



# University of Leicester

## Archaeological Services

An Historic Building Survey  
of the former Oxford Street School,  
Oxford Street, Leicester

NGR: SK 585 040

Sophie Clarke



ULAS Report No. 2013-097  
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**An Historic Building Survey (Level 3)  
of the former Oxford Street School, Leicester  
NGR: SK 585 040**

**S J Clarke**

**For: Staniforth Architects**

Checked by

Signed



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## **An Historic Building Survey of the former Oxford Street School, Oxford Street, Leicester.**

**NGR SK 585 040**

**Sophie Clarke**

### **Summary**

*An historic building survey was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) of the former Oxford Street School, located on Oxford Street, Leicester on the 13th of May 2013. The former school building was designed by the architect W. Jackson of Loseby Lane, Leicester and was built in 1873 for the Leicester School Board, as a consequence of the Education Act of 1870. The school opened in 1874 as a mixed primary school, but by 1919, following the opening of the City of Leicester Boys' School, was converted into an all-girls' secondary school and renamed the Newarke Secondary School for Girls. The single-storey structure which faces onto Oxford Street was constructed as an art room for the school in 1927. In 1939 the school was relocated to new premises on Fosse Road South and the former school buildings were subsequently taken over by the Education Department of the Leicester College of Art and Technology. More recently the buildings have been known as part of the Elfed Thomas building, formerly used by the De Montfort University Law School. The former school buildings are now proposed for demolition, to make way for new student accommodation.*

*The report and archive will be deposited with Leicester City Museums under Accession Number A7.2013.*

### **Introduction**

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for an historic building survey (Level 3) of the former Oxford Street School, located on Oxford Street, Leicester. Level 3 historic building surveys are defined in the English Heritage guidance document – *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2006). Planning consent (20130088) has been granted for the demolition of the existing school buildings, in advance of the large scale residential redevelopment of the area.

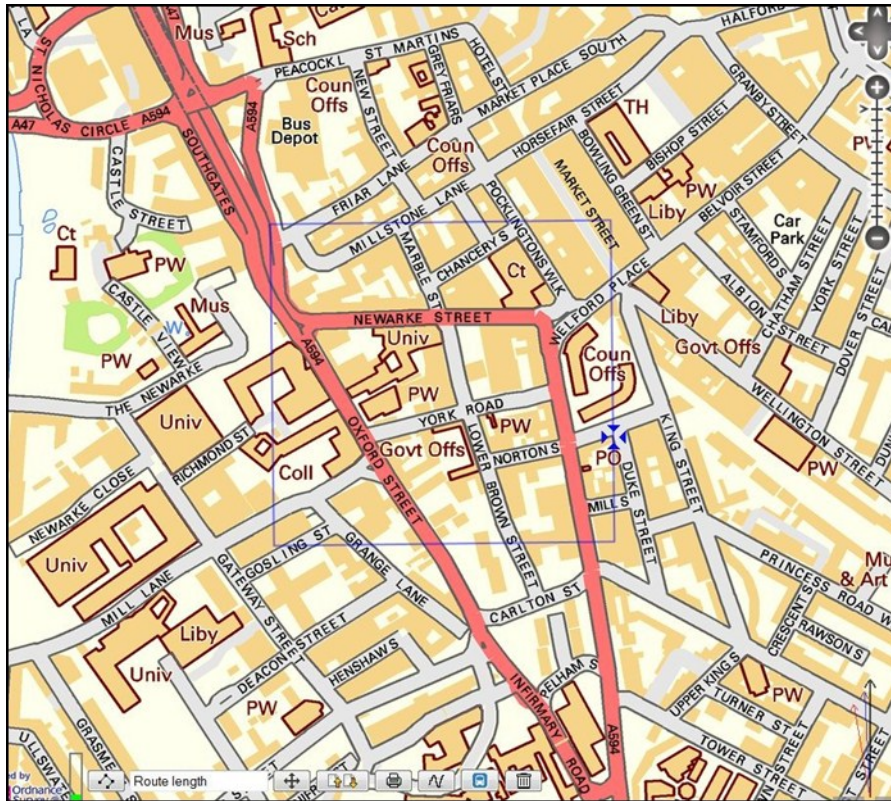


Figure 1 Site Location

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## Background

Staniforth Architects have been granted planning consent to demolish the existing buildings on the site, which were identified by the Leicester City Historic Environment Record (HER) as being of historic significance, dating to the second half of the 19th century and appearing on the 1887 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map of Leicester.

In view of their historical significance, the Planning Archaeologist at Leicester City Council requested that an analytical record of the buildings should be undertaken prior to demolition or alteration. The work was carried out commencing the 13th of May 2013, in line with the Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording (ULAS 2013), meeting the requirements of a Level 3 survey as defined in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).

## Objectives

The objectives of the historic building survey were:

- To provide a written, drawn and photographic record of all the buildings on site prior to the commencement of works with specific attention given to those elements proposed for demolition, conversion and/or alteration. This work to be undertaken to a standard that will allow the future interpretation of the building within the context for which it was originally designed and which subsequently evolved.
- To ensure the long-term preservation of the information through deposition of the record and a summary written report with an appropriate depository.

## Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2012) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing buildings or Structures* (2010).

Black and white 35mm photographs and digital colour photographs were taken throughout the survey. Notes and sketches were also made and scale site plans supplied by the client were used and modified to suit the purposes of this survey. The specific levels of detail used in the Level 3 survey followed the guidelines laid down in the English Heritage (2006) guidance, which are:

### *Survey Drawings*

- A measured survey of the buildings including floor plans and external elevations exists. These were undertaken by Mapmatic and supplied by the client for the purposes of this work. Scaled printouts from this survey were verified on site for accuracy and amended as necessary with the addition of historic architectural details. These were transferred to a CAD package and revised to conform to the architectural drawing conventions set out in the English Heritage guidelines.
- Any additional drawings that are required will be made on drafting film at a scale of 1:5, 1:10, 1:20, or 1:50, as appropriate, illustrating particular historic architectural details. Again these drawings will be transferred to a CAD package and reproduced in the approved format set out in the English Heritage guidelines.

The drawn record comprises:

- Plans (to scale or fully dimensioned) of the building as existing, showing the form and location of any structural features of historic significance (eg blocked doors/windows).



