

### **Education in Stoney Stanton, 1902-1956**

The parish of Stoney Stanton today is in the district of Blaby, in the south west of Leicestershire. It is located approximately ten miles away from the city of Leicester and around 5 miles east of Hinckley. In 1902, an Education Act was passed which set up local authorities that had more power over making decisions for the schools within their area. During this period of 1902-1956, there was one voluntary-controlled school in the village, a Church of England school which was under Local Education Authority (LEA) power.

The Stoney Stanton Church of England School was established in the nineteenth century. In 1906, it was split into two departments, an infant department and a mixed junior department. A new site was built for the infants' school to accommodate around 200 children, approximately 200 yards away from the juniors' mixed building. Both departments had separate head teachers. Under the request of the school's managers and with the permission of the local education authority, they were reconstituted in 1933 under one head teacher again. However, both departments were still in separate buildings and with the instruction from the LEA, a role of being in 'general charge of the infants under the supervision of the Head Teacher' was given to a female assistant teacher at the school.<sup>1</sup>

There have been no records found which have shown evidence of a secondary school in the parish. However, in a letter by the director of education, Mr Brockington, discussing the amalgamation of the junior and infants department in 1933, it is explained that the senior students from Stoney Stanton went to Hinckley Modern School.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Challenges faced by the school in the early twentieth century**

One of the challenges which the school faced as reported in the school log books and highlighted in some of the inspector reports, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, was the high turnover in staff. As one inspector had said in his report on the 26th June 1923, 'the school has never had a really settled staff'.<sup>3</sup> The concerns about the high turnover carried on into the 1930s, with inspector reports dating 1937 mentioning the issue.<sup>4</sup>

There were also issues with children's absences. Attendance in the log books of the early decades of this period frequently mentioned low attendances due to children being ill with colds, mumps and other diseases. In one instance, in the month of April 1905, the infant's school had to close because there was a measles epidemic and therefore the school needed to be disinfected.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes bad weather was also the cause for low attendances, especially in the earlier part of this period.

Another challenge faced by the teachers themselves was that they taught children of varied abilities in a single class. In the same report on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1923, the inspector had reported of the mixed department school that this factor put 'considerable strain on teachers' and he advised that the school should get 'extra assistance'. The 152 children were split into three classes at this time and

---

<sup>1</sup> TNA, ED 21/33619.

<sup>2</sup> TNA, ED 21/33619.

<sup>3</sup> TNA, ED 21/33619.

<sup>4</sup> TNA, ED 21/56086.

<sup>5</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/310/2, May 29 1905, p. 100.

these classes were under the control of the Head teacher and two assistant teachers. Nevertheless, the school was credited for improving under the circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

### The buildings and safety of the school

The infants' school which was built in 1906 had a school room with a length of 52 feet and a breadth of 19 feet and 6 inches. It had an area of 1,014 square feet. Other classrooms in the school had a length of 23 feet, a breadth of 18 feet 6 inches and were 425 square feet in area.<sup>7</sup> Evidence from managers minutes dated January 18<sup>th</sup> 1905 suggests that the school site was 1,000 square yards and that the managers intended to build a barbed wired fence around it instead of a stone wall.<sup>8</sup>

On several occasions, the school had suffered from health and safety problems in relation to the site as well as the building. In an inspector's report in 1911, the infants' school yard was said to not 'appear to be well drained', and the children's feet were wet from 'pools of water'.<sup>9</sup> In addition, a concern was raised about the classroom doors being 'nearly off the hinges'. On another occasion, a letter from the Stoney Stanton Parish Council, dated 1<sup>st</sup> September 1938, raised concerns about the 'entrance gateway being in a projecting wall which abutted directly on to the carriageway'. The school managers agreed to sacrifice 88 square yards of the playground in order to allow the council to re build 'the wall as the new highway boundary'.<sup>10</sup>

In an inspector's report on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1954, the buildings were described as 'old' but 'substantial' and 'provide useful accommodation'.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, it was observed that the floors were in 'need of repair', and a higher fence was needed around the sites too make them safer. Furthermore, the juniors' playground was said to be too small. The school had a 'reasonably light and airy kitchen, made from part of a large classroom', which provided meals, which around 70 pupils would accept. It was summed up in this report that 'full use is made of indoor and outdoor space and an attractive and stimulating environment has been provided for these young children'.

From the late 1950s and 1960s, records show evidence of discussions of building a new site to accommodate both departments, which was eventually built in the late 1960s and is today known as 'Manorfield Church of England Primary School'. One of the old school sites is still standing today, now being used as a doctor's surgery in the village.

Louise Crook, University of Leicester, July 2013

---

<sup>6</sup> TNA, ED 21/33619.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, ED 21/10419.

<sup>8</sup> ROLLR, DE 4476/33/1.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, ED 21/10419.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, ED 21/56086.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, ED 161/10762.