

Education in Oadby, 1700-2013

Due to Oadby's close proximity to the city of Leicester, the population has grown enormously since the early nineteenth century and educational provisions have been needed to develop alongside its growth.

The returns to Bishop Wake's visitation questionnaire of 1706-15 state that there was no school in Oadby.¹ The 1818 parliamentary enquiry into the education of the poor records that the only means of education for poorer families was a Sunday school, which was connected to St. Peters Anglican Church and was attended by 117 children.² By 1833, this had grown to accommodate 150 pupils, and there was now another Sunday school for nonconformists which was attended by 70 children.³ Both of these Sunday schools were supported by annual subscriptions and contained children of both sexes.⁴ The village also now had five small daily schools containing 82 children of both sexes, paid for by their parents.⁵

In 1838 the parish received funds to establish an infants' school and a daily school which opened in a small rented room.⁶ The parish later joined in union with the National Society in 1848, and a new school was opened which could accommodate 155 infants and 103 older children.⁷ This new school was needed due to population growth, from 856 in 1821 to 1,196 in 1851.⁸

At the start of 1872 a school board was set up to provide additional school places, and was one of only six school boards in Leicestershire at the time.⁹ The board rented the Baptist church's schoolroom for use as a day school, which opened on 22 July 1872.¹⁰ This school taught infants aged 3-7 and older children aged 7-13, and the school day was 9-12 in the morning and 2-4.15 in the afternoon except Saturdays.¹¹ It became a council school after board schools were abolished by the 1902 Education Act. In 1908, a separate infants' school was opened.

There was little development in education for most of the interwar years as, like the rest of the country, there was not the money to build many new schools. By 1925, school managers in Oadby were very anxious for a new school to be built, as the present schools were 'unsuitable and unhealthy for educational purposes'.¹² A new council school for older children was eventually opened in 1929, replacing the original school.¹³ An inspection of the council school in 1933 records that there were 5 junior and 5 senior classes, with the junior classes drawing children from the village's infant school, and the senior classes being swelled from transfers from four neighbouring villages.¹⁴

Following the 1944 Education Act, the council school became a secondary school and was officially named Gartree Modern School in 1948.¹⁵ A new Oadby County Junior School was completed in 1955, and named Langmoor Junior School, which is a primary school today.¹⁶

¹ J. Broad (ed.), *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns from the Diocese of Lincoln, 1705-15* (Oxford, 2012), II, pp. 860-61.

² *Education of the Poor Digest*, Parl. Papers 1819 (224), p. 459.

³ *Education Enquiry*, Parl. Papers 1835 (62), p. 494.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ CERC, National School file, Oadby (uncatalogued), letter, 19 May 1980.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *VCH Leics. III*, p. 195.

⁹ R.A. McKinley, 'Education', in *Victoria County History of Leicestershire, vol. III*, p. 249.

¹⁰ ROLLR, E/MB/A/241/1, 18 July 1872

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² ROLLR DE 4365/330, 26 October 1925

¹³ ROLLR DE 4365/330, 27 October 1930

¹⁴ ROLLR DE 4365/330, 21-22 March 1933

¹⁵ ROLLR, E/MB/B/241/4, 6 December 1948

¹⁶ ROLLR, E/MB/B/241/4, Meeting 4 July 1955

The rapid development of Oadby in the decades following the Second World War raised the urgent problem of trying to accommodate the rising population. In 1956, the Director of Education stated that more permanent solutions were needed, rather than adding to existing schools.¹⁷ The Ministry of Education had approved another junior school to be built in 1956/7, plus a new secondary school, and Gartree would be converted into a primary school.¹⁸ The committee were also seeking a site which could carry a third primary school, another secondary school and possibly a grammar school in the future.¹⁹ Today a single site contains Brocks Hill Primary School, Gartree High School and Beauchamp Upper School and Community College.

The second major post-war development came in 1957 with the introduction of the so-called Leicestershire Experiment, later renamed the Leicestershire Plan. Oadby and Wigston was selected as one of the first three areas to trial a new system of comprehensive education, with children moving from primary school to the same secondary school to be called a High School, at age 11, with those who undertook to remain at school until at least age 16 moving at age 14 to an upper school. In 1968, eleven years after the introduction of the plan, Gartree became a high school and Manor High School was also opened.²⁰ Manor High School accommodated around 720 pupils, and was said to be the first in Europe to be purpose-built for ages 11 to 14, and aroused considerable interest from the media and visitors.²¹ Today, Manor High School now accommodates over 900 pupils, making it the largest middle school in the country, and it also specialises in technology. In 1973, the age of transfer to secondary school in Oadby was lowered to 10 and Brookside Primary School opened on adjoining land, catering for 4 to 10 year olds, allowing children to remain at schools on the same site from ages 4 to 14 years.²²

From 1957, Oadby children who wanted to stay at school for O- and A-levels had to transfer at the age of 14 to Guthlaxton school in Wigston.²³ This changed in 1964, when the former Kibworth Beauchamp grammar school was relocated to Oadby and became an upper school, providing education for children over 14.²⁴ This was later developed in the 1970s into a community college, achieving this status through its emphasis on provision for disabled.²⁵

Educational provision in Oadby continues to expand with its increasing population. There are now five primary schools: Langmoor, Brocks Hill and Brookside, mentioned above, Woodland Grange, which opened in 1991 and was extended in 2001 to accommodate 380 pupils,²⁶ and Launde Primary.²⁷ All transfer children to the next stage of their education at age 10, either to Manor High School or Gartree High School, which re-opened in a new state-of-the-art building in 2007.²⁸ Beauchamp College caters for teenagers between 14 and 18. Most recently, during 2012-13 and in common with many other Leicestershire schools, all but two of Oadby's schools converted to academy status.²⁹

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¹⁷ ROLLR, E/MB/B/241/4, 16 January 1956

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ TNA, ED 162/1462, 23-25 May 1972

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² ROLLR, DE 3627/205, 30 April 1971

²³ S.C. Mason, *The Leicestershire Experiment and Plan* (Leicester, 1964), p. 7.

²⁴ TNA, ED 162/1462, 23-25 May 1972

²⁵ A.N. Fairbairn, *The Leicestershire Community Colleges and Centres* (Nottingham, 1979), p. 76.

²⁶ <http://www.woodlandwideweb.org.uk>

²⁷ http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/education/information_about_schools/schools_mapsearch_primary.htm (accessed 11 Aug. 2013)

²⁸ <http://www.gartree.leics.sch.uk>

²⁹ http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/education/information_about_schools/academies_in_leicestershire.htm