

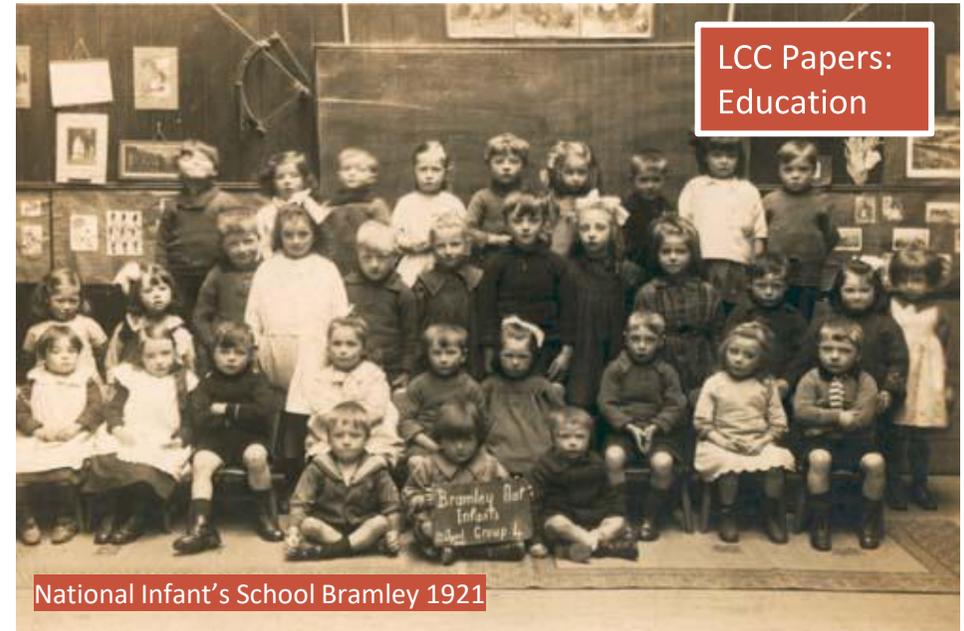
Some Key dates

- 1870** - Education Act allowed School Boards to be established to fill in the gaps where no school provision was available
- 1880** - Elementary Education Act made school for compulsory for children aged 5 to 10
- 1891** - The Elementary Education Act made primary education free.
- 1902** - Education Act brought together voluntary and School Board schools under the control of the Local Authority
- 1906** - Education (provision of meals) Act
- 1944** - Education Act (or Butler Act) overhauled education in England and Wales by introducing free, universal secondary education for all
- 1988** - Education Reform Act. Introduced the National Curriculum and allowed schools to opt out of local control

Opening times

Monday – 9.00am – 8.00pm
Tuesday – 9.00am – 8.00pm
Weds – 9.00am – 8.00pm
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Saturday – 10.00am – 4.00pm
Sunday - Closed

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Leeds City Council Papers: Education

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Background

Leeds Corporation (now Leeds City Council) has been deeply involved in the development of the fast-growing city in the 19th century and onwards. Over 200 years of Council papers are lodged in the Central Library, and these give details of how it has contributed to making the city what it is today. Many of these papers are annual publications, while others are for specific activities.

19th Century

Education in 19th century Leeds was highly stratified, with private schools for the wealthy and limited options for the poor, through charity schools. At the start of the 19th century, education was not universal, nor funded by the state. And the subjects taught were very different to today. For example, Leeds Grammar School had not allowed any subjects other than Latin or Greek to be taught. However, during the century, there was a recognition that education should be available to more children and adults, both for the increasingly technical requirements of the workplace as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, and the opportunity for improvement, particularly for the working classes.

In 1839, there were 154 day schools teaching 3,700 boys and 3,000 girls in the township of Leeds. These schools were funded through voluntary assistance mostly from various churches and included Sunday Schools. Many were Dame schools, ie. nurseries for working mothers. Nevertheless, in 1857, 25% of men and 45% of women signed the marriage register with marks, and by 1860, less than half the children were under instruction.

All this changed with the introduction of the Education Act of 1870. Education was still not free or compulsory, but the newly formed Leeds School Board was required to ensure that a school was available to all children between the age of 5 and 13.

Attendance was the responsibility of the Board and rose from 64% in 1873 to 89% (83,000 children) in 1902.

20th Century

In 1902, a new national Education Act was introduced that abolished School Boards and put education in the hands of local councils. The Council's new Education Committee set to work and the initial focus was in assimilating the School Board and voluntary systems under one Educational Authority.

What was striking in these early years was the poor physical health of many of the children. In 1909, for example, of the 16,600 inspections undertaken by the Council, 31,739 diseases or defects were found, ranging from TB (304) and tooth decay (9,261) to dirty & verminous children (2,923) and subnormal nutrition (1,548). 9,000 children were absent as a result of the medical inspection, and a further 2,000 absent due to epidemic sickness in their household. For much of these early years, health was an over-riding priority and issues like free school meals became national policy matters.

Even in 1946, there were 25,000 school dental inspections, of which 18,000 were found to need treatment.

After the Second World War, the education landscape started to look more familiar to today's reader. Secondary education became free for all children, alongside the introduction of Secondary Modern schools, which focussed on practical skills, rather than the academic skills focus of Grammar Schools. It also clarified post secondary education regarding paths to University and vocational training.

By the 1950s, health issues in annual reports were much less prominent and focussed instead about the building programme, and the improvements in secondary, higher and further education.

Funding has consistently been a highly charged topic, and what should be funded by local tax payers and central government remains an issue to this day. But it does mean that the Council has to be very much on top of costs. So, in 1967, the cost of school meals was kept under 1 shilling (5p) per meal or £1.20 with inflation in today's money!