheerful exercises, including singing and physical training, which are most enjoyable to him. Indeed, the children cry when their mothers want to keep them at home, and they cry also when the holidays come. There cannot be a better proof of what is being done by bringing the child into the school.⁴⁶⁵

His representation of the school as a haven from poor homes and environments was a direct challenge to those who claimed that Board Schools failed to reach 'the very poorest, most wretched, and most miserable among the outcast population.' In so doing he justified the increasingly expensive work of schools by highlighting the want and poverty of their students. For Mundella, the lack of warmth, food and 'cheerful exercises' available to children had a detrimental effect on a child's educational achievement. He gave 'an example which ought to be taken up all over London,' of the beneficial effects of nourishment on a child's capacity to learn, that of the penny dinners introduced by the Conservative M.P. for Mid Surrey, Sir Henry Peek at a National School 'on the Coast, at the village of Rousdon.' The school had children from a scattered population of poor agricultural families and prior to introducing midday meals, 76 per cent of children attended and 88.7 per cent of were eligible for examination. Within two years of the introduction of the lunch-time meal, attendance stood at 81.6 per cent and 96 per cent were now eligible for the Annual Exam. Moreover the pass rates in what had once appeared to be a 'heavy programme' of Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic, Geography,

⁴⁶⁵ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Cols. 580-581

Grammar, Literature and Domestic Economy had all improved (except for Domestic Economy), with 100 per cent of children now passing in three of the eight subjects. For Mundella the improvements in exam results were decisive because ‘flour, suet, meat, potatoes, bread, rice, sugar, and every other article consumed in these dinners’ had become ‘an attraction’ for the children which ‘induced regularity of attendance,’ and in turn induced ‘a marked improvement in appearance, work and attendance’ come inspection day, thereby ensuring an ‘Excellent’ Merit Grant.⁴⁶⁶ There was no question in his mind, and those of his Liberal colleagues and educationalists, that feeding children aided them intellectually. The question, as we shall see, was who was responsible for this feeding.

Mundella’s argument that only teachers were responsible for the negative impact of payment by results but that they also had the ability to identify underfed children and therefore help improve physical and mental abilities was designed to pre-empt a prepared statement by Samuel Smith, the Liberal M.P. for Liverpool, who wanted to, ‘call the attention of the Committee to the subject of over-strain on both pupils and teachers under our present system of education.’⁴⁶⁷ Smith argued he, ‘had no desire to speak on this subject of over-strain in any spirit of antagonism to the growing education of the country.’ Yet for him, ‘grievous injury done to children, as well as to teachers’ was being caused by a culture of educational competition in which schools were expected to teach too many subjects, too quickly at levels which were too demanding. Such an education was the ‘consequence...of ...an ambition to obtain the largest share of the Government grant it was possible to get, and which could

⁴⁶⁶ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 578

⁴⁶⁷ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 585

only be obtained by pushing children forward beyond their strength.’⁴⁶⁸ Smith drew the House’s attention to an account of a Liverpoolian doctor who had witnessed vast numbers of Board School children, particularly girls, who experienced overpressure in the form of ‘severe headaches’ and ‘sleeplessness.’ Smith underscored these symptoms with anecdotal tales of death by ‘brain fever’ and suicide, all caused by exhausted ‘physical stamina and mental power.’⁴⁶⁹ While there was little dispute amongst MPs that headaches and tiredness were symptomatic of exhaustion (educational or otherwise), death was too sensational a claim to go uncontested. The Liberal Sir Lyon Playfair, for example, who was the first to speak after Smith, noted that the *Journal of the Statistical Society* had found that,

ever since our national system of education has come into play, the reduction of mortality among children has been surprisingly great. Between 5 and 10 years of age, boys have a lessened mortality in the latter period of 30 per cent, and girls of 33 per cent.⁴⁷⁰

Thus, just like Lord Shaftesbury, Playfair argued that if deaths had been caused by overpressure, they were anomalies in a downward trend. Likewise, having found no evidence of an increasing suicide rate amongst children, Playfair believed ‘suicide has clearly nothing to do with the overwork of school life.’⁴⁷¹

Despite Liberal MPs such as Smith raising concerns about overpressure, it was Conservative Members of the House who were persistently vocal on the topic of overpressure in Board Schools. Thomas Salt, the M.P. for Stafford and John Gilbert Talbot, M.P. for Oxford University were typical examples. Salt, a Lunacy Commissioner and Ecclesiastical Commissioner, was interested in the causes of mental distress and had an active interest in the development of National

⁴⁶⁸ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 586

⁴⁶⁹ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Cols. 586-594,

⁴⁷⁰ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 602

⁴⁷¹ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Col. 604

Schools. Similarly Talbot was the Vice-president to the Church of England's National Society and had claimed in 1871 that in 'trusting our religious teaching to the School Boards,' the Education Department and its HMIs would be stretched to capacity and in so doing the 'Education of England [would] never meet the best desires of the best portion of her people.'⁴⁷² For many of those who worked with voluntary schools, like Salt and Talbot, the increasing expenditure by the Education Department was a sign that Board Schools were not being used as they had been 'originally created; to supplement, not to supplant, the voluntary schools.'⁴⁷³

Talbot argued that the SBL had 'a power [compulsion] which no other body had...it was their duty to sweep up all the leavings of every other system.' Instead of concentrating on the poorest children, however, Talbot believed that the SBL charged too high a price for anything other than 'extravagant' practices that were 'drawing away children from other schools.'⁴⁷⁴ Consequently the schools were appealing only to those who could afford them, who previously would have attended his beloved National Schools.

In the follow-up session the Liberal M.P. for Finsbury, William Torrens, ratified Talbot's statement, arguing that in his own North-London constituency, 'new schools on the most expensive pattern are continually erecting, where they are not really wanted, apparently to break the heart of the existing voluntary schools.' He noted how within the parish of St Giles, whose population had been on the decline since the introduction of Board Schools, the SBL was

⁴⁷² J.G. Talbot, 'The Lesson of the School Board Elections,' *A Paper Read at the Annual Meeting of the Church of England School Teachers Association for West Kent*, (Journal Office, Maidstone, 1871)

<<http://archive.org/stream/lessonofschoolbo00talb#page/n5/mode/2up>> (accessed 31.10.12)

⁴⁷³ HC Deb, (27 July 1883) Vol. 282, Cols. 830-862, Col. 837

⁴⁷⁴ HC, Deb (26 July 1883), Vol. 282, Cols. 566-667, Cols. 617-618

actively building 441 additional places, despite there already being an excess of 792 in local SBL schools and a further 400 'vacant' places in 'the old voluntary school.'⁴⁷⁵

Thus, Conservative MPs' concerns about overpressure were in fact as much an anxiety about the survival of voluntary schools, as they were about the survival of the Board School child. The object of the Education Act of 1870, as Salt saw it, was to 'give an education suited to the children of persons who were to obtain their living by manual labour.' Thus *if* Board Schools were attempting to appeal to families who might otherwise choose a higher-fee paying voluntary school then 'the instruction given could only be of use to persons in a far higher position.'⁴⁷⁶ In so doing Salt argued, Board Schools, especially in London – given the breadth of the SBL's curriculum – had 'imposed too much labour both upon teachers and scholars; and...aimed at subjects not suited for mere elementary instruction.' For Salt and his allies it was irresponsible of Board Schools to 'to exert [the] brains' of 'children who were scantily fed and scantily clothed,' as if they were 'like the children of parents [of the] well-to-do.'⁴⁷⁷

In a bid to reassure critics that Board Schools were aimed at those children who would otherwise not attend school, the Education Department partially reaffirmed the view that poverty made children incapable of and ill-suited to instruction equivalent to that given in a high fee paying voluntary school. In their response to the NUET in November 1883 they argued that in Board Schools, 'the standard or progress has been fixed with reference to the capacity not of the bright, nor even of the average child, but of a scholar of only

⁴⁷⁵ HC, Deb, (27 July 1883) Vol. 282, Col. 841

⁴⁷⁶ HC, Deb, (27 July 1883) Vol. 282, Col. 836

⁴⁷⁷ HC, Deb, (27 July 1883) Vol. 282, Col. 835

moderate ability.’ But, the Education Department continued, as long as the child ‘had been properly classed, that he has passed the standard of the previous year, and that he has been under tolerably regular instruction since,’ there was nothing to prevent a child ‘of ordinary health and intelligence’ from mastering his subjects. Indeed since the 1882 Education Code ruled that:

the conditions of examination have been greatly eased by the withdrawal of higher subjects from a large number of the young scholars; by the encouragement – through the Merit Grant...and by the permission...to withdraw children from examination where there is a reasonable excuse, and otherwise to make allowance for exceptional cases, such as those of ‘weak or dull children.’⁴⁷⁸

By the beginning of 1884, however, circumstances surrounding alleged cases of overpressure throughout Britain overtook the Education Department’s calm reassurance that all that was needed was to trust in the Education Code. On 11th February 1884 Stanleigh Leighton, Conservative MP for North Shropshire asked whether Mundella was ‘still of opinion that the Code requires no amendment’ following newspaper reports relating to the suicide of a Board School boy in West Bromwich, which suggested the boy had been ‘subject’ to great ‘pressure...in order to force him through the examinations of the Code.’ Mundella was still of the same opinion, having read the evidence of the Coroner’s Report which reassured him that there was little the school could or had done to influence the boy. He called attention to the statement made by the boy’s teacher, under oath, that there had been no need to press the boy, ‘as he would have been a sure pass.’⁴⁷⁹ Mundella’s response, however, did not reassure Leighton because within a week he was again pressing the Vice-president on the mortal dangers of overpressure in Board Schools. This time Leighton asked if it was true that Professor Stokes, the HMI for Southwark, had

⁴⁷⁸ TTAO: Lord Sandford, Letter, ‘Overwork in Elementary Schools Lords Report’, *The Times*, (Saturday, 17th November 1883), pg. 6

⁴⁷⁹ HC, Deb, (11 February 1884), Vol. 284, Cols. 415-6

reported, 'fourteen certificated female teachers in his district have broken down from over-work under the New Code; that two have died; and that the health of the others seems to be in a precarious condition.'⁴⁸⁰

At this point, it is worth jumping ahead four months, because Leighton's February allegations regarding the fourteen cases sparked an SBL investigation that was reported back to the House in June 1884. It was left to the former chairman and Liberal M.P. Lyulph Stanley to explain that the Board's evidence had 'proved' the cases of overpressure 'to be a mass of hearsay statements' which were so unreliable that one teacher had even been reported as dead when she was in fact still very much alive.⁴⁸¹ While the SBL's investigation showed Professor Stokes' concern to be misplaced, his report that doctors were associating sore throats, low fevers, lost voices and even lost sight as signs that head teachers and their assistants were suffering from 'over-exertion' stuck in the minds of the predominantly Conservative parliamentarians who questioned the economic and social viability of Board-School education. Responding to Lyulph Stanley, the Tory MP Talbot said, 'whatever the answer' the allegations of overpressure had come from doctors and were thus 'made on good authority.' Moreover, Talbot argued, while the cases were, 'not of overworked children, but over-strained teachers' they highlighted the physical frailty of staff, many of whom had come through the Board School system as pupil-teachers. Overpressure was no longer simply affecting the most vulnerable in society but those who took charge of them.

⁴⁸⁰ HC, Deb, (19 February 1884), Vol. 284, Col.1332

⁴⁸¹ HC, Deb, (16 June 1884), Vol. 289, Cols. 427-548, Col. 522

The SBL's investigation was paralleled by a parliamentary investigation carried out by Dr Crichton Browne. The former superintendent for West Riding Lunatic Asylum was brought to the attention of the House of Commons also in February 1884, through the Conservative MP for Oxford University, Mr Raikes, who argued for a public enquiry into the 'condition' of children's 'health.' Raikes quoted from a letter that had appeared in the Bolton Observer, from Dr Crichton-Browne. The doctor drew upon his encounters with older-children and adolescents in his former role as superintendent for the West Riding Lunatic Asylum. He focused his criticism on the pressure faced by children in 'high school' and 'middle-class' families who were expected to undertake lessons and exercises after school. He commented that, 'when they should be roaming fancy free, [extra school-work] is to embitter their existence, and that of their parents, and to endanger their symmetry of growth.' The doctor claimed he had seen homework cause 'many lamentable instances of derangement of health, disease of the brain, and even death', he believed it was,

high time for a declaration of rights on behalf of helpless children, and on behalf of future generations also, whom, if we are not careful, we shall load with a burden more grievous than the National Debt; a burden of degeneration and disease.

The letter prompted Mundella to state in Parliament on 19th February 1884 that 'the Education Department has no control' over private schools, in which 'it may surely be left with parents of the wealthier classes to take care that their children are not over-taxed.' He pointed out however, that 'the work imposed upon teachers and children in some of these schools is greatly in excess of anything attempted in public Elementary Schools.' He invited 'Dr. Crichton-Browne to visit some of the public Elementary Schools of London, in company with one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, and to favour [Mundella] with his opinion

of their work from a sanitary point of view.⁴⁸² Crichton-Browne duly accepted the invitation and within two months he had researched and written what would become a central focus for the Overpressure debate in London, *'The Report Upon the Alleged Overpressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools.'*

Medical vs Educational Opinion

The main focus of Dr. Crichton-Browne's 1884 Report were the 6,580 children who attended twelve of London's Board Schools and two of The Capital's denominational Schools in Lambeth and Southwark, all of which charged a weekly fee between 1-6d. Appropriately enough Crichton-Browne's research was located in the same division as the SBL's investigation into the fourteen cases of over-pressed staff, which Lyulph Stanley would report on in June 1884. For Crichton-Browne 'metropolitan school children' embodied the,

increase of nervous diseases generally, which is to be attributed to modern civilization, which imposes an ever-growing tax upon the brain and its tributaries, and of which education is at once a product and an instrument.⁴⁸³

The doctor shadowed Mr Fitch, the Chief Inspector of Schools, who was also the local HMI for Lambeth. Without explaining the nature of his enquiries either to Fitch or SBL staff, Crichton-Browne pursued throughout his enquiries the 'frequently named consequences of educational over-pressure', interviewing head teachers about cases of St Vitus' Dance (characterised by a loss of muscular dexterity brought about by rheumatic fever); asking teachers to point out which children they knew, or believed they knew, to be short-sighted; observing children in the different Standards for signs of 'muscle eccentricity' such as 'peculiar movements, antics or grimaces;' and speaking briefly to

⁴⁸² HC, Deb, (19 February 1884), Vol. 284, Col.1331

⁴⁸³ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 17

children about where and when they experienced headaches, sleeplessness and toothache.⁴⁸⁴

Crichton-Browne's reliance on interviews, particularly those of children, were later criticised by Fitch as unscientific. Recognising that his results might be 'objected' to because children were often 'imitative and reckless,' Crichton-Browne was quick to note that,

to ask the victims of headaches in a large body of children to declare themselves is really, it may be said, to invite malingering. But such objections to my results, however specious in appearance, could not be advanced by anyone who had witnessed my method of inquiry.⁴⁸⁵

He had done his utmost, he explained 'to gain the confidence of the children and secure the co-operation of the teachers before any fair census.,' For Crichton-Browne children were loyal and easily intimidated, finding 'there seemed often to be a reluctance on the part of children to admit their liability to headaches,' particularly when his 'professional title had been emphasised' or amongst children who feared that a, 'headache would be regarded as a reflection on the teacher, whose agency in their production was obscurely recognised.'⁴⁸⁶ Crichton-Browne was undeterred in speaking to them, however, when, in his mind, their bodies always betrayed the truth. He concluded,

in a great number of cases of dullness of intellect, a medical man could at once recognise the physical defects (which are often distinctive enough, although imperceptible except to the medical eye) which accompany mental weakness.⁴⁸⁷

For Crichton-Browne examining the bodies of, what the NUET described as 'weak and dull children,' was the most reliable way to identify and prevent cases

⁴⁸⁴ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, for St Vitus Dance and muscle eccentricity see, p. 28; for short-sightedness see p. 30; for headaches see p. 21, for sleeplessness see pp.27-28; for toothache see p. 30

⁴⁸⁵ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 21

⁴⁸⁶ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 21

⁴⁸⁷ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 52

of overpressure.⁴⁸⁸ Indeed if trust between interviewer and interviewee was an issue, for Crichton-Browne this was only further evidence that medical practices needed to be integrated into school life by, for example, giving teachers suitable 'instruction in physiology' so as to be able to prevent those 'scholars, who although quick-witted and eager to learn are certain to suffer in the process from being unduly pushed forward.'⁴⁸⁹

In assessing the symptoms of overpressure Crichton-Browne did not encounter 'one case of' St Vitus' disease himself, but he did point out that he was 'told of several that had arisen in these schools' and that he had observed forty eight children (out of 6580) 'closely bordering it.' Other symptoms, however, were more suggestive of 'overpressure', 46.1 per cent of the children, for example, suffered habitual headaches, 38.8 per cent of the 6,000 plus children examined by him experienced chronic sleeplessness and 54.2 per cent of children experienced tooth ache and neuralgia.⁴⁹⁰ Crichton-Browne did not use his findings to estimate the total number of cases of overpressure occurring in The Capital. Instead he commented that 'educational over-pressure does exist to some extent in Elementary Schools' and proposed that the ailments he observed needed to be taken together and seen in the context of increasing cases of diabetes and suicides, which in some cases, he argued were brought about by 'our present educational system [which] is setting up states of nervous illness which in rare instances culminate in inflammation of the brain...and in many instances...a certain amount of suffering and disability...in afterlife.'⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ NUET, 'The New Code', p. 11

⁴⁸⁹ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 52

⁴⁹⁰ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, for St Vitus Dance and muscle eccentricity see, p. 28; for short-sightedness see p. 31; for headaches see p. 21, for sleeplessness see pp.27-28; for toothache see p. 30

⁴⁹¹ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 20-21. For suicides, pp.15-16, for diabetes, pp. 19-20

For Crichton-Browne the symptoms and causes of overpressure were multiple. Some were deduced from their sufferers, detected by the 'eye' of a 'medical man.' Girls, he argued, for example, were more prone to headaches because of their 'sensitive and highly strung nerve systems.'⁴⁹² Yet despite associating headaches among girls with their nervous system, Crichton-Browne's own evidence suggested that 'frontal headaches' were induced by poor eye-sight caused, he argued, by poor lighting. He failed, therefore, to associate them with the detailed work of needlework that was only undertaken by girls, and which some argued at the time, only exacerbated poor eye-sight.⁴⁹³ Crichton-Browne had also found morning headaches most common, 'in the lower standards where cases of partial starvation are most numerous' as compared with 'the higher Standards' and the 'sixpenny schools' in which he found children were 'generally better fed.' Despite the correlation between headaches and empty stomachs, however, he failed to notice that girls too suffered headaches more in the morning than their male counterparts, which could have been indicative of their home circumstances.⁴⁹⁴

Crichton-Browne's correlation between malnourishment and children in the lower Standards, however, pointed to his much larger concerns that the Education Department were systematically failing children because of their over reliance on the opinions of HMIs and payment by results. He argued that because 'the inspector remain[ed] the sole judge of the reasonableness' for why

⁴⁹² Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 24

⁴⁹³ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 26 See also from Middleton, 'Epidemic', p.429 and Angela O'Hanlon-Dunn, 'Women as witnesses: Elementary Schoolmistresses and the Cross Commission, 1885–1888,' pp. 116-135 in Joyce Goodman and Sylvia Harrop (eds.) *Women, Educational Policy-Making and Administration in England: Authoritative Women since 1880*, (Routledge, London, 2000) p. 121

⁴⁹⁴ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p.25. Anna Davin's research suggests the gendering of malnourishment was dependent generally on individual households, see Anna Davin, 'Loaves and Fishes: Food in Poor Households in Late Nineteenth-Century London,' pp. 167-192, in *History Workshop Journal*, No. 41 (Spring, 1996), pp.174-175

a child would be exempt from examination, teachers were fearful of adding names to an exemption list, believing that the HMI would view these children as the teacher making excuses for a lack of progress. Not a single teacher in his brief inquiry felt, 'free to do what he would wish in the way of withholding scholars from examination'⁴⁹⁵ Consequently, argued Crichton-Browne 'dull' and 'delicate' children were being confined to Infant Departments where they would not be examined, or placed into Standards they were ill-prepared thereby causing them to be over-pressed.

For Crichton-Browne a child's physical and mental robustness was determined by food. Thus 'Half-starved children' asserted Crichton-Browne 'are all delicate, and many of them in the course of their starvation develop consumption and various forms of [other] diseases.'⁴⁹⁶ He proposed that in certain cases the very act of educating a malnourished child was to over-press him or her. The fact that under a system of payment by results and Merit Grants such a child was also being, 'prepared for examination, the same examination which has to be passed by their plump, well-fed companions – is to substantiate the statement that educational over-pressure exists.'⁴⁹⁷

According to Crichton-Browne overpressure was an endemic problem not just amongst the '20 or 30 per cent of backward children who,' because of the failings of payment by results, 'must...be passed and sometimes hard pressed, in order to...make a passable appearance,' but also potentially amongst the, '20 or 30 per cent of bright, clever children, who can easily accomplish all the work required of them.' Despite the creation of a more demanding Standard VII in

⁴⁹⁵ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 51

⁴⁹⁶ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 11

⁴⁹⁷ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 10

1882 Crichton-Browne found that children of 'good material' were 'ultimately brought into a somewhat feeble condition,' because, 'throughout the Standards' teachers were unable to educate bright children to a level, 'as highly as they might have been' in the early stages of their development. As a result, when children were placed in the Upper or final Standards of a school 'where they are expected to work double brain power...their intellectual stamina is soon exhausted.' Just as Mrs Burgwin would draw attention to the sudden decline in health of her pupil-teachers at the Cross Commission in 1886, Crichton-Browne argued that pupil-teachers were 'the brightest children of a school', but were also the most 'over-pressed' commenting that they were,

deficient in the spontaneity and vivacity that the characteristic of their time of life, and exhibit a certain sameness and sobriety of facial expression and a certain listlessness of demeanour that speak plainly of brain exhaustion.⁴⁹⁸

Crichton-Browne depicted the Capital's elementary system as unnecessarily universal in its aims. He argued that 'to judge a teacher' who works with 'puny, dwarfish, pale, and feeble' children against those who work with the 'larger limbed and larger headed children' was not only to do the staff an 'injustice' to the progress they were making, but it was also to 'incite...overpressure.' For Crichton-Browne the failures of graduating the Standards and examination process at a suitable rate "would vanish at the appearance of the tape measure.' If children were measured then schools could place the child in a Standard that matched their physical development. This panacea for overpressure, however, in which physical measurement ensured Standards would no longer be confined to 'age difference', was underpinned by injustices of a different kind. Rather than treating all children as the same and using payment by results to examine the teacher, under Crichton-Browne's method,

⁴⁹⁸ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 7 and p.40

where by children's height, weight and head circumference would be measured, HMIs would make 'allowance' according to 'health or development, or racial differences.'⁴⁹⁹

The Education Department could limit overpressure by dealing with payment by results and classification of children by ability but, argued Crichton-Browne, it would still be overlooking, 'the fact that a good deal of that material [children] is quite unfit for its operations.' While Crichton-Browne did not believe schools were 'responsible for the starvation of the children,' they were 'responsible for any aggravation of the evil effects of that starvation.' If children were to truly 'profit from education' then what was needed was for them to know their 'meals will come round with unerring certainty.'⁵⁰⁰ He argued that in providing 'two pints of new milk daily' children with 'snappish intellects would brighten up and strengthen in grasp.' The doctor, however, did not envision all these children receiving milk. For those who were not 'the very poorest in London,' but came to school breakfast-less 'because they have no time to eat it,' their parents 'alone [were] blameable.'⁵⁰¹

Crichton-Browne's *'The Report Upon the Alleged Overpressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools'* was not without its critics. Yet his comments on medical examination and malnourishment made clear that for Crichton-Browne the causes of overpressure exposed the school classroom in ways that could not be ignored. Moreover it provided the NUET with high-profile support for an overhaul of the Revised Codes and prompted the SBL and parliament to ask their own questions about the effectiveness of Board School education for the

⁴⁹⁹ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 52

⁵⁰⁰ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p.10

⁵⁰¹ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p.11

'backward' and malnourished child and the classification of their most forward students.

Crichton-Browne's Report was published by the Education Department on 24th July 1884; exactly one week later, a memorandum from Mr Fitch, the Chief Inspector, who Crichton-Browne had accompanied in Lambeth, was added by the Education Department to the Report. Fitch did not produce any substantially new evidence for the report but had been asked by the Secretary of the Education Department to provide a response.⁵⁰²

Inspector Fitch was quick to challenge the existence of overpressure, asking readers 'to bear in mind that every one of the cases, so far as I know, has broken down on close investigation and shown to be attributed to other causes.'

⁵⁰³ Crichton-Browne's generalisation on the subject, he suggested were 'somewhat rash,' given that he had only encountered 10 per cent of the Elementary School population in London.⁵⁰⁴ Fitch described Crichton-Browne's report as having been researched and written in a style that meant even, 'when facts are wanting, the opinion of the writer was none the less strong.'⁵⁰⁵ Specifically he was concerned that the results bore, 'no true relation to the children's actual experience or knowledge,' because they relied too much on superficial evidence. Standing in front of a class of sixty boys and asking them about when they experienced headaches was, Fitch argued, wholly 'unscientific.' He had observed how upon seeing 'a strange gentlemen counting their hands and gravely recording the result in a note-book,' the children's

⁵⁰² Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 55

⁵⁰³ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 61

⁵⁰⁴ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 57

⁵⁰⁵ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 75

'hands go up or [are] kept down very much at random,' because they are 'amused and a little puzzled; they peep at one another; they look at the teacher to try and catch some indication of the way in which they are expected to act.'⁵⁰⁶

Not only did Fitch dispute the Doctor's methods of research, he also found the concluding suggestions wanting. With regard to Crichton-Browne's appeal to feed children, he commented that, 'a school is established for the purposes of instruction, and not for the purpose of dispensing milk.'⁵⁰⁷ Although Crichton-Browne had argued that schools should only provide nourishment where parents were too poor to pay for it themselves, Fitch believed that 'caring for the food and health of the young belongs properly to the parents.' For a school to feed a child, no matter how poor, it would at best limit and at worse discourage parental duty. Thus instead of feeding a child and reducing that parental responsibility, schools taught the future generation of parents that, 'physical health and mental exercises are not alternative rivals, they help each other.'⁵⁰⁸

Fitch was also deeply sceptical of what he described as Crichton-Browne's, 'panacea for the evil of over-pressure,' the medical examination. This was not to say that Fitch did not accept Crichton-Browne's concerns that the human 'material' schools were working with was 'puny, dwarfish, pale, and feeble,' but rather it was,

precisely in this lowest class of children, whom Dr Browne would like to exempt from mental exercises altogether that the influence of such exercises and of school life generally has been most beneficial. I have reason to believe that the improvement in the death-rate of children of

⁵⁰⁶ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 56

⁵⁰⁷ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 77

⁵⁰⁸ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 59

school age is more marked amongst the humblest classes of the population than in the rest of the community.⁵⁰⁹

Fitch disagreed that the malnourished child in particular was more likely to experience overpressure. This was because, the Chief Inspector argued, the ‘unhappy circumstances... [have] done something to sharpen [the children’s] faculties, and to make the pursuits of school more of a relief and a pleasure to them than to other scholars.’ Indeed Fitch believed that just as poverty could fortify a child’s adeptness, the quiet or ‘studious’ child, who had ‘an unconscious predisposition to disease’ was inclined to ‘prefer the more intellectual forms of employment’ where physical energy was not required.⁵¹⁰

Thus to consider that ‘a child who has had no breakfast is not fit for school-work,’ Board Schools were at danger of undoing the very premise and achievements of the Education Act. Doctors, Fitch continued, were as prone to disagreement as Inspectors. Some, argued Fitch would, ‘dismiss all children of this class to their homes and to the streets, while ‘many other medical authorities, not less humane and skilful’ would, concede that if,

certain children are weak or ill-nourished it is still better for them to come to a cheerful, well-warmed school than to stay at home. And if they are once in school it is better for them to be animated by the presence and pursuits of their more fortunate schoolfellows and encouraged to do their best than to be relegated to a special class for dull and backward children from whom nothing is expected and to whom no hope is offered.⁵¹¹

By highlighting the disparities that might emerge from medical inspections the Chief Inspector of Schools had revealed his own inequality of expectation. For while the malnourished children might be ‘depriv[e]d...a life of opportunities’

⁵⁰⁹ Fitch proceeds to give an extended quote from Mr Martin sub-Inspector for Marylebone as evidence. Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 60

⁵¹⁰ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 60

⁵¹¹ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p.78

Fitch believed 'nothing [was] expected' for the dull or backward child.⁵¹² Yet Fitch was not wrong with regards the differing views of medical authorities. As shall be discussed in Chapter Five, Dr Warner, a paediatrician from the London Hospital, spent much of the 1880s surveying over 10,000 children with the help of the SBL. He concluded that Board Schools needed to educate more children not less. Moreover he too argued that it was in the interests of the development of certain children that they were taught among 'their more fortunate schoolfellows.'

The disparities between Crichton-Browne and Fitch revealed different attitudes towards the child and its schooling. For the former superintendent of West Riding the individual child's body ultimately should be determining how and what it was taught. For the Chief Inspector it was the child's mind and behaviour, which was key. For Fitch the Education Act helped ensure the poorest in society had a right to an education, in which the school helped teach them responsibility and ambition. By not providing food to the poorest, however, Crichton Browne argued that schools were ignoring a responsibility that could not be met by the parents and left children unable to be the best they could be.

