

**ADDRESS**

Gloucester Primary School, LONGHOPE CLOSE, CAMBERWELL

Parish CAMBERWELL  
District SOUTHWARK  
County GREATER LONDON

Case UID: 166030

Date First Listed:

Formerly Listed As:

**RECOMMENDATION**

Adviser: Ms D Keate

Outcome: No, do not list

Recommended Grade: NL

27-MAR-2009

Advice Text: After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are not fulfilled.

**CONTEXT**

Gloucester Primary School is owned and managed by the London Borough of Southwark. It is a fully operational school and we are not aware of any proposals for alterations or disposal. The site is not in a conservation area.

**HISTORY**

Until the Elementary Education Act of 1870, education was largely left to voluntary initiatives, with the churches or local charities as the main providers for the poorer classes. The Act, steered through Parliament by William Forster and thus known as 'Forster's Act', actively supported by Gladstone, was the first to set a national, secular framework for the education of children aged 5-13. A driving force behind the Act was the need for a literate and numerate workforce to ensure that Britain remain at the forefront of manufacture and improvement. It required partially state-funded elementary schools to be set up in areas where existing provision was inadequate, to be managed by elected school boards. The churches and other pressure groups had opposed state-provided education. Conservative opinion generally favoured church schools, and was concerned that radical and secular education provided by the board schools might have threatened the status quo by teaching the labouring classes to think too much, but the Act's intention was to supplement rather than duplicate denominational schools targetted at areas of most need. The new legislation resulted in a surge of school building across the country. After 1870, the number of new voluntary schools declined because, it is thought, board schools paid higher salaries and provided better buildings.

London was not initially included in the Act, but an amendment created the School Board of London (SBL), to operate within the boundary of the Metropolitan Board of Works. This was the first school board to be founded, and the most influential. The SBL was elected from ten divisions based around London constituencies: the City, Southwark, Chelsea and Greenwich, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Westminster, Finsbury and Marylebone. SBL policy was to provide London with modern, high-quality schools, and while elementary education would not become compulsory on a national level until 1880, it passed a by-law in 1871 compelling parents to send children aged 5-13 to school. The SBL built vast numbers of schools - about 500 in all - and was the single largest educational provider in London; by c1890 it was providing places for some 350,000 children. It was also highly influential in school design nationally. Frequently built in slum areas, they were

designed to impress, being large, imposing, and often as high as three storeys. ER Robson, appointed as architect to the SBL in 1871, developed the characteristic Queen Anne style as a secular alternative to the Gothic of Anglican schools. This interpretation of the red brick, sash windowed, vernacular idiom of many houses of the late C17 and early C18 lent itself to a template for the large-scale designs required for schools, as well as for the large windows needed to light classrooms. Robson's 1874 book 'School Architecture' was highly influential, and his standard Board School plan was widely emulated. In the following decades, under Robson's prolific successor TJ Bailey, school design became increasingly eclectic, displaying Arts and Crafts and Baroque influence, alongside Queen Anne and other styles. The London board schools were often the most identifiable and noble buildings in their late-C19 urban neighbourhoods, famously lauded by Sherlock Holmes in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Naval Treaty' (1894) as 'Beacons of the future'.

The Education Act of 1902 steered in by Balfour's Conservative Government abolished the 2,568 school boards and replaced them with Local Education Authorities (LEAs). In London, the responsibility for education was transferred to the London County Council (LCC) in 1904. The LCC's Education Committee continued its commitment to architectural quality.

Originally named Gloucester Road School, (the road no longer exists), this school was built in 1875 by the SBL to the design of ER Robson, to serve an area of dense working-class housing to the south of the Camberwell basin of the Grand Surrey Canal (now part of Burgess Park). It accommodated 1,003 children, and was extended in 1885 and 1894. Two further ranges were built c1900 to the north: a single-storey block, probably a special school, a feature of London board schools from 1892 for children with learning difficulties, and a two-storey block of three bays, possibly a cookery annexe or workshops. The London County Council bomb damage maps indicate that the school was 'seriously damaged, but repairable at cost', which probably explains the loss of the roofs to the north-east part of the building. The school's setting was radically changed when Gloucester Grove Estate was built in 1971; the area is again in the process of redevelopment to provide low-rise housing.

