

# The History of Education in Conwy Town



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## **Introduction**

When we embarked on this project, we discovered that a number of other researchers had discovered parts of this story but no one had produced a complete chronological view. Consequently we have tried to piece together all of the information which we have found in a wide variety of sources. We don't consider this to be a fully comprehensive account and we are sure there are people who might read this document who have additional information. We would welcome anyone who can add to the story to get in touch with us so that we can update it. It could include personal anecdotes, photographs, documents or even information relating to other books which we have not yet discovered. The sources of any updates will be fully acknowledged.

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# Conwy Town

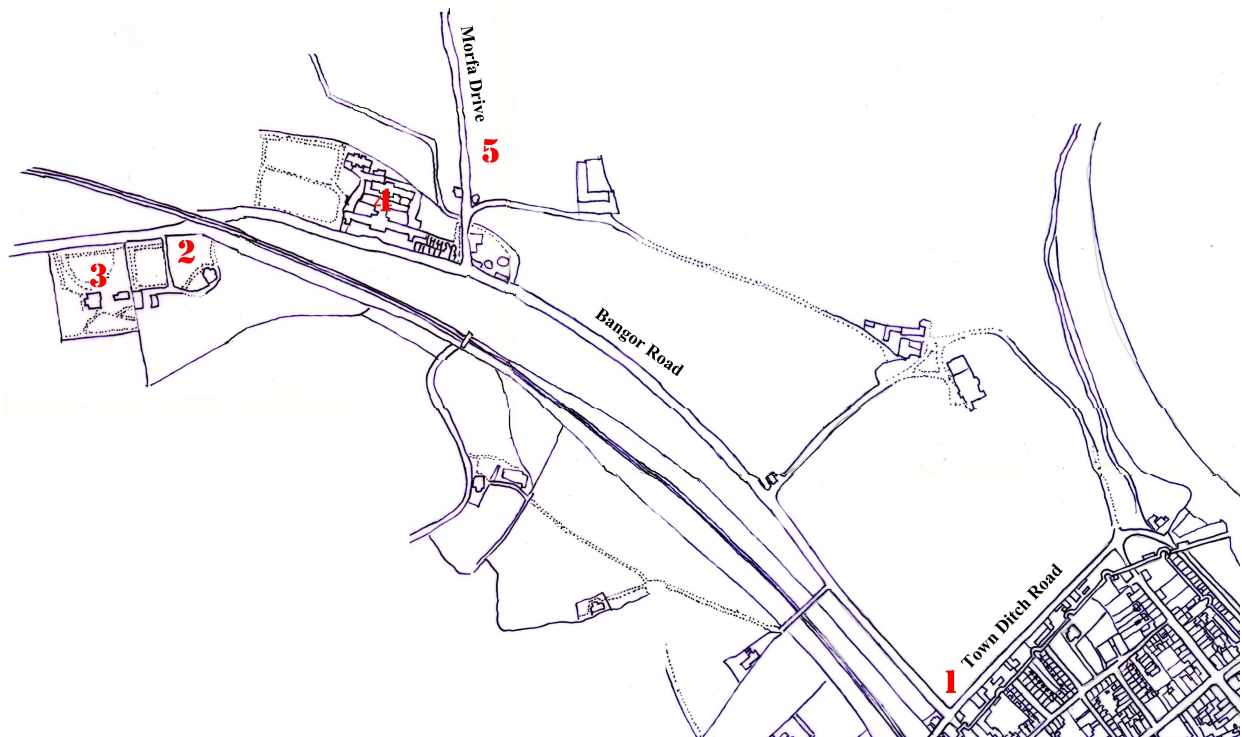
Copy of a map of 1888



1. Plas Mawr School
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## Bangor Road area, Conwy

Copy of a map of 1888



1. Bodlondeb Girls National School later the National Infants School
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5. Ysgol Aberconwy

## Gyffin Schools

Rough copy of a modern map



1. Porth y Felin/ Ysgol Porth y Felin 1998 – present
2. Conway Grammar School: later Conway College later demolished: rebuilt 1926 as the Central school: later Aberconway Secondary School to 1961: then Cadnant Junior School: later Ysgol Cadnant until closed in 1998 - demolished 2002.
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## 1. 12<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries

The first occupation of the site of Conwy town was in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century when the Cistercian monks from Rhedynog Felen near Caernarfon relocated to Conwy to establish Aberconwy Abbey. The house at Rhedynog Felen had been founded in 1186 by a group of monks from Strata Florida Abbey near Tregaron in the county of Ceredigion. They transferred to Conwy just four or five years later. The name of Aberconwy's founder is a mystery because no foundation charter exists although three possible names have emerged.

1. Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd, who in 1186 was lord of Arfon, in which Rhedynog Felen was located.
2. Gruffydd ap Cynan. Lord of Anglesey, Arfon and Arllechwedd at Portaethwy in Anglesey, who did issue a charter granting lands in Anglesey to the Abbey of Aberconwy.
3. Llewelyn ap Iorwerth (Llewelyn the Great) who also issued a charter dated 1/7/1198 granting the Abbey lands throughout Gwynedd, his ancestral domain. The date of his charter has been questioned by Lloyd. He states that 'Llewelyn was not in a position to make certain of the grants mentioned in 1198 as he had not then established his authority over all the relevant lands.'