- Measured cross-sections, long-sections, or elevational sections illustrating the vertical relationships within the building.
- Measured elevations.
- A site plan at 1:500 or 1:1250 relating the building to other structures and related topographical and landscape features

### ***Written record***

A written record was maintained on site in the form of field notes and annotations on survey drawings.

The written component of the report includes:

- The precise location of the building, by name or street number, civil parish, town etc and national Grid Reference.
- A note on any statutory or non-statutory designations.
- The date the record was made, the names of the recorders, and the location of project archive.
- A summary of the building's type and purpose (historically and currently), its materials and possible date(s).
- A table of contents and list of figures or illustrations.
- A statement describing the building's type or purpose, materials and possible dates of construction and alteration. This account should outline the building's plan, form, function, age and development sequence. The names of builders and owners should be given if this information can be established.
- An introduction to the recording exercise, setting out the circumstances of the record, its objectives methods and scope, and any constraints or limitations on the record made.
- Acknowledgement of contributors, commissioning bodies & others contributing to the project.
- A discussion of published sources relating to the building and its setting (including written documentary & historic map evidence).
- An account of the building's overall form (structure, materials, layout) and phases of development (with supporting evidence).
- Details of any available information for the past & present uses of the building and its parts (with supporting evidence); and for any fixtures, fittings, plant or machinery associated with the building.
- Full bibliographic and other references, or a list of sources consulted.

### ***Photographic record***

A photographic record of the investigations was maintained using a 35mm format SLR camera with black and white print film supplemented by colour digital photographs. The photographic record comprises:

- General views of the building in its setting or landscape.
- The building's exterior appearance.
- The overall appearance of the principal internal areas.



- Any exterior details which are relevant to the building's design, development and use, and which do not show adequately on the general photographic record.
- Any machinery or other plant, or evidence for its former existence.
- Detail of dates or other inscriptions which contribute to the understanding of the building.
- Any significant contents/fixtures/fittings/ephemera.

## Results

### *Survey Drawings*

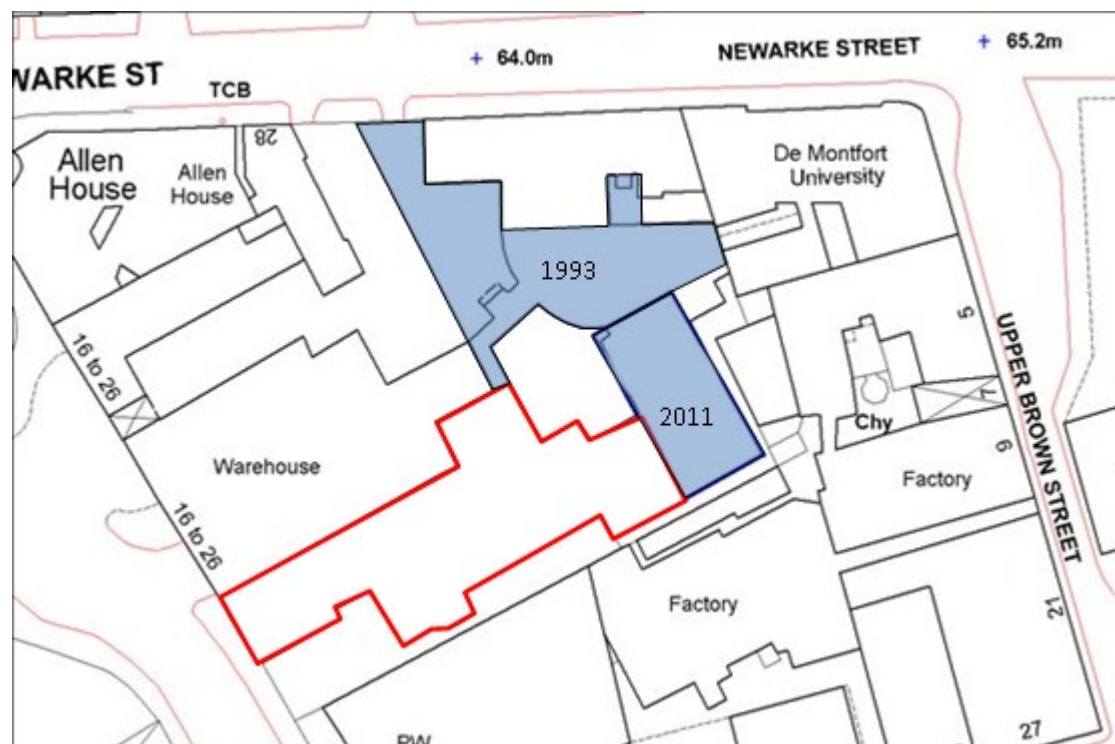


Figure 2. Block Plan, showing site (outlined in red) in relation to neighbouring buildings.

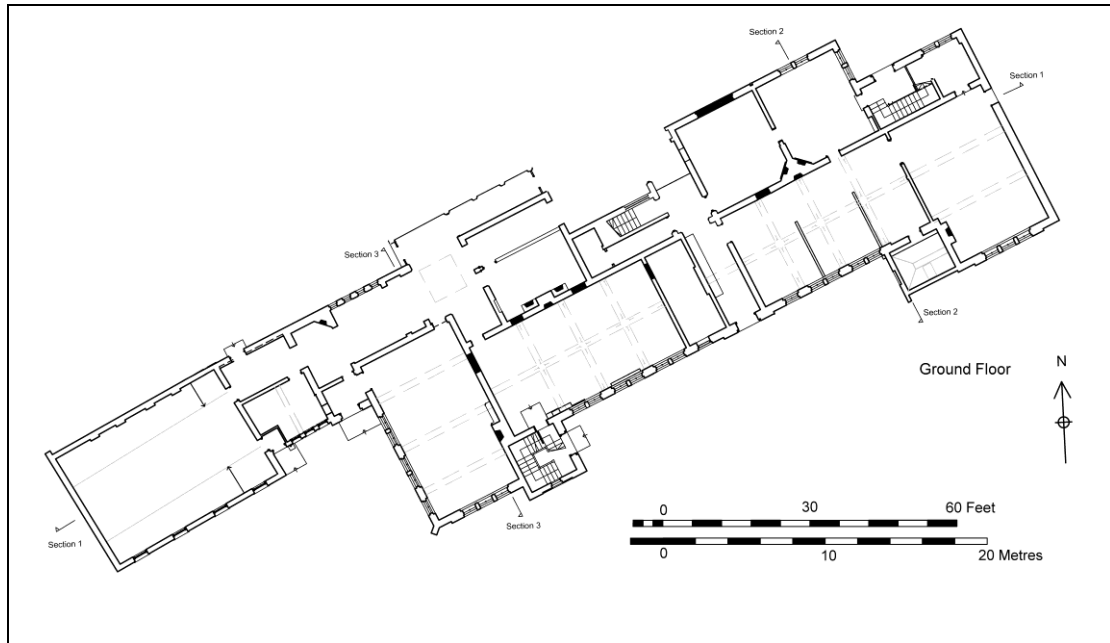


Figure 3. Ground floor plan.