## DESCRIPTION

This is a three-storey building in the Queen Anne style, built in yellow stock brick with red brick dressings. The composition, a little unusually, was symmetrical on both principal elevations, and the internal layout follows Robson's conventional plan of a hall per floor (aligned east-west here) with a series of classrooms clustered around it. We do not have details of the original 1875 building or how it was extended; there is a datestone of 1894 on the north-east flank elevation and the transition is seamless. It is a handsome and cohesive composition with shaped and triangular gables, enlivened by combining irregular bays-widths with bays breaking forward; also, by varied fenestration of round, segmental and flat-arched windows, with surface ornament in the form of pilasters, moulded window aprons and string courses. The south elevation comprises four blocks of three bays flanking a deep central recess. The north elevation is arranged with 6-8-6 bays with the central 8-bay block breaking forward. However, the roofs and gables of the central and eastern portion have been lost, presumably a result of the bomb damage, and now have flat roofs behind plain parapets. Most chimneystacks have been removed. There are unusual linenfold panelled doors to some of the entrances, and most window joinery appears original, or has been replaced like-for-like. The east elevation is marred by a modern full-height extension, which rather brutally cuts across a cut-brick aedicule bearing the SBL initials and a bas relief of a winged figure with book, dated 1894. The interior plan is largely intact, and the top floor hall has decorative arch-braced roof trusses. The original boys' entrance is on the east elevation, and the paired girls' and infants entrances on the south-west elevation. The west elevation also has an SBL aedicule,

undated. There is also a single-storey modern toilet block.

The c1900 buildings to the north comprise a single-storey range of four bays and a two-storey block of three bays. These are also in the Queen Anne style with a row of Dutch gables and tall windows. The inner face of the single-storey range facing the playground was obviously afforded some architectural treatment, judging from a painted-over gauged-brick niche on what would have been the external wall, but a series of extensions has obscured this elevation.

## ASSESSMENT

Board schools rank among London's most distinctive building types. At their best they display considerable architectural achievement through picturesque composition, good materials, careful detailing and spare use of decoration; at their most modest they are attractive, highly-competent designs with high townscape interest. All have local historic interest as eloquent records of the impact of the seminal 1870 Education Act and the unprecedented achievements of the SBL on London's social history and townscape. Given the high numbers that were built and relatively high survival rate, however, selection is necessary in assessing further examples for designation. Very early board schools, and generally those which have high architectural quality and are well preserved, will be strong candidates for designation. Interiors were almost routinely plain, which means that the case for listing will rest principally on external architectural interest.

Gloucester School is quite a good example of a London Board school by ER Robson in the Queen Anne manner, and given its relatively early date it would be a stronger candidate for listing had it survived better externally. The unsympathetic extension on the side (east) elevation might be discounted under other circumstances, but the loss of a substantial portion of the roof, chimneys and gabled roofline on a principal elevation is a serious drawback when assessing a building type which, par excellence, is defined by its roof profile. The building's overall architectural quality, though good, would not rank it among the most accomplished board schools of this period and thus does not outweigh the changes that have taken place. While the interior survives well, with attractive decorative trusses to the top hall, it is otherwise plain and standard in terms of board school design.

The benchmarks for listing London board schools are high, given the quality of what survives. Some 60 examples are listed and we are now taking forward an uncompleted project of 1994 which identified further candidates for designation. In the national, and London-wide context, our view is that this building falls below the standard for designation. Board schools are well-represented in the locality: there are three listed examples in Camberwell: Bellenden Road (1876); Ady's Road (1883-4) and Grove Vale (1900) representing the broad span of the SBL period. The c1900 ranges to the north have attractive north elevations, but are built in a style well-established by this date and are not of sufficient architectural merit in their own right to warrant listing. The group as a whole however has considerable local interest in an area which has lost virtually all its Victorian buildings.

Conclusion: Gloucester Primary School should not be included in the statutory list

Reasons For Designation Decision:

Gloucester Primary School is not recommended for designation, for the following principal reasons:

\* the loss of a substantial portion of the roofline due (it is assumed) to bomb damage, means that it falls below the standard required for designation

\* Whilst of some interest as a relatively early London Board school in the Queen Anne manner, the building's overall architectural quality, though good, does not rank it among the most accomplished board schools of this period, and does not outweigh the changes that have taken place.

## VISITS

27-NOV-2008 Full inspection

## COUNTERSIGNING

First Countersigning Adviser: Ms E Gee

Comments: Agreed. This building has been carefully assessed, both for its own design and survival, and its context amongst London's many impressive Board schools. It certainly has qualities that render it of local interest, but given alterations, it falls below the benchmark for listing. 15 June 2009

Second Countersigning Adviser:

Comments:

HP Director:

Comments:

Proposed List Entry

LONGHOPE CLOSE

Peckham  
Gloucester Primary School

NL

Case UID: 166030

Proposed LBS UID: 505155