(J.E.Lloyd: History of Wales Vol. II p.601)

Even though Llewelyn was unlikely to have been the founder, he was a great friend and patron of the monks in general and of Aberconwy in particular. When he died in 1240 his body was interred in a stone coffin in the Abbey Church.

In 1283 Edward I had the Abbey moved to Maenan near Llanrwst so that he could replace it with a fortress town. The move was completed by 1284 and the original abbey church was then remodelled to form the current parish church. Llewelyn's coffin was also removed and taken by the monks to Maenan. At the Dissolution of the monasteries his empty and lidless sarcophagus was taken to the Gwynedd Chapel at the church in Llanrwst. The final resting place of Llewelyn's bones is not known.

(Norman Tucker: Conway and its Story 1960 p.12)

People often think that monasteries offered education to some of the local populace. In fact this rarely happened and there is certainly no record of it taking place in Aberconwy. The monks were much more likely to instruct peasants in husbandry so that their monastery lands could be efficiently farmed.

However, the Abbey 'contained men eminent for their learning; its library was famous and it was also one of the depositories of the public acts. All things of importance which happened in Wales were regularly recorded in the Abbeys of Aberconwy in North Wales and Ystradflur (Strata Florida) in South Wales.' (Rev. Robert Williams; The History and Antiquities of the Town of Aberconwy p.71)

It is also known that at least two of the Aberconwy abbots received university education.

Education for the majority in Wales had democratic and egalitarian roots. The ruling classes employed private tutors or governesses, or sent their children to fee paying schools. They had little interest in helping the poor to become literate. Their own education would have been delivered using the medium of English.



## 1a. The first school in Conwy

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Dr. John Williams (1582-1650), Lord Keeper/Lord Chancellor (1621-1625), Archbishop of York (1641-1650), who was born in Aberconwy and educated at Ruthin Grammar School, wanted to set up a similar school in Conwy. Obviously this would have only benefitted the children of wealthy parents. Dr. Williams had hoped to establish the school with the help of Sir John Wynn of Gwydir. According to Norman Tucker the school was never established. (Norman Tucker *ibid.* p.67)

However, A.H.Dodd, seems to indicate that there was a school in Conwy, which had been set up prior to the civil war. He says that towards the end of January 1645 a contingent of Royalists was sent to the Dee Passage at Holt to meet a threat from the Parliamentarians and that the Archbishop's cooperation was elicited in order to alert Gwynedd to that threat. Eventually Holt was recaptured, and so Caernarfonshire was safe again. In February 1645 the bishop of St.Asaph decided that he could risk leaving his son at school in Conway even though the town was still 'in a ferment'.

(A History of Caernarfonshire 1284-1900 – A.H.Dodd 1968 pp.117-118)

*Could this school have been held in the 'Old College' (no.20 Castle Street)? No verification of this has been found but nobody seems to know exactly how the building got its name. It has been rebuilt/re-modelled so much over the centuries that it has been dated by different authorities as being from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 16<sup>th</sup> century with much modification at later dates. The only known connection with education appears to be its name.*



The Old College, Castle Street

Pennant speculated that the current building replaced an earlier one established by Edward I for the instruction of youth. Norman Tucker said that this was highly improbable 'as Edward I had enough on his hands without bothering about such an unwarlike creation'.

(Pages from Conwy's Past – Norman Tucker p.55) (also North Wales Weekly News article 6/6/1968)

In 1646 the Parliamentarians besieged Conwy. First the town fell to them with help and advice from the archbishop, Dr. John Williams, originally a royalist but who by this time had changed sides. The castle eventually surrendered to the Parliamentarians about three months later. A 'Puritan regime' was quickly established in the town by the Parliamentarian governor, Colonel John Carter. He was a Buckinghamshire adventurer who came to North Wales in 1644. In 1647 he married Elizabeth Holland, heiress of the Kinmel Estate near Abergele.  
(Norman Tucker *ibid.* p.86)

## **1b. The Burgesses' School**

After the 'Commonwealth' was established in 1649 following the end of the civil war, the Puritan sects were keen to promote 'godliness' amongst the general population. In 1650 'The Propagation Act' was passed which resulted in many schools being opened. In Wales 63 new schools appeared. In them, children of both sexes were taught to read, write and count and memorize the scriptures, free of charge but through the medium of English. They became known as 'Propagation Grammar Schools.'

In Conwy, Colonel John Carter, the governor, was keen to bring education as well as religion to the people of the town. He appointed a schoolmaster who was to be paid by the corporation to teach the children of 'poor burgesses'. This may have been one of these so called 'Propagation Schools'. However, the burgesses constituted only 5% of the total population and later records from 1760 – 62 showed that there was a total of only 16 children allowed to attend. It was definitely not available to the majority of the children in the town.  
(Conway and its Story – Norman Tucker *ibid.* p.86); A.H.Dodd *ibid.* p.370)

Extracts from Parish registers, 1541-1773, compiled by Alice Hadley provide the names of some of the schoolmasters who taught in this school.

