

Education in Kilby, 1902-1956

Education provision before 1902 in Kilby was centred on the village school. A school building application had been made on the 22 November 1870 to build a school connected to the established church, for the labouring poor. It was called 'The Kilby National School' (Church of England),¹ and opened on 6 January 1873.²

This village school continued to be the centre of educational provision in Kilby throughout the twentieth century. The Education Act of 1902 introduced the provision of two levels of education and established a local education authority for Leicestershire. Elementary education had to be provided for children up to the age of 10. Additionally, there must be the provision for education for every child over the age of 10, up to the then school leaving age of 12; subjects to be taught included English, maths, science, history, geography, drawing and a foreign language. This presented practical issues in Kilby. A note had been made in the diocesan inspection report in 1902 that 'better accommodation for infants would be desirable'.³ A fuller picture of the school is painted by an inspector in 1910, who commented that 59 children, ranging from infants to standard VII, had to be taught in a single room, measuring 34 feet by 17 feet, without any division except that 'the infants are shut off out of sight of the older children by curtains'.⁴ This was discussed by the school managers again, but it was decided not to build a separate room, at least for the time being.⁵ Inspection reports were otherwise satisfactory, indeed the diocesan inspector for religious education commented in 1900, 'This school can take its place among the best small country schools in the Archdeaconry'.⁶

The pupil teacher system that had been so popular for many youngsters throughout the period preceding was changed under regulations introduced in 1907. The earliest age to become a pupil teacher rose to 16 and as a direct result of this, the number of pupil teachers began to decline dramatically. This meant that the way that lessons were delivered began to change. More and more often, a qualified teacher was sought to carry out teaching duties.

In 1930, the local education authority made the decision that the older children were to be educated at the school in Wigston Magna.⁷ The school in Kilby was now a school for 4-11 year olds, and in 1932 had 31 pupils across the age range, with just one teacher.⁸ The local education authority's Survey of Small Schools, in July 1933, considered moving the younger children to Wigston as well 'after the proposed reorganisation and adaptation of premises have been effected',⁹ but that did not take place.

By the late 1930s, examinations taken at age 11 decided which path a student's education would take. Those who passed went to Kibworth Grammar school, while the other children were

¹ TNA, ED/103/124/13, p. 205

² ROLLR, E/LB/163/1, p. 1.

³ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

⁵ ROLLR, DE/5338/1, 1910.

⁶ ROLLR, E/RT/163/5/6

⁷ TNA, ED/21/33512, 29th July 1930

⁸ ROLLR, E/LB/163/2, p. 306.

⁹ ROLLR, DE 3538/6, p. 7.

sent to Wigston Modern School.¹⁰ In 1938 a further Modern school was completed at South Wigston, and in July 1939 the headmistress of Kilby school visited it at the invitation of the new master and mistress there¹¹, to familiarise herself with the future environment for many of her pupils. Those attending a Modern School would be gaining a more practical education in comparison with the more academic approach favoured in a grammar school.

The Education Act of 1944 brought in more changes to the face of education. The compulsory school leaving age now became 15, with secondary education becoming free for all. Local education authorities had to produce a development plan for their area, and Leicestershire proposed the closure of Kilby's school, with infants being sent to Fleckney and the junior children to Church Langton. Parents signed a petition of protest, making five points to the authority: that it was 'inadvisable' to send very young children away from their home village for eight or nine hours each day; that 'travelling on buses is the cause of epidemics'; good work was done and good results were being achieved in Kilby school, despite its small size; it was an agricultural district, and it was felt that the absence of a school would have an adverse effect on farmers wanted to employ farm labourers; and that the village school had always been at the centre of village activity and inspired loyalty and pride among the children in their village – if that was taken away, rural depopulation could result.¹² The local authority withdrew the proposal.

The 1944 Act also introduced a two-tier system for voluntary schools such as church schools, which could elect to become either voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled. There were differences between the two in regards the management and funding of the school. Voluntary-aided schools meant the church owned the school building, appointed two-thirds of management and bore one half of the maintenance responsibilities. As a voluntary-controlled school, all maintenance was funded and two-thirds of management were appointed by the local education authority. Now reprieved from the possibility of closure, St. Mary's school in Kilby became 'St. Mary's Church of England voluntary-aided school'.

Education in Kilby changed throughout the period of 1902-1956. The school leaving age continued to rise throughout the period, with children benefitting from more years spent in the education system. The way the education was delivered changed too, with fewer pupil teachers employed after 1902, and the scheme eventually abolished under the Education Act 1944. Students who would have been taught only in the village school at the beginning of the period would find themselves travelling to secondary schools further afield after the 1930s in an attempt to improve education standards. However, remaining constant throughout and with apparently no alteration to it, was the village school. Children have been attending the village school at Kilby for well over a century and it is still in use today as a primary school for ages 4-11.

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¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 472.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

¹² DE 5338/1, pp. 95-6.