

# HOW IT ALL BEGAN

## ***Delivering education to our community for over 100 years***

Before the first school was built lessons for children living in Percy Main Village were conducted in the 'Primitive Methodist Sunday School' and according to the log books, conditions were pretty grim.

The first evidence of a purpose built school being planned for Percy Main was in a letter dated 24 May 1889 from Mr. Robert Muckle, a Land Agent to the Duke of Northumberland based at the 'Manor Office' Tynemouth (Manor House, Manor Road). This letter was found in the archives of the Duke of Northumberland held at Alnwick Castle and indicated the preferred site for the school which was land owned by the 8th Duke of Northumberland, His Grace Alan Ian Percy, KG CBE MVO TD (17 April 1880 – 23 August 1930).

A further letter dated 2 May 1890 from Mr Muckle mentions the price of five shillings per square yard. In the original letter there appeared to have been some concerns over the future use of the land but this situation appears to have been clarified as Mr Muckle states *'Some doubt was at one time entertained whether the land selected as the site might not at some future time be required for Colliery purposes – should the old Percy Main Pit ever be opened out again. I have however submitted the matter to Mr J B Simpson, His Graces' Mining Agent, and he is of opinion that were the Colliery to be re-opened the land in question would not be required. Subject to the foregoing remarks I am of opinion that the value of the land, as coloured round with blue on plan is five hundred pounds (£500).'*

According to the book by Eric Hollerton<sup>1</sup>

Following the 1870 Education Act a School Board was elected for the Borough of Tynemouth. Since there was already a National School at Percy Main, a Board School at the village was not felt to be a priority.

The inhabitants did vote for a new school eventually; it opened on 1 February 1892. At first, education to Standards I and II only was offered, increased to Standard V from May 1893. The infants' school, to the left opened in September 1900. It was the last constructed by the Tynemouth School Board, before its powers passed to the local authority in 1902. The school at the corner of St John's Street and Nelson Terrace was replaced on 28 January 1968 by new buildings closer to Howdon Road. This is our current school premises.

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<sup>1</sup> Around North Shields the Second Selection compiled by Eric Hollerton (2000 p 31\_Tempus Publishing Ltd )



The picture above is of the council school, c,1905.<sup>2</sup>

The first purpose built Percy Main School was officially opened on 30 December 1891. It was a Junior Mixed with Infants section and was occupied by the children for the first time on 1 February 1892 (70 mixed juniors and 50 infants all of whom paid no school fees)

During those early years the poor health of the children was very evident with numerous outbreaks of childhood illness which were the norm in those day including Diphtheria, Small Pox, Measles, Mumps, Whooping Cough, Scarlet Fever and Chicken Pox. (Reference to health issues in the timeline are written in Red). The school was closed on several occasions by the chief medical officer when the level of infections reach epidemic proportions.

With the exception of some 'Bombardment Drills' the 1914-1918 war (1<sup>st</sup> World War) did not affect the daily life of the school too much, however this cannot be said about the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War (1939-1945). During these years the school operated a part time timetable, in fact on 1 September 1939 a state of emergency was declared and school was suspended totally until 20 November when a maximum of 60 children were allowed to return to school (references to the War Years are shown in Blue on the timeline)

But despite all this the school continued to function providing a caring learning environment for the local children.

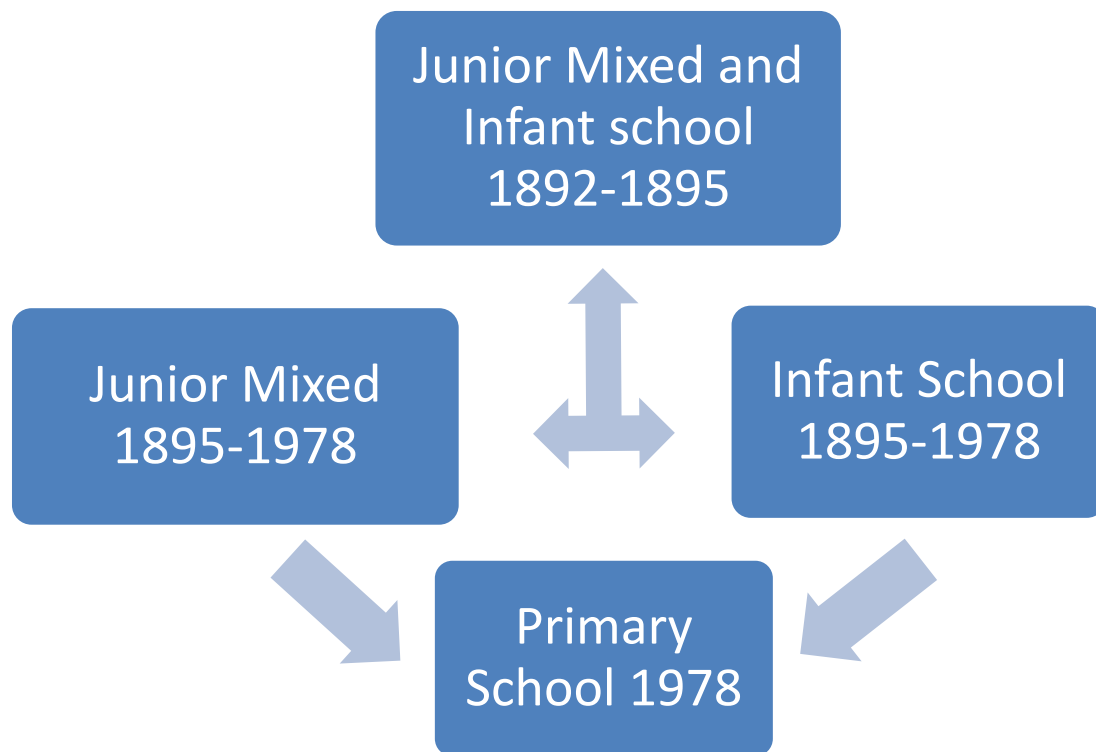
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<sup>2</sup> Picture taken from Around North Shields the Second Selection compiled by Eric Hollerton (2000 p 31\_Tempus Publishing Ltd )

