

A group of school children in front of a fence. The image is overlaid with a blue tint. The children are of various ages and are looking towards the camera. Some are giving thumbs up. The background shows a chain-link fence and industrial buildings in the distance.

A History of Our Lady & St Joseph School

Kingsland, Hackney

Celebrating 150 years of education

School timeline

- 1854** Fr William Lockhart begins the Kingsland Mission at 83 Culford Road. Early teaching is arranged informally by parishioners.
- 1856** A former paper-dyeing factory on Culford Road is converted into a church and schools. At this time, Fr Lockhart's mother teaches the middle class children and her friend, Miss Athy, the Infants and girls schools. A lay master teaches the boys.
- 1862** Two visits from Cardinal Wiseman to watch the school plays.
- 1865** The Sisters of Providence arrive to help with the teaching.
- 1874** The Rosminian Fathers leave Kingsland for Ely Place.
- 1877** The Sisters of Providence are replaced by Servite Sisters.
- 1880** The Servites are replaced by the Servants of the Sacred Heart.
- 1894** The Ursulines of Jesus come to Kingsland and move into 163 Culford Road. Apart from the period between 1958 and 1977, they have been a constant presence in the parish.
- 1940-41** The area is damaged by the Blitz and the school is evacuated to Bugbrook, Northamptonshire, until 1943.
- 1959** Opening of the Cardinal Pole Secondary School. St Joseph's becomes an Infants and Junior School.
- 1964** The new church on Balls Pond Road is completed.
- 1972** First phase of the new buildings is completed. Around this time the school was renamed Our Lady and St Joseph.
- 1989** New school buildings opened by Cardinal Hume.
- 1998** The school becomes an island site, with the demolition of the last house on the corner of De Beauvoir and Tottenham Roads.
- 2006** The community centre is opened by Bishop Bernard Longley, commemorating 150 years since the school was founded.

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Part One: The early years

The modern buildings of Our Lady and St Joseph School disguise its long history. The school's origins go back to the informal teaching arranged at the new Mission of Kingsland in 1854 – a year that saw the birth of Oscar Wilde, the beginning of the Crimean War and Pope Pius IX's proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Since then, the school has gone through various

incarnations, used several properties and been linked to five different religious congregations. Rather confusingly, it has variously been called 'St Joseph's Catholic School,' 'Kingsland R.C. School' and (only from the mid-1970s) 'Our Lady and St Joseph School'. Thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of the local Catholic community, the school has thus continued to serve the area for over 150 years.



Our Lady and St Joseph School with Bishop Bernard Longley, 2006

Education in Victorian London

The education of children was originally organised by private individuals, charitable institutions and churches. There were many private schools in 17th and 18th century Hackney and Islington, which were then country villages on the edge of London. The most celebrated of these was Dr Newcome's Academy (Hackney School). Such was its fame that members of the Royal Family would even attend the annual school play. There was also provision for the poorer children: there were two such schools in Hackney as early as 1616 and by 1833 as many as four infants' and 59 day schools. There was also a local tradition of schools for dissenters. In the late 17th century, for example, Daniel Defoe and Samuel Wesley were both educated at the progressive Morton's Academy on Newington Green.

The rapid expansion of the Catholic community, thanks to Catholic emancipation (1829), the Restoration of the Hierarchy (1850) and the growth of the urban, mostly Irish Catholic population, meant that many Catholic schools were founded in the 19th century. Education was a major priority for the Church and Cardinal Manning famously delayed the building of Westminster Cathedral so that funding could be provided for education. 'Could I leave 20,000 children without education,'

he once said, 'and drain my friends and my flock to pile up stones and bricks?' He believed that 'the care of children is the first duty after, and even with, the salvation of our own soul'. Schools were deemed especially necessary to prevent the 'leakage' of young Catholics to the Protestant schools. By 1869, 14,027 Catholic children were on the books of the parish schools in the Archdiocese of Westminster.

It should, of course, be remembered that these early Catholic schools were set up before the 1870 Education Act, which established a national system of state education under locally elected school boards. It was not until 1902 that local government (LEA) took responsibility for education. In the meantime, Catholic schools were financed by voluntary contributions and the nominal fees paid by pupils.

From 1847, Catholics were able to apply for government grants (covering, for example, a third of the cost of building a school) and a new body was formed, the Catholic Poor School Committee, to oversee interaction between the Church and the government. In 1849, the committee opened St Mary's College in Hammersmith (now at Strawberry Hill) for the training of Catholic teachers.

The foundation of the schools at Kingsland

Kingsland had been sparsely populated until the 19th century. As the name suggests, the area had been used by the king as hunting ground, and was particularly favoured by Henry VIII. The legend that he used the hunting lodge to secretly meet Anne Boleyn is continued in road names such as King Henry's Walk and Boleyn Road. By the 18th century, much of Kingsland was sold to private individuals and leased to watercress growers, brick-makers, claypit owners and the like. The 19th century saw much residential development in the area, including, of course, De Beauvoir Town, which originated in 1821 when an ambitious developer, William Rhodes, secured a lease for 150 acres of land from the landowner, Rev. Peter de Beauvoir. Rhodes planned to build elegant residences for the well-to-do in a grid pattern, with four squares on diagonal streets intersecting at an octagon. However, only part of the plan was actually finished, including one of the squares (De Beauvoir Square), due in part to a lengthy court case that investigated Rhodes' purchase of the land.

It was inevitable that a Catholic church would eventually be built to serve the area and at Easter 1854 a new mission was founded at Kingsland and placed under the care of Fr William Lockhart, a prominent convert and former protégé of John Henry Newman at Oxford and Littlemore.

He belonged to the Institute of Charity, a congregation of priests founded in Italy in 1832 by the Blessed Antonio Rosmini – hence the Institute's popular name, the Rosminians. In time, Fr Lockhart was joined by several assistant priests, the longest serving being Fr William Lewthwaite, who was actually two years older than Lockhart and had formerly been an Anglican clergyman in the Leeds area. Lewthwaite did much work in Hoxton (where he established a school) before it was taken over by the Augustinians; he also ran Kingsland during Lockhart's frequent absences due to poor health. Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman wrote about the rapid



Father William Lockhart

growth of the Church in north London in his Pastoral Letter of 13 May 1856:

It is yearly happening that a district springs up and becomes densely peopled, where before was only a thin and scattered population. The few Catholics among it were amply provided for in the next mission, by whose priests they were attended. But the encrease [sic] of numbers now requires a new foundation, a decent chapel, a residence for a priest, a school, and then maintenance, however slender, for priest and teacher. This, dearly beloved, is no fanciful picture of our ever growing wants. The two missions of Clerkenwell and Islington arose within the limits of a mission in the city, by the spread of the population towards the north, and the formation of new suburban districts. Two priests had to be stationed at each. Within

the last few years two new missions arose from the first of these, requiring three additional priests: making five where two had sufficed before. Then lately it has been found necessary to subdivide the second of the districts mentioned. A new and flourishing mission has been started in Kingsland, conducted by two Fathers of Charity, and a large building has been transformed into a most becoming temporary chapel, with ample schools. And already this new mission is preparing the way for further extension, by the purchase of schools at some little distance.

The new Catholic Mission at Kingsland was based at 83 (later renumbered 163) Culford Road, thanks to the generosity of Thomas Kelly, a well-to-do Irish builder in the locality. At first, a room in his house was used as a chapel but, as the congregation grew, it



The gothic interior of the old church – the first floor of a converted factory, 1856-1964

was replaced by a converted storage shed behind the house. As the thoughts of the fathers turned to the education of the Catholic children of the area, this rather humble structure served as the first school and the sanctuary was curtained off to form a makeshift classroom area.

On 29 September 1856 more permanent and dignified buildings were opened, and this is normally considered as the formal beginning of the church and schools of Our Lady and St Joseph. A paper-dyeing factory was converted into a church through the work of two of the leading Catholic architects of the time, William Wilkinson Wardell (also responsible for the great cathedrals of Sydney and Melbourne in Australia) and, later, Edward Welby Pugin (the son of the more famous Pugin, who also designed St Monica's Priory, Hoxton and St Scholastica's Retreat, Clapton). The church formed the upper part of the building, with the school rooms below. The complex was demolished in the early 1970s, having served the Catholic community for over a hundred years. One of the few survivals of the original church is the large crucifix outside the present school, facing De Beauvoir Road, which was originally above the High Altar.



Who lived in the new Kingsland mission?

Although there were poorer families in the area, there were none of the ghastly slums so famously described in Henry Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor (1851). According to the 1868 National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland:

The streets [of Hackney] are in general straight, well-paved, clean, and lighted with gas, being under the superintendence of a local board of works. The houses are substantial and commodious, and are well supplied with water. The extensive silk mills formerly existing here have long been removed, and the place is now chiefly inhabited by city merchants and gentlemen engaged in business in London.

An early neighbour of the church and school was Joanna Vassa, who had inherited the considerable estate of her father, Olaudah Equiano, a former slave and leading abolitionist (see page 19).