- 1669 Lowry Wynn was buried on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April. The wife of **Richard Smith schoolmaster** at Conwy the 20<sup>th</sup> August was interred 1669 (p.149 Alice Hadley)
- 1752 Baptized Grace the daughter of **John Ellis schoolmaster** by Mary his wife July 24<sup>th</sup>. (p. 255 *ibid*)
- 1754 Baptized the daughter of **John Ellis late schoolmaster** by Mary Jones his wife September 28<sup>th</sup>. (p.260 *ibid*)
- 1761 Baptized John the son of **Joseph Shelden** by Margaret Roberts his wife June 24<sup>th</sup>. (p.276 *ibid*)
- 1763 Baptized James the son of **Joseph Shelden schoolmaster** by Margaret Roberts his wife September 4<sup>th</sup>. (p.304 *ibid*)
- 1772 Baptized Hugh the son of **Robert Williams schoolmaster** by Catherine his wife Oct.14<sup>th</sup>. (p.304 *ibid*)
- 1772 Buried Hugh son of **Robert Williams schoolmaster** November 21<sup>st</sup>. (p.304)
- 1775 Baptized Catherine the daughter of **John Jones schoolmaster** by Margaret Evans his wife January 31<sup>st</sup>. (p.311 *ibid*)
- 1789 Baptized Matthew son of **Griffith Owen schoolmaster** by Ellen his wife June 10<sup>th</sup>. (p.346 *ibid*)

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1760 there were 16 named children attending the school. The list included girls as well as boys. One of the girls had the Puritan name of 'Silence'.

John Williams and Richard Williams	sons of	Griffith Williams
Rich'd Hughes	son of	James Hughes
John Parry and Joshua Parry	sons of	Joshua Parry
John Williams	son of	Mary Griffiths
Thomas Evans and Ellen Evans	children of	Griffith Evans
John Owen and Ann Owen	children of	Robert Owen
Robt. Roberts and Thomas Roberts	sons of	William Roberts
Jane Griffiths	daughter of	John Griffiths
Ellen Beethel	daughter of	Jane Beethel
Mary Sheldon	daughter of	Joseph Sheldon (this entry was crossed out)
Silence Owen	Owen Roberts daughter	

16 allowed by me Peirce Wynne Alderman

For the following two years, November 17<sup>th</sup> 1761 and November 1762, the lists were the same apart from the addition of a new pupil, Margaret Jones, presumably to replace Mary Sheldon:-

16 allowed by me Robert Wynne Jun.r. Alderman  
(Bangor MSS - 14820)

The fact that an Alderman was recording and limiting the number of pupils attending the school indicates that the Corporation was still responsible for its funding over a hundred years after it was founded. The school survived until at least the year 1810.

### **1c. A Welsh Trust School**

In 1674, Thomas Gouge, a London Minister, with the help of some wealthy Puritan merchants and the support of some Anglican parsons, founded the Welsh Trust in order to set up schools which would be conducted in English for both girls and boys. The children were all to be taught to read and write, 'cast accompts' and repeat the Catechism. The parish was expected to provide supervision and half of the costs. The Trust had begun operations in Caernarfonshire in 1675. The Vicar of Conway provided sponsorship for a Trust School within his own parish. The school had thirty six pupils (but only half that number in 1678). The Trust also published books in Welsh including Welsh Bibles. After Gouge's death in 1681 many parishes withdrew their cooperation. It's not known where the Conway school was sited nor how long it lasted.

(Dodd *ibid.* pp.173-174)

The following entry in Council Records of Conwy concerning the 'Keepers of School and Reading Morning Prayer' may possibly refer to the Trust school.

29<sup>th</sup> September 1689

'Order that Edward Samuel Cley should keep school and read morning prayer within the said Town this ensuing year and that he should be paid 10s salerie by the Bayliffs thereof. Subscribed in Council ye 10<sup>th</sup> of Ffeb'ry The Order written above.'

Cadr. Wynne Alderman

Hugh Williams

John Williams, Bayliffe

## **1d. Gyffin Charity School**

In 1719 John Jones, Dean of Bangor (1689-1727) and of the Anglesey family of Plas Gwyn, founded a school at Gyffin for the education of 12 children. He left a legacy of £100 to provide an endowment to fund the school. Its purpose was:- “ for the instruction of poor children for ever to read the Bible and the Common prayer Book in Welsh and be taught the catechism of the Church of England in Welsh.” In 1699 he had written about the problems in trying to provide education for the children of peasants. “The great obstacle is the poverty of the children. It is so great that they cannot allow themselves to learn.”

Before he became the Dean of Bangor, he was the incumbent of several Anglesey parishes where he was actively involved with the work of the S.P.C.K. (The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) from its inception, holding meetings with the local clergy to canvas their cooperation and setting up several elementary schools at his own expense.

(A.H.Dodd *ibid.* p.216)

The S.P.C.K. was founded in 1698 by Thomas Bray an Anglican priest and a small group of friends. It provided the catalyst for the growth of the charity school movement. It provided advice and encouragement to local groups to help them to set up, finance and run hundreds of schools. It also produced model sets of rules and provided a curriculum and examples of good practice for teachers and trustees. Although its main aim was to provide a knowledge of Christian doctrine, many of the schools provided basic literacy and numeracy and some also taught needlework, woodwork and other working skills.