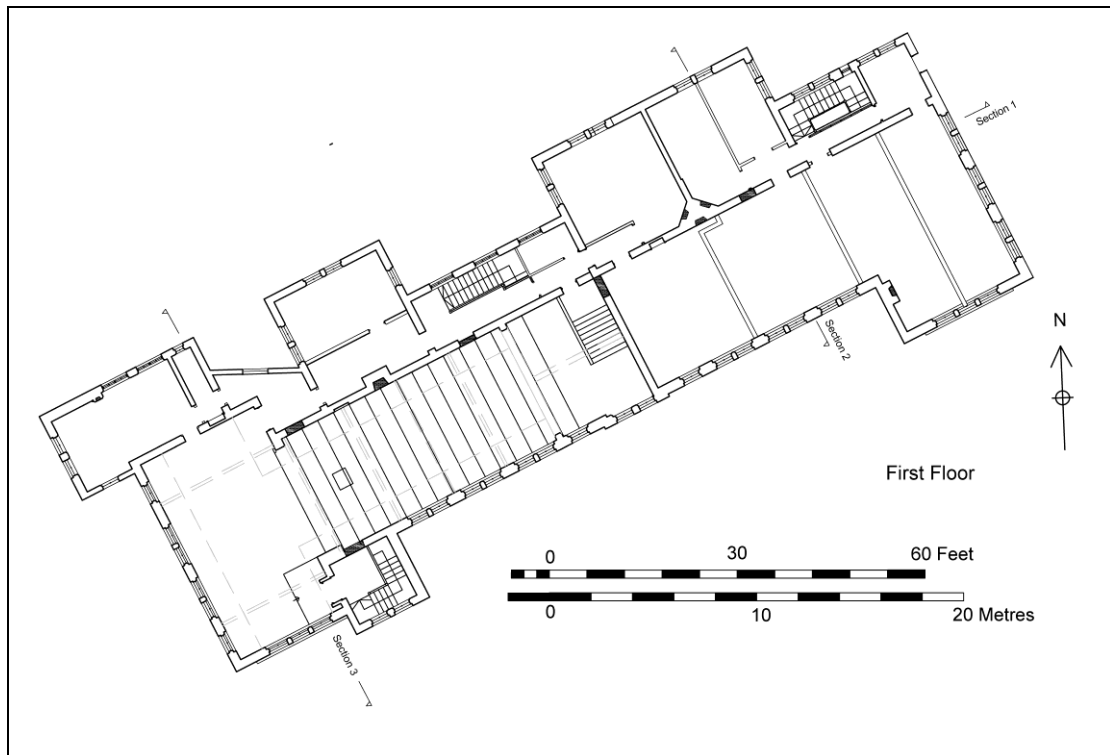


Figure 4. First floor plan.

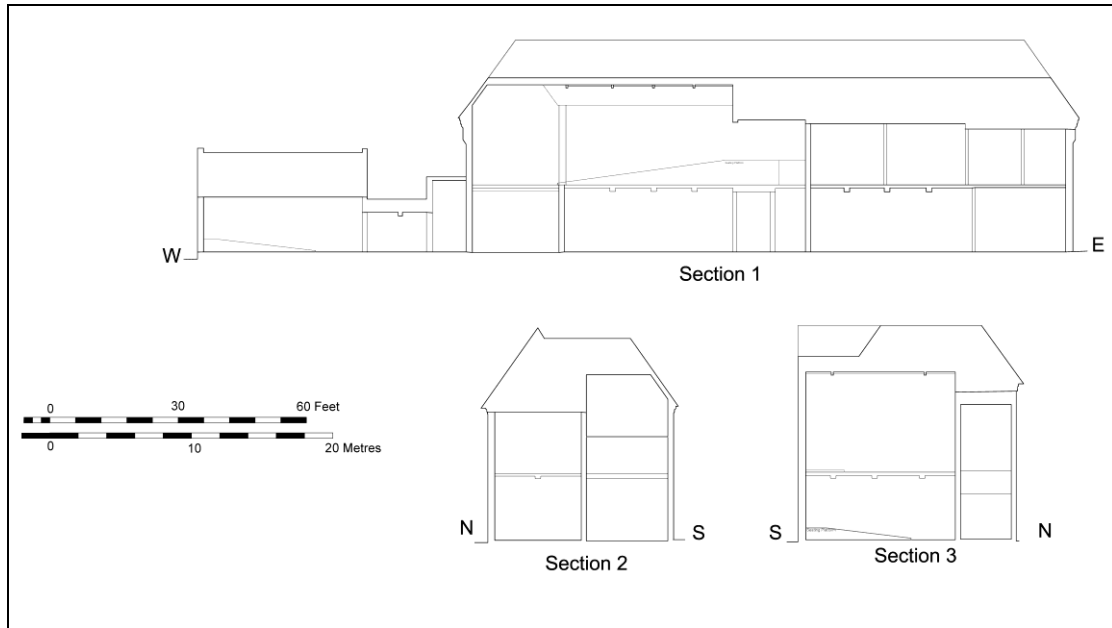


Figure 5. Cross Section drawings.



Figure 6. Elevation drawings.

### ***Historical Background***

*(Taken from 'The City of Leicester: Primary and secondary education', A History of the County of Leicester: volume 4: The City of Leicester (1958), pp. 328-335. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66570> Date accessed: 28 May 2013).*

As a consequence of the Education Act of 1870, the Leicester School Board was established in 1871 in order to better facilitate the provision of education for 5-12 old children within the city. The Oxford Street School was one of the earliest schools to be established by the Board, opening in 1874 as a mixed primary school. In 1919, following the foundation of the City of Leicester Boys' School, the Oxford Street School was converted and renamed as the Newarke Secondary School for Girls.

