

**Presentation about St Ignatius', St Aloysius', and St Joseph's Schools  
made at the unveiling of the blue plaque  
on St Ignatius' Chapel in St Clement's on 31 July 2018**

**Sr Marie Ann**

1832–1849:

There was a small private boys' school for about 8 pupils in the presbytery, Leslie House. It was possibly a Boarding School.

1860–1869:

The priest in charge of the Mission from 1860–69 was Rev Alexander Comberbach and during this time, according to information from the European Provincial Archives of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, there was a Dame school for a few local Catholic children kept by a Mrs Bradley in the lean-to scullery alongside the presbytery. Maybe this was where the school began in 1869.

4<sup>th</sup> October 1869:

St Ignatius School began with 18 children in a room in the presbytery, Leslie House. At first the inspectors were happy with the premises, but this changed as numbers grew. The school was oversubscribed and has been ever since.

1873:

It was necessary to use the dining room for needlework. Over the years the log book notes how the 'ladies' of the parish rallied to help with needlework, but there are also many notes about how 'gentlemen' as well as the 'ladies' of the parish played their part in supporting the school in so many ways including from reading, writing, books for a library, treats, entertainments, and trips. Amongst the notes about the many visitors to school there are some stating 'Father Hopkins visited'. Father Gerald Manley Hopkins enjoyed these visits and teaching the children.

1875:

After the opening of St Aloysius Church in 1875, the school moved to the Chapel, which was only used on Sundays. A Curtain was drawn to screen off the altar. The Henry Taunt pictures show both the weekday school and chapel on Sundays.

1880:

An interior change to the chapel to make a new classroom. Measurements recorded in the log book compared to Taunt photos indicate it was the vestry.

1882:

Boys were selected to attend a small school for about 19 built in 1881 next to St Aloysius Church. Evidence suggests a choir school.

1892:

The school beside the St Aloysius Church rebuilt to accommodate 80 boys.

1894:

Evidence in the log book indicates that it became the Boy's Department and the site in St Clement's became the Girls and Mixed Infants. It remained one school.

1895:

A new classroom for Infants was built at the side of the chapel.

1902:

There was a major re-organisation of the schools in the parish and the log book for St Aloysius Boys' Elementary School begins. For reasons of economy, the involvement of the Society of the Holy Child of Jesus in both schools began and they remained involved until 1977. They were Headteachers of both the school next to St Aloysius Church until 1967 and the one in St Clement's for most of the time until 1977 and other sisters taught in both schools.

It is not clear from any evidence when the name of the school here changed to St Aloysius Mixed Infants and Girls but logically this was in 1902 when the re-organisation took place. 1908 was the first inspection recorded under the name of St Aloysius Mixed Infants and Girls.

1909:

The Holy Child Sisters, who had been living in Leslie House, moved to Cherwell Edge and Leslie House was demolished. The new building, now Listed Grade II, held three classrooms and cloakrooms for boys and girls. The toilets were outside and the boiler for heating was in a cellar. The new building was known as Leslie House by school. The Infants were taught in the old premises.

1911:

SS Edmund and Frideswide Church was opened in the Iffley Road. The site in St Clement's was now just for the school but it was not the last time that Mass was celebrated in the Chapel, as in 1964 changes introduced by Vatican 2 meant that the school was given permission for Mass to be celebrated in the school twice a term and their school hall was what had been the Chapel of St Ignatius.

1914: The only change to the former chapel after 1911 recorded in the log book, other than painting, redecorating, and repairs was the removal of the Gallery in 1914.

1932:

Another reorganisation: Our Lady's, Cowley opened, St Aloysius Boys became mixed as did St Aloysius Mixed Infants and Girls so a new name was needed and the school in St Clement's became St Joseph's.

This school now received the children aged 11 plus from Our Lady's Cowley and from St Aloysius. As space was needed, the roof of the old church was raised, and two upstairs classrooms were created. They were accessed by a wrought iron outside staircase. The Rose Window was filled in. A room was built for the Head Teacher over a new cloakroom for the Boys and one for the Girls. School Assemblies were held outside.

But that was not enough so in addition to sports on Angel Meadow, from:

1937: Jeune Street Hall used on certain days for Physical Education.

1945: The Friary Hall in Iffley was first used for the Infants and lunch for these children was in the canteen at SS Mary and John's School.

1946: A new classroom was put up in Caroline Street.

1949: Alma Hall began to be used for Music (Singing), Art and P.E.

1956: Corpus Christi Hall was used for the first time for one Junior Classes.

Plus, there was tennis in Bury Knowle Park, swimming in the 'Duck Pond', Long Bridges and Cowley Pool after it was opened. Woodwork and Domestic Science were held in various venues including East Oxford.

From 1941 school lunches were introduced over the road in Boulter Street. In later years, the canteen was down the road in St Clements School and finally in East Oxford.

There was regularly Mass and Benediction attended by the school in the Greyfriars Church in the Iffley Road.

The Religious Inspector reports in 1948 that his inspection was not satisfactory as it had to be conducted like a 'Cook's Tour' owing to the distances between the annexes.

A former pupil of this time wrote 'We walked and walked and walked.'

1947:

The School Leaving Age was raised to 15 years, and the secondary department was renamed St Joseph's Secondary Modern School. It moved to Iffley Turn as Blessed Edmund Campion Secondary Modern School. 1958

St Joseph's Primary School remained in St Clement's as a primary school with just an extra classroom in Caroline Street. There was space to plant two cypress trees in the front of the school on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1959.

The noise from the traffic, fungi on walls, standing room only at playtime was well reported in the local newspapers by 1967.

The last day in St Clement's was on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1968 and the Head Teacher wrote in the Log Book:

'It is with mixed feelings that we say Goodbye to our historic site, scene of so many labours, source of many graces, served by devoted teachers for a whole century, revered by many former pupils for the happy spirit prevailing there.'

*Sources:*

- Log Books of St Ignatius School, St Aloysius Mixed Infants and Girls, St Joseph's Catholic Primary and Secondary.
- *The Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire Vol IV*
- *A History of the Post-Reformation Catholic Missions in Oxfordshire*, 1905, ch. entitled 'Oxford City', pp.226–243) by Mrs Bryan Stapleton
- *Gerard Manley Hopkins, A Very Private Life* by Robert Bernard Martin
- The materials preserved in the European Provincial Archives of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (14–16 Norham Gardens, Oxford)