According to the National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland (1868) the charities in Gyffin produced about £7 per annum, including the income of Dean Jones's school. This seems to indicate that the school had survived well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A questionnaire of 1749 (now in the NLW) showed that in Conwy town - “there is not, neither has there been, any Publick or charity school in this Parish.” Gyffin, where John Jones set up his school, was close by, but it was and still is a separate parish.

In 1731 another member of the S.P.C.K., Griffith Jones, a minister of the Church of England who was born in Carmarthenshire, instigated a system of teaching people to read in Welsh known as 'circulating schools'. The schools were held in one location for about three months before moving on to another place. Pupils were taught to read in Welsh. The curriculum consisted only in the study of the Bible and the Catechism of the Church of England. As a result, many people became literate and in addition gained a deep knowledge of the Christian scriptures. By 1761 there were about 85 circulating schools in North Wales but no evidence has been found of any such schools in Conwy town.

During the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century another educational agency began making a contribution towards increasing the importance of literacy in the area. This was the Sunday School. About half were Methodist; a third were Church of England; but those with a good reputation attracted all denominations. The weaknesses of the Sunday School as an educational instrument are obvious. Half a day a week spent partly in learning to read from scratch, partly receiving religious instruction, under teachers who were untrained and generally unpaid, meant slow progress. But at least books were available, primarily Bibles but also elementary primers to help the unlettered in their uphill task.

(A.H.Dodd *ibid.* p.370)

## 2. 19<sup>th</sup> century

The population of Conwy in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was as follows:-

1801 889

1811 1053

1821 1105

1831 1245

(Rev. Robert Williams *ibid.* p.91)

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### 2a. *The Monitorial system*

*In about 1804, two British Educators, Dr. Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster, independently instigated a system of education known as the 'Monitorial System' or the 'Bell-Lancaster' Method. It involved more advanced pupils teaching less advanced ones, enabling a small number of adult teachers to educate large numbers of children at low cost. The Reverend Andrew Bell developed his version in the Church of England schools and Joseph Lancaster, who was a nonconformist, started using his system in London.*

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According to a report in 1846 the main schools in Conwy did not make much use of this system (see below p.20) although there is an account that provides evidence of a school at Plas Mawr which did make use of monitors. (see below p.13)

In 1832 Princess Victoria and her mother the Duchess of Kent, spent several hours in Conwy as part of a visit to North Wales and Anglesey. After luncheon the royal visitors left but the duchess presented £30 to the local charity schools. (Norman Tucker *ibid* p.129)

### 2b. Conwy Charity Schools

#### **Plas Mawr School**

It's not clear how many charity schools there were in Conwy at the time, but in the 1834 Robson's Directory p.18, there is a record of a day school at **Plas Mawr** run by a Mrs. Hill. It could well have been there in 1833 when the future queen and her mother made their visit. Plas Mawr is an Elizabethan town house on High Street built by Robert Wynne in the years 1576-1580. It is currently in the care of CADW and is open to the public.

There seems to be some debate about the exact date the school started. R. Hugh Pritchard, in his article, has given the date 1837; Cadw has suggested it started in 1839; RCAHMW says 'Two rooms on the first floor were used as a school pre-1887.' However, the entry in the Aberconway Robson's Commercial Directory seems to be the earliest reference found so far.

'The school occupied two rooms, the White Room and the Great Chamber now known as the Reception and the Lantern Rooms. The 'babies' were housed in the latter. Both were upstairs rooms.' (R.Hugh Pritchard School in an Elizabethan Mansion – Aberconwy Historical Society “Transaction” )

This was a voluntary school with the premises shared with various poor families. Two teachers and a caretaker rented rooms in the gatehouse.  
(CADW guidebook)

Thomas Owen and his wife Mary lived in the building and Thomas was paid 9/- per quarter in summer and 15/- per quarter in winter to work as the school caretaker. (R.Hugh Pritchard ibid)

Mrs Hill seems to have run the **Plas Mawr School** until about 1840 when T. Roberts is listed as the teacher in the Robson's Directory of that year. It is likely that this was the Thomas Roberts (1786-1856) who was recorded at the Town Hall School in 1835. (Pigot's Directory - see below p.14) He was also the landlord of the Black Horse Inn, Castle Street and the bard 'Myrddin'. Later on he taught at the National School, Rose Hill and at the Guildhall School. (see below p.14)



Plas Mawr

By 1844 Elizabeth Humphreys is named in the Slater's Directory and also in the Directory of North Wales as the teacher at the **Plas Mawr School**. At some stage before 1868 this School became the **Infants National School**. (see below p.15) Margaret Jones was named as the teacher in the 1868 Slater's Directory. In that year, in spite of the poor quality of the building, an inspector wrote that; "I have no fault to find with this school." The school is known to have used paid monitors to aid the teacher and later to use the pupil teacher system.

