

Wheatley Primary School

Here you will find a brief overview of our history. If you would like a more detailed record you can download 'A history of our school' by Liz Wickens [here](#).

Bishop Moss's School (1811 - 1858)



The school room in Mitcheldene.

In 1811 Dr Charles Moss, Bishop of Oxford, left the sum of £3000 in his will for charitable causes, including the establishment of schools at Wheatley and Cuddesdon “for the education and bringing up of children of the same parishes”. Eventually in 1818 a house in the High Street, now known as Mitcheldene, was purchased by the Trustees of Bishop Moss's will, for the purpose of establishing the first school in Wheatley. A large schoolroom, which still stands in the grounds of Mitcheldene, was used for the boys, while the house itself provided a classroom for girls and accommodation for the Master and Mistress.

The first Master of the new school was Valentine Guy, with his wife acting as Mistress, and they ran what became known as Bishop Moss's school together until 1828 when he handed over to his wife's nephew, William Saunders.

In 1840 an Infant School was established in Bell Lane by the Misses Tyndale of Holton and responsibility for its running was given over to the trustees of Bishop Moss's estate in September 1841. Mrs Hunt of Wheatley was appointed to run the Infant School and her son William became Master of the Boys' School and his sister Sarah took over responsibility for the Girls' School, with all three Hunts residing in Mitcheldene. Sadly, however, the Girls' and Boys' schools did not prosper under their new leadership, falling into serious debt and disrepair. Eventually William and Sarah were asked to leave, although their mother stayed in Wheatley for a further 25 years as a loyal and excellent schoolmistress of the infant school until her death in 1870 aged 77.

The opening of this new school on 5th May 1858 by Rev Morrell, Rector of Henley-on-Thames and a member of the Morrell brewing family, marked the beginning of a new era for the children of Wheatley, Holton and Littleworth.

Edward Elton's School (1858 - 1950)



The school buildings on Church Road.

The new school was designed by George Edmund Street, the architect responsible for designing St Mary's church, and built out of local stone at a cost of £1,000. It opened on 5th May 1858, less than a year after the consecration of the new Church.

Girls and boys were taught in separate schools from 1858 until 1871 when the school became co-educational following a series of unfavourable inspection reports, especially criticising standards of reading amongst pupils, which led to a reduction in the schools' funding. A change of headteacher in 1874 saw an improvement in standards: the HMI report of 1876 states: "The school has come on wonderfully since Mr Thompson took charge of it: great credit is due to him for its improved condition During the period from 1819 to 1891, Wheatley School had no less than twelve head teachers, but in September 1891 Mr Rees Leyshon was appointed head, a position he was to hold for the next thirty four years. His lengthy headship set a precedent which has continued; in almost 120 years since Rees Leyshon became head, only five other people have held the post of Head of Wheatley School.

The school continued to improve and expand under Rees Leyshon's leadership, with pupil numbers rising to 137 by the turn of the century, so that the buildings had to be enlarged and extended.

The War Years



Pupils lined up for drill.

The school also did its bit towards the war effort in September and October 1917 and 1918. On fine afternoons the children went blackberrying for the soldiers. In 1917 they picked 1,251 lbs of blackberries, but the following year an astonishing 3,304 lbs of the fruit was despatched by night train to Oxford, where it was delivered to Cooper's jam factory.

John Key took over as Head in 1925, serving for 29 years until his retirement in April 1954. He was succeeded by Ronald A. Murray Ransom, who in turn was followed two years later by Glenville Rees Evans who went on to serve as Head for 27 years despite announcing on his

arrival that he would only stay for two years! It was Glenville who finally broke with a tradition dating back to 1858; that the Headmaster should reside in the School House on the Church Road site. His decision to move out on March 21st 1978 followed significant increases in the rent demanded by the owners of the house, the Diocesan Board of Finance, to the degree that it became “economically foolish to remain as a tenant”.

The Last Fifty Years

In September 1950 the Shotover Secondary Modern School was built on Littleworth Road, and senior pupils were transferred here from the Primary School, reducing the numbers on roll to 125. Glenville Evans announced that he would be retiring as Head of Wheatley Primary School at the end of March 1983, after 27 years of Headship at the school, and Clive Hallett was appointed in November 1982 to succeed him.

School On The Move

The new Headmaster had merely two and a half terms in post before the decision was made to move the Primary School. In 1972 the Secondary Modern School was amalgamated with Holton Girls Grammar School to form Wheatley Park Comprehensive School, with the Littleworth Road site being the Lower School. Then, in 1982, Wheatley Park School was totally relocated onto the Holton site and the vacant Littleworth Road site became the new home for the Primary School, and services such as the Register Office, Youth Club, the County Caretakers' Training Centre, and more recently, the John Watson School.

Wheatley Primary School is justly proud of its long history and its place at the heart of the local community. It is a school that began in order to meet a local need over 150 years ago, and although twenty-first-century needs are different in so many ways to those of our Victorian founders, the importance of education and community remain at the heart of our school.

The Present



The current Littleworth Road site.

Today the school caters for children aged 4 to 11 and, with around 300 pupils on roll, is one of the largest primary schools in the local area. The school mission statement reads: “Wheatley Church of England Primary School aims to provide a safe, caring and happy learning environment in which all children, whatever their needs or abilities, are given the opportunity to flourish and develop. In our school we try to foster a strong sense of community in which attitudes of mutual respect and responsibility are promoted and where Christian values have a central place.” This ethos is reflected in the feedback received from visitors to the school who find its atmosphere to be welcoming, calm, friendly, hard-working, co-operative and professional. collective worship in assembly.