

Schooling: Activity 1 - Attending School: Clothing, Fees and Rules

TEACHERS' NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Understand that until 1891, families had to pay for their children to attend school
- Appreciate that some children still missed out on education
- Understand that school clothing was different from today
- Appreciate that rules on behaviour were as important then as they are today
- Develop children's research skills, using historical sources, in particular photographs, a school timetable and texts on school fees and rules, to learn about Victorian schools.

Cross-curricular links

- Art
- ICT
- English
- Maths

Sources



Source 1. Chichester School Boys, 1878



Source 2. East Grinstead Council School, 1900



Source 3a. Chichester National and Lancastrian Schools 'Scale of Fees' May 1881



Source 3b. Audio version of 3a



Source 4a. School Logbook Extracts: Cocking National School, 1880, and St Catherine's Roman Catholic School, Littlehampton, 1886



Source 4b. Audio version of 4a



Source 5a. Rules of Warnham National School, 1875



Source 5b. Audio version of 5a

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Sources 1 and 2

School clothing and hairstyles:

Clothing worn - boys wear long and short trousers, ties, bow ties, leather boots. Girls wear white aprons and pinafores.

Hairstyles - middle partings, ribbons in hair of girls.

Note: Look at some of the serious expressions on children's faces - some children look very intensely at the photo camera, as it may have been the first time they have seen such a machine! They would also have been told not to move as the camera exposure time was several seconds and their faces would blur if they moved.

Sources 3 and 4

Before 1891, scholars had to pay a fee every week in order to go to school. According to the 'Scale of Fees' for 'Chichester National and Lancastrian Schools', 3 old pence (1.25 new pence) was charged per week for one child with 1 pence added per additional child in the same family. School became free to everyone in 1891. Note that Warnham National School fees are different, so different schools charged different fees.

The weekly fee for 5 children in the same family in Chichester would have been 7 pence (just under 3 new pence).

Some families did not have the money available to pay for their children school fees all of the time. The logbook statement written by the teacher at Cocking National School shows this.

Source 5

School started at 9.15am, lunch 12.15-1.45 (1.5 hours) and ended at 4pm (see Rule 1). Children would spend 5.15 hours per day in school.

Standards of behaviour (see Rule 3):

- Children were to come to school clean and tidy
- Children were to be well dressed (note spelling!)
- Children were to be orderly and quiet when entering and leaving school
- Rough behaviour, fighting, throwing stones, and using bad language was forbidden.

Clothing Club (see Rule 8) - Some children went to school barefoot because their families could not afford shoes. Other children, if they did not have proper clothing, would not go to school. Each scholar could pay a small fee into a fund, and this fund ('Clothing Club') would allow the school to save up towards suitable clothing and shoes

for needy children. The school would also contribute a small sum according to what was already accumulated. The clothing club fund made an attempt to assist poorer children and help them attend school. Every Monday morning, according to the Rules of Warnham National School, each scholar could pay a small fee into their fund.

School Library rules (see bottom of Source 5) - books could be borrowed on Mondays for One Penny a month. You had to pay to borrow books in this Victorian school.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Until 1880 there was no law that made education compulsory. In early Victorian Britain, many children did not go to school. Until school fees were abolished in 1891, parents had to pay a few old pence every week for their children to go to school and many families were too poor to afford this. The fee contributed towards the teacher's salary. Instead of sending their children to school, they sent them to do other things like work in farms, or stay at home and help with household chores.

Some help was provided to poorer families (eg. Clothing Club), but this was limited.

Schools in Victorian times provided a basic education for the poor.

See Historical Background and Victorian Timeline for details of the Parliamentary Acts that had an effect on schools and education.

NOTE: This activity includes an additional theme that could be used as homework or a short classroom task:

1a - Absenteeism

Children look at the sources and answer the questions on the Extension: Absenteeism Children's Activity Sheet.