The monitors were paid at the rate of 1s 6d a week but apparently they were subjected to the same harsh discipline as the pupils. "After repeated warnings the paid monitor was severely punished for gross neglect of duty. The punishment was inflicted in preference to his being dismissed, at the request of his mother." The date at which this incident took place is not known.  
(R.Hugh Pritchard ibid)



## **Back Lane School, Guild Hall/Town Hall Schools**

Pigot's Directory in 1835 p.681 lists two other schools, one in **Back Lane\*** run by Robert Hughes and another in the **Town Hall** run by Thomas Roberts. Both of these may also have been there in 1832. No other references have been discovered relating to the Back Lane School. The **Guild Hall** was originally used as the Town Hall by Conway Corporation up until 1899 when the newly built Civic Hall on Castle Street was officially opened. Since then the Guild Hall has been used for many purposes. For a short while after 1835 this school became known as the National School for Juniors.

\* Back Lane was the former name of Chapel Street.

## **Guild Hall School (Town Hall School)**

Thomas Roberts ran the school from at least 1835 to 1844. He is listed in some of the trade directories of the time.

1835 Pigots Directory - Thomas Roberts, Town Hall

1840 Robsons Directory - T Roberts, master, High Street, ( National)

1841 Robsons Directory - T Roberts, master of the National School, High Street

In the 1844 Slaters Directory Thos. Roberts is listed as master of the National School on Rose Hill Street. In addition to this entry, a Thomas Parry is recorded at the Town Hall School, Castle Street. It seems that this school was still running after the National School was established in Rose Hill in 1838/39.

In 1859 permission was granted to a Mr. William Davies to keep a school in the Town Hall at 6d per week provided it did not interfere with the meetings of the Corporation and the Petty Sessions. (EM Patterson " The Spirit of Conwy" Book 1, page 135-The Story of the Guild Hall)



The Town Hall later the Guildhall

## 2c. The National School

On December 18<sup>th</sup> 1837 the Town Council decided that 'Scubor fawr and the land upon which it is situated be given for building a National School and house for the master, provided sufficient funds can be procured for the purpose.'

(Norman Tucker *ibid* p. 132)

The school building was erected in the years 1838/39 and opened as a National School for boys and girls in 1840. It was located on the southeast side of Rose Hill Street between Porth y Felin and the railway station. The land was provided by Conway Borough council and paid for by Sir David Erskine. The cost of the building (£380) came from voluntary contributions.

Robson's 1840 Directory lists an Infant School at **Mount Pleasant** and the National Boys and Girls School in Rose Hill. No other information regarding the Mount Pleasant site for Infants has been found but it may eventually have transferred to Plas Mawr because the school there also became known as the Infants National School. In the 1840 Directory, Miss Connor and Miss Crawford are named as the schoolteachers in the Infants School at Mount Pleasant and Mr. James Foster and his wife Mrs. Foster in the National School, Rose Hill. By the time the 1844 North Wales Directory was published Mr. Thomas Roberts and Mary Jones are named as the teachers at the National School and Elizabeth Humphreys is listed in charge of the school at Plas Mawr.



The National School – now the Conwy Visitor Centre

## 2d. Lancaster Square School

In the 1844 Directory there is another school in **Lancaster Square** run by an Ann Hughes. She is also recorded there in the 1850 Slater's Directory.

*Was this perhaps a 'dame school'?* The dame schools were generally run by single or elderly women often in their own homes. They catered for the children from the poorest families whose parents had no choice but to go out to work and so many functioned primarily as day care facilities. The 'teacher' was often poor herself and barely literate and so she simply taught the girls to sew and do household chores. Sometimes the 'teacher' had another job such as washing or sewing which she carried out whilst looking after the children. Nevertheless, some dame schools did try to offer the rudiments of reading and writing and a few taught the children a good foundation in the basics.

In the 1861 census there is an Ann Hughes living in Lancaster Square aged 46 years and unmarried. She is described as a servant and cook in a boarding house. It's not known whether this was the same Ann Hughes who was the 'teacher' in the Lancaster Square School listed in the trade directories.

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## 2e. The Factory Acts

*A series of Factory Acts were passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in 1833, 1844, 1847, 1850, 1853 and 1867 which limited the use of child labour in factories and other industries. Children under the age of 9 years were not allowed to be employed and children aged 9-13 who were employed in such places, were to receive 2 hours education daily. In 1833, after the Factory Act was passed, grants were made available to aid elementary education. This almost certainly provided the impetus for the sudden arrival of a number of schools in Conwy around this time.*

*From 1833, the state also funded education for the poor in schools run by churches.*

*Expenditure for educating the poor increased rapidly after the first education inspectors were appointed in 1839.*

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It is quite likely that most of the schools which were springing up in the town from the 1830s would have been teaching reading and writing in English rather than in Welsh, because many of the teachers in the new day schools had come from England. The Sunday schools, particularly those in the nonconformist churches and chapels, would have almost certainly used Welsh.