In July 1870, Fr Lockhart wrote that 'the kind of families we have consist of middle class people, who are forever wanting the priest to take tea or wine or whisky and water, and only a priest who is known to be above self-indulgence will preserve the respect of the people.' This was not, however, a temptation for Lockhart himself, who was a strict tee-totaller and a leading figure in the Catholic Temperance Movement.

Joanna Vassa – a famous neighbour

A famous resident of Tottenham Road, on the site now occupied by the school, was Joanna Vassa (1795-1857). Her father was Gustavus Vassa (aka Olaudah Equiano), one of the leading figures in the abolition of slavery and a principal character in the 2007 film, *Amazing Grace*. Originally from Nigeria, he was sold into slavery but eventually bought his freedom, became a merchant and wrote his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. He was a prominent member of the 'Sons of Africa', a group of twelve black men who campaigned for abolition, and married an English woman, Susanna Cullen. His daughter and heiress, Joanna,

married a Congregationalist minister, Rev. Henry Bromley, and for many years helped him run a chapel at Clavering, near Saffron Walden. In 1845 they moved to Tottenham Road and would have seen the early days of the church and school. They are buried at the Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington, and their tomb has recently been restored.

The links with the Abolitionist Movement do not end there. One of Fr Lockhart's converts was William Wilberforce, the eldest son of the great Wilberforce. He converted in 1863 and was an occasional guest at Fr Lockhart's presbytery.



Joanna Vassa's parents
Gustavus Vassa
(aka Olaudah Equiano)
and Susanna Cullen

School life in the 1860s

The parish and school archives are virtually non-existent. However, we are fortunate that both Fr Lockhart and Fr Lewthwaite regularly wrote to the Father General of the Institute, based at the Piedmontese town of Stresa (Italy), as well as the Father Provincial in England. These letters were kept, together with several other items relating to Kingsland, and are now stored at the Institute's archive at the Collegio Rosmini, Stresa. This makes it possible to build up a vivid picture of the schools' early years.

It is important to remember that there were a number of separate schools in the parish, each occupying one or more rooms below the church or, after the arrival of the nuns, at the convent. The plans for the

schools under the church drawn up by Fr Lewthwaite in May 1861 show separate rooms for the 'School for Girls and Infants,' 'School for Poor Boys' and the 'Commercial School' for the fee-paying middle classes.

The first teachers seem to have been parishioners who organised themselves into a rota. In 1856, Fr Lockhart's mother, Martha, opened a Private School for middle class children. She had converted to Catholicism in 1846 and had spent a period with the Sisters of the Convent of Our Lady at Greenwich. When the mission was founded at Kingsland, Mrs Lockhart was the principal benefactor and paid for much of the property and subsequent building work. In 1856, she left Greenwich and moved to Kingsland, where she lived

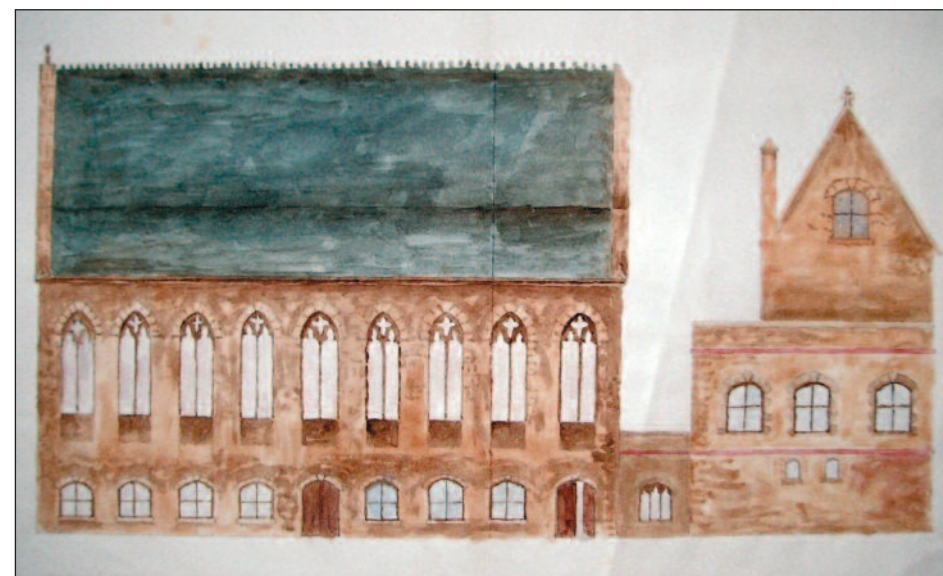


Plans of the church and house of the Institute of Charity, May 1861

a sort of quasi-monastic life, even wearing a religious habit. She was joined by another former Greenwich sister, Miss Catherine Athy, who looked after the Parish School for Girls and Infants. However, Mrs Lockhart's health soon began to decline; in 1857 she stopped teaching and turned her attentions to Catholic publishing and the foundation of St Joseph's Press. Her pupils were taken over by Mrs Tayler, a convert and widow of the former Anglican Rector of Stoke Newington. Miss Athy, meanwhile, continued teaching in the Parish School, where she was joined by her mother and sister.

Likewise, the poorer boys were taught by lay masters, like Mr Carr or Mr Needham, and Rosminian brothers, such as Br James

Foreigner, who worked at Kingsland between 1863 and 1868, when he left the Institute. For the more 'respectable' boys, the head schoolmaster for many years was the Liverpudlian Joseph Atkinson, who combined his teaching duties with the editing of a popular magazine, Catholic Opinion, which had been purchased by Mrs Lockhart in 1867. Atkinson left Kingsland in 1869 and joined the Rosminians; he was ordained in 1875 and died six years later. In his letters, Lockhart occasionally asked the Institute to send a priest to take charge of education—'I wish you could spare Br John Edwards when he is a Priest,' Lockhart wrote to Father General on 21 June 1862. 'We want someone who understands schools, which neither Fr Lewthwaite or myself do. Also having a priest at head



A view of the church, with the schools on the ground floor, seen from Tottenham Road in 1861

of the Middle Schools would give a great additional importance to it.'

In 1865 the female branch of the Institute of Charity, the Sisters of Providence, arrived in Kingsland to take care of the Girls and Infant schools and set up a Private School for 'young ladies.' They did sterling work although their relationship with the clergy was sometimes rocky. In his letters to Stresa, Lockhart frequently complained that the Sisters refused government inspection (which was required) and were reluctant to teach boys under the age of seven. *'If the Nuns do not take them,'* he wrote, *'they will have to go to Protestant schools and their condition will in some cases be worse than before.'* Indeed, he threatened to get rid of the Sisters and replace them with a

more compliant congregation, such as the Filles de la Croix (Sisters of the Cross) from Belgium, who had previously shown an interest in working at Kingsland.

The school year was punctuated by a number of special events. Each summer there was an excursion to a nearby attraction. On 15 July 1857, for example, the schools at Kingsland and Hoxton (both under the Institute of Charity) spent the day at Rye House. There were also school plays; indeed, St Joseph's seems to have had a thriving theatrical tradition. On 9 March 1862, Fr Lockhart wrote that Cardinal Wiseman *'did us the honour of dining with us and attending the dramatic entertainment by the boys of our Collegiate School. On the last day of the Carnival he*



Ratcliffe College in Leicestershire. Fr Lockhart hoped that his school in Kingsland would grow into a top quality College like Ratcliffe (which was also run by the Rosminians)

attended again the performance of his own drama founded on the life of St Alexius and expressed himself greatly pleased.'

The following year the Church Notice Book advertised a school play that *'embodies various historical facts connected with the Conversion of England to Christianity in the sixth century and shows the hold of the Catholic Faith in Ireland, at the time the first missions to England were desolated by the Pelagian heresy.'*

The school had a strong relationship with the parish, the children participating at Masses, processions and other festive occasions. In 1864 a Children's Mass was started every Sunday at half past nine, during which *'the children will occupy the front seats and sing during Mass'*. The parish notice went on to say that *'children will not be admitted to the other Masses without a note from the clergy'*.