Overpressure and the SBL (1885 - 1886)

Crichton-Browne's Report was submitted to the Education Department at the end of both the school and parliamentary summer terms, only weeks since Southwark's fourteen cases of overpressure had been disproved in parliament by Lylph Stanley, the SBL's former Chairman. The SBL did not begin to take notice of Crichton-Browne's report until the autumn term, when the debate

⁵¹² Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 73; p.78

between Crichton-Browne and Fitch began to be played out in the letter pages of *The Times*.⁵¹³ Throughout October William Bousfield, the SBL's Moderate member for Chelsea, proposed an inquiry into overpressure. With the SBL drawn along increasingly party-political lines of Moderate and Progressive, echoing Tory and Liberal ideologies respectively, the SBL were as divided on Bousfield's motion as the House of Commons. Sir Edmund Currie, the Progressive Member for Tower Hamlets, for example, argued that there was no need to focus on a subject that was purely the result of the Summer's 'silly season.'⁵¹⁴ Even Edmond Heller, a fellow Progressive and the NUET president who had long warned against overpressure, believed it was not the responsibility of the SBL to respond to Crichton-Browne's enquiry.⁵¹⁵ But the debate did not disappear from the pages of *The Times* and by late November the SBL was increasingly of the opinion that as Professor Gladstone, Progressive Member for Chelsea believed, if an inquiry was held, 'a beneficial result would follow in removing popular alarm upon a cry which had been started by the enemies of education.'⁵¹⁶

In November 1885, by a mere four votes, the SBL carried the motion for a Special Committee to inquire into overpressure. Bousfield, who later became a Conservative MP, chaired the inquiry. He had been keen to examine the issues surrounding feeding raised by Crichton-Browne. Although he was 'strongly of opinion that it was no part of the School Board's duties to deal with the subject of feeding,' Bousfield had written to *The Times* in September echoing Crichton-Browne's views that if overpressure was caused by 'insufficient diet' then there

⁵¹³ TTAO: 'Over Pressure in Elementary Schools', *The Times*, (Tuesday 16th September 1884), pg. 10

⁵¹⁴ TTAO: 'The London School Board,' *The Times*, (Saturday, 25th October 1884); pg. 5

⁵¹⁵ TTAO: 'The Over-Pressure Question', *The Times* (Friday 14th November 1884), pg. 3

⁵¹⁶ 'The Over-Pressure Question', pg. 3; TTAO: 'Over-Pressure in Board Schools', *The Times* (Friday 21st November 1884), pg. 6

was no 'valid reason' why schools with 'co-operation and...division of labour' could not provide 'cooked food as that of other necessities of life?' In championing penny dinners, Bousfield argued that it was not just 'poverty or un-thriftiness of their parents' that left the 'principle part' of many children's lunches as bread. Such a diet was also due to, 'the present generation of working-class wives' lacking the 'proper apparatus,' skill, time and 'energy' to provide 'proper meals.' He highlighted that the SBL were already attempting to rectify the 'comfort of...future husbands and families,' by developing 'Domestic Cookery' lessons for girls. Until these girls became wives, however, he believed that more immediate measures, 'must be adopted if our labouring classes are to be properly fed, and to make their often small earnings go as far as possible.'⁵¹⁷ Bousfield's ability to dance across the responsibilities of family, school and wider society, whilst also teasing out the practical difficulties and aims of the Board Schools was reproduced in the Special Committee's final report in July 1885, *The School Board for London Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board*.

The Special Committee was made up of ten of the most senior members of the SBL including its Moderate Chairman the Reverend Diggle, his vice chairman Sir Richard Temple, the Reverend Mark Wilks who was the chairman of the SBL's School Management Committee, the Progressive Robert Freeman who chaired the finance committee, the former Progressive chair Sir Edmund Currie and his vice chair Lyulph Stanley, along with members representing Southwark and Lambeth, where the debates on overpressure had focused. The Committee was charged with enquiring into 'the allegations of overpressure in the schools

⁵¹⁷ 'London School Board,' pg. 5; TTAO: 'Penny Dinners For School Children,' *The Times*, (Thursday 25th September 1884), pg. 12

of the Board, made in the Report of Dr Crichton Browne.⁵¹⁸ Produced a year on from Crichton-Browne's report, the Committee's findings involved undertaking a survey amongst SBL head teachers regarding their experience of overpressure. Throughout the 1884-5 academic year, evidence was gathered from the head teachers of 3 mixed-sex, 92 Boys, 70 Girls and 52 Infants Departments from across London's neighbourhoods. Interviews were also conducted with a range of HMIs, head teachers and school visitors from Tower Hamlets, Marylebone, Southwark, Finsbury and Hackney. Bousfield also interviewed people well known to him locally, such as a Board inspector, manager and two head teachers from his own Chelsea Division. All interviewees were chosen because they could, 'give accurate evidence' providing, 'independent and representative views of the whole working of Elementary Education in Board Schools.'⁵¹⁹ In their report the Special Committee stated that they did not want to 'criticise' Crichton-Browne's 'methods of inquiry, or in any way to enter into his public controversy with her Majesty's Inspector, Mr Fitch, respecting them.'⁵²⁰ Despite their attempts at neutrality, however, the Report lacked independent medical opinions. The President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Mr J. Copper Forster, had been happy to assist in helping the committee, but having made 'various attempts to enlist the cooperation of the distinguished medical men' and failing to gain the cooperation of any, he suggested 'it would be better to relinquish entirely any enquiry of a medical character.' The committee then approached the Local Government Board [LGB], but they were 'unable to allow' the LGB's resident medical officer to assist them in the scheduled time. Whether surgeons or

⁵¹⁸ LMA: SBL/0430, *Special Committee on Overpressure - Signed Minutes*, p. 2

⁵¹⁹ SBL, *Special Committee Minutes* pp.i-ii

⁵²⁰ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xvii

doctors felt 'unwilling to undertake the duties' because they supported Crichton-Browne, or simply were constrained by other commitments, was not stated. Keen to produce a report before the end of the school year, however, the Committee, decided not to pursue medical opinion further.⁵²¹ Instead they argued that through 'careful investigation' into 'the condition of the children, and the effect of school work upon them' they would be basing their recommendations on similar evidence-based research that a medical opinion could have provided.⁵²²

Without a 'medical eye' the symptoms of overpressure recorded by the Special Committee were characterised by behavioural rather than physical traits. Some head teachers spoke of relatively mild changes in their pupils, such as 'weakness', 'sleeplessness' and 'irritability'; while for others the effects of schooling could be so dramatic that students had become 'more dull and less able to stand the work,' even suffering 'wild delirium.'⁵²³ When it came to the origins of overpressure, just as the NUET and Crichton-Browne had argued, some head teachers pointed towards 'the anxiety' induced by poor attendance under the 22 week system, 'the effort to prepare for an individual test that applied to all alike,' or the leap from the Infants Department to Standard II. Nor did head teachers take an approach to overpressure that was any less physiological than Crichton-Browne. The majority of head teachers, for example, also pointed towards the child's physicality, its 'bodily weakness', 'defective eye sight' and 'delicate health' as the main 'cause' of the overpressure.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ SBL, *Special Committee Minutes* p. 61, p.64 and p.70

⁵²² SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. iii

⁵²³ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. 275 and p. 271

⁵²⁴ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. 271 & p. 275

While head teachers were inclined to link overpressure with failures in the Education Codes and its resulting education system, the origins and severity of these failures varied from head teacher to head teacher. Some, for example pointed towards the impact of the Merit Grant and payment by results, others to the lack of autonomy surrounding exemption schedules, while for others it was the academic leap children were forced to make from the Infants to the Senior Department. By contrast all were inclined to associate overpressure with the 'delicate' nature of children's bodies and the poverty of their home life.⁵²⁵ Yet while head teachers evidently were aware of overpressure the Special Committee concluded, there was no sign of, 'the systematic and universal overpressure of large numbers of children in the Board Schools described in Dr Crichton Browne's report.'⁵²⁶ They based this conclusion partly on the evidence of George Ricks, the SBL inspector for Marylebone, who also inspected schools in Southwark and Greenwich. He had been called to the give evidence to the Special Committee after he had expressed concern that while the 1882 Code had attempted, 'to supplant mechanical with intelligent work' and 'give considerable amount of freedom of classification' in the form of exemption schedules he had found it hindered 'true education.'⁵²⁷ This was because 'the teachers classify for examination and not for education.' According to Ricks this interpretation of the exemption schedule was not a major problem, but it did result in 4 per cent of children being trained to pass the exam when they 'should

⁵²⁵ SBL, *Overpressure Report*. pp. 270-276

⁵²⁶ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xvi

⁵²⁷ 'Mr George Ricks Board Inspector, 5th May 1885,' par. 1384-3675, SBL, *Overpressure Report*, par. 3510 p. 220

be left behind,' while a further 10 per cent were having to wait until the Annual Exam when really they 'ought to be pushed on faster than they were.'⁵²⁸

Ricks' comments, however, did not confirm the scale of overpressure, merely those who may be at risk due to teachers' interpretations of the Code. The Special Committee concluded that:

overpressure as exists is not a necessary consequence of the school system, but is due, partly to the action of the parents who press their children with a view of getting them released from attendance as soon as possible; partly to the sickly and underfed condition of some children; partly to the wretched state of some of their homes, partly to irregularity of attendance and in some instances to unintelligent and unsympathetic methods of teaching.⁵²⁹

The Special Committee's lack of overt criticism for the use of exemption schedules and Education Codes in their concluding remarks spoke of the Board's measured response to the overpressure debate. Overpressure, if it existed at all, was not simply the fault of teacher's inability to classify which children should be made exempt from examination or demanding too much of underfed children, as Crichton-Browne viewed it. Nor, however, did the underfed or delicate child thrive when it was academically pushed, as Fitch argued. The truth was somewhere in between, highly dependent on physical and socio-economic factors of each child, as well as the sense of personal responsibility among parents and teachers.

Following the inquiry the Special Committee made several recommendations for both the SBL and the Education Department, treading a fine line between the opinions of Crichton-Browne and Fitch throughout. With regards the

⁵²⁸ 'George Ricks, par. 3514-3515, p. 220 Ricks makes these estimates in response to Richard Greenwood, Head Master of Southwark-Park Board School, who estimated that estimated 10 per cent were in a Standard too high.

⁵²⁹ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xvi

Committee's recommendations for the Board, as Crichton-Browne had argued, the physical health of the child was given emphasis. Just as Crichton-Browne had recommended training teachers in elementary physiology, for example, the inquiry suggested that,

a short statement of the admonitory symptoms of diseases likely to affect children whether arising from over work or otherwise be drawn up by a medical authority for the use of the teachers and local managers.

Likewise, just as both Crichton-Browne and Bousfield had argued, there was a need to address the 'underfed condition of some children.' The Special Committee advocated that, 'the Board grant facilities to local managers and to other responsible persons for the provision on the school premises of Penny Dinners.' Yet such endeavours were only recommended if they were to be done, 'on self-supporting principles.'⁵³⁰ The SBL would not fund or house dinners for children.

Similarly other recommendations ratified Fitch's belief that schools were purely for the 'purposes of instruction.'⁵³¹ This did not deny the physical or circumstantial health of the child, rather just as Fitch had argued, 'physical health and mental exercises,' were not 'alternative rivals.'⁵³² Teachers and managers, the Special Committee proposed, needed to make more use of their ability to encourage children to undertake, 'physical exercises and games both in and out of school hours.'⁵³³ This proposal showed that, unlike Crichton-Browne, the inquiry recognised the impact the curriculum itself could have on the well-being of the child. They found, for example, that not only did Needlework reduce the time, 'available for other subjects,' but also caused the

⁵³⁰ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xvii

⁵³¹ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 77

⁵³² Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 59

⁵³³ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xvi

eyes of at least one female pupil-teacher to 'suffer'.⁵³⁴ Needlework, the Inquiry concluded, 'should as a rule, be taken for examination as a Class subject and not for the shilling grant.'⁵³⁵ This was a subject which, although was an essential part of the SBL's curriculum, was not to be focused on to the detriment of other subjects or to the detriment of the child's health.

Despite making no reference in their conclusion to the impact the Education Department's Revised Code of 1882 and payment by results had on the classification of children, the *Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board* did include two recommendations for the SBL that pointed towards the more radical recommendations that they would also publish for the Education Department. The first of these recommendations was that the SBL's School Management Committee, who managed Board School inspectors, should assess the work of a school along the same lines that HMI's administered the Merit Grant, which, as discussed in Chapter Three looked at factors such as attendance, discipline and use of resources. SBL inspectors, were, however, encouraged to also consider, 'all the circumstances of the schools and of the children,' and thus could disagree with HMIs if they felt the school had 'special circumstances' for poor results.⁵³⁶ As mentioned in Chapter Three, this recommendation reinforced the legitimacy of the SBL's newly created 'Special Difficulty' status. It acknowledged that certain schools had socio-economic difficulties, which affected the progress teachers

⁵³⁴ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xi; 'Mr Richard Greenwood, Southwark Park Board School, 11th February 1885' par. 1585-1945, SBL, *Overpressure*, 1934, p.11

⁵³⁵ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xvii. The Special committee also proposed that 'Drawing should be made an optional subject in girls' schools.' The motion was approved by the SBL but Helen Taylor, the Progressive Member for Southwark, 'vigorously protested against the proposed change, and declared that the motion was directed to act against the principle which the Board had always adopted of making the education of girls equal to that of boys.' Her argument was dismissed by Professor Gladstone, however, because until now, 'girls had been taught more [subjects] than the boys, and it was necessary that the girls, where necessary, should be relieved from non-essential subjects.' See TTAO: 'The London School Board', *The Times*, (Friday 31st July 1885), pg. 9

⁵³⁶ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xvii

could make with students.⁵³⁷ The Special Committee's final recommendation for the SBL was that head teachers and managers 'make a review of the children' in Standard I of an Infants Department. The aim being to ensure that children should only enter a senior Department's Standard II from Infants if the school could guaranteed that the child could skip the senior Department's Standard I 'without overpressure.'⁵³⁸

The Report's emphasis on inspectors having a shared understanding of the difficulties faced by teachers, and the importance of only placing a child in a higher Standard if it was capable, was reinforced in the Special Committee's recommendations for the Education Department. While the Report concluded that overpressure was 'not a necessary consequence of the school system,' their recommendations for the Education Department suggested otherwise.⁵³⁹ They argued, for example that, 'greater uniformity of method and of standard of work is desirable on the part of her majesty's inspectors.' The Special Committee also recommended that 'authority be given to teachers, under supervision, to classify their children in different subjects according to their abilities.' Specifically they implied that teachers were frustrated by HMIs who failed to implement the Merit Grant effectively, having ignored the progress made by some children. As a result, the Report recommended that, 'in estimating the merit of a school' HMIs needed to pay 'greater attention...to the due promotion of children who are able to progress more quickly than the average scholars.' Despite the recommendation it was not until the introduction of the Higher Grade Schools in 1889 that a more systematic attempt to support

⁵³⁷ Thomas Gautrey, *'Lux Mihi Laus' School Board Memories*, (Link House Publications, London, 1937), p.

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⁵³⁸ SBL, *Overpressure Report*, p. xvii

⁵³⁹ SBL, *Overpressure*, p. xvi

more forward children began to be addressed. Similarly the Education Department disregarded the Special Committee's call for the scrapping of the twenty-two week system, which insisted that all children be entered for the Annual Exam based upon how long they had been enrolled rather than how regular they were in attendance, even though the committee made the suggestion with, 'a view of discouraging irregularity of attendance and consequent pressure of work.'⁵⁴⁰

The impact of the recommendations on both the SBL and the Education Department is difficult to gauge. The recommendations to the SBL in many respects provided nothing more than new guidelines for local managers and head teachers, rather than any central systematic change in policy or pedagogy and certainly the Education Department made no direct reform of their Education Codes. It is perhaps, however, more useful to see the *Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board* in a wider political context.

The overpressure debates are framed by the implicit question: to what extent was the individual parent or school responsible for the health and well-being of the child? The Education Act of 1870 had unintentionally exposed the physical development of the child. Parliamentary debates that led to the passing of the Education Act focused almost exclusively on the importance of moral and academic training. Education of the mind would create, 'stable physical and

⁵⁴⁰ SBL, *Overpressure*, p. ii

mental habits.⁵⁴¹ It was only as vast numbers of children were compelled to attend school, (locally under the bye-laws of the 1870 Education Act, and nationally under the 1880 Education Act) that it was slowly acknowledged that, 'physical...habits' could not be ignored or achieved through academic training alone, schools had to adapt to the child's body. London was one of the first local authorities to introduce the bye-laws of compulsion. The nation's Capital, as we shall see in Chapter Five, was also one of the first to introduce specific training to children found to be Blind, Myopic or Deaf and Special Schools for those classified as Mentally or Physically Defective. In this respect, that is the education of the less able child, London led the way. Moreover the SBL recognised the importance of physical exercise for all children and had made Drill an Essential Subject by 1873.⁵⁴²

In the 1870s the House of Commons had only discussed the capacity to learn in terms of, Blind, Deaf and Dumb children, with two attempts being made to produce separate Education Acts.⁵⁴³ Parliament paid little attention to how education could be adapted to a child's physical needs in the first decade of universal education. The creation of exemption schedules in 1882 and the medical concerns raised in Parliament in 1883 and early in 1884, recognised that learning could affect a child's physical development, with, on the one hand, a good education ensuring children knew how to take care of themselves and on the other hand, a poor education, creating overpressure, which potentially resulted in more delicate and poorly sighted children. As the overpressure

⁵⁴¹ HL, Deb, (25 July 1870), Vol. 203, Cols. 821-65, Col. 844. Shaftesbury was discussing the irrelevance of the 'religious problem' because it assumed the act was intended for 'for persons of mature age, people with a sort of insatiable appetite for dogma of every description...whereas, in fact, the great bulk of the children whom we seek to educate are of tender years and those of wandering parents.'

⁵⁴² LMA: 22.05 SBL, School Board for London, *The Work of Three Years (1870-1873)*, p. 9

⁵⁴³ HC, Deb, (23 February 1870), Vol. 199, Col. 760; HC, Deb, (14 August 1879), Vol. 249, Cols. 987-8

debate erupted in 1884, questioning how best to educate a malnourished or delicate child, it was indicative of the growing interest in the degeneration of the nation's children, which plagued debates of the 1890s and 1900s.⁵⁴⁴ This concern about the child's physicality was further highlighted by increasing calls for examining the education of children classified as Blind, Deaf and Dumb. Collectively these concerns and debates positioned the child's physical development increasingly as a key feature in their education.

With, as yet, no parliamentary resolve to examine the impact elementary education was having on children described as Blind or Deaf and Dumb, individuals used the overpressure debates to highlight the impact education was having on other groups of children. In the same week that Crichton-Browne submitted his report to the Education Department, in June 1884, the first convention for Blind Institutes took place convened by the Liberal Duke of Westminster, Hugh Grosvenor. Attendees vowed to lobby for a Royal Commission to inquire into the education available to blind children. At the same time, Members of the SBL, The Deaf and Dumb Institution, The Deaf and Dumb Christian Association of Ireland together with private individuals, wrote to *The Times* throughout August and September of 1884, debating whether the School Board system had been a 'failure' for deaf children, because it did not offer 'equal right...to state aid' despite, as shall be discussed in Chapter Five,

⁵⁴⁴ On degeneration see, José Harris, *Private Lives and Public Spirit: A social History of Britain 1870-1914*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993), pp.244-245, Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', pp.9-66 in *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 5 (Spring, 1978) pp. 10-11 and pp.19-22; Michelle Elizabeth Allen, *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London* (Ohio University Press, Ohio, 2008) p. 125; Gareth Stedman-Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Penguin, London, 1984), p. 286

having provided classes for children classified as Deaf and Dumb since the early 1870s.⁵⁴⁵

Just before the Liberal Government's budget was defeated in Parliament, on 8th June 1885, Mundella set in motion the formation of a Royal Commission to enquire into the condition and education of the Blind. By the time the SBL published its *Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Overpressure in the Schools of the Board* in July 1885 there were calls for the Royal Commission on the condition of the Blind to be extended or coupled with a separate inquiry into the education of 'Deaf and Dumb children.'⁵⁴⁶ Yet some Members of Parliament, for example J.G. Talbot, who, as we have seen, had criticised the work of the SBL during the overpressure debates of 1884, argued that 'broader ground' needed to be covered by such Commissions.⁵⁴⁷ In Edward Stanhope's address to the House of Commons on 14th July 1885, the newly appointed Conservative Vice-President of the Committee of Education, argued that while 'much indeed has been done' for the nation's children, his fellow M.P.s needed to consider how,

hundreds of little children who, in spite of all your machinery, and all your fine speeches, you do not get into your schools....Hundreds...go away from them with a smattering of knowledge which will not stand the test of a life solely devoted to manual labour.

Stanhope argued that the 'drawbacks' of the machinery of education were embodied by the fact that cases of overpressure did 'exist.'⁵⁴⁸ If there was to be an investigation into the impact of the education, therefore, why limit it to a

⁵⁴⁵ TTAO: Francis Magin, Letter, 'Education for the Deaf and Dumb', *The Times*, (Wednesday 6th August 1884), pg. 3

⁵⁴⁶ HC, Deb, (14 July 1885), Vol. 299, Cols. 665-744, Cols .683-687

⁵⁴⁷ HC, Deb, (14 July 1885), Vol. 299, Col. 696

⁵⁴⁸ HC, Deb, (14 July 1885), Vol. 299, Col. 666

specific group of children? Why not extend it to all children, by the creation of a separate royal commission?

Talbot used Stanhope's recognition of the 'existence of overpressure' and Parliament's increasing interest in the failure of the Education Act to meet the needs of children with sensory impairments, to call for 'a little more courage' from the Education Department. He argued that 'a Royal Commission to inquire into the working of the Education Acts generally,' would provide the 'solid ground' from which to see if 'reform was necessary.'⁵⁴⁹ The creation of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb (Egerton Commission), which shall be discussed in Chapter Five, followed by the creation of the Royal Commission on the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts (Cross Commission) would signify the beginning of the identification and segregation of Board School children, based on ideas of physical and mental defects.

The Cross Commission (1886 - 1888)

On 15th January 1886 the Education Department announced the creation of a *Royal Commission on the Workings of the Education Act* chaired by Viscount Cross, known for having been a 'reforming' Home Secretary under Disraeli's premiership. The Commission was divided evenly between ten Liberal and Conservative MPs.⁵⁵⁰ Nationally, the educational landscape was still dominated by church schools and to reflect this six of the chosen MPs had been Vice-President to the Church of England's National Society, including Talbot, who had first called for the Commission.⁵⁵¹ Other MPs had a specialist interest in

⁵⁴⁹ HC, Deb, (14 July 1885), Vol. 299, Cols. 695-696

⁵⁵⁰ Alan W. Jones, *Lyulph Stanley: A Study in Educational Politics*, (Wilfred Laurier University Press, Ontario, 1979), p. 48

⁵⁵¹ Jones, *Lyulph Stanley*, pp. 46-48

education, such as Sydney Buxton, the Liberal MP for Poplar who published *Over-Pressure and Elementary Education* in 1885; while others were experienced in the work of the school Boards such as the Lyulph Stanley, former Vice-Chair of the SBL, who had worked closely on the issues of overpressure in London Board Schools. The Commission also included Thomas Heller, president of the NUET as well as a Member of the SBL for Lambeth East.

The Cross Commission would examine:

1. The existing law – how it grew up
2. The existing state of facts
3. The working of the law
4. The efficiency of our present machinery both central and local
5. Board Schools
6. Special [rural, half-time, Welsh and workhouse] Schools and their difficulties
7. Relations of Ordinary Elementary Schools to other schools
8. The burden of cost
9. School Libraries and Museums
10. School Boards
11. Grievances
12. The Committee of Council on Education

Within this ‘syllabus’ there were just over two hundred questions, covering a diversity of themes, such as the burden and responsibility elementary education placed on parents, whether a ‘uniform standard of examination [was] fairly arrived at by inspectors,’ payment by results, ‘Higher Elementary Schools’, teachers ability to ‘classify’ children and their experiences of overpressure.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵² Cross Report, pp. iii, v-x

Among the 151 witness called to give evidence between 1886 and 1887. The Cross Commission took evidence from the SBL's Moderate Chairman, Reverend Diggle, its former Liberal Chair, Sir Buxton and the chairwoman of the SBL's cookery sub-committee, Miss Davenport-Hill. The Commission also interviewed an SBL inspector, the SBL's superintendent of Visitors, a teacher from Bellenden Road Board School in Peckham and four SBL head teachers. The head teachers came from four schools from across The Capital: the penny-fee paying Sidney Road in East London's Homerton; the mixed-sex Fleet Road Board School that charged 3d in North London's Hampstead; the 2d charging Harrow-on-the-Hill in West London and from Southwark in South London, the Special Difficulty School, Orange Street. While superficially the schools catered to the lower-end of the financial spectrum, charging no more than 3 pence for younger students and 6 pence for those in the higher Standards a week, the geographical and demographic gulfs between these Board Schools meant that the priorities and experiences could differ dramatically. At Fleet Road, for example, only 5 per cent failed to pay the weekly school fee unlike Orange Street where 30 per cent of students were in remittance of the school fee.⁵⁵³ The Cross Commission, therefore, attempted to be as comprehensive in its choice of witnesses as it was in its syllabus.

The Commission's Final Report when it appeared in June 1888 contained sixteen chapters with an extensive set of conclusions and recommendations, which touched upon issues of classification, health, curriculum, attendance, inspection, school funding. The Report consisted of majority and minority conclusions, and the breadth of recommendations spoke of the Commissioners'

⁵⁵³ For Fleet Road see, Adams, Cross Report, 15074, p. 52. For Orange Street see LMA: 22.05 SBL: *School Board for London School Management Committee Report*, (1888), pp. 376-377

divergent opinions. The minority Report was signed by Liberal MPs Buxton, Stanley, John Lubbock and Bernhard Samuelsson, together with Thomas Heller and fellow trade unionist George Shipton.⁵⁵⁴ Much of the 'dissent' from the Majority Report of the Commissioners stemmed from longstanding political factions with regard to voluntary schools and the responsibilities for payment of school fees and religious education.

Both Minority and Majority Reports, however, agreed teachers needed to have, 'perfect freedom of classifying scholars according to their attainments and abilities.' According to the Commission's findings under the current system of payment by results and the Merit Grant, children were being, 'unduly detained in the successive standards, or unduly hurried through them.' As a result there was 'great risk that the teachers [could] endanger the health and welfare of the children by too exclusive regard to their own reputation and emoluments.' There was shared concern too, for the negative impact that examinations and poor classification had on the 'health and welfare' of the child; but there was also a consensus about the positive influence the Education Codes, with their power to shape the curriculum, could have on the nation's health. In the case of girls, for example, similar to Bousfield's explanation for the SBL's need to include Domestic Economy and cookery lessons, the Commission fully encouraged instruction in physical exercise and also physiology, especially among girls, so that they could 'secure health in a household.'⁵⁵⁵

Yet while the Cross Commission saw the benefit of providing classroom lessons that related to the health and welfare of the child and its family, just as Fitch and

⁵⁵⁴ *Royal Commission on the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts in England and Wales*, Final Report 1888 [C.5485], London, Stationary Office, pp.237-393

⁵⁵⁵ Final Report, pp.214-220

the SBL before it, the Cross Commission did not recommend that schools needed to take a more immediate role in the feeding of children. Despite highlighting the 'great risk' payment by results and the Merit Grant could have on the classification of children, the Cross Commission also failed to recommend the abolition of the 1882 Education Code, its Merit Grants, exemption schedules and 22 week system. Such omissions were indicative of the political priorities of the Commission, where the 'health' and classification of the child remained for many of the Commissioners an issue of parental responsibility and individual teaching practice. Yet as we have seen in the evidence provided to the SBL's *Report On The Question of Overpressure*, taken with the experiences garnered from interviews with the Cross Commission's witnesses, discussed below, the 1882 Education Code needed reform if children from all Board Schools were to truly benefit from the Education Acts. In particular the evidence of Mrs Burgwin the head mistress of Orange Street Girls Department in Southwark and soon to be superintendent of Special Schools, revealed the daily reality of the malnourished child was a responsibility best shared by family, school and child herself. Burgwin's students and their poverty lay at the heart of the questions on whether classification should be driven by changes in the Education Code or in the child itself.

Burgwin appeared before the Commission on the 24th November 1886. As was shown in Chapter Three, Burgwin discussed the impact teaching in a poor area had on her staff, her ability to receive the Merit Grant and her approach to teaching a curriculum that would ensure her girls emerged 'not merely' as 'an educated woman, but...a good and happy woman'.⁵⁵⁶ Alongside these

⁵⁵⁶ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17202, p. 120

difficulties she also drew attention to the inconsistency in the system of inspection. Burgwin argued that the standards expected at the Annual Examination taken by the HMI 'varies very much indeed' from 'different inspectors in different districts.' This meant that teachers attempted to focus on the 'particular likes or dislikes' of an individual inspector and their individual approach to the Standards and interpretation of the school's progress.⁵⁵⁷ Her experience was one shared by fellow head teacher, Mr Adams, of Fleet Road School in Hampstead, who admitted to the Commission that he had the, 'greatest possible sympathy' for teachers working in poorer districts than his own, for they may have,

worked very hard to make [their] children better children, and great attention may have been given to the moral training of the children; but that does not come under the inspector's eye sufficiently in assessing the Merit Grant; the controlling factor is the result show to him at the examination.

Adams described a teacher he knew who formerly worked within a poor district of the Marylebone Division. He could not recall her work ever receiving 'Excellent' from the inspector. She was then transferred 'to a school in a better neighbourhood at Kilburn, in the same inspectorial division.' Within the year she was awarded 'Excellent'. Adams noted 'the difficulty is, of course, in knowing the local circumstances of the case. The inspectors do not sufficiently know them [the children], and they really have not time to take particular notice of them.'⁵⁵⁸ It appeared that while the Chief Inspector of Schools, Mr Fitch, was criticising Dr Crichton-Browne for taking children's statements at face value, his inspectors were also focusing on the education of children at a superficial level, not considering the progress staff had made with students, given their home circumstances.

⁵⁵⁷ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17050, p. 113. See also, NUET, 'The New Code'

⁵⁵⁸ Adams, Cross Report, 14989, p. 48

Part of the local circumstances of Orange Street, as mentioned in Chapter Two, for example, was of course the malnourishment of the children. By 1885 Burgwin's 'Children's Free Breakfast and Dinner Fund' had served 3500 meals to children completely free of charge since it had begun in 1880.⁵⁵⁹ In the winter of 1885 Burgwin had attempted to start charging for the meals, after being 'rather struck' by 'the penny dinner movement' that had been discussed in the debates on overpressure in 1884. But after only seven days she concluded that the, 'children who should have their feet under their mother's table' were the only ones who 'came up with the penny.' The penny dinners were not reaching those who most needed nourishment. Sydney Buxton, MP for Poplar, asked Burgwin whether she had, 'cut the ground from under the paying system by having had free dinners so long.' But Burgwin responded in the negative, 'Positively hundreds of our homes are without a penny in them in the morning when the people get up.' Indeed as confirmation of the high number of students unable to pay the school fee, 50 per cent of Burgwin's 220-strong Department ate a free meal the very day she gave evidence.⁵⁶⁰ This, in spite of the fact that it was 'quite a point of honour among the children not to ask for a dinner ticket.' Indeed Burgwin found that children displayed 'not the least' bit of jealousy towards those with a ticket, but rather the latter, 'would plead for another to have it.'⁵⁶¹ While the Chief Inspector of Schools, Mr Fitch, had argued students in Southwark would willingly raise their hand to a question from a stranger, that they may not understand, and while Crichton-Browne believed that the child's body would betray the truth when interviewed, as a head teacher, Burgwin

⁵⁵⁹ By 1885 the Fund served over 3500 meals a week see (NCBNAO) : 'Children's Free Dinners', *The Standard* (Tuesday 22nd December 1885), pg. 3

⁵⁶⁰ For all quotes see, Burgwin, Cross Report, 17170-11176, p.117

⁵⁶¹ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17250-17351, p. 122

knew the children as individuals, she understood that it was a point of pride among some families not to ask for free dinners, while for some children it was an opportunity to help their fellow classmates. The child's response was determined as much by the individual they were talking to and their interpretation of that response as it was by the child itself.

