

Contents and information for Teachers

How school life has changed



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This collection is aimed at helping Key Stage 1 children to see that school life was different in the past and that their parent's, grandparent's or great grandparent's school days may have been very different to their own. This helps children to develop their understanding of the important second order concepts **change** and **continuity**.

Some items in the collection also offer opportunities to compare similar items from different periods in the past as well as with the modern equivalents found in your school today. Items in the collections illustrate aspects of school life from the advent of universal education in the Victorian era up to the 1990s.

Learning to read

Alphabet cards – Victorian



Golden Primer - (facsimilie) 1884

Reading scheme book - 1960s



What sort of resources do pupils use today to learn to read?

Items for writing

In the earliest years of state education, children sat in rows learning by rote. The youngest children learned to draw each letter of the alphabet by drawing them in sand with their fingers. Later they moved on to writing on slates, with sharpened slate pencils – these were much cheaper than pencils and paper as the slates could be wiped clean and reused endlessly. However, since classes were very large,

when pupils were all practising their writing the noise must have been awful.

Slate and slate pencil – Victorian era – 1940s

Fountain pen and Bakerlite inkwell – pen 1950 – 70s, inkwell 1940s-60s (often white pottery inkwells were used)

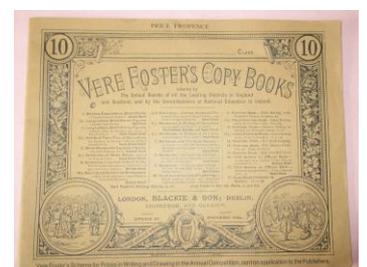


In the 1950s and 60s most schools still sat children in rows of paired or individual desks which had recessed inkwells in them. Although children learned to write using pencils, by the end of primary school they were expected to use fountain pens to write with.

To fill pens like the one in the collection with liquid ink, the gold lever on the barrel was lifted to force air out of the rubber bladder inside the pen. The nib was dipped into the inkwell and the lever was released which sucked ink into the pen. Later fountain pens used prefilled ink cartridges which fitted inside the barrel and were fitted by simply pushing them onto a tube within the nib end.

Copy book – Victorian - 1930s

As well as using slates, handwriting was practised in copy books like this. All



pupils had to write with their right hand, regardless of their actual needs and blots and smudges when using ink, were not tolerated. The repetition of words and phrases in copy books, may also have assisted reading and spelling skills.

Rolling ruler - Victorian to 1940s

Wooden school ruler - 1960s



Rolling rulers were mostly used by teachers, rather than pupils. The round profile meant the ruler could be used to draw ink or chalk lines then rolled away without smudging them. They could also be rolled down the blackboard or a book to highlight each item being read together by the class. They probably also doubled as pointers.

Rulers were for measurement and for drawing straight lines, such as underlining headings. When children used liquid ink for writing they were taught to turn them upside down so the sloped profile meant the ruler did not touch the inked line and smudge it.

Wooden pencil cases - 1960s

Plastic pencil case - 1990s



Prior to the 1970s there were few items of merchandise relating to film and gaming franchises. Today it is quite difficult to get

anything for children that does not relate to a film, TV programme, computer game or celebrity.

Children could conduct some surveys:

- *How many lunchboxes, pencil cases, bags etc belonging to children in your class are/ are not merchandise items?*
- *Which films/ TV programmes/ computer games/ celebrities etc are represented by the merchandise items belonging to each year group?*
- *Approximately how much money was spent on the total number of items for e.g. Pixar/Disney, Marvel etc. (use average prices for items from Argos).*

Learning to count and arithmetic

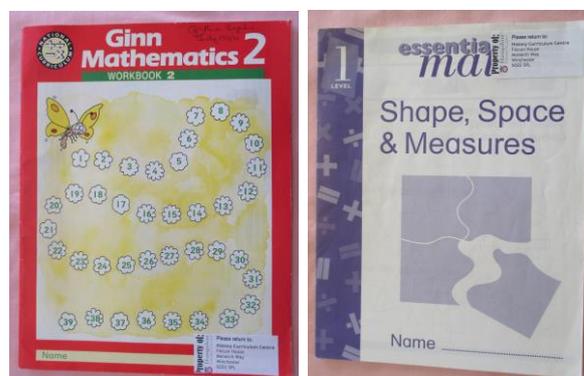
Cowrie shell counters – Victorian

Abacus – Victorian to present (ours is probably mid 20th century)



Ginn Mathematics workbook - 1983

Essential Maths workbook - 1997



Other lessons

PE: drill photo and exercises - Victorian



*Can children guess what the modern equivalent of 'Drill' is? Answer - PE
Get children to perform some of the exercises described on the reverse of the photograph (in the playground if possible, or Hall if not).*

Vocational training

In Victorian times, older pupils had some vocational training. Girls were taught needlework stitches, knitting etc. and how to do housework. Boys learned woodwork or gardening.