In 1939 the school was moved to new premises on Fosse Road South and the building was retained as the Education Department of the Leicester College of Art and Technology. More recently, the former school has been more widely known as part of the Elfed Thomas building, which housed the De Montfort University Law School.

### ***Leicester Building Register (LBR) Plans***

From 1849 it was required that plans for all new buildings and significant alterations to existing buildings in Leicester were submitted for approval to the Borough Sanitary Authority. The plans for 1849-1957 are held by the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (ROLLR) and are indexed by street name.

LBR Plan Number 2703/1873 Bundle L held at the ROLLR contains the original drawings for the Oxford Street School (Figs 7-9). The school was planned as a mixed infant and primary school and was constructed on behalf of the Leicester School Board. The architect was W. Jackson of Loseby Lane, Leicester and the drawings were approved by the Borough of Leicester Highway and Sewerage Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1873.



Figure 7. Extract from LBR Plan 1873/2703, showing architect's original cross-section drawing of Oxford Street School. Not shown to scale.



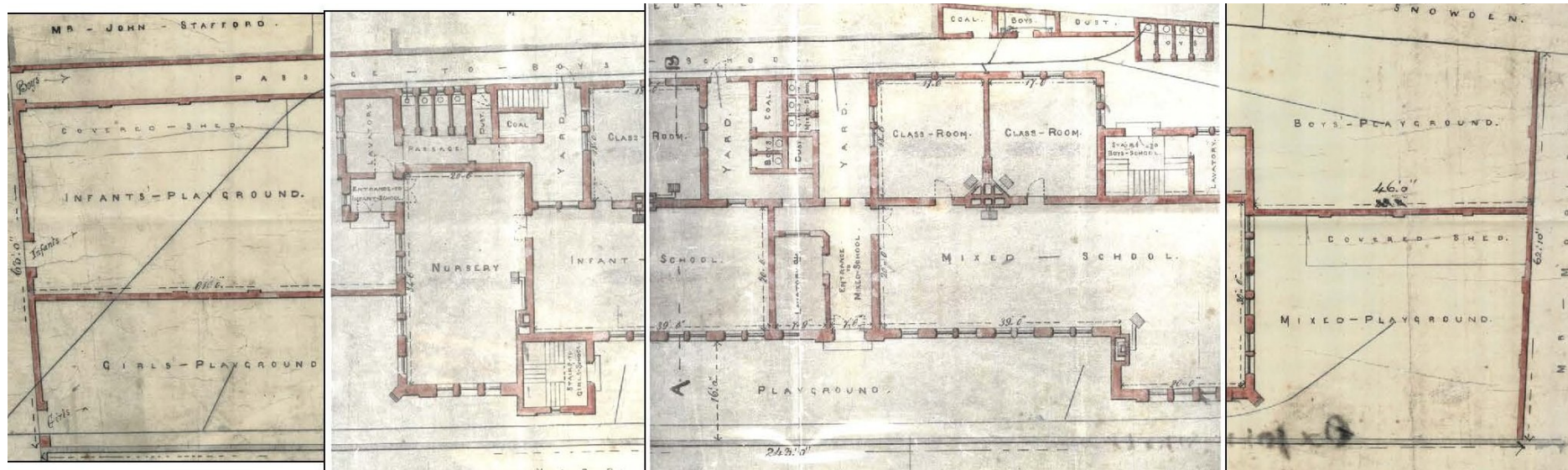


Figure 8. Composite image showing architect's original ground floor plan of Oxford Street School. (LBR Plan 1873/2703. Not to scale).



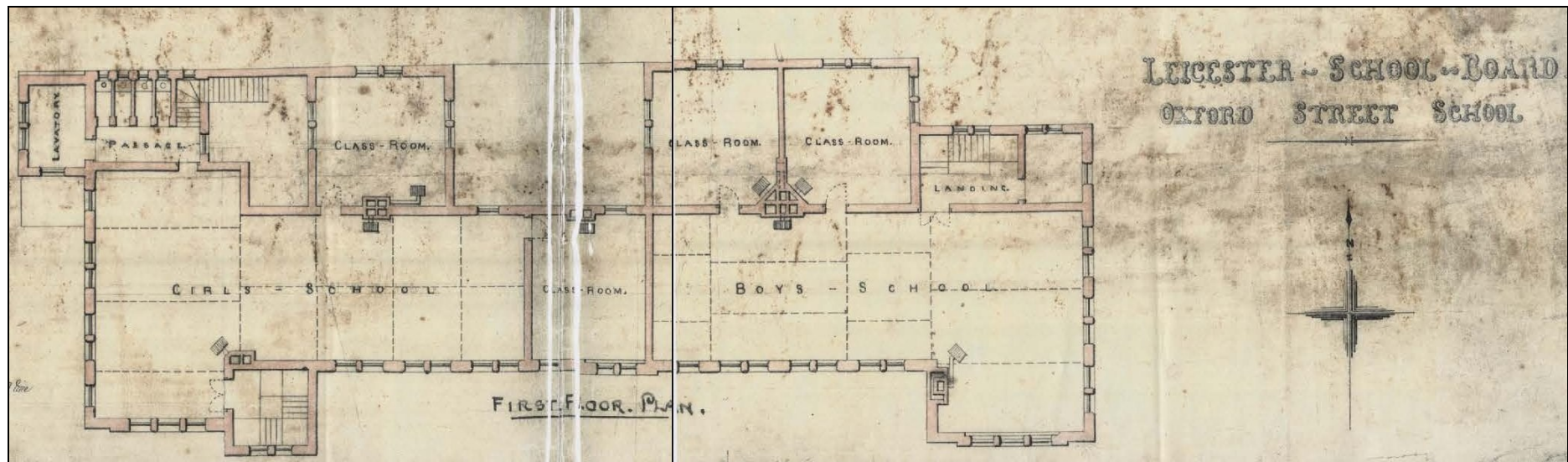


Figure 9. Composite image showing architect's original first floor plan of Oxford Street School. (LBR 1873/2703. Not to scale).

The plans of 1873 show three separate entrances into the school located on Oxford Street. The boys' entrance is located on the northern side. This opens onto a long passage leading to a stairwell at the eastern end of the building, which provides access to the boys' school located on the first floor. To the south of the boys' entrance, a second doorway provides access into the infants' playground. Entrance to the girls' school is located on the southern side of the building, where a third doorway opens off Oxford Street into the girls' playground. From here, a passage leads to a stairwell on the south-western façade, which provides access into the girls' school on the first floor. In the centre of the south-western façade, another entrance provides access into the mixed school on the ground floor.