## **2f. The Workhouse School**

The New Poor Law 1834 made it an obligation for some education to be made available to children in Workhouses. Traditionally the children were often looked after by older paupers who were generally illiterate. In September 1860 Mr.J.B.Browne, Inspector of Schools visited the Conwy Union workhouse. He recorded that of the seven children of school age who were present in the House, 'None could read or write at all and all appeared to be extremely ignorant.' Following this visit, the Board advertised for a teacher. On January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1861 Margaret Edwards was appointed on a part time basis with a salary of £3 a quarter. She was a widowed seamstress with two children of her own but she had no qualifications or teaching experience. By the end of the year the number of children had increased and so she was required to work full time and on a residential basis with full rations. Her pay was increased to £20 annual salary. The average salary of teachers in workhouses was £18 for masters and £16 for mistresses.

In May 1862, Inspector Browne visited again. He was not impressed with the achievements of the children but was satisfied with the equipment. He was also unimpressed with the teacher's achievements or abilities. Margaret Edwards resigned immediately and a new teacher, Jane Davies who was 21 years old was appointed as her successor. She had had some training and teaching experience. She started work June 25<sup>th</sup> 1862. When the Inspector returned in the September he observed that the school was operating adequately and awarded the school an annual grant of £10. (C.Draper – Paupers, Bastards and Lunatics pp.77/78)

Jane Davies left the school in April 1865. Her replacement was a seventeen year dressmaker called Mary Anne Jones of Chester. Poor health resulted in her leaving the post almost immediately. In the November 1865 twenty two year old Catherine Owen was appointed. She had worked for six years at the National School. By this time there were 19 children on the roll. She remained until September 1870. The next teacher, Jane Wynne, was only there for a couple of months. Jane Eliza Jones, her successor, stayed for about five years. She is recorded there in the 1871 census. In 1873 her salary was increased from £25 to £28 per annum. She left in 1877. The next teacher, Frances Morgan, only stayed a few weeks. Her resignation was accepted by the Board of Guardians on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1875. Ann Edwards was appointed on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1877 with a salary of £20 p.a.. She died within a few months. In November 1877 twenty one year old Margaret Jones was appointed with a salary of £30. She was a very capable teacher and after the school was inspected in 1880 a grant of £20 8s was awarded to the school.

(C.Draper *ibid.* p.120) (Board of Guardians minutes – Conway Workhouse ref.XG/3/93 – XG/3/108 1869-1914)

Conwy were comparatively slow in sending the workhouse children out to a local school for their education. In 1874 Mr. Derbyshire, one of the guardians, proposed the motion that 'the office of schoolmistress be abolished and that the children in the house should attend Conway School'. This was not followed up until the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1882 when Reverend Williams, once again proposed a motion that the children should be sent to the Conway National School. However, nothing happened until the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1886 when the schoolmistress resigned. The Board of Guardians then had to decide whether to appoint a new teacher or pursue the integration of the workhouse children into the local school. It was decided to try the latter option. Unfortunately the National School governors refused to admit the children. In the meantime the children received no education until May 1887 when terms were finally agreed with the governors of the National School in Rose Hill Street. Fees of 6d were to be paid for each child. Once the children had arrived it was discovered that five of them were under seven years of age and so were transferred to the Plas Mawr Infants School.

(C.Draper *ibid.* p.122) (Board of Guardians minutes – Conway Workhouse ref.XG/3/93 – XG/3/108 1869-1914)

In 1908 the Guardians of the Workhouse purchased a pair of adjoining houses on the Woodlands, Conwy to use as a children's home. Conwy was the first Workhouse Union in North Wales to operate a children's home separately from the workhouse. Once the children's education had

finished at the age of 14 years the girls were expected to go into domestic service and the boys into some sort of labouring jobs.

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### ***2g. Pupil Teachers***

*In 1846, Sir James P. Kay Shuttleworth issued guidelines for the employment and training of pupil teachers. Bright children of 13 years and over stayed on at Elementary School to become assistant teachers. They were apprenticed to teachers approved by HMIs and stayed on until they were 18 years old. They also received tuition of 7½ hours a week and they taught the younger children every day. At the end of five years they were expected to take an examination which could lead to a scholarship which would finance their training at one of the new Colleges. In fact, most simply carried on teaching. The pupil-teacher scheme of training was implemented from 1847.*

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Caernarfon was the first 'training college' for teachers in North Wales and later on one was established in Bangor called 'Bangor Normal College'.

Census records in Conwy name a number of pupil teachers.  
(see below pp. 22, 26, 34, 35, 36 )



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## **2h. The Blue Books**

*In 1846/47 a survey was carried out in Wales into the state of educational provision in Wales. The subsequent report by the commissioners of enquiry became known as the Blue Books. The investigation was carried out by three English commissioners - R.R.W. Linger, Jellynger C. Symons and H.R. Vaughan Johnson. They visited every part of Wales collecting evidence and statistics. However, they spoke no Welsh and relied on information from witnesses, many of them Anglican clergymen at a time when Wales was a stronghold of Nonconformism.*

*The Report concluded that schools in Wales were extremely inadequate, often with monoglot English teachers using English only textbooks in areas where the children spoke Welsh; and that Welsh speakers had to rely on the Nonconformist Sunday Schools to acquire literacy. But it also concluded that the Welsh were ignorant, lazy and immoral and that the causes of this were the use of the Welsh language and Nonconformity.*