Ten years after Burgwin gave evidence to the Cross Commission, the journalist Charles Morley visited Orange Street School, as part of his investigation of *Studies in Board School* for his Daily News column, and portrayed a similarly honest, if slightly more hungry, group of children. When Orange Street's head master Mr Mewbrey asked that, 'those whose fathers are out of work, hold up your hand,' Morley observed that the 'much desired tickets' would always go to the genuinely 'needy ones,' because not only was Mr Mewbrey,

pretty well aware whether the hands tell the truth, from personal knowledge often enough. [But] moreover, the boys and girls act as a check upon one another, and are not shy of giving the real facts concerning their comrades' circumstances, if, in their eagerness for pudding, they have not told the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.⁵⁶²

When children raised their hands at Orange Street regarding their father's employment or not, it had a different function to that of Crichton-Browne's research and was being asked by someone the children knew and trusted. Yet both Burgwin and Morley's description of Orange Street's students revealed that Board School children did not, just 'peep at one another' to know 'how to act,' as Fitch had argued, but rather they were actively looking out for each other, ensuring their classmates also knew how to act, that an honest request would receive an honest response.⁵⁶³ Burgwin and Mewbrey's 'personal knowledge' of their schools, environments, and their child's home life, enabled them to both

⁵⁶² Charles Morley, *Studies in Board Schools*, (Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1897), p. 140-141

⁵⁶³ Fitch, *Memorandum*, p. 56; Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 21

trust in and respond to the 'underfed' at Orange Street. This intimate and informal approach, but nevertheless fulsome response, to physical needs contrasted sharply with Orange Street's ability to respond to the academic needs of individual children.

Burgwin argued that because of the HMI's lack of knowledge about individual students and their full autonomy in determining exemption schedules, an estimated 25 per cent of her students were 'wrongly placed' in the Standards, with the vast majority of these children entered 'too high' for their capabilities. Burgwin reinforced Crichton-Browne's claim that some teachers were reluctant to put forward children they wanted exempt from the Annual Examination and therefore the next Standard, because they were concerned that by doing so they were revealing their inadequate pedagogic skills. As Burgwin put it,

I should think a teacher would be working against his own interests if he finds that an inspector one year either tells him, or reports, that those withdrawals will militate against his earning the 'Excellent' Merit Grant, and so the next year he will not take advantage of the schedules.⁵⁶⁴

Burgwin argued it was not that HMIs were dismissive of children's needs, but rather that they 'most decidedly' discouraged schools from using the exemption schedules because the latter 'mitigate[d] against obtaining the Merit Grant' and therefore extra school-funding. Perhaps based on her work with the NUET or with her staff, Burgwin claimed HMIs 'very often' refused to acknowledge officially the difficulties of individual children. Speaking of her own experience, however, all fifteen of her most recent proposed exemptions had been accepted. 'Two of these [children] were paralysed, and one was an idiot....one had bad eye sight...two had been in no school before, though they were 12 years of age...one was obviously dull and eight were delicate.' Burgwin

⁵⁶⁴ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17326; 17329, p. 122

suggested these children's potential inability to pass the exam were driven by the circumstances of both the home and the school. She argued that the majority of her proposed exemptions were, 'simply because of the poverty of the neighbourhood.' Poverty meant that many of these children were 'backward' in their educational progress, due to, for example, irregular attendance due to work, malnourishment and poor health.⁵⁶⁵ By examining how Burgwin viewed her exemptions and their causes, the perceptions of the Special Difficulty School, discussed in Chapter Three, are shown on an individual level. The relationship between poverty, attendance and ability are framed by Burgwin to expose the limitations of the 1882 Education Codes, but they also reveal how she approached the classification of the child.

Exemptions and Classification

Before 1882 and the new revised Education code, Burgwin would have had more opportunity to exempt children from the Annual Examination. For instance if a child's attendance had amounted to less than 255 days of the school year or because she felt the child was 'backward' and needed further lessons to catch up before they could pass the exam and move into the next Standard. As suggested in Chapter Two and Chapter Three these were not necessarily mutually exclusive factors and routinely in schools, like Orange Street, irregular attendance was associated with backwardness. Under the Education Code of 1882, however, all children who had been on the school's admission rolls for the past twenty-two weeks, 'as a general rule' were expected to undertake the Annual Exam. Sydney Buxton MP, who would interview Burgwin at the Cross Commission, argued in his 1884 essay, argued in *Over-Pressure and*

⁵⁶⁵ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17066; 17070-17072, p. 114

Elementary Education, that under the 255 day rule, 'the irregular and backward might with impunity be neglected' by the inspector as well as the teacher.⁵⁶⁶ For Buxton, when a teacher could exempt a child from the Annual Exam, (the results of which helped determine the teacher's pay), because of poor attendance, 'the interest of the teacher and the child [were] in direct antagonism'⁵⁶⁷ For Buxton the new rule 22-week rule would be more reflective of the teacher's progress with their students, as it would ensure HMI's and teachers did not ignore children who rarely attended.⁵⁶⁸ Indeed for Buxton poor attendance in itself was a sign of poor teaching because a 'good teacher' Buxton argued, would 'secure regularity wherever he goes' and in so doing limit the extent and effects of 'backwardness' that might cause a child to feel 'over-pressed' with 'toil or worry.'⁵⁶⁹

Burgwin, in her evidence to the Cross Commission asked that 'she take the liberty respectfully to differ from' Buxton because it was,

such interpretations of the Code that teachers object; why should teachers be regarded with so much suspicion and distrust, treated as if they were idle and would be fraudulent? I say emphatically that it is not because they are idle or inefficient that they ask for regularity of attendance being guaranteed to them.⁵⁷⁰

A good teacher Burgwin insisted, 'would aim' at regular attendance. This was because in a school and neighbourhood such as Orange Street irregularity was 'scarcely' caused by anything other than 'poverty, the sickness and the home needs of the parents.'⁵⁷¹ For Burgwin without 'greater freedom of classification' the backward and irregular child had no time to 'stand still' in a Standard and as

⁵⁶⁶ Buxton, *Over-pressure*, p. 29

⁵⁶⁷ Buxton, *Over-pressure*, p. 30

⁵⁶⁸ Buxton, *Over-pressure*, p. 28

⁵⁶⁹ Buxton, *Over-pressure*, p. 29

⁵⁷⁰ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17063, p. 113

⁵⁷¹ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17065, p. 114

a result had 'intensified overpressure' which 'seriously injured the health of many children.'⁵⁷² For Burgwin head teachers needed their autonomy reinstated with regards being able to classify which children were ready for examination and which children needed a little longer.

Without, as Burgwin described, the 'freedom for classification,' the labels used in exemption schedules, under the 1882 Education Code, proved to be too ambiguous for Burgwin to be sure that her most 'delicate' or 'dull' students would not have to face the pressure of examination. Burgwin was keen, 'to speak' to the Cross Commission 'of the words "obviously dull,"' because simply 'looking at them, certainly the inspector with only a few minutes time to spare...could not say that they were.'⁵⁷³ Thus it was 'very difficult' to prove to the HMI that the child's slow development in class was beyond traditional pedagogy. She appeared unsure as to how the Education Department defined the term 'dull' and commented, 'I suppose...the Department would mean that the child had defective sight or bad hearing or some sense that was really weak.'⁵⁷⁴ For Burgwin the administering of the classification produced artificial results. She argued, for example, that there was no such thing as a 'very clever short-sighted child' under the 1882 Education Code, because if an HMI did not recognise a child had failing eye sight and the child then failed the exam, their experience was merely recorded as a 'fail in writing.'⁵⁷⁵ There was no official recognition for individual circumstances. Either the teacher had successfully educated the child or she had not. Burgwin spoke of one of her students who, 'has very bad eye sight (she now has glasses) and writes with her left hand. I

⁵⁷² Burgwin, Cross Report, 17108; 17110; 17122, p. 115

⁵⁷³ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17072, p. 114

⁵⁷⁴ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17070, p. 114

⁵⁷⁵ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17247-17248, p. 119

am very proud of her writing myself, but she has failed in writing; she has failed in diction.’ J.G. Talbot, who had long been suspicious of the Board School system and its tendencies towards overpressure, proffered, ‘it is not that the child cannot do as well as a longer sighted child, but owing to the system the child is punished, or rather the school is punished for her...[It] seems to give another example of the danger of this system, which relies upon the inspection of each individual child’s work, and pays the grant accordingly.’⁵⁷⁶

Asked if a Blind child could be ‘very clever,’ Burgwin argued she ‘had never had one.’ Nevertheless Burgwin seemed to be suggesting that the dullness of such children was a matter of circumstance, aggravated by a Board-school classroom where lessons were, ‘always’ taught ‘orally from the board,’ making ‘it difficult to let them all see’ and where, ‘a great deal of work...[was] required of them.’⁵⁷⁷ She noted how in a Standard I class of forty children she needed to ‘make specific arrangements’ to teach fifteen of the girls who by the age of seven could, ‘not see the blackboard.’⁵⁷⁸ As shall be discussed in Chapter Five, following the increased interest in classification that the overpressure debates had exposed, Burgwin would oversee the development of the SBL’s Special Schools in the 1890s and 1900s. With the encouragements of the SBL and later the LCC she would push, not just to separate which children should or should not be entered into examination, but those children who could or could not be taught in the ‘ordinary Standards by ordinary methods.’⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17368-17369, p. 123

⁵⁷⁷ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17369, p.123; 17097 p. 115

⁵⁷⁸ Burgwin, Cross Report, 17098, p. 115

⁵⁷⁹ LMA, SBL:793 *Minutes of Special Subcommittee to consider and draft memorials and circulars on questions arising out of the Report of the Special Committee on the Subjects and Modes of Instruction*, p. 497

Summary

Between 1891 and 1904 the number of children attending school in London rose by 12.5 per cent. The result was that over half a million scholars were on the Admission Rolls by the time the London County Council took control of The Capital's education away from the SBL. Despite this increase, however, the number of children in the lower Standards (I-III) steadily dropped by 7.4 per cent, with the majority of this decline occurring in Standard I [Table 3.1]. The LCC did not comment on the cause of the decline, but it does suggest exemption had become more commonplace since the overpressure crisis of the mid-1880s. Moreover, as shall be discussed in Chapter Five, following the publication of both the Cross Commission, the Royal Commission on the Blind Deaf and Dumb and indeed regular calls throughout the 1880s from doctors like Crichton-Browne and, as we shall see, Dr Francis Warner, in 1889-1890 the SBL introduced medical inspections for children thought to be in need of 'special instruction.' The result, as Burgwin noted in her Special Schools Report in 1903, was that the proportion of deaf children, for example, had decreased slightly from 1 in 746, to 1 in 866 in ten years.⁵⁸⁰ For Burgwin children and their schooling were becoming more robust with an 'increase in medical skill, the better conditions of living' and 'by the decrease in the number of scarlatina patients. The decline in numbers in the lower standards, were suggestive, therefore, of the rise in special education that Burgwin presided over from the 1890s, in which, as shall be discussed in Chapter Five, greater attention was paid to developing a more complex system of classification. This meant rather than being made exempt from the Annual Exam and being kept in the lower Standards of mainstream Elementary Schools, as Burgwin had experienced

⁵⁸⁰ See LMA: SC/PPS/063/061, *SBL, Report of the Special Schools Sub-Committee (1903)*, p. 4

throughout the 1880s, children were now being entered into special classes and schools, when their teachers felt they could not educate the child further.

The decline in Standard I's numbers in the 1890s was not simply brought about by the overpressure debates of the 1880s, but the debates over that issue had forced a reappraisal at every level of education of the classification and 'health' of the child and the school's responsibility towards it. 'Overpressure' from its anecdotal origins in the Times newspapers, and the Parliamentary debates about the responsibility and intelligence (or not) of the nation's Working Classes, in particular in its Capital city, had exposed the numbers of children slipping through the educational net for a multitude of reasons. From the limits of the 1882 Education Codes to the malnourishment of children, overpressure was a question of which children needed to be identified and why in order for the 1870 Education Act to work effectively. The potent combination of political priorities and child welfare, meant that politically the arguments as to the reasons for overpressure became dominated by whether one was generally in favour or suspicious of Board Schooling. For many Liberals, irregular attendance and physical weakness were not the responsibility of the Education Department but merely symptomatic of individually poor teachers and neglectful parents. Yet for the majority of Conservatives, the claims of doctors, teachers or HMIs about the extent and causes of overpressure were indicative of an education system which deliberately attempted to ape the education of National Schools at the cost of the physical circumstances and economic priorities of the labouring classes.

The decision by A.J. Mundella, the Vice-President of the Committee on Education to invite the Lord Chancellor's visitor in lunacy Crichton-Browne into London's Board Schools only intensified the debate. The doctor's report had identified little more than had already been recognised by the NUET, calling for more autonomy of classification and systematic feeding programmes, which had been in use in various forms since 1874. Yet Crichton-Browne's medical background meant his life was dedicated to finding and eradicating the imperceptible defects of the body and therefore the mind. His suggestion that schools keep medical records was driven by an approach to the child that was almost wholly dependent on reading the physical body – the child as empirical unit could be trusted because its body would portray its needs and experiences. For those working in education, however, behavioural factors were central to understanding the child's needs. For the Chief Inspector of Schools, Mr Fitch, children's bodies had to be examined in tandem with their mental development, while for the head teachers (not just at Orange Street, but across London and beyond) the physical needs of children could be modified by 'personal knowledge' of family backgrounds and by watching children develop their own moral code with one another.

The relationship, however, between the child's physical body and its education was also central to the concerns of head teachers and HMIs regarding the autonomy and accuracy to classify and exempt children from examination. In the evidence given to the Cross Commission, head teachers and teachers revealed that because the inspection process only allocated a few minutes to each child, as long as she was, 'quick enough in answering some conventional questions,' the HMI's Annual Exam belied the 'difficulty to learn', the 'slow

development' and the poor malnourishment that was experienced in the classroom on a daily basis.⁵⁸¹ Moreover the subjective nature of the Education Codes exemption titles, such as 'obviously dull' could result in the child being placed in a Standard inappropriate for its needs. As we saw in Chapter Three, classification of children by ability began through the development of Higher Grade and Special Difficulty Schools. How the forward or backward child was identified or managed was dependent not just on the child's mental ability but the HMI's opinion of the child and its school. Indeed as the overpressure debates exposed, classifying children relied also on the HMI's relationship with the teacher and the school's own relationship to and comprehension of the child's social and familial background. This classification was complication still further by, as we shall see in Chapter Five, the family and the head teacher's own understanding and acceptance of ability and 'defects'.

The decision to create two Royal Commissions, the Cross Commission, and the Royal Commission on Blind Deaf and Dumb children (Egerton Commission) helped to officially fragment the idea of the Elementary School child. As Ian Copeland, the historian of special education has argued, through these commissions children were increasingly separated according to ideas of 'ordinary and normal' and 'abnormal and subnormal.'⁵⁸² This was reinforced by the Cross Commission who, only five days after being appointed, made the suggestion that 'the case of the feeble-minded children would come more appropriately within the terms.' This was despite the evidence, as this chapter has exposed, of Crichton-Browne and Burgwin, which suggested there was a

⁵⁸¹ Crichton-Browne, *Alleged Over-Pressure*, p. 8; see also 'Managers Reports Cook's Ground Board School (Chelsea Division),' SBL, *Overpressure Report*, pp. 261-264

⁵⁸² Ian Copeland, 'Special Educational Needs' pp.165-184 in Richard Aldrich (ed.), *A Century of Education* (Routledge Falmer, London 2003), p. 171

difficulty in distinguishing between the malnourished, poverty-stricken, 'backward' and poorly attending child of the Board School and her 'dull', 'delicate' and poorly-sighted peers. Indeed they were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Until the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf) Act of 1893 School Boards did not have to educate children with identifiable sensory impairments and those with acute physical or learning difficulties did not have to be educated until the introduction of the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act in 1899. With no legal requirement to attend, for those that did with no training to help teachers identify nor power to exempt such children from examination, those with poor sight, hearing, intellectual or physical ability attended classes where blackboards were too far for them to see, teachers too quiet for them to hear and workloads too big for them to cope with. Yet by 1904 17 per cent of London's schools would be catering to children with physical or mental 'defects' and it is the rise of these schools and the approach to the child that they developed that we will now turn to.

CHAPTER FIVE

London's Special Schools 1870 - 1904

This chapter explores the evolution of special instruction for children classified as having a sensory, physical and/or mental 'defect', under the auspices of the School Board for London (SBL). London schools were first made aware of the issue of diverse need and ability as children who could neither see, nor hear, nor speak arrived in the classroom; some children were only discovered through their lack of attendance and School Visitor Officers entering their homes. Much of the issue of special instruction revolved around questions of classification: not only how to diagnose the educational needs of the 'ordinary' and the 'defective', but how to identify the differences between such children in the first place. Provision evolved pragmatically and each category of ability and need required specific forms of instruction creating its own story. Blind instruction, for example, developed with a relative lack of controversy, but Deaf and Dumb instruction, its methods and classifications provoked debates still not resolved to this day. Moreover mental defects were seen to overlap with each of these categories. This spectrum like nature of many of the supposed defects, where there was never a hard and fast rule, left room for ambiguity and dispute, as doctors and teachers negotiated the evidence from the classroom. What emerged was a system of classification which relied on observations of teachers and their anecdotes, written reports on the individual child, the research of individual doctors, who worked closely with the SBL and knowledge of London's diverse socio-economic circumstances and the affect it could have on children's bodies and minds. This chapter focuses on the evidence given to

the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and the Dumb (Egerton Commission) and the Education Department's Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children (EDCDEC), and follows the leads given by some of their witnesses who were members and teachers of the SBL. In a sense the material included here only scratches at the surface of these debates, nevertheless, through the evidence given to the Committees, some of the diverse opinion and practices of classification can be reconstructed. In so doing it reveals the circumstances of classification and how it shaped the creation of special instruction.

We have seen how debates about 'overpressure' in the mid-1880s drew public attention to the range of physical and mental development encountered amongst SBL scholars. These debates forced the SBL to reappraise both the methods of classification used by London's schools and the demands they placed on children and teachers. Through Board meetings, Special Committees and Royal Commissions, both the SBL and Parliament simultaneously untied and retied the educational and medical approaches to classifying educational-need. 'Special Instruction' for children described as Blind, or Deaf and Dumb had begun in the 1870s, in an ad hoc way; but following the overpressure debates the SBL broadened its 'special instruction' at the beginning of the 1890s creating a more systematic, if still fluid, approach to classification of physical and mental development.

This chapter explores the evolution of special instruction under the SBL and its classification of children as Blind, Deaf or Dumb. It begins, however, by placing this evolution in the context of the increasing taxonomy of mental and physical

abilities that spluttered into legislative and medical existence in the late 1880s. Not only does this introduce some of the key reports and individuals that helped shape the development of London's special instruction, but it also highlights the distinctions and interconnections that were made between children. In so doing while the evolution of special instruction is one of separate classrooms, classifications and Standards, it was also seen to be a central part of elementary schooling as a whole.

The SBL and the Egerton Commission

Prior to the 1880s classification had developed beyond the confines of the Standards system, which classified children by those who could or could not pass the Annual Examination. Within the first three years of the founding of the School Board for London work was underway to identify and provide special tuition for children with sensory impairments. In 1871 the SBL were responsible for the education of nearly half a million children, a fifth of whom had never attended school before. As issues of employment, poverty, ill health and disability entered the classroom en masse they shaped the SBL's sense of responsibility to London's children. Various forms of 'special instruction' were developed by a series of ad hoc Special Committees and superintendents for a divergent set of social and physical needs, from schools for working children to one to one instruction for blind children.⁵⁸³

By 1876 the rapid expansion in scale and diversity of 'special' classes promoted by the SBL prompted an editorial in *The Times* which 'congratulated' the Board

⁵⁸³ Stuart Maclure, *One Hundred Years of London Education 1870-1970* (Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1970), p. 22

for its investment in specialist schooling for 'half-timers', (children exempt from full-time education due to paid employment) and argued that,

There are some obvious advantages in the size of the field of work with which the London School Board has been entrusted. It is possible, without waste, to make provision for all sorts of different wants, and so to get rid of difficulties which are elsewhere found exceedingly embarrassing.

From the inception of the SBL the labouring child was considered part of its remit, indeed working children were depicted in the Board's seal (Image 2.6).

The two half-time schools that had prompted the praise of *The Times* were attended by well over 400 eight to eleven year olds, from across London, who worked as, 'doctors-boys, guides to the blind, cigar-box and match-makers, flower makers and sellers, firework and toymakers, errand boys, girls who help at home, sewing-machine girls and trimming-makers.'⁵⁸⁴ According to *The Times*, development of a school for half-timers had both, 'isolated so common a source of disorder and at the same time...made provision for a class so commonly neglected.' By creating a school devoted to part-time scholars, the SBL were dealing directly with the 'disorder' that was feared to come from ignorance and want. Half-timers represented 'exceptional cases' of a socio-economic class, whom Conservative MPs had feared would be, on the one hand, financially hurt by compulsory education and on the other, left untouched, despite SBL spending.⁵⁸⁵ The use of rate payer's money to educate working children was, therefore, supported by *The Times* who saw it as the SBL achieving what it was 'instructed' to do.

Not all 'exceptional cases' were seen to be the responsibility of the Board.

Between 1874 and 1876 thirty children had been identified as Blind by the SBL

⁵⁸⁴ The Times Archive Online (TTAO): 'The London School Board', *The Times*, (Thursday, 28th September, 1876), p. 10

⁵⁸⁵ HC, Deb, (17 February 1870), Vol. 199, Col. 438-98

and were given part-time instruction, while eighty-two children were taught in dedicated Deaf and Dumb classes. It was the education of these groups of children which *The Times* took an exception to, arguing that any,

...attempt to give special instruction to the deaf and dumb and to the blind, for all of whom Sir Charles Reed says it is the duty of the Board to make provision, has been an affair of much greater difficulty. We cannot help thinking, too, that the undertaking of it had been more questionable...the cost must be much larger and the result much less than ordinary.

The SBL and its Liberal Chairman, Sir Charles Reed, were in danger of applying 'a too strict logic' *The Times* concluded, 'to try and do over again a work which has been done already by independent agencies.'⁵⁸⁶

The confusion, or quibbling, of *The Times* over the 'logic' of providing special Board Schooling for some children but not others, stemmed from the origins of the 1870 Education Act (Forster Act) itself. The Forster Act had made schooling compulsory, yet under Clause 74 of the Act a child could not be forced to attend school through 'sickness or any unavoidable cause.'⁵⁸⁷ Until the introduction of the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act in 1893, therefore, the SBL had no legal responsibility to instruct blind or deaf children, nor for the parents of such children to seek out such instruction. Nor was there any duty to undertake medical inspections or for School Board Visitors to be trained in recognising children with partial sight or hearing loss. Moreover, prior to the introduction of the Elementary Education (Deaf, Dumb and Blind) Act of 1893, as discussed in Chapter Four, even if such children did attend a Board School, teachers had no duty to either identify the sensory impairment or have it ratified at inspection. If the impairment was ratified by the HMI and the child was

⁵⁸⁶ TTAO: 'Editorial: Sir Charles Reed Address at the reassembling' *The Times*, (Thursday, 28th September 1876), pg. 7

⁵⁸⁷ 1870 Elementary Education Act (33. Vic.) cl. 74

entered onto an exemption schedule, then it merely excluded her from academic progress by excluding her from the Annual Examination and reducing the teacher's potential income.

Thus since the SBL was under no obligation to count or to educate Blind, Deaf, or Dumb children in the 1870s and 1880s it is difficult to estimate accurately the numbers of children in London with sensory impairments. As the numbers of children identified with sensory impairments slowly grew throughout the 1870s and 1880s, classification of such impairments and how to educate children with them became a preoccupation at all levels of the school system.⁵⁸⁸ In 1889 the SBL took part in trialling medical inspections and adopted them permanently in 1890 to decipher which children were physically in need of special instruction. Superintendents and teachers trained in special instruction helped to identify 122 children as Blind and 430 as 'Deaf and Dumb.'⁵⁸⁹ Although sensory impairments were increasingly being recognised, the process lacked systematic application. As medical inspections grew more routine, the need emerged for better teacher training that responded effectively and systematically to the diverse impairments and needs of students.

The slow and uneven development of special instruction under the SBL was punctuated by various commissions and pieces of legislation which revealed the changing and sometimes conflicting priorities of elementary schooling towards

⁵⁸⁸Medical inspections were trialled in 1889 by Francis Warner following his campaigning efforts with COS and the British Medical Association. These were then adopted permanently in the 1890s but only to decipher who should enter or leave special instruction. See LMA: 22.05 SBL, *School Board for London Annual Report* (1892) p. 110 and Mr Frank Drew 'Harris, MB, DPH, called in and examined', pp. 40-47 Education Department. *Report of the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children*, (EDCDEC) Vol. II, 1898, (C.8747), London, Stationary Office, p. 43 For figures of identified children see, 'The London School Board', (Thursday, 28th September 1876), p. 10. The estimates are based on the SBL's 1891 figures for the total number of children classified as Blind, Deaf and Dumb following the introduction of medical inspections in Special Schools, see LMA: SC/PPS/063/061, *SBL, Report of the Special Schools Sub-Committee* (1903), p. 4

⁵⁸⁹See LMA: 22.05 SBL, *Annual Report of the School Board for London* (1889-1890), pp. 61-62

the end of the Nineteenth Century. In 1885 the Cross Commission, as we have seen, was set up to discuss the impact of Board schooling including its role in overpressure and classification. The Cross Commission did examine 'exceptional' cases such as 'dull' and 'gifted' children, but its main focus was on the 'average' child.⁵⁹⁰ Yet as discussed in Chapter Four, 'average' varied according to school and child; in some classrooms sensory impairments, 'delicate' bodies and mental 'defects' were, if not average, then a routine feature of the Board School.⁵⁹¹

In 1886 one year after the Cross Commission was set up, The Idiots Act was passed, by the short-lived Liberal Government, which simplified the admission process for asylums, distinguishing between those described as 'lunatics', whose mental health appeared to be episodic and would not benefit from further education, and those described as 'idiots and imbeciles,' whose mental state was thought to be stable, and although seen to be congenitally limited, had the capacity to be maximised with special instruction within an asylum setting.⁵⁹² The Act, however, only provided permissive legislation and still left unknown numbers of children without education: too 'exceptional' for ordinary lessons and too 'average' for an asylum.

These 'exceptional' children, however, captured the interest of another Royal Commission, originally set up to examine the condition of blind children and their education in 1885. In 1886 this commission's focus was expanded, following the lobbying and subsequent appointment of Lord Egerton of Tatton,

⁵⁹⁰ *Royal Commission on the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts*, (Cross Report) Second Report, 1887, (C.5056), London, Stationary Office, par. 4.A-4.B, pp. ix-x

⁵⁹¹ 'Mrs Burgwin Examined' pp. 113-126, Cross Report, 17066, 17070-17072, p. 114

⁵⁹² *Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and the Dumb*, (Egerton Commission) Report, 1889, (C.5781(i-iii)), London, Stationary Office, par. 626-627 p. xcii

then Chairman of the Manchester school of the Deaf. Egerton broadened the scope of the enquiry to include the 'Deaf and Dumb' and broadened its terms of reference to include the examination of, 'cases... [where] special circumstances would seem to require exceptional methods of education.' These 'cases' referred specifically to children classified as 'idiots', 'imbeciles' or 'feeble-minded' with particular focus on those from 'the class immediately above' pauper children, who were neither so poor that they could enter the workhouse, and thus be dealt with under the Metropolitan Asylums Board, nor so wealthy as to afford private help.⁵⁹³ Egerton argued that lower working-class children with mental 'defects' were 'a class...practically excluded from the operation of the Education Acts – as much and perhaps even more' so than those who were classified as Blind or Deaf. This was because the 1870 Education Act's definition of 'sickness and unavoidable causes', which could be used to exempt a child from school, lacked legal definition, and so was left to the initiative or discretions of individual school boards and their employees.⁵⁹⁴

The Egerton Commission's research was far from comprehensive, over two years the commissioners visited only six asylums in England and Wales, but they did make a conscious effort to interview medical officers from these institutions and other doctors about how many of those children classified as 'idiots' or 'imbeciles' were in fact, 'capable of education and...able to benefit by training, and if so, whether it can best be carried out in some special institution distinct from an ordinary lunatic asylum.'⁵⁹⁵ The Egerton Commission concluded that 'a substantial per centage of the idiot class are capable of improvement,' citing the evidence of Dr G.E. Shuttleworth, Medical

⁵⁹³ Egerton Commission, par. 635, p. xciv.

