

Marlow Schools - list and history

This leaflet has been written with the aim of outlining every form of schooling known to have been available in the town over the centuries. It also gives some insight into the use made of various school buildings by the Church of England over the last 200 years.

Grammar School

Sir William Borlase School for boys - 1624 - West Street

Lace-making school for girls - after 1628 - West Street

Closed in 1853 due to the decline of the bone lace trade



Originally begun in 1624 in memory of his son, Henry, the school was endowed under the will of Sir William Borlase, who died in 1628. On the present site, there were originally a charity school to teach poor boys “to read and write, and cast accounts”, one to teach girls lace-making, and a House of Correction. The establishment was originally known as “The Free School” and its uniform of blue cloaks was worn until well into the 19th century. In 1881 it was reformed and re-

established as a fee-paying Grammar School, then taken over by the County Council in 1902, and became co-educational in 1988. The original school building, shown here, is still visible in the centre of the present school frontage.

Private Schools

Prospect House School for boys - c1841 - Junction of Wycombe & Little Marlow Roads
Boarding establishment

Girls boarding school - c1855 - West Street

Dial Close School - 1929 - Causeway
Primary school, closed in 1972

During the nineteenth century it was the norm for middle class families who did not aspire to Public Schools to send their children, of both sexes, to small private boarding establishments. These often included day pupils as well as boarders. The two quoted are the ones which have left some trace of their existence. There were almost certainly more at various times. In the same period, there were also a number of Dame Schools around the town, often in poorer areas, where children were taught basic skills by untrained teachers for even less than the few pence per week charged by the National Schools.

Church Schools

National School for boys - 1813 - Church Passage

National School for girls - 1814 - Church Passage

National School for boys - 18?? - Quoiting Place

Roman Catholic School - 1845 - St Peters Street

National School for boys - 1851 - The Causeway

It is suggested that at the time the boys' school moved to the Causeway, the girls' school migrated to their vacated premises at the top of the town.

National Schools for infants - 1864 - St Peters Street & Oxford Lane

Marlow C of E School for girls - 1871 - St Peters Street

Marlow C of E School for boys - 1913 - Wethered Road

Marlow C of E Primary School - 1954 - St Peters Street

Marlow C of E Secondary School - 1954 - Wethered Road

Holy Trinity C of E School - 1961 - Wethered Road

Marlow C of E infants School - 1961 - St Peters Street

St Peters RC Primary School - 1974 - Prospect Road

Marlow C of E infants School - 1974 - Spinfield School

Sandygate C of E infants School - 1976 - Sandygate Road



National Schools were set up, from 1812, by the National Society for the Promotion of the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. Schools for girls and boys were established here soon after this, in cottages in Church Passage. This alley linked The Causeway with St Peter's Street, running through the churchyard and across land now occupied by Old Bridge House. The boys were soon removed to a property near the Crown, but the girls remained near the river until 1851, when the present Church Hall was presented to the church as a school for boys (*picture - National School for boys, 1851*).

At this point the girls moved into the boys' old quarters, only to return to Church Passage some years later, where they were joined in 1864 by a newly created infants school. Another infants school was set up in Oxford Lane, in premises "lately used for worship". Soon a purpose-built school was erected and later enlarged on the site north of the United Reform Church.



*St Peters Street infants' School, 1869
Later part of the C of E girls' school*

Owing to the demolition of Church Passage in 1871, the Church of England was forced to provide new premises for the infants and girls National Schools, and was therefore able to provide sufficient school places in 1870 for the whole population. As the town grew more places were needed, so in 1913 the Church of England boys school was built in Wethered Road. allowing the girls school to expand into the boys' old building.



C of E Boys' School, 1913

They acquired more space in 1916, when the infant schools were amalgamated on the Oxford Road site, a decision which was to cause problems later.

After the Second World War there were insufficient school places for infants at Oxford Road, and five-year-olds began their schooling in the Salvation Army Citadel or even the now demolished conservatory of Court Garden. In line with modern educational practice, the Church of England schools were reorganised in 1954 as a mixed primary in St Peter's Street and a co-ed secondary in Wethered Road. The problem of infant provision was solved in 1955, when the County Council opened Foxes Piece First School on redundant allotment land in Little Marlow Road.

In 1961 they took over secondary education, providing at Great Marlow School facilities more complex and expensive than the church could afford. This resulted in the primary school moving to Wethered Road, where it still flourishes as Holy Trinity School.

The infants initially moved into the St Peter's Street buildings, which provided adequate space, but not the atmosphere or facilities which they needed. A new school was planned in Sandygate Road and the St Peter's Street site sold for development, but problems with the construction led to the C of E children occupying Spinfield School for two years before it opened as a Council school. Eventually, in 1976, the First School children moved into their modern, purpose-built premises.

A school for Roman Catholic children had been set up beside St Peter's church in 1845. This, having outgrown its original premises, moved to Prospect Road in 1974.

Marlow was unusual in having no British School set up by Non-conformists for their children. As no School Board was created here under the 1870 Education Act, this situation continued. Possibly, poor Non-conformist children were taught before 1870 in their chapel school-rooms. The children of the many affluent Non-conformist business families would have been privately educated.

State Schools

Foxes Piece Infants School - 1955 - Little Marlow Road

Great Marlow Secondary School - 1961 - Bobmore Lane

Foxes Piece Middle School - 1969 - Little Marlow Road

Spinfield School - 1976 - Terrington Hill

As the town increased in size more school places were needed. The County Council provided a Middle School on the Foxes Piece site, and later Spinfield School, which served children from the estates at the western side of Marlow.

My thanks to the school secretaries and staff who dealt with my enquiries so patiently and helpfully.

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Sources

BROWN, R & HUNT, J Marlow: a pictorial history

National School for Infants logbooks, 1864-1916

*Photograph of St Peter's Street School courtesy of
Bob Rockell*