At first floor level, the boys' and girls' schools are located at opposite ends of the building and there is no access shown between them.

LBR Plan Number 34028/1927 at the ROLLR is for a proposed new Art Room at the Newarke Secondary School for Girls on behalf of the City of Leicester Education Committee. The drawings show a single storey building and include south and west facing elevation drawings, floor plan and cross-section (Figs 10-12). The architect was J.O. Thompson ARIBA, Education Surveyor and the plans were approved by the Borough Sanitation Authority on the 19th of November 1927.

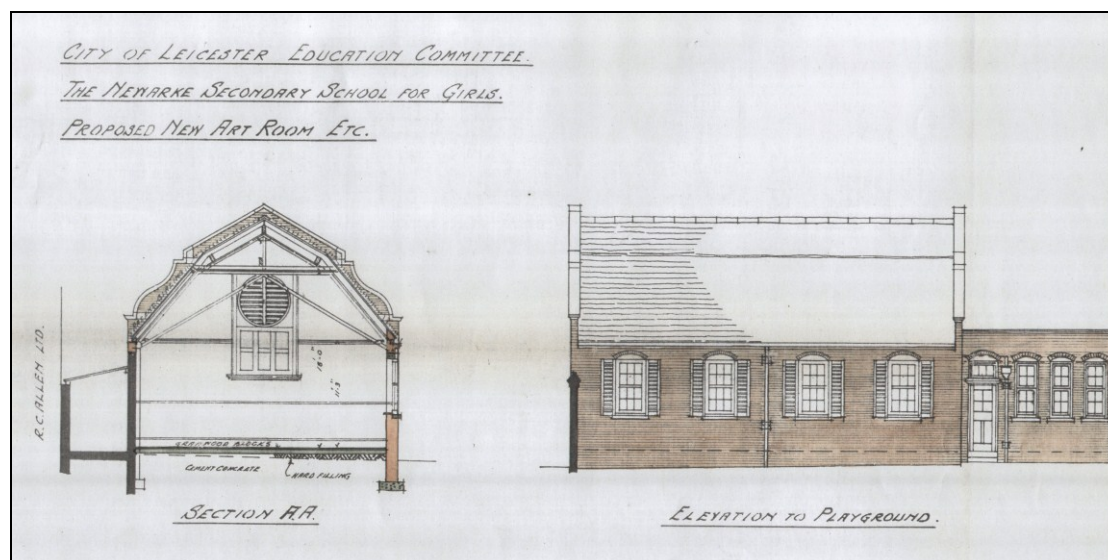


Figure 10. Original architects drawings of new art room for Newarke Secondary School for girls. (LBR Plan 1927/34028. Not to scale).

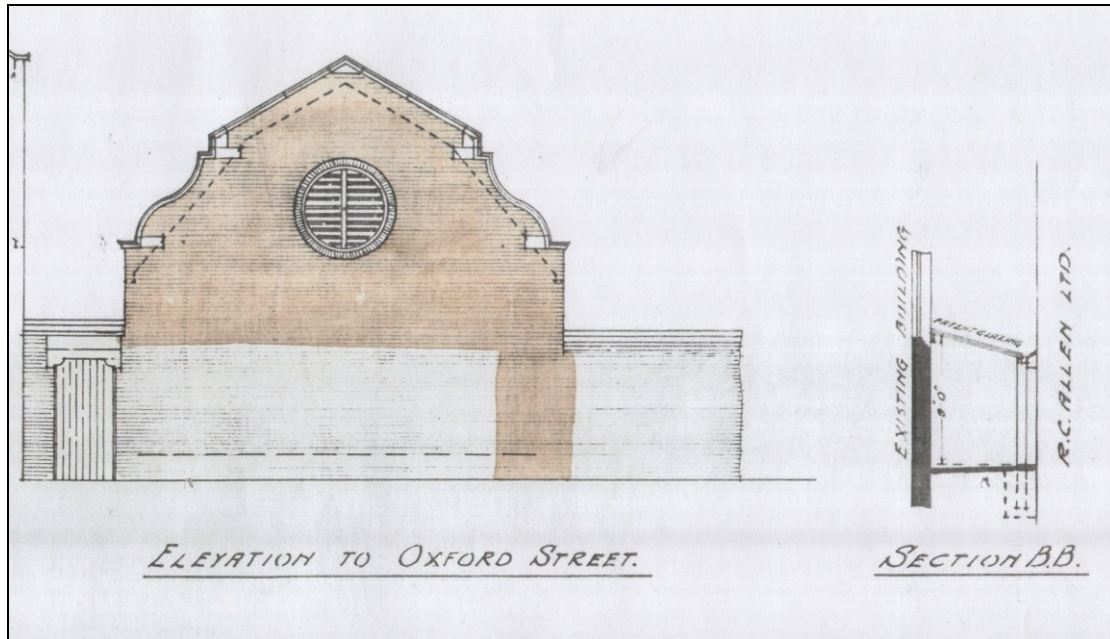


Figure 11. Original architects drawings of new art room for Newark Secondary School for girls. (LBR Plan 1927/34028. Not to scale).