⁵⁹⁴ Egerton Commission, par. 621, p. xcii

⁵⁹⁵ Egerton Commission, par. 622, p. xcii

Superintendent of The Royal Albert Asylum in Lancaster, who would spend the final decade of the SBL, acting as their Medical Examiner of Defective Children. Shuttleworth studied up to a 100 inmates at the Lancaster Asylum over several years and found that up to 40 per cent of 'imbeciles' were in fact capable of learning to read and write and that a further 45 per cent of inmates were 'capable of benefiting in a minor degree by school instruction and discipline.'⁵⁹⁶

The interest the Egerton Commission's Report had in highlighting the capabilities of those with mental defects and the education available to them, as compared with those classified as Blind or Deaf, was, in part, born from the perceived correlation between children with sensory impairments and those with learning difficulties. The Report of the Egerton Commission argued that although, 'the three classes of blind, deaf and dumb, and idiots differ entirely among each other, both as regards their character and educability, there are...among the idiot class many deaf and dumb, and partially or completely blind.'⁵⁹⁷ The Cross Commission had 'suggested' that Egerton include an analysis of 'feeble-minded' children, which Egerton agreed, 'would come more appropriately within our terms of reference,' because 'a great many...backward children in our Elementary Schools...require a different treatment to that of the ordinary children.'⁵⁹⁸ What constituted 'feeble-minded' or a mental 'defect', however, overlapped with and remained entangled in understandings of the child's body. The implications of such complicated and ambiguous classifications of children and their needs proved a bone of contention for elementary schooling in the last decades of the Nineteenth Century and

⁵⁹⁶ Egerton Commission, par. 660, p. xcvi

⁵⁹⁷ The Commission didn't provide national estimates, instead they referred to the evidence provided by doctors of specific Asylums, for example, Dr Shuttleworth of Lancaster's Royal Albert Asylum, who estimated that 25 per cent of cases were 'dumb' see Egerton Commission, par. 649, p. xcvi

⁵⁹⁸ Egerton Commission, par. 709, p. civ

evidence given to the Egerton Commission, by Doctor Francis Warner, paediatrician at the London Hospital in the east-end, for example, revealed that in London, 'many children are absent from the Elementary Schools not because they are incapable of being taught but because of some physical infirmity,' which he argued, schools would not or could not adapt to.⁵⁹⁹

In December 1890, just over a year after the publication of the Egerton Commission's Report, the SBL directed its School Management Committee to establish three schools 'for those children who by reasons of physical or mental defects, cannot be properly taught in the ordinary Standards or by ordinary methods,' but who, if given suitable training could eventually be, 'enabled to assume their places in the Ordinary Schools.' These three Schools of Special Instruction would be attached to existing Elementary Schools in some of London's poorest districts: Finsbury's Hugh Myddelton, situated just outside City in the heart of The Capital, Sayer Street on the border of Southwark and East Lambeth and Hanbury Street in Tower Hamlets. The new 'Special Schools', were 'established as an experiment in the poorest districts' already 'containing a large number of schools.' By focusing their efforts on poor neighbourhoods, the SBL safeguarded itself against a repeat of the controversy, provoked during the overpressure crisis, where it was accused of providing Board Schooling for children who could afford alternatives. Moreover, it enabled further exploration of the disputed claims made by some doctors, head teachers and SBL members, throughout the overpressure debates, that malnourishment affected physical or mental development. By establishing the Special Schools in neighbourhoods already well supplied with Board Schools, selection and

⁵⁹⁹ Egerton Commission, par. 711, p. civ

classification of children was made more effective. The larger the number of students per Special School, the easier it was for teachers to educate the children according to similar abilities. Divided into four different classes of, 'not more than thirty children,' management of Special Schools could focus on similar individual needs, as it attempted to do in ordinary elementary schooling. Children for this 'experiment' would be, 'nominated by the head teachers of the Boys and Girls Departments of the [attached] Elementary Schools' who were thought to be, 'intellectually weak, poorly endowed with perception, memory, reasoning.' The child would then be 'examined by a Committee, consisting of the Board inspector or the division, The Board's medical officer and the head teacher of the Special School.'⁶⁰⁰

By the spring of 1891 the SBL had permission from the Education Department to make these Special Schools permanent, citing the recommendation in the Egerton Report that,

feeble-minded children should be separated from ordinary scholars in public Elementary Schools in order that they may receive special instruction, and that the attention of school authorities be partially directed towards this object.⁶⁰¹

That autumn, on the 15th of October 1891, the SBL hired Mrs Burgwin as the first Superintendent for Special Schools in the country. No record remains as to why Burgwin was chosen, but, since she had been head mistress of Southwark's Orange Street Special Difficulty School since 1873, she knew the learning and social difficulties faced by children and schools in deprived areas. She had worked with local schools (including Sayer Street, on the border of

⁶⁰⁰ LMA, SBL:793 *Minutes of Special Subcommittee to consider and draft memorials and circulars on questions arising out of the Report of the Special Committee on the Subjects and Modes of Instruction*, p. 497

⁶⁰¹ LMA: SBL/ 2154, *Report of the School Board for London (1893-1894)*, p. 79; Egerton Commission, *Feeble Minded Children*, p.cvi

Lambeth and Southwark, mentioned above) and private donors to pioneer the Free School Dinners scheme in 1880, which had demonstrated that nutrition could be an integral, but privately funded, responsibility of SBL schooling. Since the SBL recommended that, 'these schools should be under the charge of women,' except when men were, required to teach in more advanced manual work,' Mrs Burgwin was a prime candidate. Furthermore, as already mentioned, she was also the first woman elected to the executive committee of the National Union of Elementary Teachers (NUET) and active member in the Metropolitan Board of Teachers Association (MBTA), suggesting she had good working relations with London's teachers. In 1886, in the midst of the overpressure debates, she proved herself to be a well known, well experienced and well informed witness for the Royal Commission on the Education Acts (Cross Commission). And with an annual salary of £300 – £100 less than the salary for the part-time, male medical officer she would be working with – Burgwin's experience and knowledge was excellent value for money.⁶⁰²

Upon her appointment, Mrs Burgwin, now aged forty and with over twenty-five years' worth of experience in London schools, was given three months leave by the SBL to visit institutions in England and on the continent, in order to become 'acquainted with the various methods of teaching adopted for the instruction of similar classes of children.'⁶⁰³ When she returned from her travels she set up eight temporary centres for special instruction, across London and continued to develop the SBL's pilot scheme, overseeing the integration of a Deaf centre in Hugh Myddleton's Special School and establishing Sayer Street as London's

⁶⁰² TTAO: 'The London School Board', *The Times*, (Friday May 16th 1890), p. 4. For comparisons with the wage of male head teachers, see Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930* (Routledge, London, 1996), p. 75

⁶⁰³ LMA: 22.05, SBL, *Minutes of Proceedings* (June 1891-November 1891), p. 1070

first permanent Special School for 150 Physically and/or Mentally Defective children.⁶⁰⁴ By 1903, just before the SBL was superseded by the LCC, Burgwin had pioneered the creation of eighty-eight Special Schools and centres across London and the education of up to 5208 children who had been identified as Blind, Deaf, Physically or Mentally Defective.⁶⁰⁵ Burgwin's promotion to Superintendent in 1891 had marked a turning point in her career and in the space of ten years the former head mistress moved from witness to the Cross Commission in 1886 to an investigator, selected, as she was in 1897, to be one of only eight experts to sit on the Education Department's Committee on defective and epileptic children (EDCDEC).

The Education Department's Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children

The EDCDEC itself was born out of the success and limitations of the Egerton Commission. In 1893, for example, the Elementary Education (Deaf, Dumb and Blind) Act echoed the recommendations of the Commission's Report. A 'child being blind or deaf' was no longer a 'reasonable excuse for not causing the child to attend school, or for neglecting to provide efficient elementary instruction for the child.'⁶⁰⁶ Similarly, as already noted, the SBL's expansion of its special instruction was justified through the Commission's recommendation for 'auxiliary schools.' Yet while the Egerton Commission and the SBL both called for an expansion in schools dedicated to those identified as 'feeble-minded' or educable 'imbeciles,' the 1893 Elementary Education (Deaf, Dumb and Blind) Act made no reference to such children. Within a year of the Act's passing and with no sign of extra government funding to extend Special

⁶⁰⁴ *SBL Annual Report* (1892), p. 33

⁶⁰⁵ *SBL Special Schools* (1903), p.4

⁶⁰⁶ 1893 Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, (56-57 Vic), cl. 1

Schools beyond those identified as Blind Deaf or Dumb the SBL ‘urged that legislation should be introduced to enable School Authorities to provide for defective children on the same lines as for blind and deaf children.’ The Board also made a specific ‘plea...for epileptic children,’ who ‘by reason of severe epileptic fits, [were] unable to attend Ordinary Schools,’ but because of their irregular attendance were also thought ‘unsuitable’ for existing special classes.⁶⁰⁷ The SBL’s plea prompted the Education Department to invite Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) and other school boards to proffer their own views on the subject in March 1895. Apart from the SBL, however, the Education Department received no clear response which provided them with no ‘clear basis for further action.’ But in 1896, just as the Egerton Commission had requested six years earlier, the Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee, recommended separate provision for the education of ‘feeble-minded children’ in workhouse schools. The recommendation ‘renewed representations...by the London School Board and by other School Authorities in favour of special legislation’ and the EDCDEC – with a nationwide remit – was appointed.⁶⁰⁸

The findings of EDCDEC eventually became the basis for the 1899 Education Act (Defective and Epileptic Children), which extended the ‘special’ provision set up under the Education Act of 1893 to include those children who,

not being imbecile, and not being merely dull or backward, are defective, that is to say...children by reason of mental or physical defect are incapable of receiving proper benefit from the instruction in the ordinary public Elementary Schools, but are not incapable by reason of such defect of receiving benefit from instruction in such special classes or schools.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁷ EDCDEC, Vol. I, 1898, (C. 8746-7) London, Stationary Office, par. 6-7, p.1

⁶⁰⁸ EDCDEC, Vol. I, par. 8-9, p.1

⁶⁰⁹ 1899 Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, (Vic 62-63), p. 1 cl,1b

The difficulty in defining or classifying degrees of 'defective' is signalled in the language. The founding of EDCDEC reflected the increasing professionalization and specialisation of education at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Unlike the Royal Commissions that preceded it, the EDCDEC consisted of only eight individuals all of whom worked regularly in and with Board Schools, including the chairman, Rev T.W. Sharpe, who was Senior Chief Inspector of Schools; Mr Pooley, Senior Examiner for the Education Department; Mr Newton the Chief HMI for Greenwich and Mr Orange an Examiner for the Education Department, who acted as Secretary. The committee also included Dr Shuttleworth, former Medical Superintendent of the Royal Albert Asylum for Idiots and Imbeciles, who had given evidence to the Egerton Commission, and Miss Townsend, a member of the *Council of Association for Promoting Welfare of the Feeble-minded*. The EDCDEC also appointed two employees from the School Board for London, Mrs Burgwin, who had, by then, been Superintendent of Schools for Special Instruction for five years, and Dr Smith a Medical Officer of the Board, whose work drew attention to the need of the SBL and in turn the Education Department to extend special provision.

The EDCDEC was the first to look specifically into how classification of children could be applied in schools, with the aim of finding,

The best practical means for discriminating on the one hand between the educable and non-educable classes of feeble-minded and defective children, and on the other hand between those children who may properly be taught in Ordinary Elementary Schools by ordinary methods and those who should be taught in Special Schools.⁶¹⁰

Over a year the Committee interviewed various members of the medical, educational and political communities, taking a similarly probing approach to its

⁶¹⁰ EDCDEC, Vol. I., par. 1, p.1

questions as the Cross and Egerton commission had before it. The results led them to conclude,

from the normal child down to the lowest idiot, there are all degrees of deficiency of mental power; and it is only a difference of degree which distinguishes the feeble-minded, referred to in our inquiry, on the one side for the backward children who are found in every Ordinary School, and, on the other side, from the children who are too deficient to receive proper benefit from any teaching which the School Authorities can give.

⁶¹¹

Dr Francis Warner and Classification of Defects

Much of the taxonomy used by the EDCDEC had been developed and questioned by one of their most authoritative witnesses, the London paediatrician Dr Warner who gave evidence to both the Egerton Commission and the EDCDEC. Warner's research focused on deciphering and then classifying the 'disorderly action' of children's mental development. It represented the result of more than a decade's research that began with over 10,000 cases compiled from his work at the London Hospital and private practice in the late 1870s and early 1880s. In 1888 he collaborated with the British Medical Association (BMA), concerning the physical condition of 5000 children, this was expanded to 50,000, with the help of the Charity Organisation Society (COS). Finally in 1892 the *Congress of Hygiene and Demography* appointed a Committee to continue the collaboration between COS and Warner's until 1894. In total 86,378 elementary-school children were examined by Warner of which 18,127 were from London Board Schools.⁶¹²

Warner had approached the SBL to take part in his research in 1888, but they initially chose not to be involved. The Board's rejection was not explained, but

⁶¹¹ EDCDEC, Vol. I., par. 3, p. 13

⁶¹² EDCDEC, Vol. I., par. 720-748 pp. 27-28

as shall be discussed below, Warner had been critical of the SBL at the Egerton Commission, questioning their use of fines to limit absences and accusing them of exploiting the Education Act's vagueness, regarding health, to limit intake. Such criticisms were voiced just as the SBL were beginning to move on from the overpressure debates of the mid-1880s. As discussed in Chapter Four, these debates had been exacerbated by Doctor Crichton-Browne who had interviewed teachers and examined scholars of the SBL without informing the Board of his true purpose. It is perhaps no surprise then that Warner had to make three requests to the SBL and provide personal reassurance that unlike Crichton-Browne, 'we were not going to question the children themselves, or handle them,' to be granted access to the schools and the children.⁶¹³ Instead Warner would systematically view the children in rows, ask the teacher questions about specific children and have the children move parts of their body, such as limbs and eyes to gain a sense of their physical character.

In March 1890 the BMA, who had recently published a report on 'the average development and brain power among children in primary schools,' sent a memorial to the SBL the Government and '*other education bodies*,' pleading with them to undertake a further 'scientific enquiry' to determine 'the condition of portions of the school population which need special forms of education...and of ascertaining the relative and absolute numbers of such [who]...need special training.'⁶¹⁴ While the SBL were not prepared to make their own enquiry, as the BMA had asked, they accepted further research was needed and finally approved Warner's request, giving him access to 'selected public Elementary Schools, certified industrial schools for the blind and deaf and other exceptional

⁶¹³ EDCDEC, Vol. I., par. 720 pp. 27

⁶¹⁴ *Minutes of Special Committee on the Subjects and Modes of Instruction*, p. 348

schools, as well as among groups of children exempted from or summoned for non-attendance at school.⁶¹⁵

Warner was able to identify a total of eighty-two 'signs' of 'disorderly action,' among the children he encountered in London's schools which he grouped into four 'classes of defect':

- (A) 'physical defects', such as 'deformities' of the head, limbs or organs
- (B) 'abnormal nerve signs', such as movement and balance
- (C) 'physical condition', such as malnourishment, paleness, delicate
- (D) 'mental dullness' to mean low mental power⁶¹⁶

Warner's 'mode of discrimination,' as he described it to the EDCDEC, involved getting a class to line up in a 'large room or hall' and then, child by child, he held 'an object' up to each of them to prevent them 'looking at him' and to allow him to observe the child's 'separate features of the head and face...the expression of the face and any over action in the upper or lower portions of the face, or fullness under the eyes.' The object would then be moved to see if 'the child follows it accurately and readily with his eyes.' As a class the children were then told to hold out their hands, so that Warner could observe their response to requests and skills of balance. Warner then went round the class again, looking at each individual child's palate. Any child found to have an 'abnormal point' was 'asked to stand aside.' Finally the teacher or head teacher was then asked to 'pick out any not already selected whom they may consider dull and

⁶¹⁵ *Minutes of Special Committee on the Subjects and Modes of Instruction*, p. 365

⁶¹⁶ EDCDEC, Vol. I, par. 680, p. 25 see also par 730 p. 28: 'the first means of selecting those signs was looking among children of known brain defect, observing the points that occurred in the face and in movement of imbecile children in whom each of these signs was found to be very frequent. But when, having described the separate points, one looked for them among large number of ordinary children, one found that each separate signs was exceedingly common also among a large number of ordinary children, one found that each separate sign was exceedingly common also among the whole body of children. Looking over a school of children for such signs, one found that the per centage of the children who presented these nerve signs who were reported dull by the teacher, was very considerably higher than the per centage of children in the school.'

backward.⁶¹⁷ Warner interviewed staff about each child, creating a proto-type medical card of 'any point below the normal either in the opinion of the inspector or of the teacher.'⁶¹⁸

The teacher's colloquial observations, however, were mediated by Warner and his assistants. As he explained to the EDCDEC, for example, if a teacher described a child as 'idiotic...I should put it down as dull; I should not say idiotic unless I found signs of idiocy.' Teachers, he explained, did 'not mean that the child is an idiot' as defined by the Idiots Act of 1886 as 'unable to live independently', but rather, that the child had a 'mental incapacity.'⁶¹⁹

To make sure that teacher and doctor did not misinterpret one another's observations, Warner developed his medical cards, so that 'defects' could be simply identified from a list of 82 'signs.' These cards could then also be collected together to identify demographic patterns. In the event, the SBL did not use Warner's medical cards because they created their own 'family history' books for every child entering special instruction, but the cards were taken up by Brighton's School Board, to help identify 'feeble-minded' children.⁶²⁰

Despite Warner's methodical approach to research, which helped to formalise children's bodies through classifications, like many of his contemporaries, such as James Kerr, who in the Twentieth Century became the London County Council's Chief Medical Officer, Warner argued that there was no 'really hard and fast rule' for the identification of 'defects.' Children who showed no physical

⁶¹⁷ EDCDEC, Vol. I, par. 785, p. 30

⁶¹⁸ EDCDEC, Vol. I, par. 788, p. 30

⁶¹⁹ EDCDEC, Vol. I, par. 959-961, p. 37

⁶²⁰ 'Mr Francis Warner, MD, FRCP, called in and examined' (12th February 1897), pp. 25-39, EDCDEC, Vol I, par. 720 725, p. 27

'defect', for example, might still be considered 'imbecilic', because their family's social and physical history could be used by Warner and his colleagues as 'abundant proof...of a certain degree of mental deficiency.'⁶²¹

The non-committal and somewhat paradoxical approach to classification, in which there was no 'hard and fast' rule to identifying mental or physical defects but that there might be 'abundant proof' if family history was taken, culminated in and underpinned the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, which enabled Local Authorities to compel children, described by doctors as 'mentally-defective', to be sent to an industrial school or long-stay institution. In 1916 George Shuttleworth, who had given evidence at the Egerton Commission, described the three degrees of 'Defective' that were defined under the Act: 'Idiot', which described someone so 'deeply defective in mind' that they were 'unable to guard themselves against common physical danger'; 'imbeciles', which described children whose 'mental defectiveness [was] not amounting to idiocy, yet [was] so pronounced that they are incapable of managing themselves or their affairs ...or being taught to do so'; and 'feeble-minded' which described someone seen to be capable of managing their self but, 'permanently incapable of receiving proper benefit from the instruction in Ordinary Schools.'⁶²² While the Mental Deficiency Act is not a focus of this chapter these descriptions represented a body of opinion or medical research, while still being open to debate. The Act's definitions of defective act as a glossary to the near-fifty years of the debate that preceded it, in which teachers, doctors and politicians

⁶²¹ EDCDEC, Vol. I., par. 837, p. 33. See also, Patricia Potts, 'Medicine, Morals and Mental Deficiency: The Contribution of Doctors to the Development of Special Education in England,' pp.181-196 in *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Mental Handicap and Education, (1983), p. 182

⁶²² George Shuttleworth, *Mentally Deficient Children Their Treatment and Training* (P. Blakiston's Son & Co, Philadelphia, 1916), pp.27-28, this also discusses the forth definition of defective 'moral imbecile'

grappled to establish consistent systems of care and classification as ideas of the child, its abilities and disabilities and the role of the school took shape.

The Beginnings of Special Instruction (1872 - 1876)

Practical provision for children's 'defects' had begun, as we have noted, as soon as London's schools were established. In September 1874 the SBL passed a, 'resolution instructing their officers to aid in procuring the attendance of blind children at the Board Schools.' It took a further six months before the SBL began to hire instructors for blind children. At the same time the SBL also hired Reverend William Stainer to 'initiate a system of deaf-mute instruction.'⁶²³ Stainer's appointment led to more immediate results for some children. Stainer had grown up in Southwark and had been involved with the education of deaf children since his pupil-teacher days at the Deaf and Dumb Asylum on Old Kent Road in the 1840s.⁶²⁴ In 1872 he was ordained and served as the second Chaplain to the Royal Association in aid of the Deaf and Dumb (RADD). In this role he was 'in charge of' Sunday school lessons for deaf and dumb children in London's 'eastern districts.'⁶²⁵ Appointed by the Board his 'first step was to ascertain in what locality the largest number of [deaf] children resided.' Based on the local knowledge he had built up working for RADD, Stainer established a class in Wilmot-Street Board School, in the Tower Hamlets Division, for just five students thought to be deaf.⁶²⁶ He argued the school was suitably located, however, because it was in such a 'densely populated part of Bethnal Green that there were a considerable number' of deaf children to encounter.

⁶²³ TTAO: 'The School Board for London', *The Times*, (Friday 27th November 1874), pg. 7

⁶²⁴ H. Dominic W. Stiles 'William Stainer, teacher', <<http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/library-rmid/2012/03/09/william-stainer-teacher/>> (accessed, 20.12.12)

⁶²⁵ TTAO: 'Christmas Appeals', *The Times*, (Wednesday December 25th 1872), pg. 4

⁶²⁶ 'Alice Westlake Examined', (4th March 1886), pp.191-196, Egerton Commission, par. 6270, p. 191

Until the introduction of medical examinations in the 1890s, children were only identified as Deaf, Dumb, or Blind outside of the classroom by School Board Visitors, who went door to door to establish which children were absent from school and why. The Visitors interviewed parents, observed the child and in some cases asked for a medical certificate. From September 1874 children thought to be Deaf and Dumb by the Visitor were then, with the parents' consent, referred to Rev. Stainer who 'selected the children whom [he] thought were eligible for instruction.'⁶²⁷ The reliability of Visitors and the evidence of those who were not formally trained in classification were the subject of debate in the 1880s, as we shall see. But as the Wilmot Street class grew in the first year there was no cause for concern amongst SBL Members. Within a month of Stainer opening this small centre, twenty-seven children had been registered and by late November the Chairman of the SBL noted the support for the class amongst families and friends who,

showed their appreciation by sacrificing money and time to allow the deaf-mutes to receive the instruction...some came long distances...one parent...had actually come to live near the school in order to have the benefit of the instruction for his child.⁶²⁸

By December the SBL had extended Stainer's contract, making him the permanent Superintendent of the Deaf and Dumb, enabling him to open a larger class, known as a 'centre', in Pentonville near Kings Cross station.⁶²⁹

The success of Wilmot Street demonstrated that special instruction for those with a sensory impairment received the approval of many families. It took another six months of persistent campaigning on the part of the 'Home Teaching of the Blind Society' (HTBS) – a voluntary organisation – for the SBL

⁶²⁷ 'The Revd. W. Stainer Examined' (4th March 1886), pp. 197-205 Egerton Commission, par. 6413-6418, p. 197

⁶²⁸ 'The School Board for London', (27th November 1874), pg. 7

⁶²⁹ TTAO: 'The London School Board', *The Times*, (Thursday 10th December 1874), pg. 10

to extend this practice to children who had been identified as Blind. In May 1875 the SBL hired Mr Finchland, a blind instructor from HTBS and Miss Palmer as his assistant, to provide half a day's instruction per week to students identified by Visitors or teachers as Blind.⁶³⁰ Finchland was not considered by the Board to be 'a very high class individual' but at just 30 shillings a week (similar wages to those of a newly certified teacher), his knowledge of reading and writing techniques gained as a blind instructor, made him an affordable and sufficiently knowledgeable employee.⁶³¹ Unlike Finchland, Miss Palmer had 'no special instruction', but having 'lost her sight from small-pox in the service of the Board' she was familiar with the SBL curriculum and the practicalities of learning without sight. For two years Finchland and Palmer 'visited the children they could hear of in a casual way and g[a]ve them a certain amount of instruction.' Without this instruction, children 'were left very much on their own resources...attend[ing] a day school if they chose' and if they did not, then 'nobody looked after them.'⁶³²

By 1876 Finchland and Palmer were instructing thirty children a week in nineteen different schools across London. In September of that year, the SBL responded to the increasing identification of blind students by organising a conference to discuss the differing pedagogical 'systems' available for blind and partially-sighted students.⁶³³ The aim of the conference was to create an elementary system that enabled 'a blind child' to 'take its place side by side with its seeing brother or sister, read the same books, and be instructed by the same

⁶³⁰ TTAO: 'Home Teaching for the Blind,' *The Times*, (Thursday May 20th 1875), pg. 8

⁶³¹ For earnings of full-time teaching staff see Copelman, *Teachers*, p. 54

⁶³² Westlake, (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 86, p.5

⁶³³ 'The London School Board', (28th September 1876), p. 10

teacher.’⁶³⁴ The result was the establishment of the SBL’s permanent ‘Sub-Committee for the Instruction of the Blind and the Deaf and the Dumb’, which became the ‘Special Schools Sub-Committee’ in 1891, covering all aspects of special instruction for children identified as Deaf, Blind, Mentally or Physically Defective.

The titles of these Committees may suggest that special instruction for these groups of children had shared parameters, but for the teachers and superintendents of the SBL who worked in the field, Blind, Deaf and Dumb children had very different needs and the aims of special instruction varied according to these needs. The problem for the Committee was cost. Anxiety was raised as early as 1874 when *The Times* reported ‘remarks made by unnamed members of the Board that the creation of individual Deaf centres ‘was costly,’ a complaint repeated, as noted above, in the editorial in September 1876.⁶³⁵ The task of the Committee was not only, then, to identify and classify children and their special instruction, but to economically reassure voters and ratepayers. The original title of the Committee must, therefore, be understood in a wider context, one in which the provision of elementary education for all children had to be seen to be financially viable. The creation of a sub-committee that dealt with all three identifiable sensory impairments, conveyed a cost-effective message, as well as suggesting that such children constituted a large enough cohort, within the SBL’s student population, to justify permanent special instruction.

⁶³⁴ ‘The London School Board’, (28th September 1876), p. 10

⁶³⁵ ‘The School Board for London’, (27th November 1874), pg. 7 It is not noted who made these remarks

The woman behind the work of the SBL's initiatives in special education was Alice Westlake. A prominent campaigner for women's suffrage, who was elected SBL Member for Marylebone in November 1876, having succeeded Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Alice Westlake had worked with Garrett Anderson on the development of what would become the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital. She was an active member of the first managing committee of St Mary's Dispensary for Women and Children, the precursor to the New Hospital for Women, for which she would eventually become Vice President.⁶³⁶ Within a year of Westlake's election she was appointed to the 'Sub-Committee for the Instruction of the Blind and the Deaf and the Dumb' where she remained until 1888, pioneering a more systematic approach to the identification and education of such children. Westlake described the work of the committee in two interviews she gave to the Egerton Commission: first in December 1885, in which she talked about her role in developing blind instruction, and then again in May 1886 where she discussed the SBL's development of education for children classified as Deaf or Dumb. Under Westlake and her colleagues, however, the identification of sensory impairments, the differences and similarities in how they were understood to affect the child and the classroom, informed a fractured evolution in special instruction. Blind or partially sighted children were partly integrated into ordinary day schools, but for those considered Deaf or Dumb the desire to 'mix' them with other children was outweighed by the demands of the ordinary classroom life. The development of special instruction between 1876 and 1886 reveals an elementary system that drew a very fine line between providing for different types of learning while at the same time not rendering the child undertaking that special instruction

⁶³⁶ Elizabeth Crawfield, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866-1928* (Routledge, London, 2001), p. 706

unequal with the 'ordinary' children from whom they were differentiated. Differences between children in some minds and under some methods of provision, could easily become the sources of social inequality.⁶³⁷

Blind Instruction (1876 - 1899)

When Alice Westlake spoke to the Egerton Commission about the SBL's development of blind centres she recalled how in 1876, when the then vice-chairman Reverend John Rodgers, asked her 'to take the matter up,' she found that until then 'there was no member of the Board who...had taken up the subject particularly.' The apparent apathy of her fellow members galvanised Westlake into action and 'from that moment' she 'interested' herself 'in the instruction of the blind.'⁶³⁸ With only two instructors travelling back and forth between nineteen schools Westlake quickly concluded 'that the instruction was exceedingly bad and wanted reforming from beginning to end.'⁶³⁹ After 'much' undisclosed 'opposition' from some of her colleagues, Westlake commissioned Marchent Williams, an SBL inspector, to report on the methods of instruction used throughout the country.