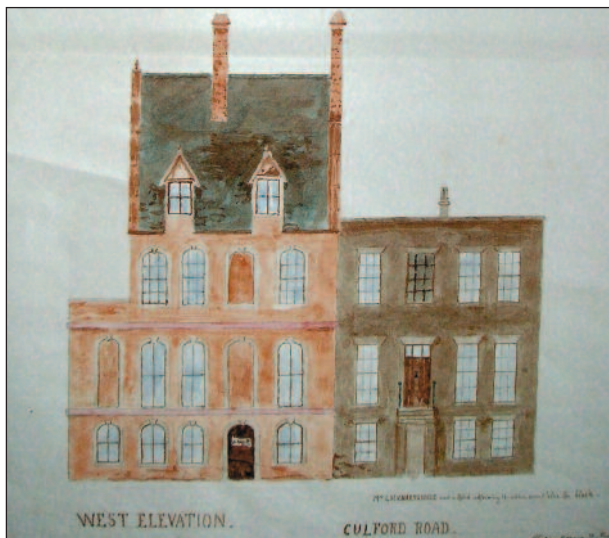
There were also close links between the parish school and Ratcliffe College in Leicestershire, which was also run by the Institute of Charity. Writing to the Father General in November 1861, Fr Lockhart reported that *'the superior boys' school under Atkinson is progressing very satisfactorily and will I hope always form a nursery for Ratcliffe – 12 of our former pupils are there at present.'* Soon after his appointment as Archbishop of Westminster, Manning told Lockhart that he wished the Fathers to establish a *'school for boarders and day scholars similar to St Charles*

School [Bayswater].' Lockhart considered Clapton, which then fell under Kingsland's care, to be a suitable and healthy location for this project. He proposed that the extension of the Ratcliffe buildings, which was then starting, should be delayed so that the Institute could *'have time to deliberate on the whole merits of the case of Clapton versus Ratcliffe.'* When a Belgian priest later showed interest in buying Ratcliffe and opening a Catholic Lunatic Asylum there, Lockhart recommended that the Institute should accept the offer and transfer the College to the Kingsland mission.

This fitted in with Lockhart's dream of establishing a flourishing Rosminian centre in London with a large community and flourishing college, all under the supervision of the Father Provincial. The Institute of Charity could then place themselves alongside the other successful religious orders in London, especially the Jesuits at Farm Street, the Dominicans at Haverstock Hill, the Passionists at Highgate, and the Oratorians at Brompton. In particular, they could concentrate on preaching missions. *'Nothing is more needed than good preachers in London,'* he wrote on 10 May 1864. *'Faber is dead and there is no-one of much name but Manning – as for the Jesuits, they are preaching only to the ladies!'* Indeed, Lockhart was *'thoroughly dissatisfied with our position in all our mission houses; we are simply reduced to the condition of secular [ie diocesan] priests.'* Something more was required.

The late Victorian schools

The Fathers of Charity finally left Kingsland in 1874 for the newly combined missions of Baldwin Gardens and Saffron Hill, then a much more destitute part of London. In need of a larger church, they purchased the medieval chapel that had formerly belonged to the bishops of Ely at Ely Place. Not surprisingly, parishioners were distraught and sent petitions to Cardinal Manning and the Father Provincial, with some 529 signatures. The Sisters of Providence stayed on to help at the Girls and Infant Schools until 1877, when they transferred to Ely Place and were replaced by the Servite Sisters (Mantellate), based at Stamford Hill. Three years later the Servites gave way to the Servants of the Sacred Heart, whose Provincial House was at Homerton.



1879 was a good year for the parish schools. CH Chapman of the Boys' School won the Prize for Latin in the diocesan General Examination of Grammar Schools. Latin seems to have been a speciality of the school for the following year another senior pupil, Herbert Burdis, also won this prize. Meanwhile at the Girls' School, Fanny Hickey won the diocesan Annual Prize and gained highest marks in the Quarterly Exams in September and December 1879. Fanny was one of two pupil teachers, former students who stayed on to assist in class and eventually qualify as teachers themselves.

A modern visitor to the Victorian schools would be struck by the poor teacher/pupil ratio. In 1876, for example, a single Master,

George Robinson, looked after 54 boys, while 133 girls and infants were cared for by the Sisters of Providence and two young pupil teachers, Mary Wehrle and Kate Thorogood. However, attendance was irregular. According to the report of Westminster Diocesan Education Fund, the average attendance in 1876 was actually 33 boys and 97 girls and infants.

The original Culford Road presbytery (left), beside the school (on right)

Financing the schools

Financing the schools was a constant headache for the clergy, even though the first teachers often did their work gratuitously, without a proper salary. The Government took an increasingly active role in education. In the early 1870s, the Government gave Kingsland a grant of around £62 a year for the Boys' and £55 for the Girls' Schools. This was added to the small fee paid by the pupils (the so-called 'School Pence'), which amounted to an annual income of around £60 (boys) and £32 (girls). However, this hardly covered costs – the parish schoolmasters alone were paid salaries that came to a total of about £116 a year.

As time went on more demands were being made by the Government so that educational standards were maintained. The 1870 Education Act set up 2,500 school districts around the country, each of which had an elected School Board that examined the provision of elementary education and could build and run schools out of rates. Fr Lockhart stood as a candidate for the Borough of Hackney School Board; only five of the sixteen candidates could sit on the Board and he came ninth, with a respectable 4,145 votes. In 1874 a Board School (now De Beauvoir Primary School) was built on Tottenham Road, opposite the church. However, many non-Catholics preferred to send their children to St Joseph's rather than the new school.

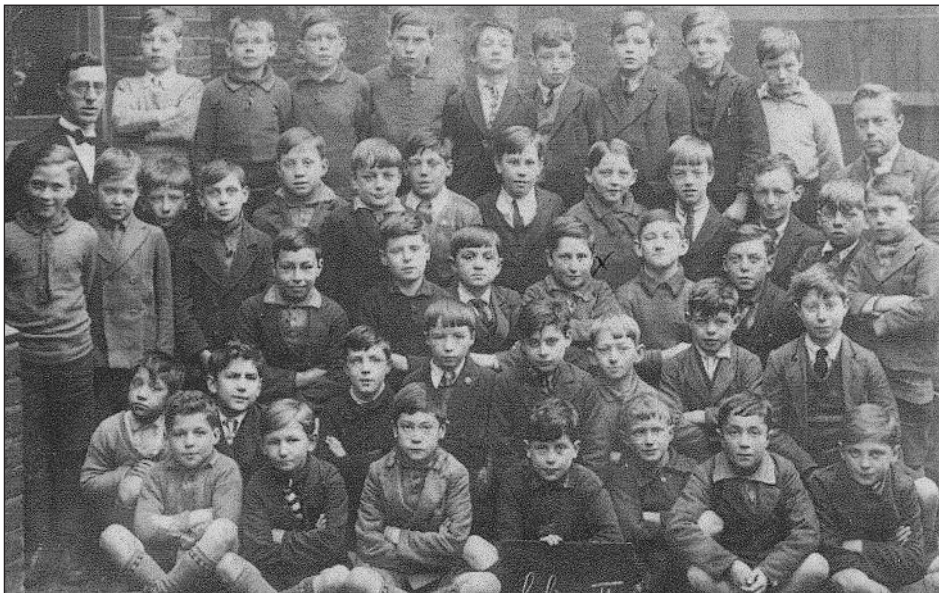
However, financial problems still remained, especially with a rising parish debt – in 1874 the parish had 'bought out' the interest of the Institute of Charity for the princely sum of £3,500. In a letter dated 4 December 1892, the Rector of Kingsland, Fr Donald Skrimshire, wrote to Archbishop Vaughan:

In accordance with your wishes, I send you an accurate statement of the receipts and expenditure of this Mission and Schools. The annual deficit is nearly £150. My boarder, who has been living here for 18 years, died yesterday, and thereby I am suddenly deprived of another £110 a year. I am willing to try by means of outdoor collections, entertainments, and begging, to supply this heavy deficit, but I am unable to cope single-handed with two new burdens recently imposed upon me.

- 1. The Schools are condemned, and to put them into the condition required by the Education Department, a sum of £500 is needed.*
- 2. During the past month, I have been served with two imperative orders from the Sanitary Authorities to erect a new system of Lavatories for the three schools, the cost being estimated at £223.0.0. I shall be pleased to carry out any suggestion made by the Council of temporal administration as to the means of raising these two sums.*



Our Lady and St Joseph School girls class, circa 1920s



Our Lady and St Joseph School boys class, circa 1920s

The Ursulines of Jesus

At the end of 1894 the new Rector of Kingsland, Mgr Martin Howlett, secured the help of another congregation of sisters, the Ursulines of Jesus. This French teaching Order was founded in 1802 at Chavagnesen-Paillers in the Vendée and had recently established a house in Swansea.

The Sisters moved into 164 Culford Road, where the Mission had started forty years previously, and dedicated their Convent to the Holy Angels (Convent des Saints Anges). The house was in a poor shape, as one of the sisters described in the Convent Annals:

It is quite impossible to give a true picture of the dilapidation and dirt left behind by a former tenant. Doors, windows and locks were broken, the wallpaper was hanging in shreds, bugs crawled all over the place, in some rooms the floors gave way under our feet. As we stood among the debris we laughed; there was nothing else we could do.

With the exception of the period between 1958 and 1977, the Ursulines have been present at Kingsland and, for much of that time, were indispensable in teaching at the Parish Schools. Like the Sisters of Providence, they founded a Private School at the Convent, in order to raise money for their work. *'Our Mission is very poor and very much in debt,'* Mgr Howlett wrote,

'so if the Private School is a financial success the sisters could give us a moderate rent for the house until our debt is paid.' Initially the Private School had only seven pupils from three local families. The Kingsland superior, Mother Louise des Anges, wrote to the Mother General: *'it is hardly worth beginning a school with so few pupils but Monsignor says that others will come; we must give the parents time to get to know us.'*

The Ursulines encountered many difficulties at first, especially given their poor command of English, lack of teaching qualifications and limited resources. Permission had to be gained from France for the sisters' expenditure – the superiors in France did not see the need for such things as curtains and carpets, although Mother Louise was at pains to point out that these were considered necessary in England.