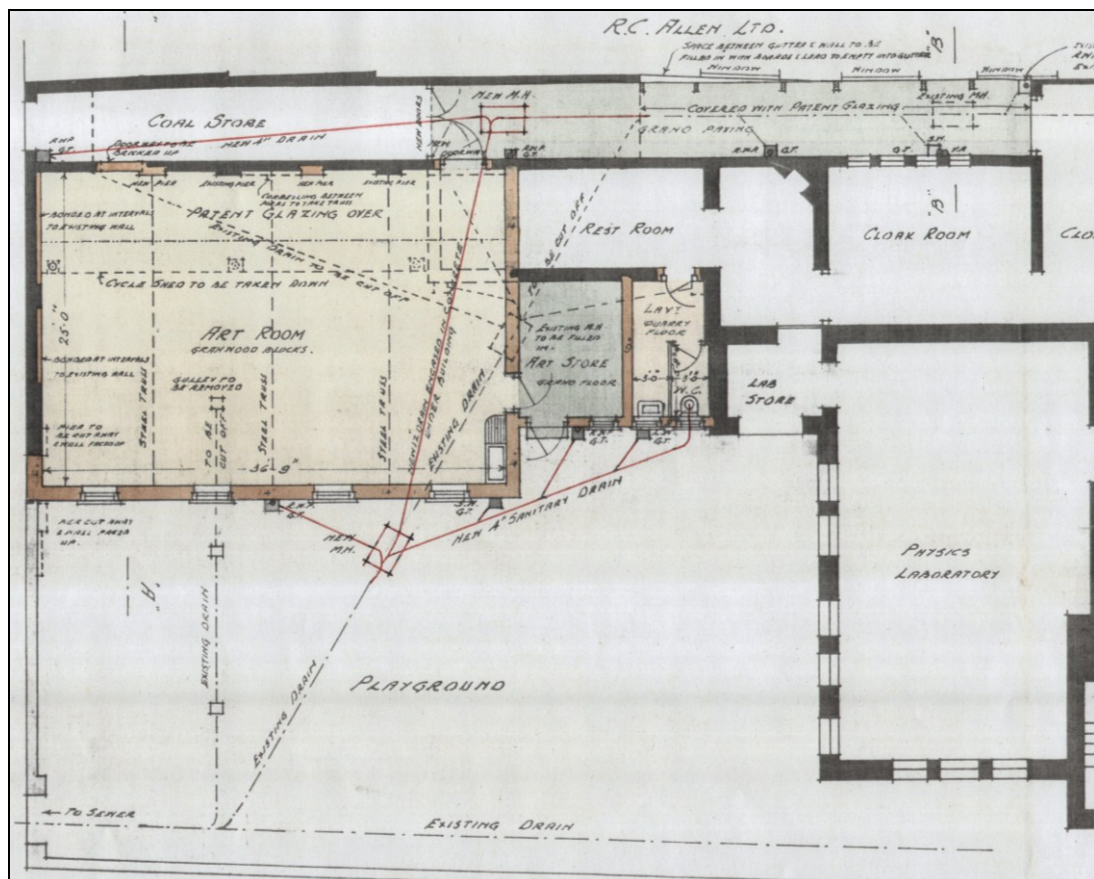


Figure 12. Original architects drawings showing floor plan for art room of 1927. (LBR Plan 1927/34028. Not to scale).



### *Site Visit*

The building was inspected on the 13th of May 2013. At the time of the visit the building was empty and showing some signs of dereliction, with evidence for squatting, pigeon infestation and stripping of interior fittings, particularly of cast-iron radiators and pipe-work. Demolition work of adjacent buildings, including early 20th century toilet blocks was underway at this time.

### *Building Description*

The school of 1874 is a two-storey building constructed of red brick in the Victorian Gothic style and is notable for the high quality of workmanship and attention to detail demonstrated particularly in the exterior brickwork. The roof is covered with Swithland slate and capped with decorative terracotta ridge tiles. Several courses of decorative, dentillated brickwork encircle the whole building at the level of the eaves, as do a trio of blue-brick string courses, which are interrupted by the first floor windows. Beneath the first and ground floor windows are two string courses of moulded brick in an unusually complex design; these courses run the full length of the south-facing façade and around the west-facing gable end, but are not present on the projecting wings of the north-facing façade. The south-facing façade appears unaltered since construction and is basically flat, with projecting, gabled wings at either end, with a principal entrance, originally to the mixed school, located in the centre of the range. The more uniform, classical arrangement of this façade, plus the uninterrupted decorative banding may indicate that this was intended, at the design stage at least, as the principal façade. However, given the close proximity of the former Congregational Chapel, which was constructed on the adjacent plot in 1863, it has never been possible to appreciate the south-facing façade in its entirety. The plainer, north-facing façade is similarly obscured, by numerous later additions and the presence of other buildings.

Throughout the building, the windows are mainly paired on both floors, with elaborate lintels of oolitic limestone and, at ground floor level, brick arch-heads. Doorways located at the north-eastern and south-western ends, and within the centre of the south-facing façade, have two-centred arch-heads of oolitic limestone, with heavy roll-moulding and nail head detail.

Linked to the south-western end of the school of 1874, is the former art room of 1927. This is a single-storey rectangular building of simpler design: an ogee variation on a Dutch gable, complete with coping and kneelers, fronting onto Oxford Street. The doorway to the north of this has a moulded limestone lintel, with nail head detailing and is the original entrance to the boys' school of 1874. The entrance to the south is likely to have been built after 1927.

Internally, there is evidence for several campaigns of addition and alteration, although the original layout of the building is still discernible. Fixtures and fittings relating to the De Montfort University Law School remain in evidence. Much of the original building fabric is obscured by large whiteboards and projection facilities. Larger spaces have been subdivided into smaller classrooms with modern partitions, false ceilings have been inserted and within the former nursery, infant school and girls' school, modern staging has been installed for use as lecture theatres. The former girls'

school remains an impressive space, well-lit and with a high ceiling which is open to the rafters. The two original staircases leading to the girls' school and boys' school at either ends of the building are built on steel beams, with decorative, open-fretwork risers and closed, timber balustrades, with moulded, mahogany handrails. Original doorway and cupboard openings throughout the building have shouldered, or 'Caernarfon' arch-heads. Brickwork 'nail head' corning visible throughout the classrooms of both floors mirrors the decorative detailing seen externally.