Needlework samplers (images) - Victorian



Discuss why girls and boys were taught different skills and whether pupils think that was a good or bad thing.

Ask pupils what they think about Margaret's age? Do they think they could make something like these?

Outdoor and indoor play

As now, schools in the past had a range of equipment for educational or physical play, particularly for the youngest children. Even Victorian schools had some play equipment.

Building blocks - Victorian



*What different construction materials do the children have in their class now?
Would they like to have bricks like these Victorian ones?*

This advert from 1879 explains why building blocks were used in schools.

Many happy hours

Building blocks are among the most pleasing and instructive toys ever invented for children. The structures provide many happy hours for boys and girls, do not readily fall apart, and can be carried about. Children do not soon become tired of the blocks, as their ingenuity is constantly being called into exercise.

Skipping rope and cup and ball - Victorian



Conduct surveys/interviews:

What playground toys/games do children play now?

*What playground toys/games did children's parents/carers/adults in school play when they were at primary school?
Were there any crazes, e.g. Yoyos, French skipping/Yogi ropes, marbles.*

Other items

School bell

This is how the beginning and end of the school day was signalled in many schools. Some Victorian school buildings had a bell tower on the roof.



How are lunchtimes/ breaks etc signalled in school now?

School milk bottle

The 1944 Education Act introduced important social reforms such as making education free for all and opening secondary education to girls. It also included the requirement for local education authorities to provide school meals and school milk for all under 18s. The milk was provided in $\frac{1}{3}$ pint bottles like this.



Milk was not usually refrigerated, it was just left in the crates in which it was delivered, so could freeze in the winter or get very warm and curdled in the summer by the time it was issued to the children.

Can children find out if their parents/ grandparents/carers got free school milk and if so did they like it?

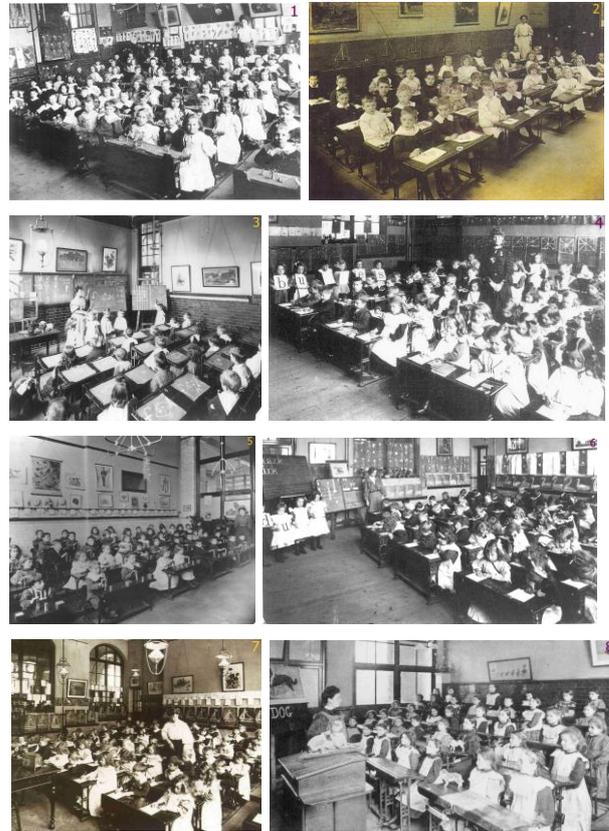
The need for secondary schools to provide milk was removed in 1968 by Harold Wilson's Labour government. In 1971 Margaret Thatcher removed the requirement for children over seven to get milk. In 1977 it was withdrawn altogether by the then Labour Government. Today milk is again provided in schools as a result of dairy industry promotion.

School clothing

Whilst today the wearing of school uniform in primary schools is more or less ubiquitous, this is a relatively recent thing.

Use the photographs provided (8 x Victorian plus 2x 1960s) to investigate what pupils are wearing.