By 1903, each school had a Headmistress and Assistant (both Ursulines) as well as lay sub-assistants. Sr Ange de la Providence was Headmistress of the Boys' School, Sr Mary Laetitia Headmistress of the Girls' and Infants' and Sr Mary Lawrence in charge of the Private School, which now had thirty pupils (each of whom paid £4.4.0d a year to attend the school).



The chapel in the gardens of the Ursuline Sisters' convent in Culford Road, built in the early 1900s



A statue of St Joseph in the old school hall



Senior girls about 1912-1913, in the garden of the Ursuline Convent, Culford Road

Changing times

So things continued. In 1904 the sisters acquired another house in Culford Road for the Private School and, between 1911 and 1914, a house in Buckingham Road was rented and also used for this purpose. Meanwhile, Mgr Howlett managed to raise funds and build a new wing for the overcrowded Parish Schools.

The First World War brought the threat of German bombing. These generated great fear, especially after a daylight raid on 13 June 1917 resulted in 162 fatalities, including 18 pupils of the Upper North Street School in Poplar. On the night of 19 October 1917, five Zeppelins were seen

over London and the school buildings at Kingsland shook from the bombing. The Ursulines, together with a group of parishioners, sheltered under the choir loft in the church and feared that they would be crushed. Fr MacCarroll even gave the final absolution.

During the Second World War the children were safely evacuated to Bugbrook, Northamptonshire. At first, the local children had lessons each morning in the school while the Kingsland group went for a walk; then in the afternoon the situation was reversed. Eventually they were given the use of a church hall



Children from Our Lady & St Joseph School evacuated to Northampton, 1939

and a chapel was set up in an upstairs room of a pub, there being no Catholic church in Bugbrook at the time. The children returned to Kingsland in 1943 only to later encounter the V1 and V2 bombings, during which two classrooms served as air raid shelters.

For much of its first century of existence, Kingsland was in debt and the various parish priests did their best to raise money and launch appeals. Fr William Dempsey had the vision of building a new school and in 1934 bought a piece of land at Balls Pond Road and King Henry's Walk, formerly belonging to the Bookbinders Provident Asylum (there were almshouses here, similar to the ones next door). Fr Dempsey paid a deposit of £1,435 – more than he could really afford – and borrowed the rest (over £13,000). The 1944 Education Act established a tripartite system of secondary education: grammar schools; secondary technical schools and secondary modern schools (plus comprehensive schools that combined these standards). Fr Dempsey considered using the plot of land for a secondary modern school, but in the end the needs of the parish triumphed. It was decided to build a new church, presbytery and parish hall, and meanwhile rebuild the school on the Culford Road site.

The present church, designed by Wilfred C Mangan, was first used in 1962 and completed in 1964. In 1963 a new building was constructed for St Joseph's School, with the support of the LCC. However, Fr Thomas Hookham noted in

the parish newsletter (then called the Kingsland Echo) that 'much of the good of this wonderful new school will be wasted when so many of our children return to their overcrowded homes. How can they do their work and become good citizens when so many are living in such appalling conditions (many families in one room)?' He told a Catholic Herald reporter that he needed five new primary schools since only forty children a year were accepted by the parish school and the Catholic birth rate in Kingsland for 1963 was 268.

St Joseph's took children of all ages – from 1947 this meant up to the age of fifteen. In 1959 St Joseph's became an infant and junior school only. The older children were separated to form the nucleus of the new Cardinal Pole School, which was opened on Wenlock Road, Shoreditch. In 1964, the Cardinal Pole was moved to new buildings on Kenworthy Road, thanks largely to the efforts of the Parish Priest of Homerton, Fr Charles Carr. By now the new secondary school looked after children from five local parishes: Clapton, Hackney, Homerton, Kingsland and Stoke Newington.

In the early 1970s the old church building was finally demolished, along with several houses owned by the parish, and the present school buildings erected. The first part was ready for use in 1972. Shortly afterwards the school became known as Our Lady and St Joseph, to reaffirm its connection with the parish.



The May Queen Procession, 1960



The Ursuline Sisters with head teacher Mr Dan Goodrich and other school staff, 1962

School life in the 1920s and 30s

What was school life like in the 1920s and 30s? John Lusardi of Sandringham Road attended the school between 1928 and 1934, when he won a scholarship to St Ignatius', Stamford Hill. The Infant School was mixed and run by the kindly Sr Evangelist and Miss Arnold. Classes were held on the ground floor of an extension built on the side of the church. At the age of seven, students progressed to the Boys' (below the church) or the Girls' School (on the first floor of the extension, though they also used one room below the church). There were three boys' classes, each with about twenty-five pupils, taught by Miss Farmer, Mr Eden (who had an Army background) and Mr Monaghan (the Headmaster). Sr Patricia, who was regarded as a disciplinarian, looked after the Girls' School. John remembers playing the part of Brutus in a production of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and playing football in the small playground in front of the church. There was an annual outing to High Beach, Epping Forest, and regular trips to the Haggerston Baths for swimming. Discipline was strict and, as in all the schools of the period, the cane was regularly used as a corporal punishment.

School Vocations

It is worth noting that five pupils who attended the girls' school later became Ursulines of Jesus: Sr Mary Edmund Scanlon, Sr Mary Rose Moynihan,

Sr Helena Moynihan, Sr Mary Monica Prendergast and Sr Anne Christine Coster.

In addition, the school has produced several priestly and religious vocations, including Joseph Atkinson IC (the first Schoolmaster of the Boys School who retired to become a Rosminian), Anthony Wehrle IC (who entered the Institute of Charity from the school in 1869), Fr John McGrath (who founded the parish of Kingsbury, Wembley Park in 1937), Fr Bernard Fisher (diocesan archivist from 1948 to 1965), Canon John Murphy (Parish Priest of Our Lady of Willesden, 1964-84), Fr Anthony Turbett (who later returned to Kingsland as a Curate and died in 2000, aged 52) and Fr John Cunningham (at the time of writing Parish Priest of Waltham Cross).



Bishop Patrick Casey says Mass in the school hall

Profile of an old boy: Bishop Patrick Joseph Casey (1913-99)

Patrick Joseph Casey was born at Stoke Newington on 20 November 1913, the son of Patrick and Bridget Casey (nee Norris). He was educated at St Joseph's Parochial School and in later life kept in touch with his former teacher, Sr Evangelist. In 1969 he assisted at her Requiem. After Kingsland, he went on to St Edmund's College, Ware, to train for the Priesthood. On 3 June 1939 he was ordained priest by Cardinal Hinsley.

His first appointment in 1939 was as Assistant Priest at St James', Spanish Place. He stayed there for a total of twenty-one years and, since the Rector was Bishop George Craven, one of the Westminster Auxiliaries, Casey virtually acted as parish priest. In June 1961 Casey became parish priest of Our Lady of Dolours, Hendon and was heavily involved in splitting the parish so as to form St Patrick's, West Hendon. His time at Spanish Place and Hendon had proved his administrative ability and so, in 1963, he was appointed Vicar General by the new Archbishop, John Carmel Heenan. The following year he became a Domestic Prelate (with the title of Monsignor) and a Canon of Westminster Cathedral.

On 2 February 1966 he was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, with the titular see of Sufar. Three years later he became Bishop of Brentwood, with the proviso that he would only remain for ten years. He tried to implement the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, setting up commissions on liturgy and justice and peace, and undertaking a series of consultations. He also extended Brentwood Cathedral. At the same time he maintained close relations with Westminster and acted as chief celebrant at the Funeral Mass of Cardinal Heenan, which was televised live on TV. On 31 May 1975 he returned to Kingsland to consecrate the new church once the debt had been paid off.

In 1979 he resigned after ten years as bishop and, the following year, became parish priest of Our Most Holy Redeemer and St Thomas More in Chelsea. He remained in Chelsea until September 1989, when he retired to Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. In his remaining years it was his delight to assist in the church next door to his home. Bishop Casey died on 26 January 1999, aged 85, and had been a bishop thirty-three years.

Memories of fifty years ago

The following memories have been provided by Michael Watts, an old boy who now lives in Harlesden. They give a vivid picture of life at the school after the war.

Wartime in Kingsland

The Balls Pond area suffered badly during the war. In the blitz (September 1940 – May 1941) the main targets were the railway lines which ran from the West to the docks, the telephone exchange on Kingsland Green and the water treatment and pumping stations farther north beyond Stoke Newington. Kerridge Court, which is in Kingsbury Road (just off Balls Pond Road), is named after a bomb disposal officer who was killed while attempting to defuse a parachute mine on the site. My parents' house in Queen Margaret's Grove was completely destroyed on 7 September 1940.