*The Report was entirely antagonistic to Welsh culture; the commissioners often just reported verbatim the prejudiced opinions of landowners and local Anglican clergy. The uproar that followed the publication of these Reports acted as the spur for a much greater level of nonconformist involvement in the politics of Wales. In fact, it evolved into organised political action which culminated in the General Election of 1868.*

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### **Part 3 of the report - North Wales** (Blue Books pp.25 &26)

#### **Conway – “In 1841 the population of Conway amounted to 1358.**

The inhabitants have been greatly increased since that time, in consequence of the public works connected with the Chester & Holyhead Railway. No schools have been provided for the poor, except the following church schools, which are very ill supplied with funds. The total amount of income for the payment of three teachers and for the support of the schools being £69.

Although a considerable amount of shipping is carried on at Conway, no instruction is given in navigation.

**Conway Church Schools** – These comprise two schools, one of which is set apart for boys, the other for girls and infants. They occupy two separate rooms of a large building, erected for the purpose. The **boys' school** is taught by a master. Numbers of school - 90. Subjects, professed to be taught – reading, writing, arithmetic and grammar, the Bible and Church Catechism. Fees - the poorest children pay 1d per week, others pay from 5s to £12 per quarter.



I examined this school March 12, 1847. Of 90 children said to be members of the school, I found about 55 present, of these 17 could read a chapter of the Bible, but only 5 could answer simple questions upon Scripture history. There was no specimen of good writing in the school, several can understand English, and express themselves in intelligible language. Many are intelligent, but their attainments are irregular and desultory. The master has taught a considerable portion of the Latin grammar, yet they could not compare an English adjective by rule. Again, of three who were working equations algebraically, none could work a simple sum in the Rule of Three, till at last one succeeded with difficulty. A fourth, who was working duodecimals, could not multiply a sum of £ s d; and of four in compound arithmetic, two could not write down 840.

The master is a man of superior abilities, understands English well, and is a good Welsh scholar. He has an original method of teaching interpretation, which he practices with great assiduity and considerable success. His questions on the subject read are intelligent, and he is skilful in entertaining his scholars, but he has never been properly trained to teach, and consequently he has no kind of system, or power in governing the school. He allows the children to make the greatest possible noise, and even those who are being examined laugh in his presence, and are totally regardless of his exhortation and punishment. The organization is bad. There is a great gap between the first and second class, all below the first class being in utter ignorance of everything. Monitors are not regularly employed and are therefore not trained. When one class is examined, all the rest are wholly unemployed and idle. This neglect of the lower classes accounts for their very thin attendance, 55 out of 90.

The building is damp. The furniture, books, cards, copies and slates are scanty and ill- selected. No register is kept of the scholars.

**School for Girls and Infants**, taught by a mistress and an assistant in the same room. Number of girls 65 of boys 21. Subjects taught – reading, writing and arithmetic. Fees 1d each 2d being the largest payment received from any one family.

I examined this school March 12 and 13 1847. In the girls' department, out of nine reading in the New Testament, only two could read well; none could write well upon paper; and only one could work a sum in compound arithmetic; twenty could repeat the Church Catechism, but they were very ignorant of Scripture, only three being able to answer the plainest questions respecting the New Testament history.

The infants, of whom there are great numbers, are being taught hymns and mimic exercises, but the subjects of instruction are very limited. There are neither object lessons nor any of the other branches of simple education which are generally given in infant schools.

The mistress has never been trained, and has never seen a school properly conducted. Although apparently very anxious to do her duty, she has had no opportunity of preparing herself for it. The assistant (who has the care of the infants) is a girl only 15 years old, and is only competent to keep the infants from doing or receiving harm. The funds for the support of this school are very slender, they amount to £26 including the payments of the children. The salary of the assistant has been withdrawn within the last twelve months.”

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## 21. Census of Religious Worship 1851

*In 1851 a census of Religious Worship was carried out. This included the provision of Sunday education classes. It is not a completely reliable guide because not all churches or chapels responded to the questionnaire and many failed to distinguish between the general congregation and Sunday Scholars. It is also likely that on many occasions Sunday Scholars were incorrectly counted when they were only present in a separate meeting place for the school and not in the main worship service in church or chapel.*

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### **Conwy parish and Borough (2,437 acres)**

**The population consisted of 730 males and 798 females giving a total of 1,528.** Six religious establishments responded to the census.