**Pre-opening timeline** (dates mainly taken from the school log book)

|                                       |         |  |                                       |     |                         |     |                 |     |
|---------------------------------------|---------|--|---------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| 1880                                  |         | The Elementary Education Act 1880 insisted on compulsory attendance from 5–10 years. For poorer families, ensuring their children attended school proved difficult, as it was more tempting to send them working if the opportunity to earn an extra income was available. Attendance Officers often visited the homes of children who failed to attend school, which often proved to be ineffective.  |                                       |     |                         |     |                 |     |
| 1889                                  | Nov     | <p>Many of the residents of Percy Main were dissatisfied with the school accommodation in their village with the result that a ‘memorial’ from 389 residents was presented to Tynemouth School Board requesting an additional school.</p> <p>The Board took a census which showed that more accommodation was required.</p> <p>A Ballot was arranged, whereby the residents were to vote for the enlargement of the existing St Johns School or the erection of a Board School, which would have to be paid out of the rates. The result of the ballot was as follows:-</p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>For an enlargement of St Johns</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">180</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>For a new school</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">411</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>Majority</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">231</td> </tr> </table> <p>The Tynemouth School Board applied for sanction to erect a school in Percy Main with accommodation for 300 infants and standards no. 1 and 2 (Juniors).</p> <p>Sanction given for a school accommodating 130 infants and 212 older children.</p> | <i>For an enlargement of St Johns</i> | 180 | <i>For a new school</i> | 411 | <i>Majority</i> | 231 |
| <i>For an enlargement of St Johns</i> | 180     |  |                                       |     |                         |     |                 |     |
| <i>For a new school</i>               | 411     |  |                                       |     |                         |     |                 |     |
| <i>Majority</i>                       | 231     |  |                                       |     |                         |     |                 |     |
| 1891                                  | March 6 | The Tynemouth School Board, who had previously approved the plans for the school made by Mr F.R.N. Haswell, gave the building contract to Messrs J and W Simpson (local builders). The school was to be built at an estimated cost of £4481.15.4 ( <i>£4481 15 shillings and 4 pence</i> ), inclusive of land and a caretakers house (The money for the later borrowed from the Prudential Assurance Co. Ltd. at 3½% repayable over a period of fifty years).  |                                       |     |                         |     |                 |     |
| 1891                                  | Nov 14  | <b><u>Two Foundations Stones Laid</u></b> , one by Rev James Stark (Chairman of the School Board) and the other by Mr Joseph Grant of Percy Main.  |                                       |     |                         |     |                 |     |

There are two separate timelines for our school which, from 1895 to 1978, run concurrently. This is because in 1895 two completely separate schools (*sharing one building*) were created. These two schools had separate Head Teachers and separate school log books. Then in 1978 these two schools amalgamate to once again form one single school. The following grid should help the reader understand the log books from which the information for the timelines was obtained.



## OUR BUILDINGS

First Lesson took place in The Primitive Methodist Sunday School building.

1 February 1892

Children move into the first purpose built Percy Main School.

20 November 1967

Children move into our current building.

| Date and School Type   | Timeline Reference   |
|--|--|
| 30 December 1891<br>Official opening of Junior Mixed and Infants School      | Junior Mixed Timeline ( <i>with includes Infant Section</i> )  |
| 1 May 1895<br>Separate Infant school created                                 | Junior Mixed Timeline ( <i>log book entries continue in the Junior Mixed and Infant School Log Book</i> )<br>Infant School Timeline ( <i>new separate log book created</i> ) |
| 20 November 1967<br>Final assembly in old school                             | Junior Mixed Timeline<br>Infant School Timeline  |
| 24 January 1968<br>Official opening of current building                      | Junior Mixed Timeline<br>Infant School Timeline  |
| 5 June 1978<br>Head notified that Infant and Junior Schools would amalgamate | Junior Mixed Timeline<br>Infant School Timeline  |
| 21 July 1978<br>Closure of Infant School                                     | Junior Mixed Timeline<br>Infant School Timeline  |
| 1 September 1978<br>School re-opens as Percy Main Primary School             | Log book entries for the new Primary School continue to be recorded in the Junior Mixed timeline and log books.  |