Set of 8 laminated photographs of Victorian classrooms



Girl's pinafore

They may see in some of the Victorian class photographs most of the girls are wearing a pinafore like this. Although not a uniform, these were very common as they offered protection which helped to make everyday clothing last as long as possible.



Do the pupils in the Victorian schools look like they are enjoying their lessons?

1960s class photographs



Left - girls from a 1961 Y1 equivalent class modelling the Easter bonnets they have just completed. The rolling backboard is visible behind the group and the corner of the wendy house is just visible to the left.

Right - the boys and girls of a Y4 equivalent class taken in 1964. They are in the school hall of their very newly built junior school.

No one is in school uniform as neither of these schools had uniforms at the time.

Homework Survey:

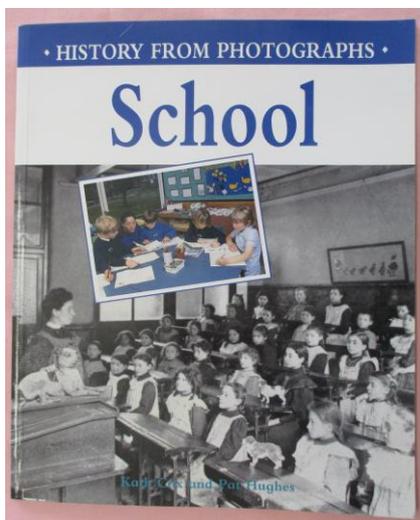
At what age did pupils' parents/carers/adults in school begin to wear school uniform, infant school, junior school or secondary school?

Schools and classrooms

Use the photographs provided, the BIG Book, your own buildings and any photographs you might source from parents/ grandparents/ school staff / the local museum/history society or local newspaper to examine how your school buildings and interiors have changed over time.

What equipment, furniture etc. do pupils recognise and what do they need to investigate further?

Big book: History from photographs: School



Teacher's cane

Today schools focus on rewarding good behaviour etc rather than punishing poor behaviour, with any punishment generally being in the form of removal of privileges. In the past though from the Victorian period and right up until the 1980s in England (later in Scotland and Ireland), corporal punishment could be used to punish bad behaviour, misdemeanours, or even failure to learn. However, during that time its use became rarer and rarer.



Adults could be interviewed about their experience of punishments at school. Were they corporal or something else, e.g. being sent to the Head teacher's office or picking up litter in the playground etc?

Attendance Reward Card (facsimile) and Attendance Medal - Victorian

In Victorian times the school system relied as much on the 'carrots' of these two items as on the stick (literally). However the carrots were aimed as much at parents as pupils.



Even when schools became entirely free, some families could not afford to lose the wages their children were earning in factories, so still kept them out of school. Schools lost grant money if there were too many absences, so reward certificates and medals were introduced to improve attendance and raise the profile of education.

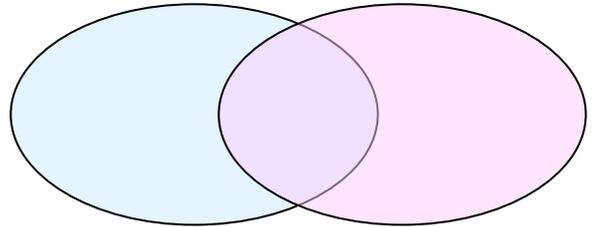
What methods are used now to promote/reward good attendance?

Using this collection

Since this collection is particularly aimed at highlighting changes in school life since free education for all children was first available, this should be the focus of any work. So your study should involve lots of comparing schools today and those illustrated by the artefacts and images contained in this collection.

- Identifying similarities and differences between school life today and the sort of school lives illustrated by the artefacts and images is probably your initial focus.

This can include sorting artefacts into then/now/both Venn diagrams to identify items that were only used in the past (e.g. the cane!), are only used now, or those that were used in the past and are still used now, although perhaps in a different form.



Secondly you might focus on changes over time, such as:

- the way children learnt to read, write or count,
- changes in the way children were disciplined,
- subjects taught,
- classrooms arrangement - rows of desks or tables dotted about,
- school dinners,
- length of day
- how many years children attended school for.

- Some of this work will involve carefully studying the artefacts and images to gain or deduce information about school life in the more distant past, but involving adults is key. Spend time getting children to devise *good* questions to ask parents/ carers/ other adults about their school days. Adults' reminiscences will not only produce additional information about schools in the past but also demonstrate one of the many ways we find out about the past. Any information collected can be used later for your final product of the study, which might be a display, presentation (including soundbites recorded for interviews with adults) class museum, webpage or class book.