At the bottom of Tottenham Road (Kingsland Road end) an open brick reservoir was built to hold water for the fire fighting services. I remember my parents telling me that they were at this point in Kingsland Road on the night of 29 December 1940 and watched the City area in flames – the so-called 'Fire of London'. That night 10,000 firebombs were dropped. To try to fight the fires the hoses were stretched from the Tottenham Road reservoir as far as the City.

Later in the war the danger was from the V1 and V2 rockets. I remember seeing a V1 pass overhead. I was pushed to the ground but the rocket carried on, the sound of the engine cutting out somewhere in the area of St Paul's Road. The V2's you never heard. Some of the bomb sites were levelled and anti-aircraft guns were installed on them. Whenever the sirens went off, the guns would start firing. I think this was only a morale boosting exercise. In fact, the falling shrapnel from the shells did more damage.

When VE Day (8 May 1945) was declared there were parties and dancing on the streets. On 8 June 1946 marching soldiers and military vehicles passed down the Kingsland Road to the City for the Victory Parade. After the war the bomb sites became the playgrounds of the local children. One site which was popular with boys at St Joseph's was in King Henry's Walk behind the present church. Disabled and damaged army vehicles were stored there and, as you can imagine, they were a magnet to the boys.

Starting at St Joseph's

My early schooling was very erratic, due to health problems. My first school, because it was close to home, was St Jude's C of E School. This was excellent but after that I received my schooling at home or

convalescent homes, mainly Catholic convents. By the time I went to St Joseph's, I had received my First Holy Communion and I was a fully trained altar server.

Before I was received into the school, I had to spend a time under assessment. This assessment room was a round room on the first floor. To get to it you had to go up a narrow stone circular staircase. It carried on upwards and came out on the right hand side of the altar of the church. This staircase was used by the nuns to get into the church. They sat in the pews on the right hand side of the altar.

After assessment I was for a while in a class that was held in the ground floor school hall which was screened off by curtains. This was because the school was overcrowded. The school teacher was an Indian lady, maybe Goan, who used to regale us with stories of earthquakes and monsoons in her homeland. Occasionally she used to dress in a sari. I can't remember her name but in those days she was a novelty.

I was allocated a 'friend' by the name of Kevin Fitzgibbon who was to look after me as a new boy. Unfortunately we got into trouble the first week. We were approached during playtime by a bigger lad, who was a bit of a bully. He demanded money from Kevin, who handed over a couple of pennies. He started on me but I promptly hit him. I should explain that, because I was small and lightly built, my father, who

was himself a good amateur boxer, had decided to teach me the art of boxing. And so I gave this bully a very clinical hiding. As usual, in schools, if a fight starts, a crowd soon gets around it. After a few minutes of this the crowd fell silent because of the appearance of Sr Elizabeth. I thought I was in trouble, but all she seemed bothered about were my right knuckles, which were grazed. She was also very interested how a young lad had learned to box as I could be a good candidate for the boxing team. As it turned out, for various reasons, this never happened. She seemed not to have too much time for the other lad.

Sr Bernadette and Fr Dempsey

After a year I transferred into Sr Bernadette's class. This was a culture shock! Although a very good teacher she was sometimes too free with the cane, which she had hidden in the folds of her habit. In fact, my mother took her on over this and won!

Sr Bernadette was always agitated when the parish priest, Fr Dempsey, appeared. He would arrive unannounced on the pretext of testing us for our Religious Knowledge. This would involve a few simple questions and then individual students were 'tested'. This 'testing' took place in an open alcove off the classroom where books were stored. He sat on a chair with you facing him. The 'testing'

normally involved a discussion, during the football season, of how Arsenal had performed on the previous Saturday. If you didn't support Arsenal you were a traitor! Fr Dempsey also wanted to know of any new jokes that were going around.

When I knew Fr Dempsey he was quite rotund and it took two altar boys to help him robe, particularly when it came to putting on the girdle. He had a booming voice and didn't need a microphone for his sermons. I can remember two sermons. One, when he harangued the congregation for the poor collection, and how was he to carry out the building of a new church? On one occasion an over zealous Knight of St Columba tuned away an elderly, very poorly dressed lady from Sunday Mass. Fr Dempsey got to hear of this and his thundering sermon the following Sunday had everyone pinned to their seats.

You were expected to attend Mass (9.30am) where the children sat in the front seats, normally on the left with a nun at the end of each pew. If you weren't there, you were asked why on the Monday morning. We also had to go to Sunday School as training for Confirmation.

School Life

Health visitors came to the school regularly. We were x-rayed and checked from head to toe, including eyesight. Everyone used to be interested to see if any children were coated with a purple medicinal dye. We never knew quite why but the poor recipient was deemed to have the 'plague'. If thought necessary a child was sent to the Maternity and Child Welfare Clinic, Richmond Road, or the Red Cross Health Centre at the Dalston Lane/Graham Road junction for artificial sunlight treatment, which was supposed to be a cure for many childhood problems. If something more serious was found the child was sent to the German Hospital, Ritson Road, which had been built for the many German immigrants and was originally staffed by German doctors.

The caretaker in my time was Mr Ferrari. His house had a yard that opened onto the playground, in front of Sr Bernadette's classroom. He was always making or repairing something, which usually attracted an audience of children. The other attraction was Mrs Ferrari, who used to make buns and cakes which she quietly gave out to the children. Sr Bernadette did not approve.

I can remember the death of old Queen Mary (the widow of George V) in 1953. The headmaster came in to make the announcement. Prayers were said and then we were given the rest of the day off – which pleased us all. Another time we were sent home was when the heavy London smogs came in and it was impossible to see the hand in front of you. Football was the main recreational game played. We used to walk to the London Fields to play. The football pitches were rolled gravel, so you came home with grit in your knees, hands or any other part that had hit the ground.

We went on a number of outings. There was an annual outing to High Beach, Epping Forest every July. There were pilgrimages to Walsingham and Aylesford. A group went to the Festival of Britain, which was held at the South Bank in 1951. My father was a foreman on the massive site and he was allowed about twenty entrance tickets, fourteen of which were given to Sr Bernadette. She distributed them by lot and each of us brought a small present back to her.

Groups also attended Fr Peyton's Rosary Crusade and, in 1954, to the crowning of Our Lady of Willesden at Wembley Stadium.

There was a state or board school in Tottenham Road. The schools had little to do with each other – 'that Protestant school', we called it. There was an entrance to the school in both Balls Pond Road (now a small garage) opposite Kingsbury Road and in Tottenham Road itself. When possible we used it as a short cut, as long as you didn't get caught by some of the pupils.

One last incident I remember happened in 1947. A meeting was organised by Oswald Mosley in Ridley Road, which was known to be anti-Jewish, anti-Irish and anti-Catholic. Despite warnings from the school teachers and our parents not to go near it (it was to be held on a Sunday) we nonetheless went there and were witness to the riots and police horse charges. Oswald Mosley was, of course, the leader of the British Union of Fascists.

Michael Watts

Part Two: A new beginning

In the 21st century Our Lady and St Joseph Catholic Primary School continues to serve a large Catholic population based largely around the parish of Kingsland, Hackney. The parish of Kingsland is one of the largest in London and today is the proud home of the Nigerian Chaplaincy of London. The school today reflects the huge demographic and ethnic changes that have happened in London since the 1950s. In a recent census of the school there were at least 35 distinct nationalities represented, nearly 50% of the school had English as an additional language and this was the same for ethnic background. The universal nature of the Catholic church is represented in the diverse nature of our school. Hackney has always been one of the poorest boroughs in Britain and for a while in the 1990s was deemed to be the most deprived area in Western Europe. Contemporary Hackney is changing at a breathtaking speed with gentrification, social housing and ethnic mobility all affecting the immediate environment. One in four new residents are single wealthy young professionals buying housing to be near the City of London. Traditionally the school served the poor white East End Catholic English population of Dalston and the Kingsland parish. The depression of the 1920s saw the next major arrival from the Irish and Scottish working classes moving to London for manual and mainly unskilled work. Pictures at the time show that the boys' school had two teachers

with Mr Eden and Mr JC Monaghan as head teacher. The boys' faces have changed little since Dickens's time and most would have been personally affected by the First World War. Photos of the girls' schools show more refined features and diets, the girls being under the influence of the Ursuline Sisters. Mr Monaghan is the first substantive head teacher we have details of. He was head teacher in the school from 1926 until April 1958. Photos taken in the 1940s upon the evacuation of the school during the Second World War show the same two teachers in post throughout. Age seems to have changed them little and the boys look better nourished but largely unchanged.



Colin Brown, the schools' first Black Caribbean pupil, with Mrs Mary Martin celebrates his First Communion, 1968

The punishment book

Records of the time show fascinating details about contemporary attitudes to behaviour and punishment. A punishment book begun in September 1943 upon the wartime re-opening of the school remains.