### *Photographic Survey*

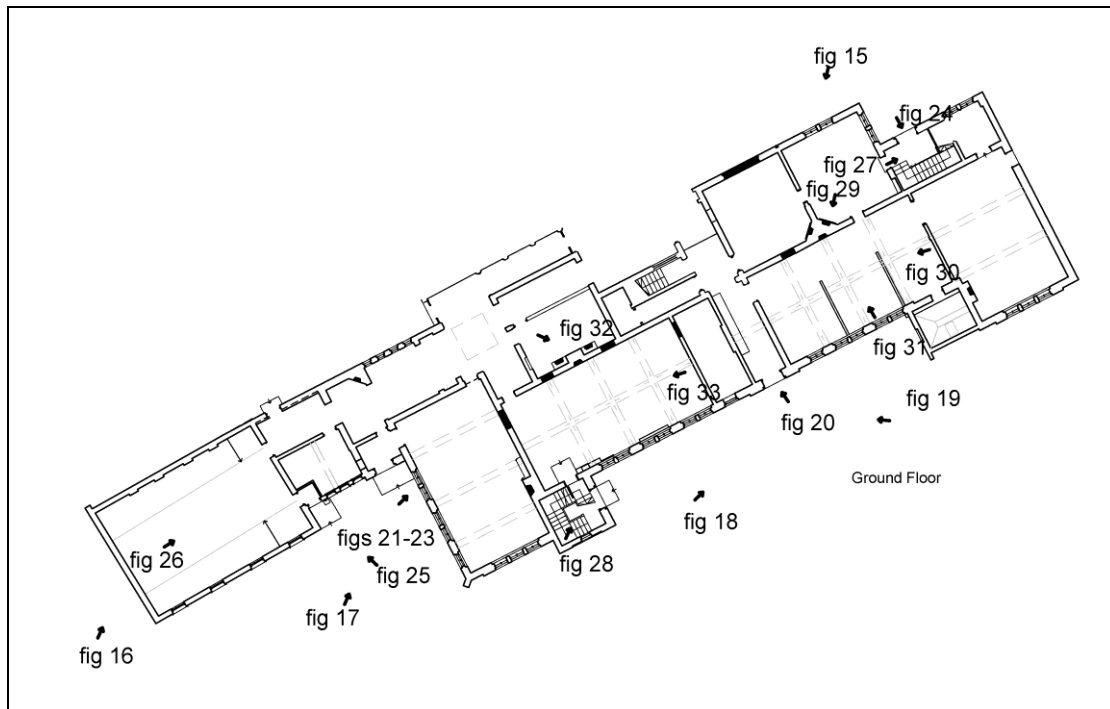


Figure 13. Location plan of ground floor photographs included below as figures 15-33.

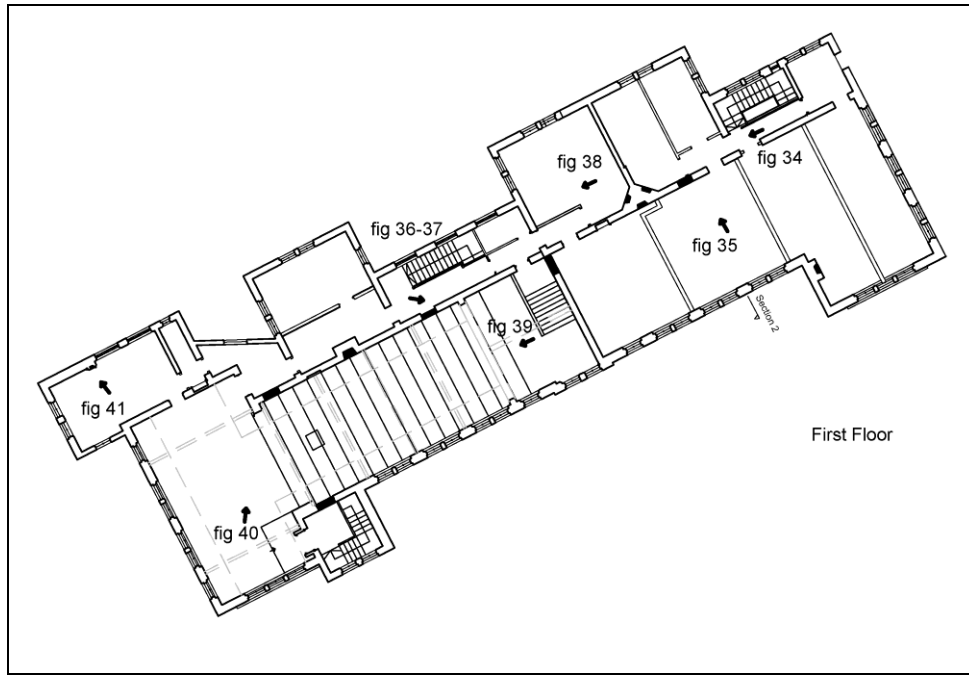


Figure 14. Location plan of first floor photographs included below as figures 34-41.



Figure 15. North-facing elevation, looking south-west.



Figure 16. West facing elevation, with former art room fronting onto Oxford Street. Original boys' entrance is located on the left hand side. Looking east.



Figure 17. Detail of above. Looking east.





Figure 18. South-facing elevation, looking east.



Figure 19. South-facing elevation, looking west towards former girls' entrance.



Figure 20. Former entrance to mixed- school. Looking north.





Figure 21. Window to former nursery. Looking east.



Figure 22. Decorative window head detail, looking east.





Figure 23. Detail of decorative brickwork string-course.



Figure 24. Former entrance to boys' school, showing decorative detail to arch-headed doorway opening, with roll moulding and nail head motif. Looking south.



Figure 25. Former art room building of 1927. Looking north.



Figure 26. Former art room interior, looking east.





Figure 27. Boys' staircase, with cast-iron open-fretwork risers and oak treads.  
Looking east.



Figure 28. Girls' staircase, looking north.





Figure 29. Former heated classroom of 1873, showing decorative brickwork cornice with nail-head motif. Looking south.



Figure 30. Former mixed school room, with chamfered and stopped timber axial and transverse ceiling beams. Looking west.



Figure 31. Former mixed school room, showing shouldered-arch doorway openings (converted as a cupboard on left hand side), and blocked fire-place opening. Looking north.



Figure 32. Blocked doorway and chimney openings within former class room. Looking south-east.



Figure 33. Former infants' school room, looking west, towards blocked doorway into nursery.





Figure 34. Pair of shouldered- arch doorway openings. Looking west along first floor passage.