Marchent Williams' report appeared in 1878. It advised the SBL to hire a sighted superintendent to oversee blind instructors, which the SBL duly did, hiring Mary Greene, an American woman who had been 'engaged in blind tuition' for

⁶³⁷ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6572 p. 205

⁶³⁸ Alice Westlake Examined' (17th December 1885), pp.4-7 in Egerton Commission, par.85, p. 5. Rodgers probably approached Westlake because of her hospital work; after all he believed that women should be in 'a house full of children' . See Jane Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Leicester University Press, London, 1999), p. 136 Moreover Westlake herself wondered whether women, 'perhaps ... are more patient' than male teachers. See Westlake, (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 6346, p. 194

⁶³⁹ 'The London School Board', (28th September 1876), p. 10; Westlake (17th December 1885), Egerton Commission, par. 85, p.5

sixteen years in both America and Britain.⁶⁴⁰ Greene continued to rely on teachers and Visitors to report those who struggled in class or were 'unable to go to school on account of eye disease.' As a Superintendent, however, Greene's responsibility was to meet with children and parents to arrange and develop 'whatever classes' thought suitable to learning with partial or no sight.⁶⁴¹ Greene also appointed and managed instructors, established permanent classes and centres, and oversaw the implementation of a more systematic curriculum, with all identified children being taught braille. Alongside their mainstream lessons in Ordinary Board Schools, time spent undertaking special instruction varied 'from one half-day to five half-days a week,' depending on the child's academic needs and the class to which they were assigned, with 'larger classes receiving a greater amount of special instruction than the smaller classes.'⁶⁴²

The curriculum in Blind classes began simply as teaching children to read and write in such a way that they could 'correspond with their friends who are not blind' by using a system designed 'for the Blind themselves.' The series of embossed dots that made-up the Braille alphabet was introduced into Britain in 1861 and was only just beginning to be used by the SBL's early instructors, Finchland and Palmer, when Mary Greene took up her post as Superintendent for the Bind in 1878. Prior to Braille, blind tuition relied on teaching children to read with various embossed versions of the Roman alphabet, a method which Greene quickly did away with because it was 'not easily read, it is not so easily

⁶⁴⁰ 'Miss Mary Greene Examined' (17th December 1885), pp. 8-12, Egerton Commission, par. 178, p. 8

⁶⁴¹ Greene, Egerton Commission, par. 204, p. 8; Westlake, (17th December 1885), Egerton Commission, par. 88 p.5

⁶⁴² *SBL Annual Report* (1889-1890), p. 62

learnt in school by children. It is not a type they could use for writing.’⁶⁴³ Roman-type had anyway ‘drifted out of use’ as Finchland and Palmer principally used Moon Type to teach children to write. Made up of a series of embossed lines and curves similar to the Roman alphabet, the system had been in common use in Britain since the late 1840s. Greene did not remove Moon Type from the curriculum entirely, because she observed that it enabled some older children ‘to write in the ordinary characters of the sighted.’⁶⁴⁴

As reading and writing methods became simplified by Greene, other subjects began to be adapted for blind students. By 1890 the SBL reported that,

At the Centres children are taught...written arithmetic by means of Taylor’s Arithmetic Boards; and Geography by the aid of relief maps and globes. Special attention is given to the teaching of Mental Arithmetic, and, as far as circumstances permit, Kindergarten and Object Lessons are given, Swedish Exercises are practised, and Knitting is taught.⁶⁴⁵

All these subjects were taught according to the same Standards as an Ordinary Board School.⁶⁴⁶ Indeed blind instruction helped to popularise the Swedish exercises, known as Ling, which would be taught in SBL classrooms alongside and sometimes in place of conventional Drill lessons. When Westlake gave her evidence to the Egerton Commission in 1885 she argued that blind children needed to come under the care of Greene and her instructors as soon as possible, as many children, with partial or no sight, entered schooling, ‘excessively ignorant, so ignorant that they [were] not able to use their limbs.’ Unable to ‘walk by themselves’ these children were even ‘brought by their parents on costermongers’ barrows.’ Ling exercises, Westlake argued, ‘trained them...in the use of their limbs’ and in so doing gave children ‘a little

⁶⁴³ Greene, Egerton Commission, par. 272-176, p. 10

⁶⁴⁴ ‘William Moon’, RNIB,

http://www.rnib.org.uk/aboutus/aboutsightloss/famous/Pages/william_moon.aspx (accessed 3/1/13)

⁶⁴⁵ *SBL Annual Report (1889-1890)*, p. 62

⁶⁴⁶ Westlake, (17th December 1885), Egerton Commission, par. 117-188, p. 6

independence so that they [were]...fit to go into the day schools,' where they could partake in Drill (Image 5.1) and other forms of physical activity.⁶⁴⁷

The aim of blind instruction was, therefore, to supplement rather than supplant the work of an Ordinary Board School. With ordinary lessons already heavily reliant on dictation, the teaching of blind children worked with and alongside special instruction. Teachers in the Ordinary Board Schools, argued Westlake, could easily accommodate blind children by 'dictating their lessons...instead of making use of the blackboard.' The mixture of special instruction and dictation enabled children to, 'pass through the same examinations and do the same work almost entirely.'⁶⁴⁸ Keeping the 'education of the blind in the company of sighted children,' was seen to benefit all. Westlake observed that a visually diverse class had a positive impact on sighted children, making them, 'much more forbearing and kind and sympathetic...they are one and all eager to help the blind children, and do any little offices they can perform for them.'⁶⁴⁹ For those considered Blind, Greene argued it 'quicken[s] their ambition' because 'they are stimulated by the desire to do as well as the others.' Children identified as Blind, argued Greene, were just as likely to come from homes of 'pretty good circumstances' as they were homes of 'the very poorest' and as a result should not be made to feel as if 'they are a separate and isolated class.'⁶⁵⁰ By sharing a classroom with an equally diverse sighted population, therefore, blind children were less likely to feel, that they were 'by themselves... [unable to] do as other

⁶⁴⁷ Westlake (17th December 1885), par. 102, p. 5

⁶⁴⁸ Westlake (17th December 1885), Egerton Commission, 143, 152, p.7

⁶⁴⁹ Westlake (17th December 1885), Egerton Commission, 105, p. 6

⁶⁵⁰ Greene, Egerton Commission, par. 304, p.11

people ... [and] not expected to do as sighted children do.'⁶⁵¹ The mixing of blind and sighted children was thought to be 'an education within itself.'⁶⁵²

Yet to classify a child as simply Blind or sighted did not necessarily address the variation in sight that could be found in the SBL classroom. When Greene gave evidence to the Egerton Commission in 1885, she agreed with her questioners when asked, 'you consider that practically for your purposes any child is blind that cannot read?'⁶⁵³ This did not mean, however, that of the 120 children identified by the superintendent as 'Blind' that none of them could see, indeed Greene told the Egerton Commission in 1885, that 'a good many' had 'partial sight.' For Greene, partial sight could mean the child 'cannot see enough to earn their living by the use of their eyes, but...can go out without a guide' and could thus earn money, for instance as a 'shoeblick.' Or the term could also apply to those children who 'cannot go about without a guide' but after completing their school-years could, 'go back to their homes, [where] the girls assist their mothers and the boys assist their fathers.'⁶⁵⁴ How many children with partial sight may have gone unnoticed or were able to hide their impairment? It was not until the SBL appointed Dr. James Kerr as its first full-time medical officer in 1902, that partially-sighted or 'myopic' children were given due attention. Dedicated to the examination and classification of children for special instruction, Kerr was able to work more closely with the superintendents and teachers than any medical officer before him. As a result he saw the 'difficulties' faced by teachers, 'in getting simple knowledge about the details of visual conditions which have such practical and controlling

⁶⁵¹ Greene, Egerton Commission, par. 227-228, p. 9

⁶⁵² Greene, Egerton Commission, par. 295, p. 10

⁶⁵³ Greene, Egerton Commission, par. 293, p.10

⁶⁵⁴ Greene, Egerton Commission, par. 218, p. 9

importance in education.’ Kerr estimated that up to 10 per cent of London’s children had poor eyesight, of which ‘7 to 8 per cent’ were ‘in the Ordinary School, with certain restrictions.’⁶⁵⁵ This finding profited Kerr to establish specific classes and teaching methods for ‘myopic’ children.

Deaf and Dumb Instruction (1874 - 1899)

Integration in the classroom for children with difficulties hearing and speaking was not as straightforward as it was for the blind. In March 1886 the Reverend William Stainer, the SBL’s Superintendent for the Deaf and Dumb, commented to the Egerton Commission that ‘classification is most important, but it is also one of the most difficult things to carry out’.⁶⁵⁶ In the 1870s and 1880s teachers, SBL members and politicians struggled to balance a desire to have a deaf or mute child ‘communicate freely with its hearing fellows,’ with the harsh reality that many of their ‘fellows’ were ‘not kind to them.’⁶⁵⁷ The limitations of the SBL’s Deaf and Dumb instruction combined with the sometimes fraught social cohesion observed in the playground was underpinned by how deaf and mute children were understood by SBL staff, local families and medical professionals.

In 1877 when Alice Westlake was appointed to the Sub-Committee for the Instruction of the Blind and the Deaf and the Dumb, she was contacted by St John Ackers, a barrister (later Conservative MP for Gloucester who sat on the Egerton Commission). Ackers was committed to raising public awareness of the plight of the deaf child and he advocated teaching deaf children to speak. In 1876 he had given a lecture to the Literary and Scientific Institution of

⁶⁵⁵ James Kerr, *School Vision and the Myopic Scholar: A Book for Teachers and School Workers* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London, 1925) p. 7 and p. 84

⁶⁵⁶ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6547 p.204

⁶⁵⁷ ‘Mrs Dancy Examined’ (24th March 1886), pp. 295-299, Egerton Commission, par. 8720, p. 298; 3758, p.299

Gloucester entitled 'Deaf not Dumb' in which he recalled how when his daughter became deaf after an illness in infancy, his wife and he were particularly 'pained' by the fact that there appeared to be no clear methodology to teaching Deaf children.⁶⁵⁸ As historian Carmen Mangion has noted, the history of 'the hearing impaired' has been dominated by 'combative disputes between oralists (who insisted that pure articulation be used to teach the deaf) and manualists (who supported the use of sign language and finger spelling as teaching methods).'⁶⁵⁹ This pedagogical debate was played out in the evolution of Deaf and Dumb instruction under the SBL and teased out in the committee room of the Egerton Commission in the mid-1880s. What emerged suggests that the deafness and/or mutism of a child and her pedagogical needs were understood by the SBL employees to be, not only difficult to classify and provide for (due to the spectrum of defect thought to be affecting the child), but also bound up with the child's social-class and familial history.

When William Stainer had set up his first Deaf and Dumb class, in Wilmot Street in the autumn of 1874, children were taught 'individually'. Stainer would 'try their voices and endeavour to the best of [his] ability to teach them to speak...sounds and syllables and simple words.' For this instruction in speaking and lip-reading to work, Stainer observed that children needed to be taught in 'few' numbers and 'under one teacher.' But 'at the beginning of each week' the Visitors presented new children to Stainer, forcing the number of children in the class to expand. In response larger and more permanent classes known as 'centres' were opened within, but operating independently of, ordinary day

⁶⁵⁸ B. St. J. Ackers, *Deaf not Dumb: A Lecture Delivered October 17th 1876 Before the Gloucester Scientific Institution* (Longman's, Green, Reader, & Dyer, Gloucester, 1876), p. 1

⁶⁵⁹ Carmen M. Mangion, 'The Business of Life: Educating Catholic Deaf Children in Late Nineteenth-Century England', pp.575-594, in *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, 41:5, (14 Jun 2012),p. 576

schools. By 1886 nine centres, charging 2d per week, had been established in the most heavily populated and urban parts of Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Lambeth West, Finsbury and Marylebone. The Egerton Commission were informed that up to 313 children were registered with these centres with daily morning and afternoon classes consisting of up to fourteen children from across a Division.⁶⁶⁰ By 1890 'the children, as far as possible', were taught Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Geography' as well as 'Kindergarten, Drawing, Physical Exercises and Cookery...where practicable.'⁶⁶¹ But the primary aim for Deaf and Dumb instruction was always 'to make them understand.'⁶⁶² How to achieve this understanding, however, was debateable.

As the size and scale of the centres increased Stainer's time was stretched between classes. Consequently 'the oral teaching' that Stainer had found possible with just five students, in which he used 'objects' and 'motions' to teach children to speak, 'soon came to a standstill for want of assistance.' Stainer initially only wanted to hire teachers who could hear because he believed that only they could teach a child speech. Failing to find an experienced instructor with hearing, however, Stainer 'engaged...a deaf teacher, who was competent as such.' For the next six years Stainer continued to provide oral instruction, while new deaf teachers trained children in the signed alphabet. With 'individual attention' limited in the centres, pedagogy developed that relied on independent work. Children were provided with pictures that they could 'recognise', while in the same room the teacher instructed individual children face to face. Once the teacher felt satisfied that the child 'could distinguish the object in the picture it

⁶⁶⁰ Westlake (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 6296, p. 193; Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6444, p. 198

⁶⁶¹ *SBL Annual Report (1889-1890)*, p. 81

⁶⁶² Dancy, Egerton Commission, par. 8641, p. 296

[was] allowed to write the name of the object and something about the object.’ As recognition and writing skills were developed, the teacher or Stainer would then increase the face to face instruction to teach the child how to say what she had recognised and written.⁶⁶³ This method was clearly very labour intensive.

The system of visitors identifying children and Stainer using a mixture of sign and oral lessons continued without question until 1877 when Westlake, as a newly appointed member of the SBL was contacted by John Ackers, who wanted to introduce a more systematic ‘oral system’. Together Westlake and Ackers ‘visited classes under the school board, and came to the conclusion that, the results of teaching were currently not ‘satisfactory,’ as ‘children were not fitted for their work in life.’ Stainer’s method Westlake argued, ‘unfitted’ children ‘for the hard work of learning the oral system’ of lip-reading and speech. When Westlake had overseen the appointment of the Superintendent for the Blind she had argued that ‘the particular type’ of communication, be it Roman, Braille or Moon, should be left ‘to the instructors.’ Braille was thus chosen because it proved ‘easier to read’ by people with visual impairments than an embossed Roman alphabet.⁶⁶⁴ By contrast Westlake was sceptical of Stainer’s use of sign because it was, ‘so easy to make signs and be understood by signs’ that children in the SBL’s Deaf and Dumb classes, did ‘not take the mental and physical trouble necessary to acquire the oral system.’ Despite the success in communication between sighted and non-sighted that Braille had offered, Westlake believed the ease with which sign-language could be learnt

⁶⁶³ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6418-6422, p.197;par. 6505, p. 201

⁶⁶⁴ Greene, Egerton Commission, par.160, p. 7

and shared among users, left children 'cut off from their kind' because 'very few people of course [knew] the manual alphabet.'⁶⁶⁵

Part of Alice Westlake's concern for the teaching of sign lay in how she perceived the parents of children considered Deaf or Dumb. Unlike those identified as Blind, who appeared to come from reasonably diverse backgrounds, many children classified as Deaf and Dumb came from families described by Westlake as, 'very ignorant' and 'very migratory...the parents are continually moving from place to place and changing their school, and it is very difficult to get the children for a continuous course of instruction.'⁶⁶⁶ Such families used either signs they had developed spontaneously or the finger alphabet to communicate. Westlake believed such familial communication only 'confirmed' these children in 'bad spelling and so increase the difficulty of their conversing with those who spell correctly.' Stainer, who taught these children agreed with Westlake, in so far as some of his students came from a 'class of children who have not educated parents, and no nice nursery to go into where there is a nurse ready to receive them and assist them in carrying out the instructions they have had in the schoolroom.' For this reason, however, he was sceptical about the effectiveness of a purely oral method because, 'the parents as a rule have no means whatever of communicating on the same principle, and almost invariably resort to the use of signs.' Stainer argued that the migratory nature of the families from which the students came meant there was not enough time or consistency in the child's life for pure oral-instruction to be effective. He reasoned that 'an ordinary child does not acquire speech without an immense amount of daily practice, surrounded by those who can converse

⁶⁶⁵ Westlake (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 6327, p. 194; par. 6270 pp. 191-192

⁶⁶⁶ Westlake (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 6277; p. 192; par. 6323 p.194

with it, and who use every effort to make the child talk; and even then it is a slow process.' Thus, he concluded, 'lessons in speech alone will never make a child talk,' what was needed was to use 'the remaining senses' in order to 'give...the power of speech.'⁶⁶⁷ Between 1877 and 1879 the Board continued to have a 'great many discussions' on the subject of how to bestow the spoken word to children. Westlake invited Ackers to discuss with the Board his own experience as a parent of a deaf child and campaigner of a purely oral system of special instruction. Throughout this period Stainer remained unconvinced; he continued to believe that a 'pure' oral-system was 'very unsuited to the children in London Board Schools,' but in 1879 'the Board' were 'determined, regardless of Mr Stainer to start a class on the oral system.'⁶⁶⁸

The first class to learn purely with lip-reading and spoken words, was set up in an existing school in a poor area, Francombe Street, near the docks in Southwark's Bermondsey, and was conducted by Mrs Dancy. As the first teacher of the purely oral system, Dancy could hear and had received training at Fitzroy College, which had been established in 1872 by The Association for the Oral Instruction for the Deaf and Dumb, to train teachers specifically in the 'oral method.'⁶⁶⁹ By 1884 she was the head teacher of a Deaf Centre housed in two-spare classrooms of Surrey Lane School in Battersea, West Lambeth, and in 1886 she gave evidence to the Egerton Commission based on her experiences of training and teaching. Within a year the class had won Stainer's approval and the SBL began to teach the 'oral-system' systematically.⁶⁷⁰

Stainer's sudden 'conversion' to the oral system, however, was not because of

⁶⁶⁷ Stainer, Egerton Commission, pars. 6453-6524, pp. 198-203

⁶⁶⁸ Westlake (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 6270, pp. 191-192

⁶⁶⁹ 'UCL Bloomsbury Project,' Deborah Colville, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/jews_deaf_and_dumb_home.htm> (accessed 01.08.2013)

⁶⁷⁰ Dancy, Egerton Commission, par. 8592, p. 295

the success of Dancy's class alone, but because of what he witnessed at the 1880 International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in Milan.⁶⁷¹ According to Stainer 'astonishing results were shown' of sixty-four children unable to hear, who, having received oral-instruction, could speak and lip-read fluently.⁶⁷²

The introduction of a pure oral system changed the focus of special instruction for Deaf and Dumb Centres. Originally centres taught children to read both sign-language and the Roman alphabet simultaneously, with children required to vocalise each word they signed or read. Mrs Dancy argued that the result of this method was that children became too 'dependent...on the written language' in their relationships with the hearing world and were likely to only be able to read 'mechanically', rather than with any real depth of understanding. Under the oral system staff did 'not put any stress upon reading' because their 'great aim' was to 'make [children] understand' the spoken word. Instead children were taught meaning through a combination of lip-reading and (somewhat ironically given Dancy's concern about dependency) on writing. Dancy described to the Egerton Commission how she would 'pronounce a sound to the child, and the child pronounces that sound and writes it on the blackboard immediately.' Dancy only pursued reading with the child when she could be sure they could 'understand what they read.'

Under this system, whereby children were taught how to write before they could read what they had written, progress was slow. Centres may have provided lessons five hours a day, five days a week, but it took a year and a half for simple sentences to be read and understood. Yet at the Egerton Commission

⁶⁷¹ Westlake (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 6270, p.192

⁶⁷² Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6525, p. 203

Dancy, claimed that, 'we gain in the end.' Exactly what was gained and by whom was not made explicit. Later in her interview, however, it became clear that while deaf children were perceived to gain from the oral system, it was a perception mediated and understood purely through a world of hearing adults. Dancy gave the example of a girl classified as Deaf and Dumb who had entered her class at twelve, leaving her only two years to train under the oral system before schooling ended. With such a limited time-frame to instruct the child Dancy 'wanted to know [the] feeling' of the daughter's hearing father that following the first year of schooling, would it be beneficial if Dancy was to substitute some of the labour intensive lessons in lip-reading and speech with the quickly learnt system of sign-language. The father responded that 'he was very pleased indeed with the progress' his daughter had made in her first year under the oral system, 'that he could understand her and she him and he had no doubt that she would understand everybody in a short time, and he decidedly did not wish her to be taught on the sign system.'⁶⁷³ His daughter's opinion was not sought directly by Dancy, it was through the eyes of the father that the oral-system was seen to benefit the family as a whole. For him he had gained a daughter who communicated as he did and his daughter, in 'short time' had secured future interaction, even integration with a hearing world.

In 1886 when Rev. Stainer was interviewed by the Egerton Commission, his admission of support for the use of a purely oral-system in SBL classrooms did not stop him acknowledging that, 'we have men holding positions in life as barristers, as teachers, as eminent artists, and so on who have never spoken a word and in whom speech does not seem in any way a necessity.' Yet as the

⁶⁷³ Dancy, Egerton Commission, pars. 8635-8673 pp. 206-207

list of professions suggests, the Superintendent of the Deaf and Dumb believed that to live a successful life with sign-language depended 'entirely upon the circumstances' of the child, its family and its schooling.⁶⁷⁴ This was a view echoed by Mrs Dancy in her evidence to the Egerton Commission. Dancy recalled how at Fitzroy College, the students she encountered came from relatively middle-class or stable artisan backgrounds whom, she believed, went on to make 'their living...in offices' or by working for the family business. By contrast, boys she encountered when teaching for the SBL were likely to apply for 'apprenticeship' in which the 'majority of masters' were thought not to 'understand the sign system.'⁶⁷⁵ As the SBL's superintendent of Deaf and Dumb Instruction, therefore, Stainer's aim was always to teach children attending Board Schools to speak, because he thought that 'if a child can speak' and even 'understand' if 'only to a limited extent' it was still, 'more able to be employed get employment, or to fulfil their employment more efficiently' than a child 'that is totally deaf and dumb.'⁶⁷⁶

When the former SBL Member Thomas Gautrey described the development of SBL's general curriculum in his memoir *Lux Mihi Laus*, he divided it into,

Three periods – 1870-1885, 1885-1896, and 1896-1903. The first was devoted in a general way to giving effect to the Huxley report, the second to a great change of aim by making instruction less literary and less ambitious, and the third to making the boys and girls more fitted to perform their duties and work in after life.⁶⁷⁷

The unique development of Deaf and Dumb pedagogy under the SBL suggests it was at the forefront of these changes in educational practice. With Deaf and Dumb teachers only able to provide one-to-one tuition to some of the students

⁶⁷⁴ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6537, p. 204; par. 6541, p. 202

⁶⁷⁵ Dancy, Egerton Commission, pars. 8698-8702 p.297

⁶⁷⁶ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6546, p. 204

⁶⁷⁷ Thomas Gautrey, *'Lux Mihi Laus' School Board Memories*, (Link House Publications, London, 1937), p. 83

some of the time, 'good illustrations' were required for children to undertake independent work. Compounded by the focus on skills like lip-reading, which went beyond traditional academic pedagogy by using, 'real objects and real actions' to convey meaning in all subjects, not just 'object lessons', Deaf and Dumb Centres helped to demonstrate the value of providing children with skills, in this case lip-reading, that would make them 'more fitted' to the work of a hearing world.⁶⁷⁸ HMIs had no requirements to examine children in these classes, which meant that unlike the teaching of the Blind under the SBL, Deaf and Dumb Centres developed separate Standards with a limited curriculum that was never examined by anyone other than School Board Members and their inspectors. Yet because these Deaf and Dumb Centres were always located within the grounds of a larger Elementary School, the limited nature of the special instruction was not necessarily isolated or hidden. Given that the Superintendent for Special Schools had been hired, not from an asylum or private school, but from an Elementary School managed by the SBL, could it be that there was a cultural exchange between the schools and centres of the SBL? Were they imagined as having different but equal purposes in the same way that Higher Grade and Special Difficulty Schools were discussed in Chapter Three?

At Surrey Lane Elementary School in Battersea, for example, the Higher Grade Departments taught a broad academic curriculum, including subjects such as Physiology, Geography, History and Mechanics to the Boys and Domestic Economy to the Girls, routinely achieving Excellent in all these subjects.⁶⁷⁹ At Surrey Lane's Deaf and Dumb Centre, however, children may have, like their

⁶⁷⁸ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par.6506, p. 201

⁶⁷⁹ LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/S106/1-43, Surrey Lane Inspector Reports (1896-1924)

Higher Grade counterparts, left at fourteen years of age and been 'nearly equal' in their knowledge of arithmetic, reading and writing as those learning in the Higher Grade classes next door, but, admitted Dancy, they did 'not know so much History and Geography.' For Dancy the goal was above all to teach a child how to 'make herself understood' to take a 'position in life as if they were not deaf,' academic development was secondary.⁶⁸⁰

Following his death in 1898, Reverend Stainer, the superintendent of Deaf and Dumb instruction, was remembered by Reverend Gilby, a prominent child of deaf parents, and missionary, as having 'gone with the tide reviling the silent method' in favour of oral instruction. But Stainer as his work with the SBL showed, had always aimed at speech when he perceived it to be a benefit, and sign where he thought otherwise.⁶⁸¹ As he explained to the Egerton Commission while he would,

Hesitate to say that speech is an essential part of the education of the deaf, and the only means by which language can be taught...there is certainly a considerable number of children who may be taught to speak by great effort... [for] whom speech may be of great advantage in life...For the sake of those who can be taught to speak I say that the system should be adopted.⁶⁸²

Stainer's conversion to the oral system had been a logical step for someone who aspired to equip all children with the skills needed to communicate fluently in a hearing world. Yet this ambition for assimilation, to enable children to take as Dancy described, a 'position in life as if they were not deaf' did not match the realities of teaching the oral system. Learning to speak required separate classes for lip-reading, its painstaking reading lessons, mouthed words and one to one tuition. These methods combined with the increasing classification of

⁶⁸⁰ Dancy, Egerton Commission, pars. 2723, 8745-8747, p. 298

⁶⁸¹ Gilby quoted in Jan Branson and Don Miller, *Damned for Their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People As Disabled* (Gallaudet University Press, Washington, 2002), p. 175

⁶⁸² See Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 5454, p. 204

abilities in the 1880s, may sometimes have reinforced a child's deafness or mutism through the architectural segregation of children from their hearing and speaking peers.⁶⁸³

The Architecture of the Deaf and Dumb Centre

Under the 1870 Education Act, an Elementary School had to be within three miles of a child's home, but because children who were classified as 'blind', 'deaf' 'dumb' physically or mentally 'defective' or sick could be exempt from attendance, the geography of London's Blind, Deaf and Dumb instruction developed idiosyncratically and according to neighbourhoods the various special superintendents were called to most often. With its oral-led pedagogy the ordinary SBL classroom could integrate those classified as Blind relatively easily, with special instruction for these children reliant on 'itinerant teachers' who travelled across London to instruct 'one or two children', until the end of the Twentieth Century. For those classified as Deaf and Dumb, Alice Westlake, the SBL member of the Sub-Committee for the Blind Deaf and Dumb, considered them to be 'under a great disadvantage as compared with the Blind.' This was because she and Stainer believed 'Deaf and Dumb' children could not be 'taught with the hearing' because of the requirements for lip-reading and the lack of sign-language in ordinary schooling.⁶⁸⁴ Thus Deaf and Dumb instruction evolved to be stationary and group-based, with children from across a Division travelling to teachers, who were housed in centres attached to Ordinary Elementary Schools. Stainer, however, saw the separate centres as more effective than itinerant teachers because group instruction allowed him to, 'get better classification,' by separating and adapting lessons to differing needs

⁶⁸³ See Dancy, Egerton Commission, par. 8641 p. 296. Also discussion on 'normalisation' of deafness in Branson and Miller, *Damned*, p. 122

⁶⁸⁴ Westlake (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 6274, p. 192 and par. 6270, p. 193

rather than having to offer the same lesson to what could potentially be two very different children. Moreover this method favoured 'discipline' because children and teachers in the Deaf and Dumb class were 'not diverted or interrupted by what is going on around [them].' Their schooling was all contained within the one separate classroom, set in but set apart from, the surrounding ordinary classes of the Elementary School.⁶⁸⁵ As the scale of the Defective population came to light, with the introduction of medical examinations and special instruction became increasingly professionalised in the 1890s with full-time specially trained instructors for special instruction, Stainer's belief that children be grouped together according to ability or 'defect' proved to be a pioneering. The creation of separate Centres and schools for special instruction were physical manifestations of not only classification and separation of children, but the increasing specialist knowledge of teachers.

With the introduction of oral instruction in 1880, Deaf and Dumb Centres became ever more distinctive in the school. Stainer argued that classrooms used for his special instruction had to be very well lit, so that children could 'watch the slight alterations, positions and intimate motions of the vocal organs' of their teachers. The focus on light demanded by the oral-system could be achieved within the existing buildings of the SBL because of the foresight of their chief architect E.R. Robson, who had designed his classrooms on the principle that 'in this sunless climate of ours it is difficult to make a school-room too sunny.' School houses were principally lit, therefore, with the 'coolest, steadiest, and best light' that came 'from the north.' Robson had also ensured that, 'some sunny windows' facing south or south west were provided, but only

⁶⁸⁵ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6464, p. 199

so long as they did not cast light on ‘the wrong places, as, for instance, right in the eyes either of teacher or children.’⁶⁸⁶ Yet while the architecture of the school needed little adaptation for Deaf and Dumb instruction, the furniture of most SBL classrooms was another matter. The SBL traditionally used pew-like galleries and immovable desks to seat children. Indeed it was not until 1913 that all of London’s Elementary Schools discussed in this thesis had their galleries replaced with dual-desks.⁶⁸⁷ The dual-design still rigidly connected desk and seat, but it provided teachers with easier access to all students and focused the child’s attention on what was occurring at the front of the classroom.⁶⁸⁸ For oral-instruction to be effective, Stainer and his staff found that students needed to not only be able to see their teacher but also ‘each other’ during dictation lessons. As a result Deaf and Dumb Centres were provided with circular and octagonal desks so that they could learn to speak by viewing ‘each other’s faces’ (Image 5.2).⁶⁸⁹

By the end of the Nineteenth Century Deaf and Dumb Centres like Surrey Lane in Lambeth West were moving out of the classrooms of existing school-houses and into purpose built buildings. These permanent centres like all SBL buildings had a shared architectural-vernacular of red and yellow brick, and shared playgrounds with the main school house. Yet the centres were noticeably different. Only one-story, they were markedly smaller, with at least two classes that were built large enough to accommodate ‘about 12 pupils’ who could sit at

⁶⁸⁶ Dr Cohn, ‘Research into the effect of German classrooms on rates of Myopia,’ quoted in, E.R. Robson, *School Architecture: Being Practical Remarks on the Planning, Designing, Building, and furnishing of School Houses*, (John Murray, London, 1874), p. 167, pp.177-178.

⁶⁸⁷ see LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/M21/28, *Maryon Park*, LCC District Inspector’s Report, (1913)

⁶⁸⁸ Robson, *Architecture*, p. 130. For uses of dual desks see, LMA: LCC/EO/PS/6/14, Bolingbroke Road Group, *Minutes of Managers*, (1886 to 1894), November 29th 1888, p. 72 and LMA: LCC/LCC/EO/PS/6/57, Kensal Green Group, *Minutes of Managers*, (1877 -1886), 23rd May 1881, p. 97

⁶⁸⁹ Stainer, Egerton Commission, pars. 6448-6450, p. 198

the 'specially constructed desks, which [were] arranged in a circular form.'⁶⁹⁰ Children used a separate entrance to the usual stone built, 'Girls and Infants' and 'Boys' gateways. At Surrey Lane, for example, (Image 5.3) a gateway was built, with a painted sign next to it, which read:

'CENTRE FOR THE EDUCATION OF DEAF CHILDREN'

While in some schools, where centres expanded to include 'special instruction' for a range of children with physical and mental 'defects', entrances were built with a stone-surround carved with the words 'Special Girls' or 'Special Boys' at their top (Image 5.4).