This book lists in great detail offences and punishments. The first entry is that of four boys from the Osborne family, aged 8-13, who were each given two strikes of the cane on each hand for truanting. Mr Monaghan was, as were all head teachers and teachers of the time, a strict disciplinarian and corporal punishment was a regular feature of school life for pupils. Punishments recorded were mainly for dumb insolence, fighting, disturbances in class, stealing, rough play, constant interruption, indecent behaviour, hooliganism in class, impertinence, throwing milk bottles,

throwing food at lunch time, deceit, defiance and bullying. The main one was disobedience! All of these are recorded between 1943 and 1960, worth bearing in mind when someone recalls that Golden Age when all pupils were angels.

The main punishment was one or two strokes on each hand almost always administered by the head teacher. Girls were caned too. On 13 November 1959, for example, the deputy head Ms Rhoda Farmer administered one stroke to nine girls of nine years of age for misbehaviour at dinner. The nuns seemed to equally be free with the cane in those days. The last recorded punishment of girls was in March 1966 for disobedience at organised games. Corporal punishment was finally banned in state schools in 1973.

Quotes taken from the punishment book, 1962–1963

Stealing bus tickets from teacher

This earned two boys 'two on the hand and two on the seat'

Truanting – did not return after dinner – absconded from dinner party

For this misbehaviour, three girls age nine were caned 'one on each hand'

Fighting, stone throwing, creating general disturbance out of school to the scandal of the neighbourhood

As punishment, three boys aged eight to eleven were each given 'two or four on each hand'

Our Lady and St Joseph School in the 1950s

Migration in 1950s

The 1950s saw the largest wave ever of migration to London from Ireland following the Second World War. This migration followed a different pattern to previous ones in that many more professional people moved, including teachers, doctors and nurses as well as the traditional labourers and unskilled. The year 1948 saw the SS Empire "Windrush" bring the first migrants from the West Indies, and they were followed by a large number of the Catholic population from these islands. The focal point of these migrants was still the Church and its institutions and, especially for women, the schools. Links were obviously always close as minutes of governing body meetings show.

Meetings of the managers

A treasure trove of information about this period comes in a book detailing the minutes of meetings of the managers, later governors of the school from 1962 to 1977. This book shows in some ways how little has changed and in others how things have moved on. Meetings in 1962 consisted of four or five managers of the school, usually the parish priest, a representative of what was then the London County Council (LCC), and two or three parishioners.

Dan Goodrich, head teacher 1914-1996

The head teacher sometimes attended and at other times submitted a report. Meetings usually lasted for an hour, minutes were a page long and little was ever discussed about how the pupils were doing. The head teacher at this time was Mr Dan Goodrich (1914-1996). He was an aircraft fitter during the Second World War. He was married for 57 years to Rosaleen and raised eight children – one boy and seven girls. He took over in April 1958 from Mr Monaghan. He was a tall, imposing man with deep roots in the East End of London. His grandfather owned a pawn shop in Whitechapel and his own father ran away to sea at a young age, returning to eventually become a Labour MP and Mayor of Hackney. Mr Goodrich always used to say he was a Hackney boy born and bred and he was immensely proud of his heritage. A keen sailor and a man who cared deeply for the under-privileged of the East End, he regularly took children to Swanage in Dorset to teach them how to sail.

The main concerns of this time were the state of the buildings especially the roof, the pressure from admissions and the need to recruit good teachers. Roofs seemed to dominate most meetings. Another difficulty was getting managers to attend these evening meetings at 170 Culford Road where the presbytery was. The clerk has left a valuable record of this time in beautiful, almost copperplate handwriting.



Visit by Bishop Casey, 1968
Line of honour from Culford Road gate: Bishop Casey with Fr Giffney and Mr Goodrich (head teacher)
Holding up the rear is the proud caretaker, Mr Percy Coster, who was determined to be at the celebration!

School life in the 1960s

HMI Inspection, March 1962

The only record of any inspections as such was the managers' comments about a March 1962 inspection by the HM Inspectorate of Education (HMI). The inspectors commented on the need for building improvements. The report goes on to note key areas about religious education and what today we call standards.

"Educational side of the school. The managers disagree with the paragraph in the report that mentions 'overlong lessons devoted to religious instruction'. The time devoted to religious instruction is forty minutes a day which is less than the time allowances approved for religious instruction."

So, RE lessons took place daily and were frowned on by the HMI.

The next paragraph states:

"The sentences in the report on Class III B should be read along with the fact that this class is composed of backward children. There is no mention in the report of this fact."

This offers a fascinating insight into education 45 years ago and is a lesson for those who speak of some glorious, golden, forgotten age in the past.

From 1962 until 1972 the school always had at least 300 or more pupils on site. There were many more junior-age than infant pupils. The last major function in the Old School Hall was the presentation made to Fr Dempsey in October 1962 to mark his retirement. The school was even then clearly at the cutting edge of technological when it purchased its first tape recorder in October 1962. At class teacher level, staff turnover was surprisingly regular in these years. All teachers had to convince Fr Hokkham, Fr Dempsey and later Canon Kay of their Catholicity, although the nuns were accepted. Minutes often speak of how the candidates "impressed" the managers. When considering promotion, the jobs seemed to almost always go to internal candidates already in post (equal opportunities were unheard of back then). Mr Goodrich read reports to almost no comment, although on 8 July 1964, the minutes stated:

"The Headmaster read his report, which was accepted and kept on file. He was congratulated on his admirable examination results."

The old school buildings

The major drive to demolish the old buildings and begin the process of modernisation began in earnest in March 1965. It took seven years to see it through and four more before it was completed. The result is what is now the infant building, administration offices and school halls.

Admissions pressure was great and by 1965 the managers were in conflict with the divisional office of the LCC. The school wished to admit 320 pupils, but this was more than the local authority wanted.

"...The managers authorise the Headmaster to admit up to a total roll of 320 even if 75 of these were new admissions of the 1959/60 age group. In coming to this resolution the managers took into consideration that there is severe overcrowding in local schools (letter from Mgr Kent to Fr Hookham); and that this problem is increased by migrants, for whom the Council admitted in the past that that provision would have to be made". (June 1965)

By autumn of that year, the LCC, following intense discussions, had caved in and allowed 320 but no more. It was also noted that the cost of the new roof had accelerated to £662. Forty years later it would be £100,000.

Secondary transfer records from these times show large numbers of pupils going

to Cardinal Pole Secondary School and others beginning the long association with St Ignatius and Our Lady's Convent. The vast majority of children stayed within the borough, one major change from today.

1968 was a very significant year for the school. Compulsory purchase orders were placed against the houses in Culford Road and Buckingham Road according to the Hackney Gazette, thus speeding up the expansion of the school. That same year, the Plowden Report encouraged more child-centred learning and a break with traditional forms of teaching. Being in the beginning of reconstruction, the school took this on board. Mr Goodrich emphasised the need for the architects to know about "small group teaching" and "family groupings". The architects were instructed to reflect this in their plans.



Only known photograph of the old house on the corner of De Beauvoir and Tottenham Roads

This year also saw the introduction of a television in the school for the first time and, following Plowden, parents were to be allowed into the school for the first time to see children at work and play. The year also carried a major blow for the school as funds appeared to have frozen for the re-build thanks to the national debt.

The visit of an old boy, Bishop Casey, was much covered and extensively photographed. He was the Bishop of Brentwood and celebrated Mass in the school.

Mr Monaghan, by then a widower, was invited to attend and a photo shows him and Mr Goodrich together with other members of staff. Another sign of the times is the cigarette in Mr Goodrich's left hand.

The year also saw the first major arrivals of black pupils and black teachers. The first known black Caribbean pupil was Colin Brown, who joined the school in 1968, but the first Caribbean teacher was a Mrs Da Silva, who arrived from Trinidad in 1962. The first black Caribbean teacher was Mrs Lucy Jilkes, who arrived a few years later.



Bishop Casey's visit to the school, 1968

Back row, left to right: Una Conway, (unknown), Ethna Morgan, Greg Duffy, Mrs E. Swift (head of infants), Lucy Jilkes, Mary Ward, Margaret Bennett (deputy head)

Front row, left to right: Mrs Horgan (deputy), Mr JC Monaghan (previous head), Bishop Casey, Mr Dan Goodrich (head), (unknown temporary teacher)

The new school in the 1970s

The modern classroom

By January 1970, the headmaster was answering questions from the managers of the school on such terms as "home" plans. He replied:

"The headmaster described the modern class-room as working child centres rather than one teaching centre: it is a logical consequence of family grouping."
(20 January 1970)

This is how the modern infants came to be structured and remained like this from 1972 until 1999. The main reason for change was simply that the open-plan nature of the buildings and the volume of noise from 90 infant children confined in a small space was distracting. From these reports one can see that the designs arose out of the good intentions of the late 1960s.



Cardinal Hume, Canon Kay (parish priest) and Bishop Guazelli (Bishop of East London) at the Blessing of the new school, 13 October 1989

School meals

Another contemporary concern of parents makes its first appearance in 1971, namely school meals. That year, the price of school meals rose by a third from 9d to 12d — that's from 4p to 6p in today's money. As a result of this move, 40 children switched to sandwiches.