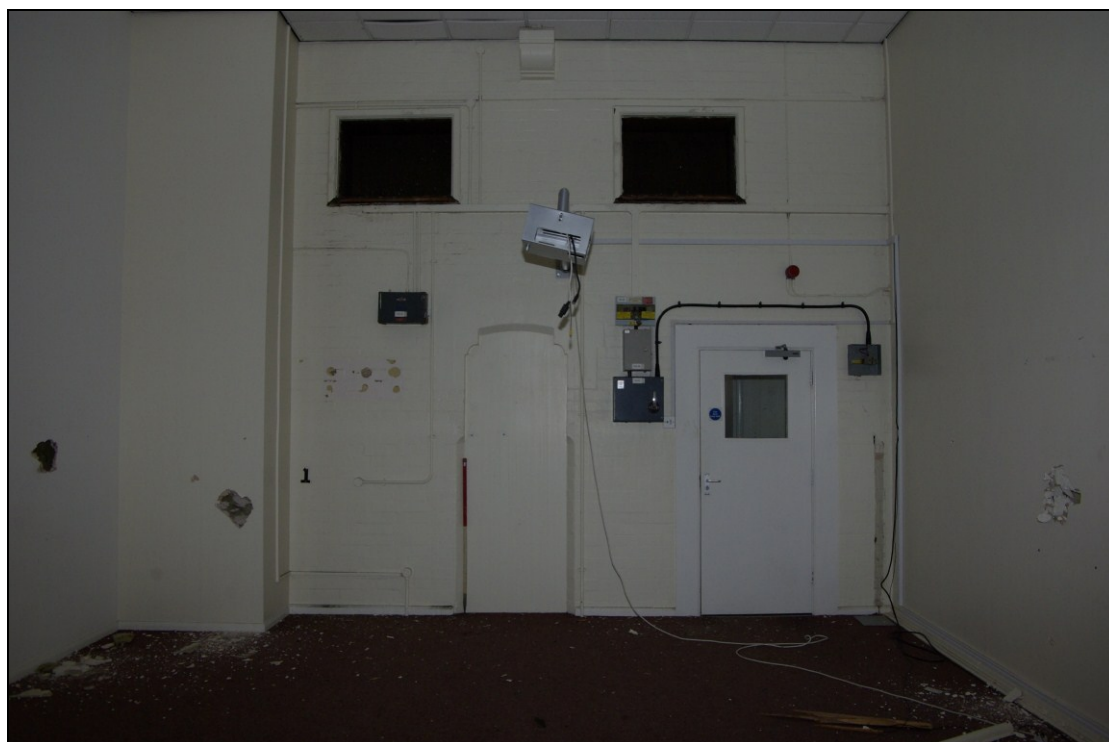


Figure 35. Blocked inserted doorway openings within former boys' schoolroom. Looking north.



Figure 36. Blocked window opening within inserted stairwell. Looking south-east.

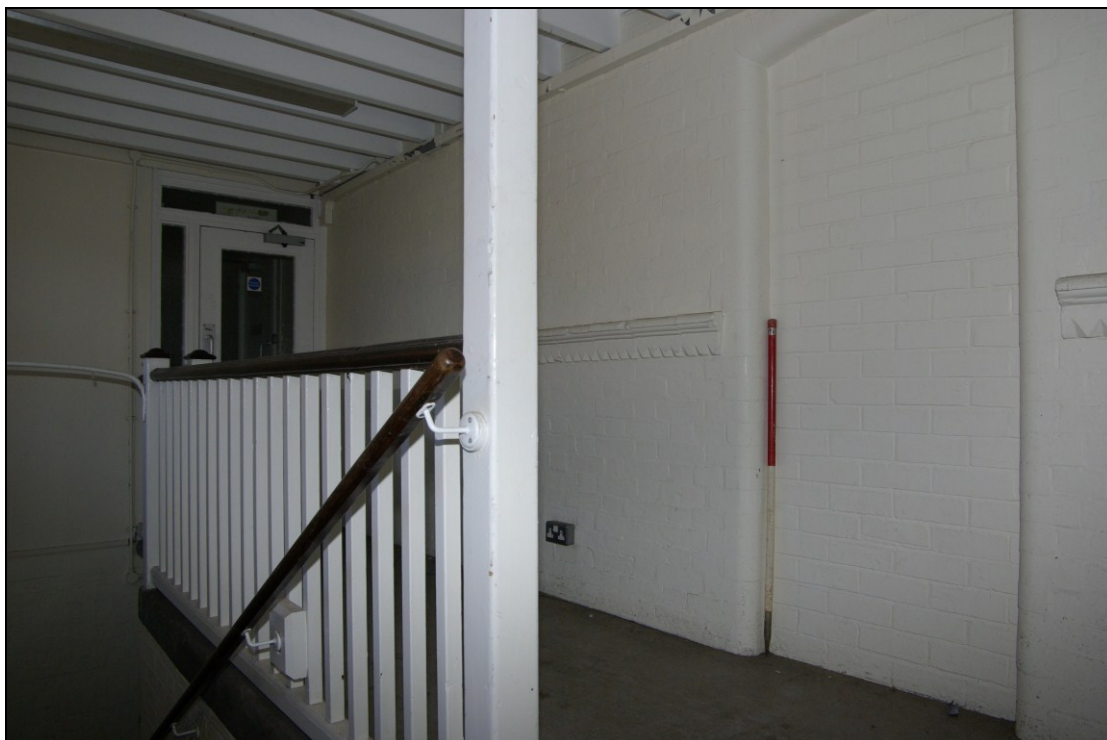


Figure 37. Moulded brickwork and nail head motif dado-rail and blocked doorway on first floor landing, leading into girls' school room. Looking south-east.



Figure 38. Modern boiler equipment within former class-room, looking west.





Figure 39. Former girls' school-room. Looking west.



Figure 40. Former girls' school-room, looking east.





Figure 41. Former heated class-room, looking west.

### **Archive**

The archive consists of:

This report,

Contact sheets of 92 digital photographs,

92 35mm black and white photographs and negatives,

Photographic record sheets, combined black and white and digital,

Plans showing locations of archived photographs

2 annotated site plan drawings

Architects survey drawings

CD of this report and the digital photographs.

The archive will be deposited with the Leicester City Museums Service under the Accession Number A7.2013.

### **Publication**

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

### **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was undertaken by Sophie Clarke, the project was managed by Vicki Score. Original architects drawings were supplied by Staniforth Architects.

## Bibliography and References

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ULAS, 2013, *Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording Oxford Street, Leicester*.

'*The City of Leicester: Primary and secondary education*', *A History of the County of Leicester: volume 4: The City of Leicester* (1958), pp. 328-335.

URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66570> Date accessed: 28 May 2013.

## Oasis Information

Project Name	Former Oxford Street School, Oxford Street, Leicester
Project Type	Level 3 Building Survey
Project Manager	V Score
Project Supervisor	S Clarke
Previous/Future work	Building Survey
Current Land Use	School buildings
Development Type	Demolition
Reason for Investigation	As a condition
Position in the Planning Process	Ongoing
Site Co ordinates	SK 585 040
Start/end dates of field work	13.5.13
Archive Recipient	Leicester City Council
Study Area	0.5ha

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