Like their non-Special School counterparts, girls and boys from the centres used single-sex playgrounds. Their lessons, however, tended to be mixed-sex, with, for example, boys entering laundry and cookery centres which in all other elementary settings were defined as purely female spaces. This arguably feminised impairment; it certainly did not masculinise it. Girls who received special instruction, for example, remained excluded from the all-male domain of workshops.⁶⁹¹

With children who had been classified as Deaf and Dumb entering schools by different entrances, into different buildings, with different curriculums, how far these differences in teaching instruction, segregation, built environment institutionalised the aim of Miss Dancy, the head mistress of the Deaf and Dumb Centre at Surrey Lane, to bestow, 'a life as if they were not deaf' upon students, we don't know. Was the deafness of the scholars reinforced by both

⁶⁹⁰ *SBL Annual Report (1889-90)*, p.82

⁶⁹¹ *SBL Special Schools (1903)*, p. 47

pedagogy and architecture? Isolated from their hearing peers during schooling, for example, children from the centres could be vulnerable to bullying. Dancy recalled how, 'one boy always wanted me to go home with him, because the other boys fought him.' Upon hearing this account the Egerton Commission, however, viewed it as evidence to support further segregation in the form of residential schooling, believing that residential schools would protect children under special instruction, from having to 'run the gauntlet of any children who might take advantage of them.' While Dancy agreed, she also argued that residential schooling restricted the child from living fully, for 'a child gets life in its own home.' Indeed believing that her students were 'quite equal in play' to their hearing peers, but just 'very sensitive,' playtimes remained a deliberately integrated affair at Surrey Lane, in the hope that those classified as Deaf and Dumb would be less keen 'to play alone.' The sensitivity of her students, however, seemed to be born from the fact that the children of the Higher Grade School-house 'were not kind to' their Deaf and Dumb peers and would 'deride them sometimes as being deaf.' Separating children classified as Deaf and Dumb so that they could be taught to communicate with their hearing and speaking peers, marked their difference as a sign of inherently lacking, in need of speech, segregated until they had learnt to communicate with the hearing world. Dancy noted, for example, that attempts at speech meant that 'sometimes they call out very loudly and shout and make a disagreeable noise.' According to both Stainer and Dancy these children would 'never be perfect,' they would never, 'speak like other people.'⁶⁹² The development of Deaf and Dumb instruction under the SBL helped formalise children's differences as need and need as weakness.

⁶⁹²All quotes Dancy, Egerton Commission, pars. 8654-8761, p. 296-299; except Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6428, p.197

The Development of Classification

Throughout the 1880s as William Stainer oversaw the adaption of the oral-system in the Deaf and Dumb Centres, he argued the aim of special instruction in these establishments was to teach students about 'speech.' By the time the SBL's 1890 Annual Report was published, however, the superintendent stated that the special instruction was aimed at teaching his students about 'language.' This shift in emphasis - from speech to language - revealed that while the SBL advocated an oral-led system, they did not completely repeal the use of signed instruction. Instead if after 'several years' a child had 'made little or no progress' in the oral-classes of a Deaf and Dumb Centre then, where 'classification...[allowed for] separation,' the child would be placed in a smaller class which taught 'silently by signs and the manual alphabet.'⁶⁹³ To be entered into these smaller, signed classes, the child had to have been classified as both 'Deaf *and* Dumb.' The uncertainty, however, surrounding how to classify children who could not hear, but could speak, or conversely, could not speak, but could hear, resulted in some children slipping through the educational net.

From the late 1870s through to the early 1890s Dr Francis Warner, whose research attempted to systematise classification, estimated that 5 per cent of the child population was, 'from special circumstances...unable [to be] educated in the Ordinary School.' For Warner this was not necessarily to do with the child's specific 'defect', but rather how the School Board recognised and responded to differences in children. When Warner was interviewed at the Egerton Commission in 1888, he argued that it was, 'highly desirable that those

⁶⁹³ *SBL Annual Report (1889-90)*, p. 82; Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6537, p. 203

engaged in conducting primary education should be aware of the common forms of mental and cerebral defect.’ This was especially important, he argued, in a school-system where corporal punishment was tolerated. Without such awareness the lack of classification, at its worst, resulted in teachers mistaking, for example, the involuntary movements of St Vitus Dance for wilful insolence. This resulted in ‘nervous children’ being ‘thrashed in school’, which inadvertently encouraged them ‘not [to] attend anymore.’ Their absence then caused their parents to be brought before a magistrate, fined and forced to send the child back to school, where the whole cycle began again. Warner argued that a lack of awareness was already resulting in him ‘frequently’ encountering, ‘deaf children in hospital practise who had remained utterly uncared for in any special way in the school.’ These children were left in ‘unplaced’ classes, unable to enter the Upper Divisions or never leaving the lower Standards. Warner argued that without systematic training in classification of ‘hair lip[s] and small brain defect[s]’ teachers and head teachers were left unable to ‘ascertain that children are so afflicted,’ resulting in physical ‘defects’ being misconstrued as mental ones and vice versa.⁶⁹⁴

The lack of staff-expertise in classification, or diagnosis of minor defects, was confirmed at the Egerton Commission, by SBL member Alice Westlake. She argued that while the Deaf and Dumb Centres were dealing with, ‘perhaps more than half’ of the actual population of affected children, it was, ‘rather difficult to get the exact figures.’ This was because, argued Westlake, the Visitors who reported which children were absent and why were, ‘not very skilful on the

⁶⁹⁴ ‘Dr Francis Warner Examined’ (7th February 1888), pp. 698-700, Egerton Commission, pars. 19094-19101, pp. 698-99 and par. 19115, p.700. When asked if he advocated an ‘annual medical inspection of all scholars in Ordinary schools, or only of all children receiving special instruction,’ Warner responded ‘I think the former is almost too big a question to raise.’ See Warner, EDCDEC, Vol???, par. 848, p.33

subject.' She gave the example of how Visitors would frequently, 'report a good many imbecile children' to Stainer, believing that their mutism was due to deafness. In reality argued Westlake, such children were, 'hardly suited for any training that [the SBL could] give them.'⁶⁹⁵

William Stainer, in his interview to the Egerton Commission commented that the SBL's classification system was, 'not very varied...it [was] too rigid.' Consequently the needs of 'many' children, who had 'a considerable amount of hearing' or an 'intelligible [amount of] speech,' were dealt with as if they were both 'Deaf and Dumb' or were left, as Warner had found, without any special instruction. In agreement with Westlake, Stainer argued that, 'as a rule' children who were mute were, 'weak in intellect, their dumbness arising from a want of power of imitation, and of memory,' typically caused by 'some abnormal weakness.' He explained that while these cases of 'idiopathic dumbness,' were 'very rare,' his experience in teaching 'Deaf and Dumb' children meant that those who were merely 'dumb' could be 'easily diagnosed' by the superintendent after just, 'one or two interviews.' Such cases, however, gave Stainer, 'greatest anxiety' out of all the students he encountered. This was because, as Westlake had suggested, the progress of these children was rarely found to be good enough to keep them *in* Deaf and Dumb Centres and *out* of residential institutions. The number of children taken on or excluded by Stainer because of 'idiopathic dumbness' is not known, but so keen was he to appease the 'satisfaction of their parents and friends' and even, he admitted, himself, he claimed that he, 'often' took cases, 'unwillingly on probation, feeling almost certain that they [would] prove unsuitable.' While he argued this was worth

⁶⁹⁵ Westlake (4th March 1886), Egerton Commission, par. 6277, p. 192

doing, because the potential 'benefit' of the Deaf and Dumb instruction outweighed the very real failure, when it became clear that the mutism could not be resolved by either the oral or sign system, Stainer concluded that his only remaining 'resource' was 'to refer' the cases 'to the parish...or to the secretary of an institution.'⁶⁹⁶ Last resource or otherwise, the child was expected to fit the pedagogy or face exclusion.

Throughout the three years the Egerton Commission, Doctor Francis Warner, of the London Hospital and private practice, continued with his own research into the 'conditions and development of brain power amongst the school population.'⁶⁹⁷ He gave a series of lectures to the College of Preceptors, the Education Society and the University of Cambridge, promoting his 'scientific observation of pupils in schools, illustrated by casts, photographs and diagrams.' He also approached the SBL with this series.⁶⁹⁸ Until the publication of the Egerton Report in 1889, however, the Board did not accept his offer.⁶⁹⁹ When they did accept, members of an SBL special sub-committee, formed following a report by the SBL on 'Subjects and Modes of Instruction,' were first offered to witness Warner's lectures. The ten members of the committee, which included the Chairman and vice-chairman of the Board were then entitled to nominate a further fifteen teachers each to receive the lectures.⁷⁰⁰ Although only a fraction of London's teachers attended these lectures, they represented an attempt by the SBL, following the publication of the Egerton Report, to create a more comprehensive relationship between schools, classification and special

⁶⁹⁶ Stainer, Egerton Commission, pars.6486-6488, p.200

⁶⁹⁷ This was the SBL's description of Warner's research that he undertook with COS in SBL schools. See *SBL Annual Report* (1892), p. 110

⁶⁹⁸ *Minutes of Special Committee on the Subjects and Modes of Instruction*, p. 363

⁶⁹⁹ Warner discusses approaching the SBL in Warner, Egerton Commission, par. 19107, p. 699

⁷⁰⁰ *Minutes of Special Committee on the Subjects and Modes of Instruction*, for Members see pp.50-57

instruction.⁷⁰¹ At the end of 1889, for example, the Board hired its first medical officer Professor W.R. Smith, a district medical officer for Woolwich. Smith superintended the 'hygienic condition of schools and scholars of the metropolis.' Prior to Smith families had sought medical certificates from independent doctors to prove whether their child was fit for school. This practice continued under Smith, but he provided the SBL with its own medical opinion and enabled the SBL to begin medical inspections of children who received special instruction, as Warner had desired.⁷⁰² Within a year of Smith's appointment the SBL began to establish Special Schools for children classified as mentally or physically defective. Admission to these new schools relied on the opinion of Smith, but not only his opinion.

One part-time medical officer and a series of medical lectures did not medicalise classification in SBL schools. Indeed, as already suggested in Chapter Four and the SBL's scepticism of Crichton-Browne's findings during the overpressure debates, not all medical recommendations were accepted. Just as the SBL made no moves to classify children by physical and racial attributes as Crichton Browne had suggested, Dr. Francis Warner's medical cards, listing the near hundred 'signs' of a child's 'defect' were rejected by the SBL in favour of 'progress books.' These books contained reports and enquiries made into the child's educational progress before, during and after they received special instruction, as well as information surrounding 'the circumstances of their birth

⁷⁰¹ 150 teachers was a fraction of the SBL's total teaching population, given that in 1889 4073 women, alone were employed in their Elementary Schools. See, Copelman, Dina, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930* (Routledge, London, 1996), p. 77

⁷⁰² By the mid-1890s the SBL had hired a medical assistant whose primary role was to decide, 'which children [were] more suitable for a special class, and which [would] be relegated to the schools for ordinary children.' See 'Harris', EDCDEC, Vol. II, p. 40

and their family history.⁷⁰³ Medical opinion thus added to an educational patchwork of assessment of each child which was sewn together by the SBL's new, full-time, Superintendent of Special Instruction: Mrs Burgwin. Burgwin's role was to 'examine children who [had] been reported...by HMIs in Annual Report as, "being dull and backward," and to see if special instruction was suitable for them and what kind. Moreover she would 'attend Ordinary Schools, [to] enquire into and report upon special cases brought to the notice of the Committee by Members of the Board, Superintendents of Visitors and medical men.' Her opinion, therefore, determined a child's classification in school as much as any doctor.⁷⁰⁴ Indeed like all the superintendents discussed in this chapter they negotiated the classification of the child through the opinions of teachers, HMIs, and medical officers, in a bid to ensure that the classification of the child was well-supported by other practitioners.

The introduction of a medical officer, new schools and a superintendent of Special Instruction, led to a ballooning in special instruction at the turn of the Twentieth Century. By 1901 ten years after the SBL had appointed Mrs Burgwin, a total of 7,661 children had been identified as Mentally or Physically Defective, of which 3,827 attended one of London's eighty-eight Special Schools. By contrast cases of deafness and blindness peaked in 1891 when the SBL began to use medical inspections in their centres. By 1901 students classified as Blind stood at 386 and 995 students had been identified as Deaf. The SBL argued that the 'decrease in blindness and deafness may be accounted for by the increase in medical skill, the better conditions of living, and

⁷⁰³ Mrs Florence Anderson, Miss Edith Cattle and Miss Rosa Whenman called in and examined (26th February 1897) pp.78-86, EDCDEC VOL II, p. 80, see also LMA: EO/DIV6/POW/LB/1, *Powis Street MD*, Logbook, (1894-1913), 29.1.1904, p. 53

⁷⁰⁴ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6547, p. 204

in the case of deafness by the decrease in the number of scarlatina patients.’ For the SBL the rise of the Special School had been matched by changing parental attitudes; while, ‘there are still careless and foolish parents...In most cases parents are now alive to doing the best thing possible for the defective child, and often they take great pains to obtain suitable instruction.’⁷⁰⁵ Yet in spite of some progress the development of classification and special instruction remained problematic.

In Charles Morley’s *Studies in Board School*, Burgwin guided the author around a Special School in Southwark. Entering a class the equivalent to the Second Standard, she introduced a boy who, ‘unable to articulate...a year or two ago’ had been brought to this Special Centre by his mother, ‘much against her will, being fearful of this strange school.’ To prove the special instruction had enabled the boy to, ‘speak when he likes,’ Burgwin asked him a series of questions beginning with, ‘tell us what you had for dinner?’ When he responded, ‘Yuss, Governess, meat,’ she probed further, asking if it was, ‘Beef or mutton?’ and when he responded ‘sheep,’ she ‘encouragingly’ asked him ‘what else do we get from sheep?’ To this the boy correctly answered ‘Wool governess.’ Burgwin, triumphant, turned to Morley and explained,

What a difference! He has learnt his letters, he can count up to ten, he knows what a sheep is, he can sew, he can say his prayers, and...by the time he is fourteen he will probably be able to do something for a living instead of being a useless burden on the State. His ambition is to be a policeman.⁷⁰⁶

Yet when Morley had first seen the boy he described him as having a, ‘sullen expression on his face...quite determined not to answer any question for anybody.’ Indeed the boy had been prompted to talk because Burgwin had

⁷⁰⁵ *SBL Special Schools* (1903), p. 7

⁷⁰⁶ Charles Morley, *Studies in Board Schools*, (Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1897), pp.170-172

theatrically asked her colleague, 'Oh teacher, tell us what you do with naughty boys?' To which the assistant mistress responded, 'Why, we send them out of school.' At this point Morley saw, 'two tears trickling down the big boy's cheeks.' It was only, therefore, by framing the boy's mutism as naughtiness that the boy had begun answering Burgwin's questions. Whether this was a tactic of moralising the child's 'defect' was routinely used in training children to speak is not clear, but the classification of mute children as 'mentally defective', 'dull' or 'feeble-minded' did not always provide the 'difference' staff of the SBL wanted.

Among the staff of the SBL interviewed by Education Department's Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children (EDCDEC), were three women teachers from Hugh Myddleton Special School, in the Finsbury Division: Florence Anderson, Edith Cattle and Rosa Whenman. Situated in one of the poorest areas in Finsbury's Clerkenwell, the Ordinary Elementary London Board School had been chosen to pilot one of the first 'Special Schools' in the country in 1890. By 1892, alongside its established 'ordinary' departments, the Special School catered for seventy-nine children who had been classified as mentally or physically 'defective', as well as a Deaf and Dumb Centre and a Laundry and Cookery centre (Image 5.5).

The teachers were asked a range of questions by the EDCDEC including how they identified various forms of mental 'defects' and the protocols used once these classifications had been made. Rosa Whenman, who had been working at the school for just under two years, explained that she had observed a correlation between, 'imperfect articulation and feeble-mindedness.' Whenman gave the example of a girl who had never 'made a sound at all' when she

entered the school but, 'was not dangerous.' After eighteen months of schooling her mother now insisted that her daughter had begun to 'speak...at home' and 'goes over all her school work and sings the songs.' While Whenman admitted the girl had begun, 'to say little words aloud' she believed that, as a teacher, she had made 'no impression at all,' as the girl had 'never' spoken to her or her colleagues directly. Despite evidence of progress, Whenman interpreted the child's silence in front of her as a sign that the girl was in fact an, 'imbecile', who she had 'no hope for,' outside of an institution.⁷⁰⁷ Thus just as was discussed in Chapter Three, whereby a poor grasp of classroom English was cause for concern in mainstream elementary schooling, the same applied in Special Schools. By not echoing the speech of the classroom a child could silently undermine the teacher's sense of authority to educate and their ability to classify.⁷⁰⁸

Those children on the other hand who had lost their hearing in later childhood and had therefore already, 'acquired speech and a knowledge of language through speech,' these 'semi-mutes', Stainer argued could not be, 'taught on the same system precisely' as that offered in Deaf and Dumb Centres. Indeed their advanced knowledge of speech meant that such children should have, 'no right whatever to be classed or put together with, or taught on the same form as congenital deaf children.'⁷⁰⁹ At the Egerton Commission Stainer was unforthcoming about how these children ought to have been taught. In 1896, however at EDCDEC, the teachers of Hugh Myddelton Special School gave some insight into the impact that the SBL's approach to classification had on the education of some of their students.

⁷⁰⁷ Whenman, EDCDEC, par. 2650-2667, p.79;par. 2730-2733, p.80

⁷⁰⁸ See 'Specific Languages for Specific Schools' in Chapter Three

⁷⁰⁹ Stainer, Egerton Commission, par. 6547, p. 204

Anderson, Cattle and Whenman (who worked in Hugh Myddelton's Mentally Defective classes) described three students considered to be 'partially deaf' and who could, therefore, speak. Despite these children having some ability to communicate verbally, however, the fact they had been sent to the Special School suggests their academic progress had been slow enough for teachers in non-Special Schools to think alternative instruction was necessary. Yet the alternative instruction given in Mentally Defective classes was also unsuitable. Without receiving lessons from the Deaf and Dumb Centre, these three students remained ignorant of lip-reading and sign-language, skills which Anderson, Cattle and Whenman argued, would have helped, 'cultivate their intellects.' Since the teachers were not trained in sign-language, the curriculum for these children was limited to rudimentary lessons in 'hand work,' which left the staff frustrated that they could not, 'do as much as we should like to do for them.' A system of classification may have helped to identify these three students' differences and label them as 'partially deaf,' but their ability to speak left them too verbal for Stainer's Deaf and Dumb Centre and 'too deaf' for the staff of the Mentally Defective classes.⁷¹⁰

The Impact of Classification

The failure to teach the three 'partially deaf' children in Hugh Myddelton's Mentally Defective classes, revealed how an awareness of classification did not always ensure that intellects were cultivated. This was in part, as suggested in Chapter Three, because the elementary system operated upon the premise that the child was expected to be adapted to the school, rather than the school be

⁷¹⁰ Whenman, EDCDEC, par. 2716-2720, p. 80

adapted for the child. But as one of the teachers of Hugh Myddelton explained, due to the various physical and mental ‘defects’ of her students she had to, ‘work two divisions’ in one class of twenty-three and ‘work [the children] individually’ in order to see progress.⁷¹¹ Thus as much as staff training in classification was important so too was the teacher’s ability to respond to children’s individual needs.

Rosa Whenman, one of the three teachers at Hugh Myddleton School interviewed by EDCDEC in 1897, argued that successful classification relied as much on good school management as it did on training. For Whenman it was not just about the quality of staff training but the quantity of children teachers were expected to teach in non-Special Schools, so that children could be recognised ‘individually’ just as they were in Special Schools. In order for a child to be transferred from a non-Special School to the Hugh Myddelton, Whenman explained, a teacher or head teacher had to submit a form which told those working in special instruction about ‘every subject’ undertaken and ‘the progress made’ by the child thus far. This form also included space for the subjects the child was ‘never’ capable of learning, alongside ‘the general habits of the child ...whether they are truthful, and so on.’

In the two years Whenman had been working at Hugh Myddelton she found the majority of teachers and head teachers from non-Special Schools to be ‘sympathetic...generally’ towards the students they were referring and would complete the forms ‘very well.’ Yet she and her colleagues also found that the information and opinions provided was mainly superficial. This was because,

⁷¹¹ Anderson, EDCDEC, par. 2722, p. 80

Whenman argued, the 'majority' of teachers had 'large classes' of at least sixty or seventy children, meaning they were unable to 'follow every child individually,' making it, 'very difficult for them to judge.'⁷¹²

During her interview Whenman had also recognised that, 'a great many [students come] from some schools to be tested...and very few from others.'⁷¹³

Doctor Warner, confirmed the observation, arguing that the divergence in how many students a school referred was related to 'an artificial point' caused by 'school organisation.' He argued that, 'there is a bearing between a school having an ex-VII Standard and the number of children you will find in [another]...Standard, and the number of children in it who will be said to be so exceptional' and therefore 'not fit for the school at all.' He explained that it had been 'pointed out to [him] over and over again' that where schools had higher upper Standards, such as Standard VII and ex-VII, 'small' children, by which he meant delicate and defective had 'greater difficulty' in 'getting out from Standard I in the infant school to Standard I in the upper school.' As a result families of such children felt discouraged from continuing their child's schooling there 'and so [they] go...away,' whether to another Ordinary Board School or, with the help of staff, to a school of special instruction. Warner noted that by contrast Schools of Special Difficulty, such as Orange Street in Southwark, where Burgwin had been head mistress, which, as discussed in Chapter Three, had been recognised as having an exceptionally poor neighbourhood, had a higher

⁷¹²Whenman, EDCDEC, pars. 2700-2704, p. 80. The population size of non-special classes would not be tackled until well into the Twentieth Century. The effect reduction in pupil:teacher ratios and the impact of the Great War on staff's understanding of children has been discussed in Imogen Lee, "Protect from the evil influences of their surroundings": the child and its care in London schools 1900-1918, (unpublished dissertation) pp. 36-60

⁷¹³Whenman, EDCDEC, pars. 2709-2710, p. 80

‘proportion of defective development cases.’⁷¹⁴ Warner argued that ‘whether or not it [was] probably true that’ students from a Special Difficulty School, as compared with a Higher Grade School, ‘had greater difficulty,’ the point was the ‘Special Difficulty’ status provided an ‘allowance’ that ensured a ‘welcomeness of these dull children’ that kept them from being referred to special instruction.⁷¹⁵ For Warner then, teachers of Special Difficulty Schools were more aware and indeed more prepared to accommodate the needs of the backward, delicate and defective child, as compared with, for example, Higher Grade Schools, which were focused on supporting the forward child.

The ‘welcomeness’ Warner had witnessed in Special Difficulty Schools towards ‘dull children’ was evidence for Warner that not all children who exhibited signs of ‘defects’ should be ‘taken out’ of ordinary schooling ‘if any experience shows that they are doing well in the classes where they are.’ He believed that ‘the fifty nine others [in the class] might put up with one distinctly below par, [because] they do not know what they will meet with in the world outside.’ Burgwin asked him, however, if he was ‘not considering the one child rather than the sixty others?’ She gave the example of, ‘a child without special training who absolutely refuses to sit in any one seat but walks about the class.’ Burgwin wanted to know if such a child would not be ‘a hindrance to the education of the fifty-nine children?’⁷¹⁶ Burgwin’s question echoed the challenge of her fellow teachers, discussed in Chapter Three, trying to ensure that all children were given equal educational attention, whilst also dealing with the realities of the classroom and the priorities of the school.

⁷¹⁴ In 1910 Orange Street would open its own Mentally-Defective Centre on its ground floor. See LMA: LCC/EO/PS/12/O/012/50, *Orange Street*, HMI Report, (1910) and LMA: LCC Education Committee, Minutes of Proceedings (April- June 1909), p. 872

⁷¹⁵ Warner, EDCDEC, pars. 798-801, p. 31

⁷¹⁶ Warner, EDCDEC, pars. 902-905, p. 36

In 1903 just as the London County Council was taking over the work of the School Board for London, Burgwin recalled how when she had begun working as the Superintendent of Special Schools in 1891,

Some educationalists objected to the removal of the afflicted child from the Ordinary School, insisting upon the humanising effect its presence exercised upon the normal children, and forgetting that the kindness and sympathy of the child's more fortunate fellows were evoked at the cost of the loss of a training which would make the child alert and self-reliant.⁷¹⁷

For Burgwin segregation of the 'fortunate' and the 'afflicted' helped to ensure that both were not hindered by difference. As with children classified 'Blind' the aim of special instruction for the mentally or physically 'defective' was to ensure that, 'after a couple of years close attention' many of these children would be 'able to return to the Normal School, where they [could] make steady, if slow, progress.'⁷¹⁸

Summary

In Burgwin's final report for the School Board for London in 1903 she noted how,

ten years ago it was difficult in many cases to get parents to see that the abnormal or defective child should have training under the best possible conditions. It was of common occurrence that the defect was concealed or denied, if it were in any way possible, and in the case of the Blind and the Deaf, the child was too often merely an object of pity at home, while its real training was neglected.

Burgwin claimed that since then there had been a change in 'public opinion' so marked that,

many parents will now move their homes in order to secure the benefit of a Special School for an afflicted child, and will plead to keep such a child in school beyond the age for which instruction is provided.

⁷¹⁷ *SBL Special Schools* (1903), p. 7

⁷¹⁸ *Minutes of Special Committee on the Subjects and Modes of Instruction*, p. 497. See also *SBL Special Schools* (1903), p. 47

Overlooking the fact that the SBL had first introduced Deaf and Dumb classes in 1874, the Superintendent for Special Schools went on to suggest that the successful cooperation of families was due to the, 'general improvement' in the past ten years. Burgwin saw this improvement shaped from the top down, in which the Education Department and its successor, the Board of Education, had 'given particular attention' and 'readiness' to provide schools 'for defective children'. Yet, argued, Burgwin, 'the ultimate success of the training of defective children' was not dependent, 'upon the law or public opinion so much as upon having an efficient staff of enthusiastic teachers who labour... for love of the work.' For Burgwin it was her teaching colleagues and 'the pains taken to raise their qualifications, by Conferences and the exchange of visits to schools, their anxiety to give their best services to their work' that meant classification was, wherever possible, being used to help develop a child's individual capabilities to wider priorities.⁷¹⁹

Mrs Burgwin's argument that special instruction was pedagogically driven has some basis in fact. Methods evolved through the classroom, school and governing educational institutions plus the SBL working together. Yet the 'success' of special instruction on the child's achievement, its quality of life is much more ambiguous and largely impossible to assess. Throughout the existence of the SBL the educational and medical community struggled to give definitive classifications of children's differences and their needs. While this revealed that individual teachers, doctors, inspectors, school visitors conscientiously judged each child on a case by case basis, nevertheless, some children slipped through the system, intellects were not always 'cultivated' and

⁷¹⁹ *SBL Special Schools* (1903), p. 7

doubtless some children were wrongly diagnosed or identified through their 'defect' rather than as an individual. Indeed because schooling had evolved to be predominately group based, it tended to isolate those who did not suit the group.

The School Board for London may have believed strongly in the principles of the Education Act and the right of every child to a 'place in the Ordinary Schools,' but only as children entered the classroom did the Board encounter the enormous complexity of its task; reconstructing some of the process has revealed how the SBL struggled to make the right a reality for each of its near million-strong child population.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This thesis has provided a close examination of the School Board for London's utopian vision of the child and the school, and how this was tempered by parental priorities, the national standardising of educational progress and the financial pressures felt in and out of the classroom. By exploring the idea of the child and the Elementary School in the wake of the 1870 Education Act it has become apparent that special instruction, which hitherto has been a specialist or even marginalised area in schooling's historiography, was born of, and integral to, the development of the largest system of local elementary education in Britain.⁷²⁰

By exploring the origins and role of academic classification, both in and out of the classroom, the thesis expanded upon the social histories of London-schooling as recounted by historians such as Anna Davin and Dina Copelman. Chapter One introduced the history of childhood by situating nineteenth-century ideas of the child in a post-enlightenment cultural landscape. Taken alongside the examination of the relationship between universal schooling and academic classification the thesis gives new perspective to Viviana Zelizer's *Pricing the Priceless Child*. Zelizer's argument that children's educational worth in the Nineteenth Century increased as their familial economic worth decreased, is shown to be part of a broader cultural shift in the West, towards the autonomy of the self and individualism, in which adulthood and childhood were increasingly thought of as universally-unique experiences. The introduction of universal schooling revealed childhoods that were equally diverse in both learning and background, this fostered a relatively holistic spectrum of ability in education. Identified by educators, through an ever evolving set of academic and social signifiers and by the physical attributes that medical classifications were limited to at the time, a child's progress and potential was shown to be unique. The thesis has been the first to show how the classification of children's

⁷²⁰ See Mike Mantin, *Educational Experiences of Deaf Children in Wales: The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1847-1914* (Swansea University) 2013, p.294. Also Julie Anderson, *Review Article - Voices in the Dark: Representations of Disability in Historical Research*, pp.107-116 in, 'Journal of Contemporary History', (vol. 44:1), 2009, p. 108

commonality and differences helped to transform elementary schooling of 1870 into a polymorphous education system.⁷²¹

The enactment of the 1870 Education Act, in a city as diverse as London, revealed that a right to a school place was insufficient; children needed a right to learn. Yet learning was not a uniform action and therefore educational, medical and political authorities continuously debated how children could learn, what they were able to learn and why they did or did not learn. This focus on classifying children's differences, created opportunity for more individualised pedagogy and flexible school management in some SBL classrooms. This challenges the Foucauldian vision of Europe's industrialised classrooms as generic and controlling spaces. Yet the use of classification in Elementary Schools helped to formalise ideas of 'ordinary' development and thus had the capacity to institutionalise alienation, with children isolated in the school by labels of 'special' or even uneducable. Indeed the increasing fragmentation of elementary schooling between 1870 and 1914, charted by this thesis, suggests more research is needed into the relationship between the rise of universal schooling (as set out in the 1870 Education Act) and the developing powers of local authorities to send children to long-stay medical institutions, under the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, which removed some children from larger society altogether.

Chapter summaries

The impact of environment, academic assessment, political debate and pedagogical specialisation each provided a thematic basis for chapters Two through Five. This ensured a systematic reconstruction of the perceptions and experiences that shaped ideas, the assumed needs and responsibilities of both the school and the child.

Chapter Two explored how Board schooling was shaped by representations and realities of London's children and their local environments. Through close analysis of SBL minutes and the architectural principles of E.R. Robson Chapter

⁷²¹ Ian Copeland, *The Making of the Backward Pupil in Education in England 1870-1914* (Woburn Press, London, 1999), p. i Focused at a national level, there is no discussion of Higher Grade or Special Difficulty Schools and limited mention of 'forward' or 'healthy' children.

Two revealed that the divisive issues of class and gender that historians have shown to be inherent in SBL architecture, operated within a broader egalitarian vision, in which school-houses were emblems of publicly-funded, universal education.⁷²² For the SBL's architect, well-built exteriors promoted the care and effort schools took to educate local children and in turn educated the local neighbourhood in the school's role. This paternal vision was translated into responsive design, with each school unique to the site and neighbourhood. Yet school-houses were always recognisable as belonging to the SBL, no matter their location. Moreover they were consciously built away from the site's street, not only so the public could easily see the building from the outside, but so that children on the inside could not be easily distracted. The school was intended to influence the neighbourhood, the neighbourhood was not meant to influence the school.