Canon Kay

A large part of the main building was completed by January 1972 and the head's office and staff room were completed for £100, the school contributing £12. Canon Kay appears to have been the prime mover in the next phase of building, which took until 1989 to come to fruition. He generously gave £8,000, representing 20% of the then cost to move forward with the nursery and juniors. The school



was very excited to be in its new premises and all was progressing well. By July 1973 the brand new school was once again suffering from a leaky roof.

By 1975 managers – or governors as they were beginning to be known – appear to have taken some interest in how the children were learning. Mr Goodrich noted:

“The Headmaster informed the Managers that at the moment there was a problem teaching children to read – this arose from a lack of motivation on the part of the child.” (6 April 1974)

In 1976 the school completed its first major building phase, which was noted in the Hackney Gazette as having cost £57,370. Owing to government cut backs there were to be no more building works until 1989. These were carried out because of fire regulations in the junior block. However, in 1977 the condition of the new school roof had got so bad that the local MP had even visited the school. He appeared very sympathetic and offered to do whatever he could. It took a further 25 years for the problem to be resolved and there were still minor leaks in 2007.

In 1977, the headmaster appeared more upbeat about reading standards noting:

“...all children leaving the school were able to read and write, in fact the standard of essay work was very high. The Headmaster was congratulated by the Managers in attaining such high standards. The Clerk was asked by the Managers to thank the Staff for attaining such good results”. (22 February 1977)

By 1977 the headmaster was typing reports, copies were made on old banda machines for circulation, and a governor requested reports in advance. The age of mass reproduction of paper and accountability was starting. A 2007 governors meeting can involve up to 20 people and a clerk and will sometimes generate literally thousands of pieces of paper with reports from the head, committees, local authority, diocese, the Education Department and various pressure groups. The head is accountable for everything and the oversight and monitoring is the responsibility of the governors. However some things remain constant, leaking roofs, admissions, school meals, budgets, reading, turn over of teachers and the religious life of the school.

School life in the 1980s

Mr Peter Soyka

Mr Goodrich retired after almost 21 years in charge of the school to live in Ireland, where he built his own home in Kinvara. He was replaced by Peter Soyka, who had been to Strawberry Hill College and taught at St John the Evangelist previously. After a transition period, he took over in January 1980. Mr Soyka was assisted in running the school by a very able deputy, Ms Margaret Bennett, who was first appointed in September 1963. She stayed in post until 1991, when she took up the headship of Sacred Heart school Islington. In January 1980, the school accepted its first ever student trainee teacher from St Mary's College, University of London, one Sean Flood.

The school was divided into the present main infant/admin block and a truly depressing two-storey junior block, with years 3 and 4 downstairs, the seniors upstairs. The intake of the school was almost entirely working class, with large migrant populations from Ireland, Spain, Portugal, the Caribbean and Nigeria as well as second- and third-generation East Enders. Even in 1980, the area, apart from De Beauvoir Square, was bleak and rundown and was noted as a National Front stronghold with its headquarters in nearby Hoxton. The children were poor but aspirational. There are three long-serving members still in the school from

that era – Mrs Mary Martin, Mrs Bridie Levy and Mrs Betty Graydon. All of them were recently honoured with long-service awards from Hackney Council.

Many of our ex-pupils now also work in the school in various roles and are very well represented among teaching assistant staff.

Mr Soyka presided over an immense era of change and turmoil in education including the introduction of the Thatcher government's education reforms, the National Curriculum, teacher strikes by the NUT, the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority and Hackney Council taking over education. It was a period when education became a battleground between left and right. For the first time since the introduction of faith schools, the left were calling for their abolition in the 1980s. The changing morality



Peter Soyka head teacher, February 1981



Photographs showing the old school being demolished and the construction of the new buildings, 1989

and attitudes of people, together with immigration patterns of people with different faiths from the Indian sub-continent, were leading to increased pressures on Catholic schools.

Yet all through this era the links between the school and parish were very strong. Mr Soyka was a devout Catholic who often went to Mass every day. Mass attendance was among the highest in London and the school was massively over-subscribed. The school was dominated in this era by the figure of the late Canon Kay. He was a war hero and former bomb disposal officer who basically ran the school with Mr Soyka. Canon Kay was called up in 1942 and served his country even though he was exempt from military service. He volunteered for the D-Day landings but was forbidden to go by his superior, also a Catholic.

To the governors' immense pride, they managed to acquire and get finances for a new nursery and junior building to replace the old fire hazard. On 13 October 1989, Cardinal Basil Hume came and blessed the new building in its official opening ceremony. Photographs of the era show the cardinal in every room surrounded by beaming children and civic dignitaries. The nursery and juniors remain substantially the same today. The island site was now almost completely owned by the school with the exception of some dilapidated

old houses boarded up and abandoned on the corner of De Beauvoir and Tottenham Roads.

Mr Soyka loved music and history and made sure the children also had a joyful experience of all aspects of learning. He was very concerned about the introduction of self-management of schools (LMS) and the school was elected to be one of the last to control its own budgets. The increased strains of the job, the immense pressure suddenly put on heads and the growing culture of exam results and financial controls all put heads of this era under intolerable pressures. On 12 February 1993, every Catholic school in Hackney was gathered in the building for a training day. In mid-morning, the school got the call that its head teacher had suffered a heart attack. Mr Soyka died at the ridiculously young age of 49. Hackney head teachers and the school especially were devastated.



Solemn Blessing of the new school and nursery at Our Lady and St Joseph's by Cardinal Hume 13 October 1989

School life in the 1990s

Mr Sean Flood

In May 1993, Sean Flood was appointed headteacher of the school and took up post from September. Every era is different and if the pace of change in the 1980s was swift, it was simply unprecedented through the 1990s and beyond. The first challenge was to prepare the school for Local Management of Schools. This meant that almost overnight, from having control of some £6,000 for books and resources, the school today has a budget of over £1m and is directly responsible for everything, including the roofs. It also meant modernising the school and its role in



Sean Flood, the current head teacher, with pupils Millennium photograph, 1999

relation to the external world. The modern uniform, emblems and sweatshirts first came in from 1994 onwards.

Changing technology

The school also had to come to terms with the changing role that technology was playing in children's lives. In the area of ICT, Our Lady and St Joseph school has been a pioneer in innovations – much of which people are unaware.

In 1998, the school was asked to be one of the first to join an Education Action Zone which gave extra funding to deprived areas. The school was one of the first to have its own dedicated ICT suite devoted to computers and had the first of the iconic blue iMacs shipped to the UK.

In a partnership with BT in 1997, Our Lady & St Joseph was among the first schools to have an ADSL line so that high-speed internet access was possible to the amazement of other schools. Later, the school was the second primary school in this country to replace the old blackboards and chalk with an interactive whiteboard – something that is now a feature in almost every class in the country. The school also had the first ever wireless network installed in its juniors. The school was also an early pioneer of websites and getting children to design their own web pages, and was in the vanguard of video



Elizabeth Reid, former head of The Learning Trust, at the official opening of the ICT suite, 1998

conferencing. All these gave the school a high profile both locally and internationally. Global links are increasingly important to the school and it has hosted high-level international delegations from Japan, Denmark, Norway, Botswana, Nigeria, Egypt, China and Holland, among others. For the past few years Our Lady & St Joseph has also hosted a group of Australian teachers, priests and educationists from a Catholic diocese in Western Australia. It has also featured as the second item on French news for its work in integrating so many nationalities into a harmonious community and been featured extensively on Japanese television. The school has also hosted many dignitaries from around the world and the UK, including a visit in 1996 by the then Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Shepherd.

Major building event

In terms of the buildings of the school, the major event came about quite fortuitously. On the corner of De Beauvoir and Tottenham Roads stood a very large old house which was boarded up and abandoned. The school tried to redevelop it but met objections. The chair of governors from De Beauvoir school and the head teacher of Our Lady and St Joseph became increasingly concerned with what was going on there, as the house had been opened up for use by squatters and undesirables. One day in spring 1998, the head entered through broken corrugated sheeting and saw sights of almost indescribable squalor in a building that was located between two large primary schools.

Hackney Council agreed to board it up immediately when they were told what had been seen. Within a matter of days a severe storm had flattened the hoardings, which collapsed into De Beauvoir and Tottenham Roads.



RT. Hon. Gillian Shepherd and the Mayor of Hackney visiting the school, 1996

Within days, the council agreed to demolish the house and give the school the money to develop the land as an environmental garden and play area.

Mr Gus John, then head of Hackney Education Authority, was a great supporter of the school and helped it finally acquire the entire island site for the first time. By summer 1998, the site was landscaped and handed over to the school and the playground space widely extended.



Children enjoying the school prayer garden, 2007

A new millennium

The 1990s saw the rise of testing and inspections, graphs, data, statistics and initiatives on an almost daily basis. This has not particularly eased in the new millennium. The school has had inspections by Ofsted, the government's schools inspections body, in 1995, 1999 and 2002, and has always done very well.

League tables

League tables were introduced in during 1997 and the school was rated first, second and third in the borough during this time. Standards in the school have always been high and the staff are also passionately committed to a broad and balanced curriculum for young children. League tables only tell a part of a story and cannot capture the spirit of a place.