Yet Chapter Two demonstrated how original school design left teachers with spaces that had limited capacity to influence en masse. Devoid of assembly halls many new schools had little opportunity to welcome families beyond the school gate, this was despite political and pedagogical consensus that familial cooperation was preferable to coercion in ensuring student commitment. Thus the rise of assembly halls and large events for families and neighbours enabled a community, beyond student and teacher, to exist within the school. Board Schools became shaped as much by those outside of the playground, as those who worked and played within.

Chapter Three focused on Special Difficulty and Higher Grade Schools revealing the impact perceptions of local families could have on the convoluted economics of elementary schooling. The chapter argued that curriculum opportunities were highly dependent on how inspectors viewed the challenges of students' homes and neighbourhoods and how flexible teachers were towards children's familial and academic needs. Under payment by results and examinations by HMIs, for example, teachers were inhibited from responding to children's individual needs.

⁷²² See Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: home, school and street in London 1870-1914* (Rivers Oram Press, London, 1996), pp.142-149 and Deborah E.B. Weiner, *Architecture and social reform in late-Victorian London* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994), pp. 10-11

Special Difficulty status counteracted payment by results by financially supporting staff in penny-fee schools. Teachers no longer faced either the economic obligation to pressurise children to perform or to be reprimanded for adapting the timetable to suit students. Instead students who needed a more focused selection of subjects could benefit from a more flexible timetable. Chapter Three's analysis of Mechanics at Lant Street, however, showed that Special Difficulty status could inhibit learning progression for 'forward' children. Local staff may have believed Lant Street's students capable, but without Standard VI and VII (inherent of Special Difficulty status), the HMI argued the school lacked appropriate resources to support them. By contrast Higher Grade status was thought to provide a curriculum and staff that could specifically stretch 'forward' children.

The creation of these two statuses reinforced pre-existing prejudices. Schoolfees had always been determined according to the economic capacity SBL members thought appropriate for a neighbourhood. With only penny-fee paying schools able to apply for Special Difficulty status to limit their timetable and with only Higher Grade status being offered to schools with a minimum fee of at least three times that of Special Difficulty counterparts, academic status was entwined with perceptions of wealth. Higher Grade and Special Difficulty status formalised a splintering of the Elementary School and the treatment of the elementary child. Yet the chapter uncovered how Higher Grade Schools, just like Special Difficulty Schools, struggled to convince parents that once their child had passed the age of compulsory attendance, two more years of lessons was financially beneficial. No matter the school's location or status, therefore, staff had to navigate students and lessons through a forest of standardised requirements, local pressures and differing perceptions. The result was a splintering of elementary classrooms and a proliferation in ideas of the elementary child's abilities and needs.

Chapter Four explored the increasing identification of children's academic and social 'needs' through an analysis of educational expertise, politics and medical opinions that shaped the overpressure crisis. The chapter is unique for analysing the evolution of classification in Board Schooling using the social

construction of health and (dis)ability, which historians of disability previously identified as missing from Elementary Schools historiography.⁷²³ Focused on the SBL before, during and after the crisis, the Chapter reveals that while historians such as Ian Copeland were right to argue that political and medical opinion dominated the overpressure debate, this did not prevent educational expertise from shaping the classification of the elementary child. To the frustration of the medical establishment, some educators even treated medical opinion as contributing, not decisive, evidence.

Chapter Four demonstrated the lack of clarity medical and educational experts established regarding the impact health could have on a child's academic skill, and vice versa. In so doing the chapter revealed the subjective nature in assessing successful schooling. For the Government's Visitor in Lunacy, Crichton-Browne, schools needed a system of physical classification to identify children who needed more food and less lessons. For Mr Fitch, the Chief Inspector of Schools, elementary education was not there to feed children. Indeed, he argued, poverty and the boredom of sickness could sharpen children's minds, enabling a determination that outshone many wealthier and healthier counterparts. For head teachers, such as those at Orange Street School in Southwark, the truth was somewhere in between. Mrs Burgwin and her male counterpart Mr Mewbrey argued that only by understanding the individual circumstances of each family could it be possible for personal histories not to determine academic futures.

The SBL responded to these differing viewpoints with a similarly mixed focus. A doctor was hired by the SBL and feeding programmes were tentatively supported. The physicality that medics observed in their identification of the 'delicate' or 'backward' child, however, was secondary to teachers' and head teachers' own observations. Beyond those children identified by medical inspections, it was teaching-staff and parents who determined if a child was to be noticed as 'special'. This was reinforced in 1891 when Mrs Burgwin was hired as the country's first Superintendent of Special Schools. Seen alongside the care taken to support 'forward' children through the establishment of Higher

⁷²³ Elizabeth Bredberg, 'Writing Disability History: Problems, perspectives and sources', pp. 189-201 in *Disability & Society*, 14:2, (1999), p. 196. Mantin, *Educational Experiences*, p. 194

Grade Schools in 1889, the classification of London's children relied firmly on the rapid development of *educational* expertise.

By examining the debates on classification, found within the sources, it has become clear that while Board Schools were encouraged by doctors to classify children on physical attributes alone, educational practitioners developed a more complex system, which relied on, for example, observation, anecdote, family history and academic achievement. Moreover in contrast to medical records, the lack of obvious attention educational sources gave to race raises questions for further study; including the extent to which children's learning experiences were affected by perceptions of their race and the impact this could have on how teachers classified them. More research is required, however, as to whether academic classification, with its more holistic focus was able to be maintained during and after the Great War and following the compulsory segregation of certain children under the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 which had been shaped by Burgwin's own hand.⁷²⁴

Chapter Five focused exclusively on the development of Special Schools, arguing that under the 1870 Education Act universal schooling in London was only achieved by specialist pedagogies and curriculums. The decision by the SBL to hire Burgwin as the nation's first superintendent of Special Schools and her involvement twenty years later in the Mental Deficiency Bill, however, also reveal that both local and national government believed the 'defective' child benefited from someone who had working knowledge of the poorest and most malnourished in London's existing schools. This is not to say that all 'defects' were associated with poverty. As acknowledged in Chapter Five, those classified as Blind may have been few in number, but they were found at all levels of socio-economic classes. Those classified as Deaf and Dumb, however, were given particular attention by the SBL, because economic migration and familial illiteracy were thought to dominate their home life. These perceived differences in background were reflected in different pedagogic

⁷²⁴ Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2013), p. 77. See also Seth Koven, 'Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers and the Great War in Great Britain', pp. 1167-1202 in *American Historical Review* (October, 1994), p. 1169, who argues the histories of the 'crippled' child and the wounded soldier 'are often so closely interwoven that the one cannot be fully understood without the other.'

styles. Blind education, in the main, could be easily integrated into existing classroom pedagogy, with its focus on dictation and oral examination and when Braille was introduced the SBL saw it as a way to foster knowledge rather than inhibit. By contrast sign-language was increasingly discouraged in fear that it would only reinforce the illiterate pattern of lower working-class households. This difference in pedagogical attitude stems, in part, from the decision to classify and develop special schooling according to defect, rather than, as was the case in ordinary elementary schooling, by academic development, age or gender.

By examining the expansion of Special Instruction at the end of the Nineteenth Century the study revealed how children could be classified to suit a school's pedagogy, such as excluding children from Higher Grade Schools, rather than adapting the pedagogy to suit the child. The Chapter argued that there was a continual balance to be made between integration and segregation. When, for instance, a child was classified as Deaf and Dumb, her education revealed both the perceived pedagogical necessity for her segregation and the inherent social isolation that came with formally identifying difference as 'defect'. There was a gap between addressing academic need and social integration.

Powis Street School: Unique and Universal

The thesis retraced London's elementary education during the rise and fall of the SBL. As the first close analysis of two Special Difficulty, five Higher Grade and three Ordinary Elementary Schools the thesis uncovered the ever-shifting face of the elementary child and its relationship to the splintered vision of the elementary system. Comparisons between these schools' micro-histories revealed how the evolution of classification, the diversification of educational focus and the responsibility for the child, shaped and were shaped by every one of London's Elementary Board Schools. To close, the thesis presents a brief history of one of the first Board Schools in in the Greenwich Division: Powis Street.

The story of Powis Street School, like all the schools discussed in this thesis, is a story of how education and its classifications were shaped by the city outside, and the children inside, the classroom. Beginning life as a church hall, the building was adapted into a small Ordinary Board School in 1873 and by 1914

had been redeveloped as a Centre for Special Instruction managed by the London County Council Education Committee (LCC). As the needs and relationships of teacher, student and neighbourhood began to be identified, ideas and classifications of the child and the school, like the building of Powis Street itself, were built and rebuilt.

In April 1873 two years since the SBL had begun to debate the development of school-houses, as set out at the beginning of this thesis, the Board announced the second phase of building works. Among twenty plans for new school-houses (including Bolingbroke Road in Lambeth West and Wilmot Street, which housed London's first Deaf and Dumb Centre), the SBL approved the development of Powis Street school to house 661 of Woolwich's students.⁷²⁵ Built on Woolwich's main high street known as Powis Street, just two roads south of the Thames, Powis Street Board School would be situated on a busy thoroughfare, north-west of the docks and south-east of the Royal Arsenal. As with all his schools the SBL's Chief Architect, ER Robson approved a building with separate spaces for Infants and Senior Departments. At the southern end of the site, away from the high street, a new two-storey school-house was built, with a Boys Department on the ground floor and a Girls Department on top. Meanwhile the old chapel which sat to the north, facing Powis Street, was adapted for Infants (Image. 6.1).

Powis Street's educational Division, Greenwich, expanded dramatically at the end of the Nineteenth Century with Board School accommodation increasing from 6,036 in 1873 to 64,883 by 1904.⁷²⁶ As discussed in Chapter One, localised expansion was indicative of the development of Greater London as a whole. Outer boroughs like Woolwich were primed for speculative development. In 1890 following the Housing of the Working Classes Act, Woolwich became one of the first boroughs to build homes funded by the London County Council

⁷²⁵ The Times Archive Online (TTAO): 'The London School Board', *The Times*, (Thursday, Aug 7th, 1873), pg. 6

⁷²⁶ LMA: 22.05 SBL, School Board for London, *The Work of Three Years (1870 – 1873)*, p. 6 and SBL/1500, *LCC Report of the School Management Committee of the Late School Board for London (1904)*, pp. 58-88

(LCC). As Greater London sprawled outwards, highstreets like Powis Street evolved from destinations into tram-lined thoroughfares.⁷²⁷

As London's school population expanded from over half a million in 1870 to nearly a million by 1904 new schools opened and existing schools began to grow in size and reputation. The impact was evident in Powis Street's dwindling student register. By the beginning of 1899, just three years after Maryon Park, discussed in Chapter Two, opened to the west of Powis Street Bloomfield Road School, its southern neighbour discussed in Chapter Three, gained Higher Grade status (Image 6.2), the SBL decided, 'to abandon Powis Street School for Ordinary School purposes.'⁷²⁸ This was not, however, the end of the story. Like many schools discussed in this thesis Powis Street was redeveloped to suit the perceived needs of its neighbourhood.

The closure of Powis Street was suggested by an anonymous HMI who asked the SBL to consider 'the provision of Ordinary and Special School accommodation in Woolwich.' In 1901 the SBL re-opened Powis Street's school-house, this time as a Centre for the Blind and Mentally Defective.⁷²⁹ The once single-sex Boys Department now housed boys and girls from across Greenwich and beyond. These children were nominated from across London by their teacher, a doctor and Mrs Burgwin as too 'mentally defective' for an 'ordinary' school. Similarly the former Girls Department upstairs was also redeveloped as a 'centre', but specifically for girls in Greenwich classified as Blind or Myopic. The Blind Department was located at the top of the school house, guaranteeing unimpeded northern daylight (Image 6.4). This constant soft light was considered a vital asset since E.R. Robson had first designed the school and as revealed in this thesis, was valued by teachers of special instruction for the clear instruction and supervision it proffered.

The creation of Powis Street's Special Centres brings the balance between educational inclusion and social exclusion discussed in Chapter Five into sharp

⁷²⁷ See Alan Jackson, *Semi-Detached London Suburban Development, Life and Transport, 1900-39* (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1973), p. 40-43 Duckworth, 'Walk 76' pp. 286-289 Charles Booth, *The Streets of London: The Booth Notebook : South East* (Deptford Forum Publishing Ltd, London, 1997), pp. 289

⁷²⁸ 22.05, SBL, *Minutes of Proceedings* (1898-1899), p. 1772

⁷²⁹ LMA: LCC/EO/DIV6/POW/LB/1, Powis Street MD, Logbook (1894-1913), 10.1.1901, p. 13

relief. These were children who, prior to the redevelopment of Powis Street, could have attended it as an 'Ordinary School'. As individuals, surrounded by the diversity of an Ordinary School's population, their 'defect' or impairment may have only been formally recognised by an indefinite attendance in the lower standards, or by their need for weekly tuition with a Blind or Deaf and Dumb tutor. Now in full-time attendance at a centre, their academic development received close attention, allowing them to excel within the parameters of elementary education. Yet they were now institutionally separated in a way that their peers had not been. Full-time education, based upon impairment, cast a group identity upon these children, which did not exist in ordinary elementary classes. The opening of the elementary special school was, therefore, the building of a bridge between 'ordinary' schools and long-stay institutions.⁷³⁰

By 1914 alongside the Mentally-Defective Centre and Blind Centre, Powis Street also operated a Deaf and Dumb Centre and a Centre for those classified as Physically Defective.⁷³¹ The latter of these was created in 1903, just as the LCC was beginning to build upon the SBL's legacy. What had once been the former chapel housing Powis Street's Infants Department, was redeveloped again with four rooms all accessible for children with physical disabilities. The expansion employed ER Robson's original principles in school design, providing two classrooms with the buffer of the chapel's hall, sheltering them from the world outside. As much as Powis Street's Physically Defective Centre cocooned its classes, as was revealed in Chapter Two, school buildings were always designed to catch the passer-by. Thus in addition to the classrooms attached to the chapel, a permanent kitchen and a classroom-cum-dining room now fronted Woolwich's high street. This not only prevented smells of daily meals and cookery lessons lingering in the playground, but also enabled the nourishing work of the school to drift into the sensory lives of the passer-by.⁷³²

⁷³⁰ See Cohen, *Family*, p. 77. Cohen demonstrates it was only in the Twentieth Century that children identified as 'mentally defective' were institutionalised for long periods and routinely shunned from daily society.

⁷³¹ See EO/DIV6/POW/LB/3 Powis Street School for Deaf, Blind and Crippled, Logbook, (1913-1929)

⁷³² Edward R. Robson, *School Architecture: Being Practical Remarks on the Planning, Designing, Building, and furnishing of School Houses*, (John Murray, London, 1874), p. 332

The incorporation of a kitchen reflected both the rising importance and management of cookery in the elementary curriculum.⁷³³ The gendering of lessons like cookery have proved central to the historiography of the SBL, but it has only been through this study's unique exploration of the special school curriculum that new questions have arisen regarding the relationship between a gendered curriculum and the feminisation of disability. Special education looked to teach children practical skills that could be seen to contribute to their family, whether domestically or through paid labour. Alongside girls at Powis Street Special School, boys also undertook Laundry and Cookery lessons, which in Ordinary, Higher Grade and Special Difficulty Departments had only ever been limited to girls. It highlights the lower expectations and opportunities available to boys at Special Centres. Moreover, while boys were taught skills like basket weaving at Powis Street, as with the majority of schools throughout the elementary system, there was no extension or adaptation of the practical skills taught to girls. Their curriculum options were as limited in a Special Centre as they were in an Ordinary Elementary School.

The building of a kitchen and dining hall at Powis Street illustrates not just expectation of students and changes in curriculum but the changing responsibilities and role of the school itself. As Chapter Four revealed, charities like Burgwin's *Children's Free Breakfast and Dinner Fund* and the overpressure debates of the mid-1880s revealed the impact malnourishment had on children's abilities. The creation of Powis Street's dining room is indicative of the growing acceptance in educational circles that schools, themselves, had a responsibility to contribute directly to the health of the family by providing children with access to regular hot meals.⁷³⁴ In 1906, due to the introduction of the Education (Provision of School Meals) Act, school dinners, which had once been the reserve for some of London's poorest schools and over the decades had become enshrined in the architecture of centres like Powis Street, now became a feature of elementary schooling as a whole. While the question of funding and management remained an issue, especially so in London, the Act

⁷³³ Thomas Gautrey, *'Lux Mihi Laus' School Board Memories*, (Link House Publications, London, 1937), p. 83

⁷³⁴ James Vernon, 'The Ethics of Hunger and the Assembly of Society: The Techno-Politics of the School Meal in Modern Britain,' pp. 693-725 in *The American Historical Review*, Vol 110, No. 3 (June 2005), p. 696

meant education authorities were now legally responsible for ensuring all children could access what many students needed, but few had ever received.⁷³⁵ The slow expansion of school meals, first among London's poorest neighbourhoods, then among London's Special Schools and lastly throughout the Capital, suggests that responsibility for children's physiological welfare became an increasingly public one as poverty and disability showed themselves to affect any child in any school.

The development of Powis Street encapsulates the entwined expansion of elementary education as London's Board Schools began to specialise pedagogically in response to the Capital's large and diverse child population. Yet whether attending a Special Centre or a Higher Grade Department all were managed as Elementary Schools. The nebulous universality of the Elementary School has been demonstrated visually throughout the thesis using school photographs. John Tagg argued in *The Burden of Representation* that photos from state bodies 'contained and negotiated change' between institution and public. The breadth of photography used in this study, breathes new life into this argument. Going beyond the traditional historiographical focus of penal and medical bodies, this has been the first study to focus instead on the institutional photography, which more than any other had to present and debate its role with the public: the Elementary School. Noticeably commemorative, rather than administrative in nature, school photos question Tagg's position that institutional photography was a tool by which working-class individuals and their culture could be simultaneously acknowledged and wholly 'repressed.' Student and teacher(s) were photographed together echoing 'the rising social classes,' observed by Tagg, who used photography to make 'their ascent visible'. School photos, therefore, captured working-class children as if they too were on the ascent. The child's individuality or background may be surpassed in these photos by the collective presence of the school, but routinely surrounded by their creations, achievements, friends or enemies, stories of children are made evident. Photographed with drawings, plants, instruments and certificates, or dressed in swimming-costumes, odd-shoes, bare-feet or shaven-heads, all indicated lives that were spent in and out of the school; lives which this thesis

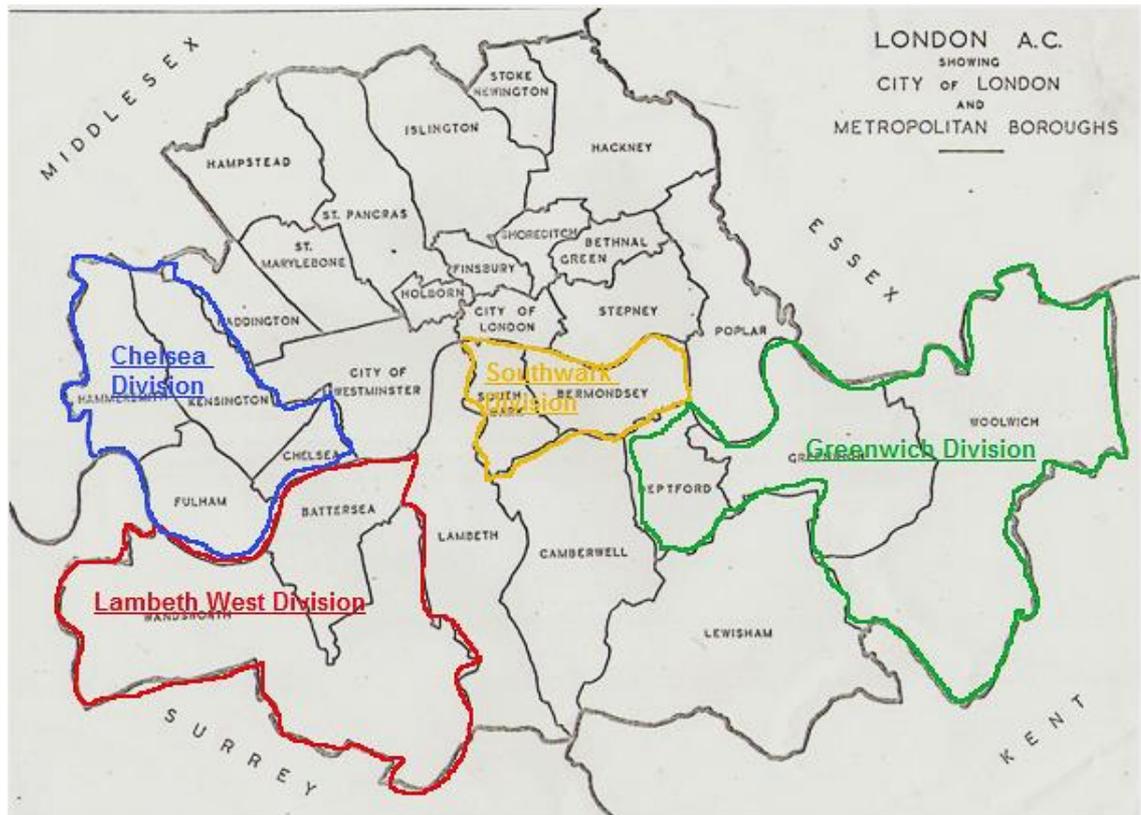
⁷³⁵ See Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt *Children in English Society: Volume ii From the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act 1948* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973), p. 635

showed were scrutinised as much by working-class families as imposed upon by the SBL. Indeed despite the majority of the photographs in this study being anonymous and left orphaned in the London Metropolitan Archives, they reveal the meritocratic aspiration of the SBL and the culture that developed in its wake. Rather than depicting the 'sombre presence' of a 'dismal philanthropic power,' uncovered by Tagg, schools presented themselves as vibrant, encouraging spaces for all children.⁷³⁶

In March 1908 a range of photographs were taken of Powis Street's Blind Centre. Along with lessons on daffodils (Image 3.2) and Drill (Image 5.1), there were also photos of brick laying, games and Practical Arithmetic (Image 6.4 – Image 6.6). These photos correspond with the wider collection of photos taken of LCC schools in March 1908, including those of the Higher Grade Schools Beethoven Street, with its mixed-sex Demonstration Rooms (Image 3.6), Monnow Road's Experimental Science (Image 3.7) and Surrey Lane's Housewifery Centre (Image 3.4). Photographed at the same time, whether to promote the work of the LCC's Education Committee or purely by coincidence, is not known, but they all share a visual vernacular, creating the appearance of a coherent and modern education system. From a Higher Grade School to a Blind Centre, they all convey the same message: these children were worthy of modern, dynamic and practical lessons. No matter what school the child attended, no matter how different the subjects taught, the image was the same: access to learning was equal to all.

⁷³⁶ All John Tagg *The Burden of Representation* (Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1993), pp. 37, 132, 151

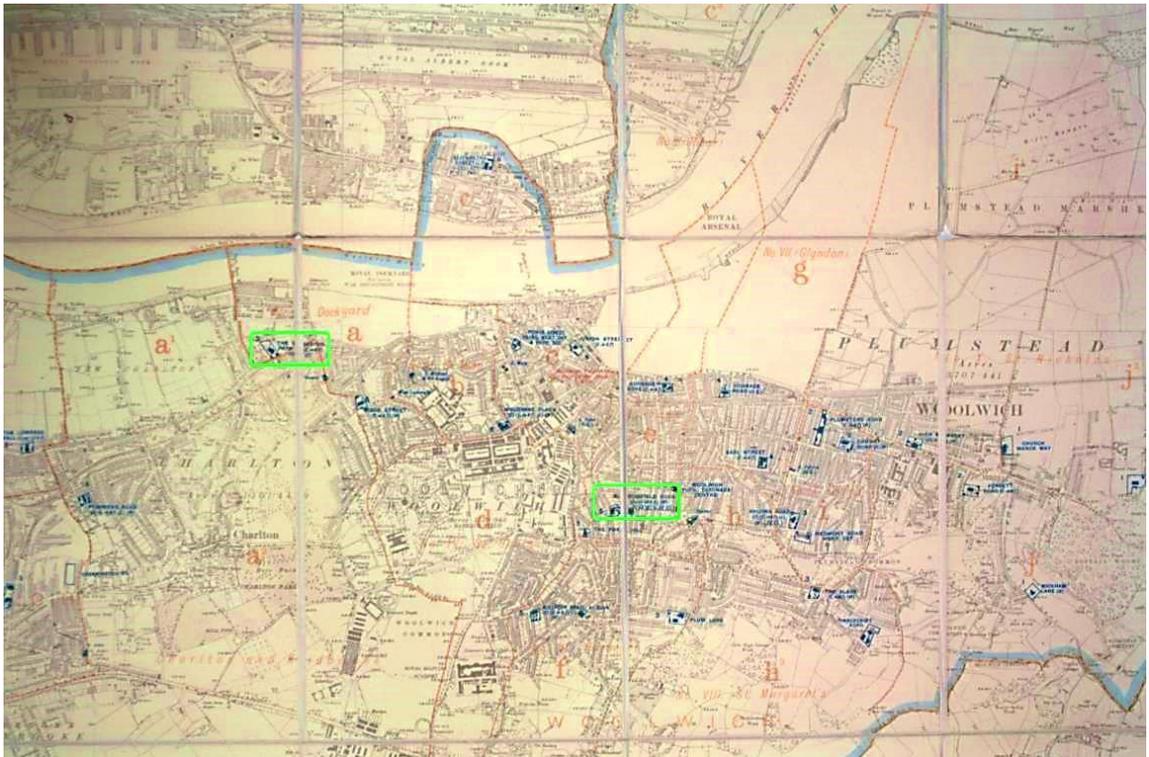
APPENDIX MAPS



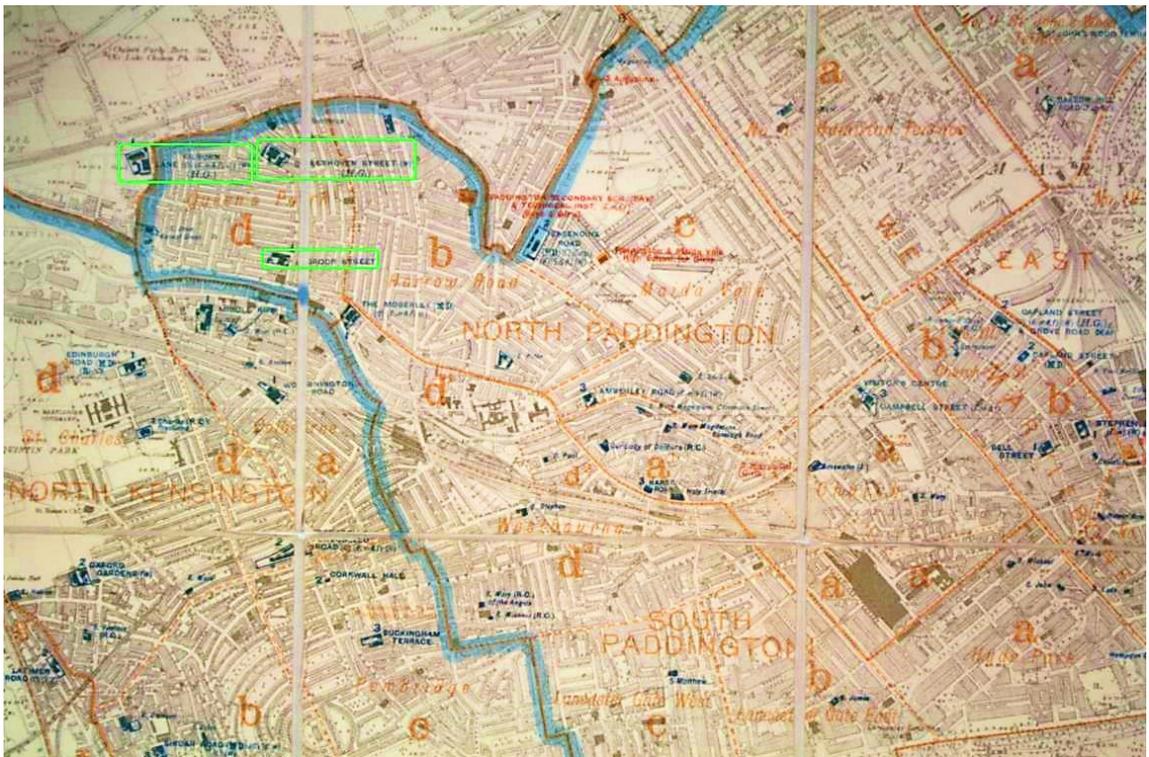
(Appendix 1) LSE, *London Metropolitan Boroughs*, in *New Survey of London Life and Labour*, (LSE, London, 1929-31)



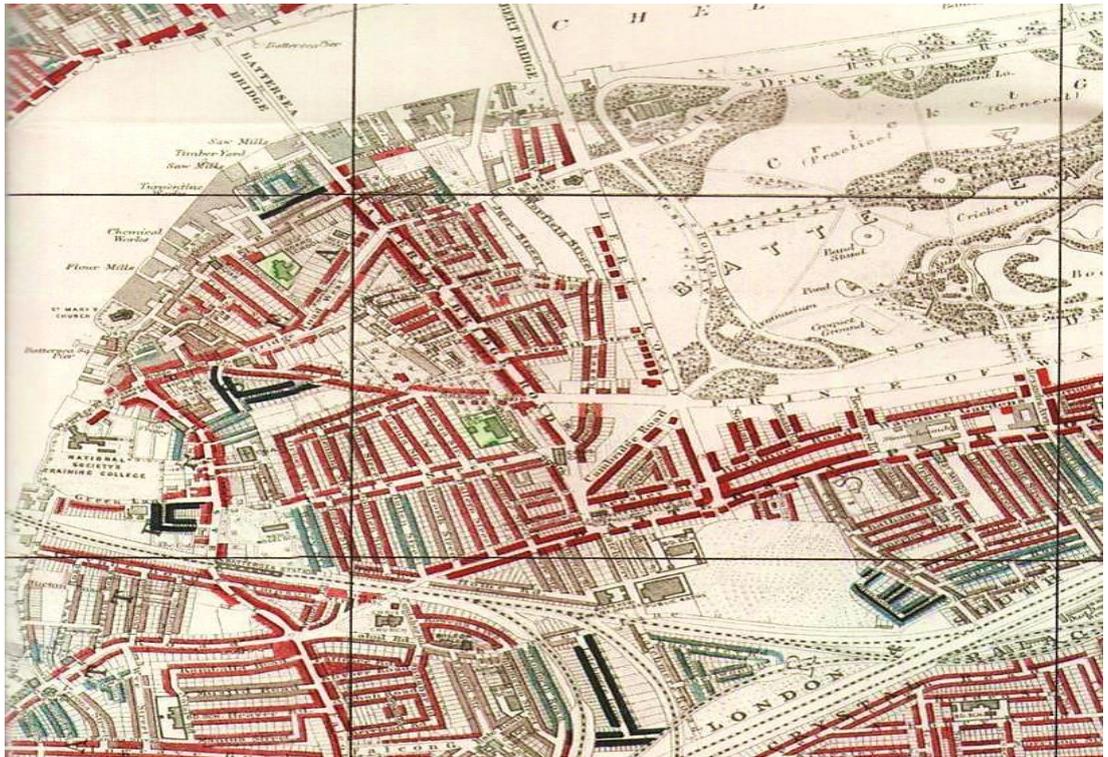
(Image 2.2) LMA: RM32/52, London County Council, 'Map showing elementary and secondary schools in the County of London', (1907). Highlighted Orange Street in the top north east, Lant Street below and Monnow Road Higher Grade (H.G.) in southern centre of the Southwark Division.