The school grounds

The story of the grounds is not finished, however, because over the years the school has been blessed with some wonderful gardeners who have done so much to create its beautiful grounds. The main gardeners have been two mothers with

children in the school, Caroline and Helen, who have done much to enhance the natural beauty of the school.

One thing that parents may not be aware of is the extent of Biblical links with the trees that have been planted. The grounds have Judas trees, a Joseph of Arimathea tree, cedars of Lebanon, a tree of Heaven, weeping willows, Passion Flowers and many more themed trees. In 2005, the second prayer garden was redesigned on the site of Equiano Vasso's daughter's house, and Bishop Bernard Longley blessed it. In 2007, the school started a thriving gardening club.

The Blair years saw a massive increase in funding for the school, enabling the refurbishment of the nursery area, the rebuilding of all the playgrounds, refurbishment of all classrooms, the installation of state-of-the-art security and the creation of an outstanding learning environment. In 2003, the school finally got a new roof in the main building at a cost of £100,000, most of which was grant aided. It still leaks however, forcing the head teacher up on to the roof on several occasions.

School community centre

For many years the old school keeper's house lay empty. Finally, in 2006, grant aid was allocated to transform it into a school community centre. This was formally opened by Bishop Bernard Longley during the school's 150th anniversary celebrations.



Bishop Bernard Longley and Mr Sean Flood at the official opening of the school community centre, 2006

Involvement of parents

A major feature of recent years has been the extensive involvement of parents in the life of the school. Annual events include a Christmas craft fayre, a summer dance and ceilidh, a barn dance, fireworks night, international food evenings, a Nigerian charity night and various major celebrations. Three parents have worked as artists in the school, resulting in the high-quality murals and artwork that are visible everywhere.

The last few years have seen parental workshops, a massive extension in after-school activities, a breakfast club and after-school centre, a parents' coffee morning and a new Parents Association to take the school forward.

Hackney Learning Trust

The Hackney Learning Trust was founded in 2002 to take over the running of education in Hackney after it was taken away from the council by the government. The school has enjoyed fruitful links with the new organisation, which has been a great supporter of Our Lady and St Joseph and its mission. Its chief executive, Alan Wood, has been a frequent visitor to the school and, in 2007, opened its latest multimedia iMac room, with its state-of-the-art technology.

Recent years

The children have seen enormous changes in the range of opportunities and new ways of learning. Music and drama were always a major feature of the school and people still talk about the productions of Mr Gerard Delrez, who taught music for 20 years.

Equally, the past few years have seen the school recognised for its art work, its Healthy Schools Status, its Investment in People and, lately, its outstanding work on sustainability.

The demography of the school has changed over the years with more nationalities arriving and a more affluent intake from the late 1990s as the area became gentrified and property prices soared. This trend is now reversing, with changes to admissions policies and a much narrower catchment area. There has also been a major shift of families away from inner London, as they capitalise on higher house prices to move out of London in significant numbers. The last of the Ursuline Sisters left when Sr Mary Moloughney moved to Ireland in 2000.



The entire school and staff of Our Lady and St Joseph School pose for a millennium photograph

Looking forward

The past few years have also seen a huge rise in the number of children with special educational needs and the school has been recognised as being outstanding in its care for all children, including the most vulnerable. In recent years there have been the Millennium celebrations, a visit to witness Nelson Mandela riding down the Mall with the Queen upon his liberation from Robben Island, and the many happy sports and musical events the school has enjoyed.

There have been sadder moments too, with assemblies that have had to deal with the Dunblane massacre of 1996, the death in 1997 of Diana, Princess of Wales, the day of 9/11 in 2001, the 2004 tsunami and the subsequent appeal for which the school collected so much, and the morning of the 2005 suicide bombings when groups of children were out on school trips and no one knew what would happen next.

The school has been blessed over the years with two exceptional deputy heads, many fine teachers, some wonderful support staff, two school keepers, two parish priests and a loyal and inspiring chair of governors, all of whom have contributed so much to the life of the school. Links with the parish are still very close and a source of great support.

The school is now a training school for teachers and many of the younger staff have trained with the school to ensure a succession of high-quality staff. Another major change in the past few years has been the increasing role of teaching assistants in delivering a full curriculum. Three of these teaching assistants are also ex-pupils of the school.

Nobody knows what the future holds, but the building work still goes on. A major rebuild of the reception and year 1 outdoor play space is in the pipeline for 2008. In the next few years, there are projected to be 9,000 new homes in Dalston. There will also be new rail links. And, of course, 2012 sees the Olympic Games come to London.

This will add to the already high demand for places. As faith and Mass attendance decreases, society becomes increasingly secular and new faith groups arrive in the area, the pressure on Catholic schools will grow in the next few years. The school in 2007 is still massively over-subscribed and there are already many African, Polish and Eastern European Catholic parents looking for places for their children.

As for the school's place in the world, it is looking to become an International School next year, with links all over the globe. In 1997, a child sent the first e-mail from a Hackney primary school, which demonstrates the pace of change.

The move to One World is to be welcomed and the school seeks to be part of this movement towards global communication, mutual respect and harmony. Rooted in this special community in Hackney, this is still a wonderful school. We must all treasure it, for it will still be here in many years to come, please God.



A mural in the school to celebrate the 150th anniversary

School staff

Head teachers / Head masters

Mr JC Monaghan	January 1926 – December 1958
Mr Dan Goodrich	January 1958 – December 1979
Mr Peter Soyka	January 1980 – February 1993
Mr Sean Flood	September 1993 – to date

Deputy Heads

Ms Rhoda Farmer	1926 – 1964 as teacher and deputy head
Ms Margaret Bennett	1963 – 1991 as teacher and deputy head
Mrs Katherine Horgan	1965 – 1973
Sr Rita	1981 – 1992
Ms Elizabeth Kenny	1992 – 1994
Ms Nuala Forkan	1995 – 2001
Mrs Val O'Donovan	2001 – to date

Schookeepers

Mr Percy Coster	1953 – 1971
Mr Tom Leahy	1971 – 1997
Mr Daniel Duncalf	1998 – to date

Parish Priests

Fr William Dempsey	1920 – 1962
Fr Thomas Hookham	1962 – 1969 and Chair of Managers
Canon Danny Kay	1969 – 1990 and Chair of Governors
Fr Bernard McCumiskey	1990 – 2000
Fr Christopher Colven	2000 – to date

Chair of Governors

Ms Philippa Toomey	1990 – to date
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Vice-Chair of Governors

Mr Derek Vitali	1991 – to date
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A mural in the junior playground, painted by the children in 2002



Back row, left to right: Theresa Garnett, Catherina McIntyre, Catrina Campbell and Tracey Francois, all ex-pupils and mums and now teaching assistants at the school.
Front row, left to right: Mary Martin, Betty Graydon and Bridie Levy, all served more than 30 years (in Mary's case 40 years) at the school.



Rules of S. Joseph's Catholic School, Kingsland.

“ Suffer little Children to come unto Me.”

- 1.—No child can be admitted under two years of age.
- 2.—Boys cannot remain after ten years of age.
- 3.—The children are required to attend the School *punctually* at a quarter before 9 o'clock in the morning, and at a quarter before 2 in the afternoon. If any child comes as late as half-past 9 or half-past 2, he will be sent home to his parents.
- 4.—The children are required to be neat and clean in their persons and dress.
- 5.—No child must be absent from School without permission of the Mistress. In case of sickness immediate notice should be given to the Mistress.
- 6.—If any parent has a complaint to make, he is requested to state it to the Rev. Father Lockhart, and on no account to interfere with the management of the School, or to interrupt the Mistress in the discharge of her duty.
- 7.—The payment is two-pence a week for each child of the labouring class, and six-pence a week for each child of a higher class, unless where several children in a family attend the School and a less payment is an object. All payments to be made on Monday mornings in advance.
- 8.—Two examinations will take place during the year, when the friends of the School and the parents of the children are invited to attend.
- 9.—All children above five years of age attending the Weekly School are required to be present at High Mass on Sunday, and on Holy-days of Obligation. A School will be held on Sunday, for an hour before High Mass and the Evening Service, for Boys and Girls of all ages who are unable to attend the Day School, and for the children of the Day School who are above Five years of age.
- 10.—The education given to the children comprises Reading, Writing, Geography, History, Grammar, Arithmetic, and lessons in general and useful knowledge. A Catechism Class every morning after prayers.
- 11.—On Sunday the instruction consists of explanation of the Mass and Sacraments of the Church in the morning, and Catechism in the evening.
- 12.—Plain Needlework *only* taught or allowed in the School. On Friday afternoons children may bring their own plain work; on other days they work to help to support the School.

N.B. A copy of the above Rules to be kept and strictly attended to by the parents of the children.

19th Century school rules - how times have changed!

Acknowledgements

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Our Lady and St Joseph School
Buckingham Road, London N1 4DG
Tel 020 7254 7353