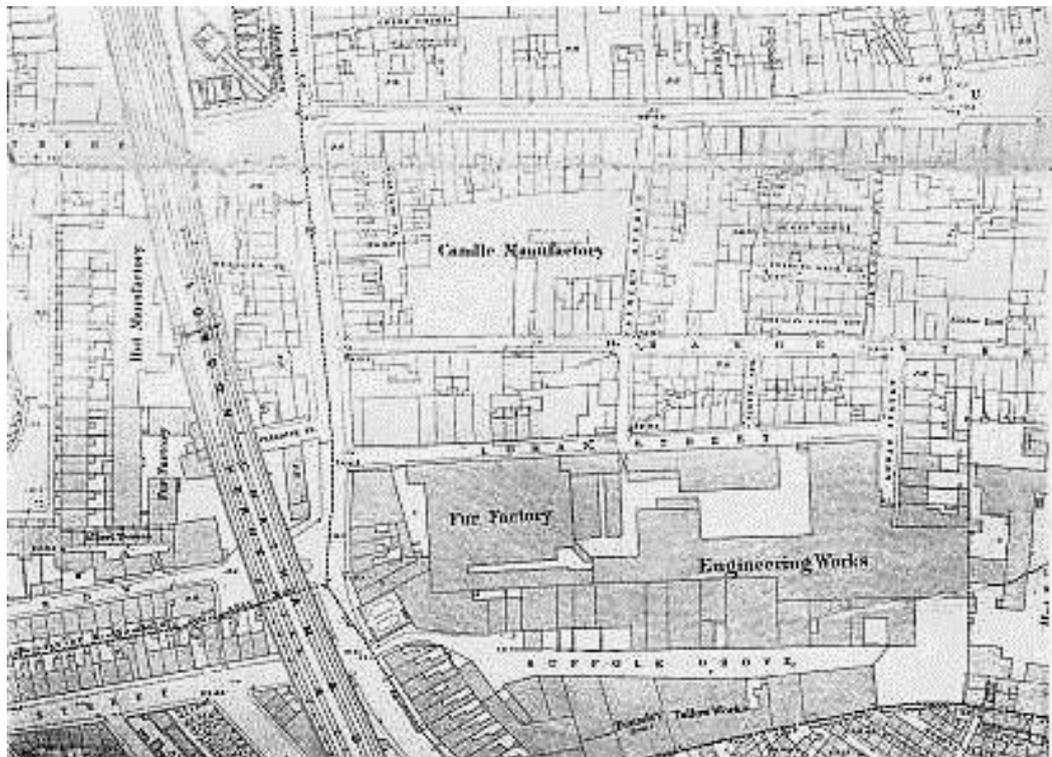
(Image 2.3) LMA: RM32/47, London County Council, 'Map showing elementary and secondary schools in the County of London,' (1907). Highlighted Maryon Park to the west and Bloomfield Road (H.G.) in the centre of Greenwich Division, covering Plumstead to the east and Woolwich to the west.



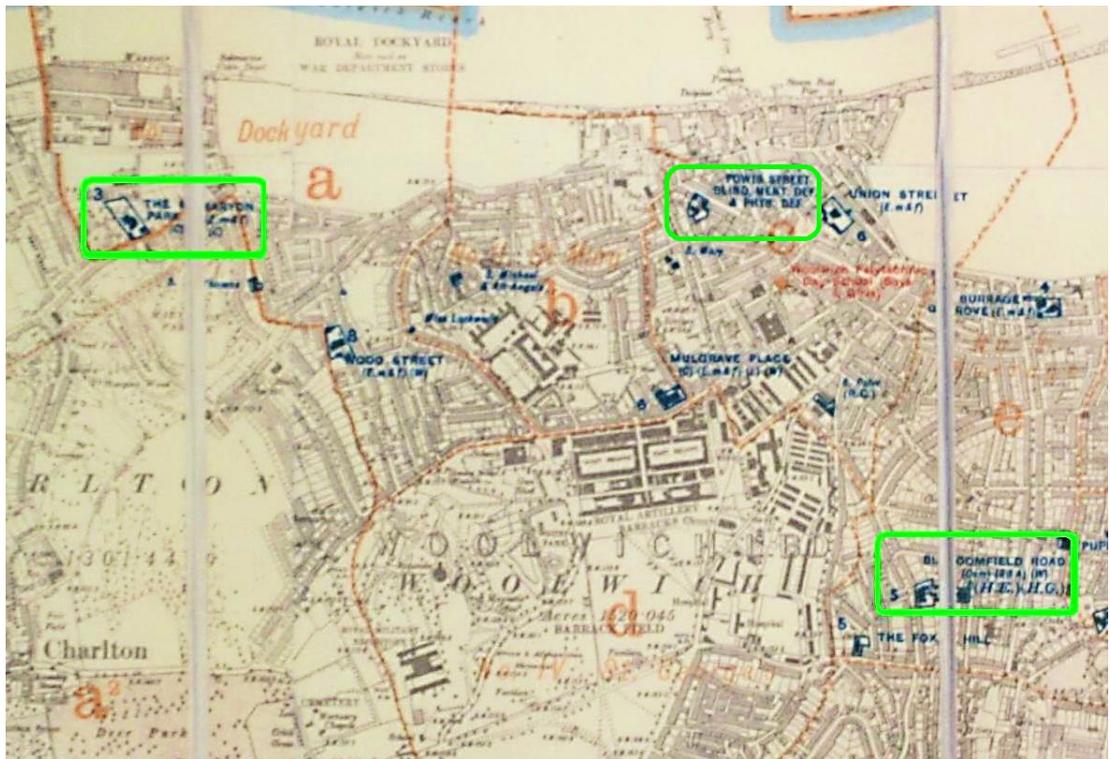
(Image 2.4) LMA: RM32/45, London County Council, 'Map showing elementary and secondary schools in the County of London,' (1907). Highlighted, Kilburn Lane (H.G.), Beethoven Street (H.G.) and Drop Street can be found towards the top left.



(Image 2.5) [Detail] Charles Booth, (1889), *Descriptive Poverty Map of London Poverty, West*, 98 mm to 0.5 miles, (Devon, Oldhouse Books), Surrey Lane 'Board School' and Bolingbroke Road 'Board' School are highlighted in green



(Image 2.16) Ordnance survey, (1872), London Sheet 7.85, *Borough*, Goddry Ed. 1:1750. OS, Gateshead, Alan Godfry Maps.



(Image 6.2) [Detail] LMA: RM32/47, London County Council, 'Map showing elementary and secondary schools in the County of London,' (1907). Highlighted Maryon Park Ordinary Board School to the west, Powis Street Special School to the east and Bloomfield Road Higher Grade School to the south.

APPENDIX SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS AND DESIGNS



(Image 1.1), Anonymous, 'Instruction in Cookery for mentally defective children at Leo-street day school, Hatcham' (photograph) in LMA: SC/PPS/063/061, *School Board for London Annual Report of the Special Schools Sub-Committee* (1903), p. 14



A LONDON STREET SCENE DURING THE RECENT FALL OF SNOW.—SEE PAGE 70.

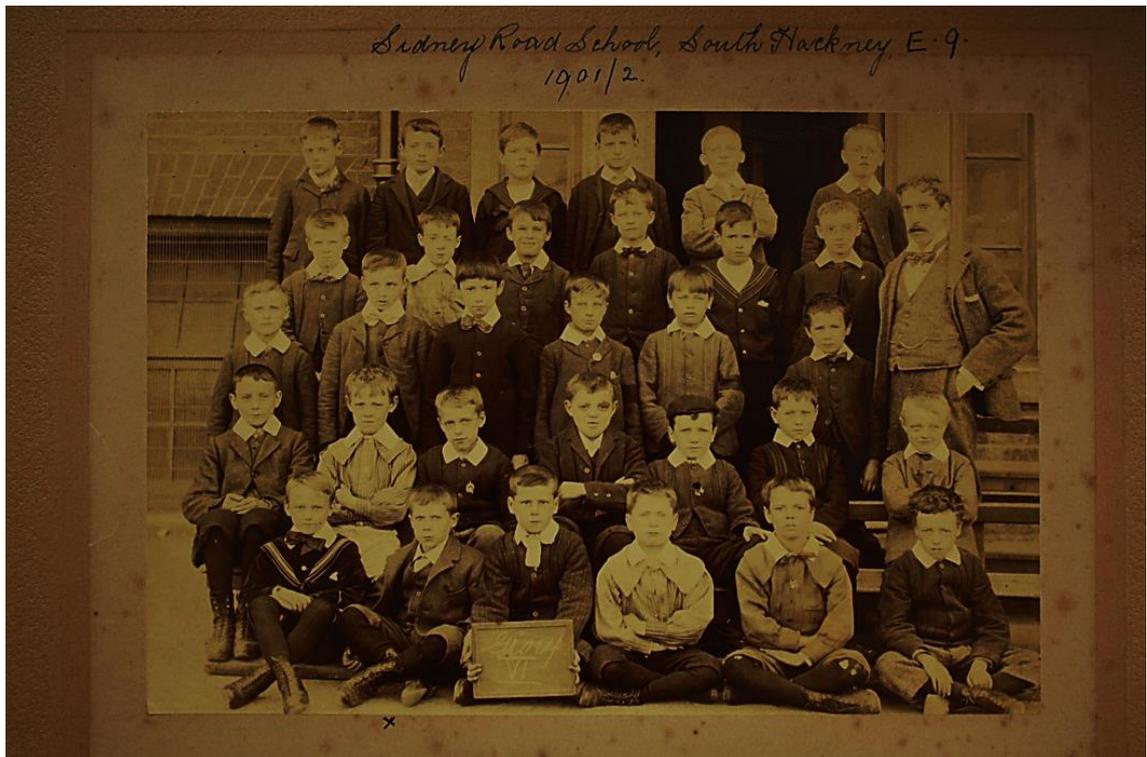
(Image 1.2), 'A London Street Scene During the Recent Fall of Snow' in Nineteenth Century British Newspapers Online: *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, (Saturday February 04 1865), p. 68



(Image 1.3) LMA: SC/PHL/02/0210, Anonymous, 'Lyndhurst Grove', photograph, (1896)



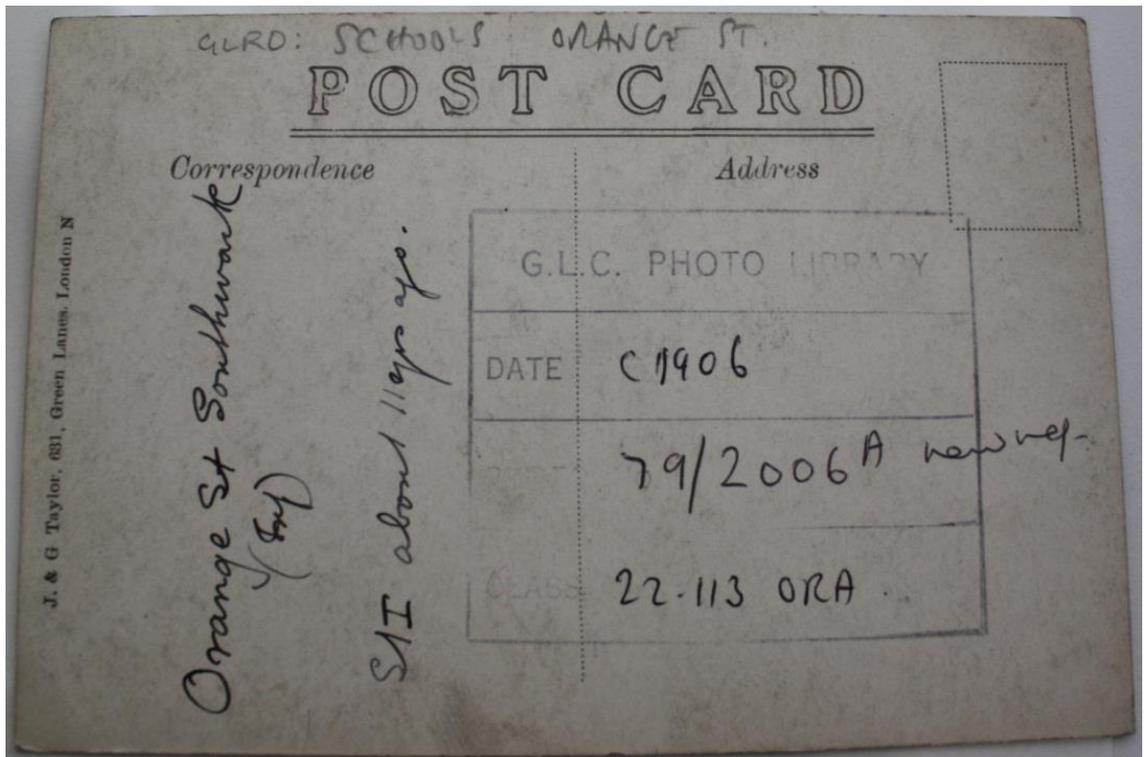
(Image 1.4) LMA: SC/PHL/02/0210, Anonymous, 'Lavender Hill School', photograph, (6.9.1906)



(Image 1.5) LMA:SC/PHL/02/0214, Anonymous, 'Sidney Road School, South Hackney E.9 Group VI', photograph, (1901-1902)



(Image 1.6) LMA: SC/PHL/02/0210, Cassells and Co., 'A Board School Cookery Class, (Kilburn Lane School)', photographic copy, (undated)



(Image 1.7) LMA: SC/PHL/02/0212/79/2006, J&G Taylor, 'Orange Street Southwark Infants St. I', photographic postcard, (c.1906)



(Image 1. 8) LMA: SC/PHL/02/0212, Anonymous, 'Orchard Street, Hackney Road', photographic postcard, (c.1907). The enclosed note reads 'Donated to the Council by Mrs L.M. Love...sister of one of the pupils (C. Mason) appearing in it, together with an attendance medal awarded to her sister...with the headmistress Miss MA Cockerill and a teacher.'



(Image 1.9) LMA: LMA:SC/PHL/02/0213/72/57/51, Negrette and Lambra, 'Rosendale Road School: Cricket Team and Teachers', photograph, (1897)



(Image 2:1) Cassells and Co., 'Morning Assembly', photographic copy, (1896), <<http://www.victorianlondon.org/ql/queenslondon.htm>>



(Image 2.6) 'School Board for London' in LMA: 22.05 SBL, School Board for London, *The Work of Three Years (1870 –1873)*



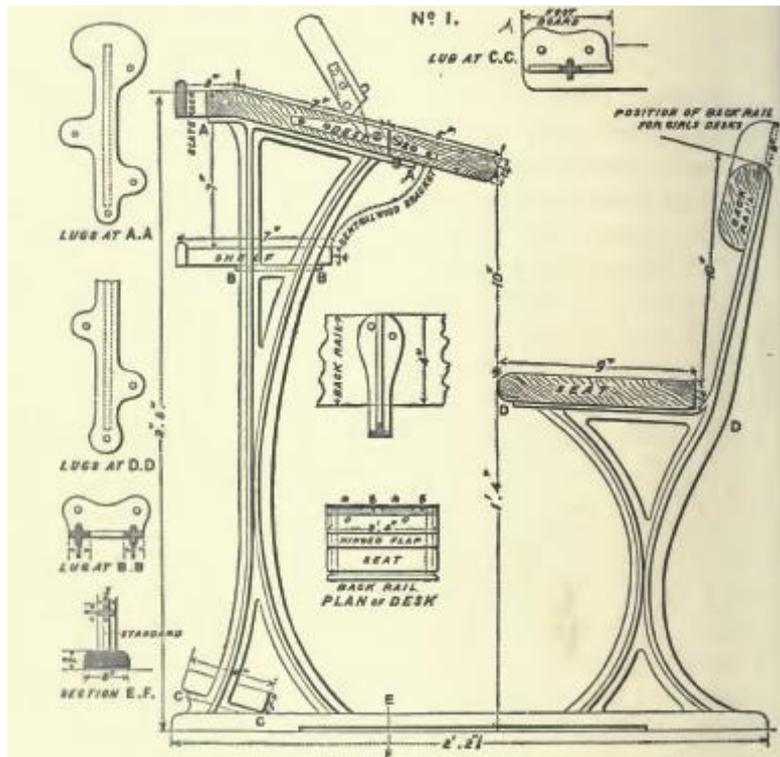
(Image 2.7) LMA: 4211/001, Anonymous, 'Free Arm Drawing', *Rosendale Road (West Lambeth)*, photograph, (c.1900)



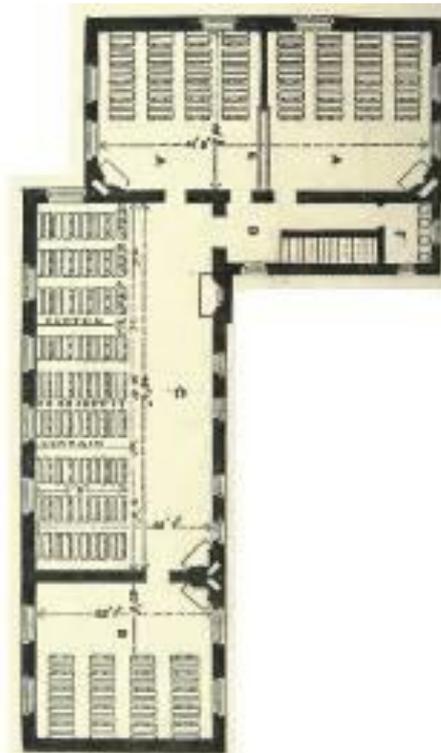
(Image 2.8) LMA: 4211/001, Anonymous, 'Science Standard VII', *Rosendale Road* (West Lambeth), photograph, (c.1900)



(Image 2.9) LMA: SC/PHL/02/0199, Anonymous, 'Gallery Class', photograph, (undated). This church school shows both the original gallery seating at the back and the dual, tiered desks to the right.



(Image 2.10) E.R. Robson, 'Desk for Graded School', plate 115, in Edward.R. Robson, *School Architecture: Being Practical Remarks on the Planning, Designing, Building, and furnishing of School Houses* (John Murray, London, 1874), p. 172



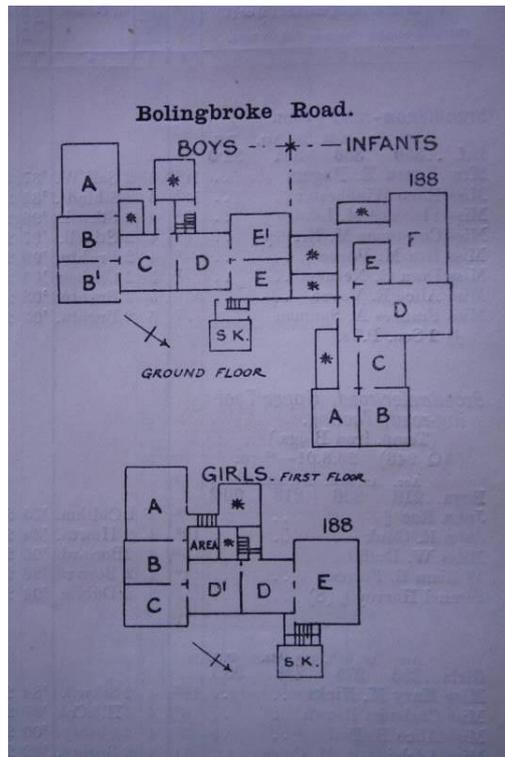
(Image 2.11), Robson, 'Suggested plan for Graded school of 210 children embodying the use of the dual desk five rows deep,' plate 118, Robson, *School Architecture*, p. 174



(Image 2.12) Robson, 'Locality of the first Board School erected in London', plate 197, in Robson, *School Architecture*, p. 291



(Image 2.13) Robson, 'Old Castle Street School', plate 198, in Robson, *Architecture*, p. 293



(Image 2.14) LMA: SBL/1500, 'Bolingbroke Road', plan, *Report of the School Management Committee of the Late School Board for London* (1904), p. 149



(Image 2.15) LMA: 4211/001, Anonymous, 'Drill', *Rosendale Road*, (West Lambeth), photograph, (1896-7)



(Image 2.17) Robson 'Orange Street School' plate 234, in Robson, *Architecture*, p. 333



(Image 3.1) Southwark Local History Library: P7642, Anonymous, 'Orange Street Infants Class', photograph, (1894)



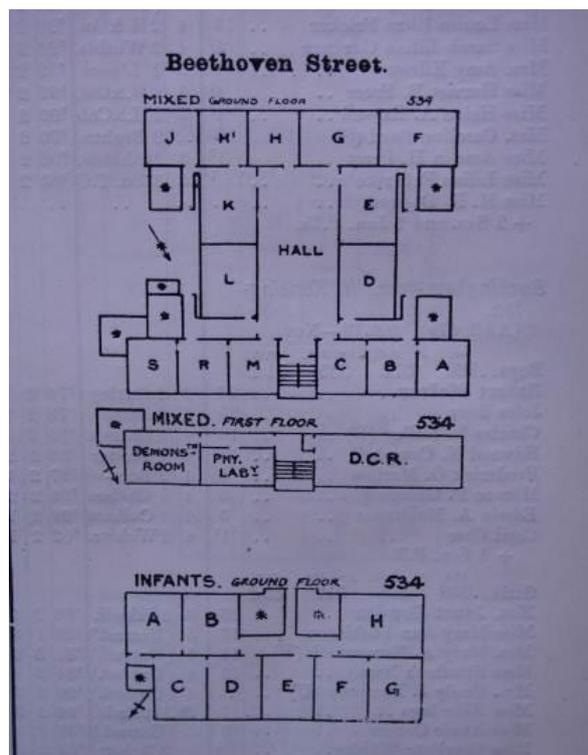
(Image 3.2) LMA: SC/PHL/02/453, Anonymous, 'Powis Street School (Blind): Lesson on Daffodil', photograph, (March, 1908)



(Image 3.3) LMA: SC_PHL_02_0201_73_3027, Anonymous, 'Bloomfield Road School', photograph, (date unknown)



(Image 3.4) LMA: 22.113SUR, Anonymous, 'Surrey Lane School Housewifery Cleaning Outside of House', photograph, (March 1908)



(Image 3.5) LMA: SBL/1500, 'Beethoven Street floorplan,' *London County Council Report on the School Management Committee of the late School Board for London* (1904), p. 5



(Image 3.6) LMA: SC_PHL_02_0200_79_7604, Anonymous, 'Beethoven Street School Laboratory', photograph, (March 1908)



(Image 3.7) LMA: SC_PHL_02_0211_5306, Anonymous, 'Monnow Road School: Experimental Science', photograph, (March 1908)



(Image 3.8) LMA: 22.113ORA, J&G Taylor, 'Orange Street Southwark Infants St. I', photographic postcard, (1900)



(Image 5.1) LMA: SC/PHL/02/453, Anonymous, 'Powis Street School (Blind) Drill, Class at Attention' (March 1908)



(Image 5.2): 'Instruction in clay modelling for deaf children at Cavendish Road Day School, Balham' (Photograph) in LMA: SC/PPS/063/061, *School Board for London Annual Report of the Special Schools Sub-Committee* (1903), p. 10



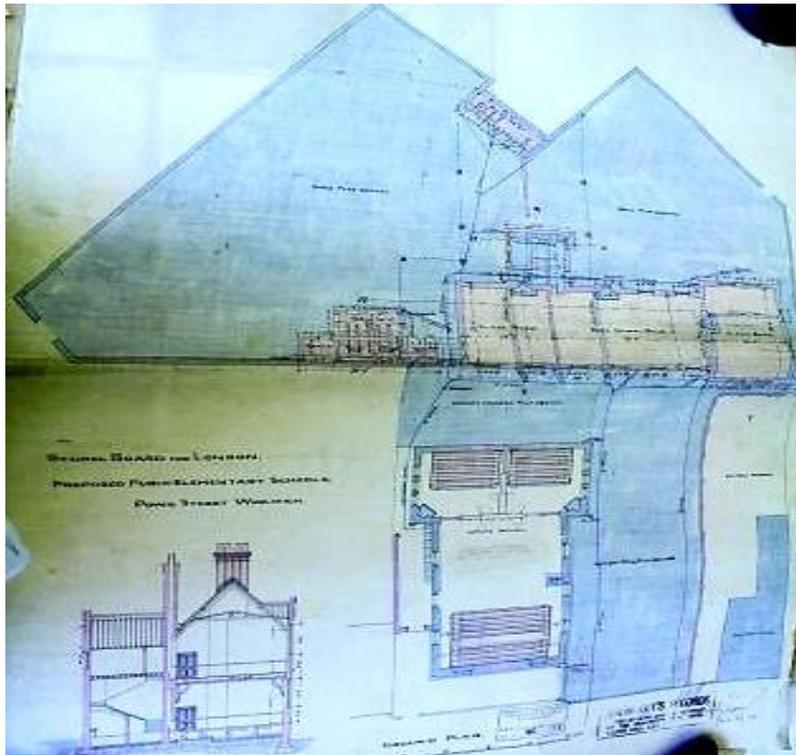
(Image 5.3) [Detail] LMA: 22.113 'Surrey Lane Housewifery – Cleaning outside of House' (March 1908) On the right-side the Deaf and Dumb entrance is just out of shot, but its sign can clearly be read.



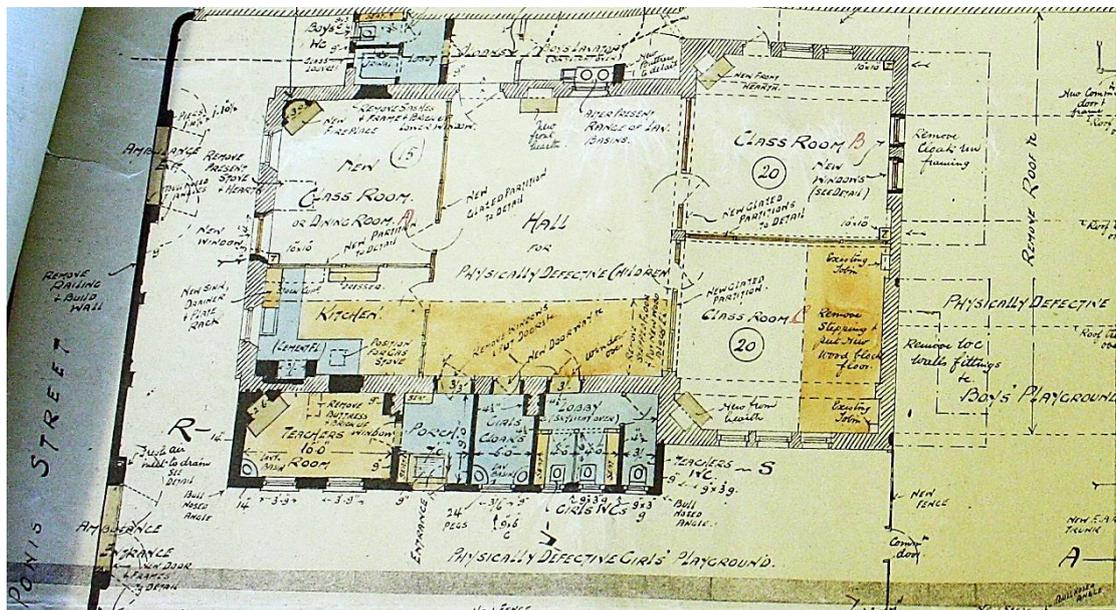
(Image 5.4) 'Special Girls' Hugh Myddleton School, Google Maps, <<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?q=london+metropolitan+archive&hl=en&ll=51.52529,-0.106108&spn=0.001939,0.005284&sll=51.528642,-0.101599&sspn=0.49638,1.352692&hq=london+metropolitan+archive&t=m&z=18&layer=c&cbll=51.525348,-0.105996&panoid=8JMtizgCHQu0V-cQGVt2ZA&cbp=12,177.74,,1,8.44>> (accessed 4.6.13)



(Image 5.5) Anonymous, 'Instruction in cookery for deaf girls at Hugh Myddelton Day School, Clerkenwell,' (Photograph) in LMA: SC/PPS/063/061, *School Board for London Annual Report of the Special Schools Sub-Committee* (1903), p.10



(Image 6.1) LMA: LCC/AH/SBL/004 Robson, Powis Street School Woolwich Plans, (1873) Powis Street School's site plan, with the converted chapel, divided into three classrooms with galleries, facing north towards the high street (at the bottom of the plan) and the new school house built behind (in the middle right of the plan)



(Image 6.3) [Detail] LMA: LCC/AH/SBL/004 Anonymous, 'Powis Street School Woolwich Plans,' (1903) showing adaptation of Powis Street School with the former Infants now the physically defective centre on and the Boys Department a mentally defective centre



(Image 6.4) LMA: SC/PHL/02/453, Anonymous, 'Powis Street School (Blind),Brick Building,' photograph, (March 1908)



(Image 6.5) LMA: SC/PHL/02/453, Anonymous, 'Powis Street School (Blind) Pigeon House Game,' photograph (27.3.1908)



(Image 6.6) LMA: SC/PHL/02/453, Anonymous, 'Powis Street School (Blind) Practical Arithmetic,' photograph (March 1908)

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