1. Conway Parish Church Diocese of Bangor.  
Endowed: land £65; tithe £48: Glebe £3.10s: fees £5: offerings £7  
Space: free 60: other 300  
Present: morn. 98 + 114 scholars: aft. 52  
Average: (12 months) morn. 160 +130 scholars; aft. 80  
Morgan Morgan vicar.
2. Carmel Calvinistic Methodist  
Erected 1828  
Space: free 80: other 88: standing 124  
Present: morn. 175: aft. 174 scholars: even. 275  
John Williams Deacon, Cyffredin, Nr. Conway.
3. Seion Chapel, Independent  
Erected: 1824  
Space: free 50: other 64: standing 50  
Present: morn. 60 scholars: aft. 150: even. 130  
Henry Edwards Deacon, Groesfford Bodidda, Nr. Conway
4. Tabernacle, Chapel St. Wesleyan Methodists  
Erected 1826  
Space: free 120: other 275: standing 40  
Present: morn. 88 incl. 40 scholars; aft. 195 scholars: even. 250 incl. 180 scholars  
Remarks: All the Sunday Scholars are included in the number written "General Congregation".  
William Bridge, Class Leader, Bookseller
5. Mount Chapel, Particular Baptists  
Erected: 1850  
Space: free 50: standing 50  
Present: morn. 6 scholars: aft. 150: even 160  
John Jones, Baptist Preacher

**Gyffin Parish 3,705 acres**

**Population of 347 males, 326 females; total 673.** Two establishments responded to the survey.

- 1. Gyffin Parish Church Diocese of Bangor

Space: free 130: other 110

Usual number of attendants: morn. 70: aft. 25: even. 70

Informant: T.C.Owen

Lewis: perpetual curacy, endowed with £400 royal bounty, and £1,600 parliamentary grant; net income £115: patron and appropriator, Dean of Bangor.

*It seems likely that Dean of Bangor, John Jones' endowed school was actually held in the church.*

- 2. Charlatanry Chapel, Calvinistic Methodists

Erected 1821

Space: free 60: other 76: standing 40

Present: morn. 64 scholars: aft. 118: even 41

Average: morn. 64 scholars: aft. 118: even. 41

Richard Roberts Elder, Llechau Isaf

*There were a lot of so called 'Scholars' attending the churches and chapels at this time. It is difficult to imagine how much benefit they derived from the 'education' being offered to them.*

.....

**Population of Conwy and Gyffin in the latter half of the century.**

	Conwy	Gyffin
1861	1795	715
1871	1862	562
1881	2287	587
1891	2334	421

**1851 census**

In the 1850 Slater's Directory, Morris Jones and Mary Jones are named as teachers in the National School, Rose Hill. By the time of the 1851 census, Margaret Jones, William B. Gyton and Harriet Gyton have replaced them. One Pupil Teacher appears in this census – John Fox of Chapel Street. There is also another teacher, Mary Jones of Berry Street but it is not known where she was actually teaching.

**1861 census**

In the 1861 census, the following are recorded as teachers or pupil teachers.

Edward Jones	16yrs	pupil teacher at the National School
John Roberts of Lower Gate Street	17yrs	Pupil Teacher but it does not specify at which school
Jane Edwards of Berry Street	20yrs	school mistress “
Hannah Hughes of Rose Street	28yrs	school mistress “

In the Slater's Directory of 1868 the teachers of the National School are listed as John Bowden and Maria Agnes Boswell.

By 1874 Charles Allen and Margaret Rimmer are named as the teachers at the National School. (Worrell's Directory)

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## **2j. Legislation and the Education Acts**

In 1861 the **Revised Code** for funding elementary education was introduced. An economy-minded Liberal government wanted the state to get value for the money they were providing for schools for the poor. This set in place a system of elementary school finance in which national level funding for individual schools depended in part on the outcomes of student examinations conducted by school inspectors. Grant payments were linked to pupils' success in basic tests in reading, writing and arithmetic. The system was dubbed 'payment by results'. It sounded the death knell of Welsh teaching, since it was not a grant earning subject and in the very next year it ceased for a whole generation to be an examination subject at Bangor Normal teacher training college. (Dodd *ibid.* p.396)

The 1870 **Education Act of England and Wales (known as Forster's Education Act)** set up the framework for all children between the ages of 5 and 10 to attend school but some discretion was allowed. As a result of the Act, 'school boards' were set up. The Boards could make grants to existing church schools and erect their own board schools or elementary schools. The schools were eligible for an annual government grant on the basis of an inspection (payment by results). The School Board in Conwy was not set up until 1892. (see below p.26)

In Caernarfonshire, the School Boards were at first primarily concerned with the provision of school places. Later on their preoccupation became school attendance. The main problem was that some parents were too poor to send their children to school. School fees were still being paid at this time, but the Boards were able to pay the fees of children whose parents could not afford to pay even if they attended Church schools. The Attendance Officers mostly tried persuasion rather than instigating legal proceedings as they knew that the parents would not be able to afford any fines imposed. They sometimes arranged for the children to receive clothing or shoes instead of waiving the school fees. The schools themselves also started offering attendance prizes and ministers would use exhortations from the pulpit to encourage attendance. Their efforts were generally successful. Rural boards favoured economy and the release of children for agricultural labour. Town boards tended to be more rigorous in their provisions.

(1970 - *Education in Caernarvonshire under the School Boards prepared by Mrs May Aris for an exhibition held at Bangor Normal*)

As a result of the 1870 Act, guidelines on Standards of Education were published.

*The six Standards of Education contained in the Revised code of Regulations*  
1872

**STANDARD I**

Reading

One of the narratives next in order after monosyllables in an elementary reading book used in the school.

Writing

Copy in manuscript character a line of print, and write from dictation a few common words.

Arithmetic

Simple addition and subtraction of numbers of not more than four figures, and the multiplication table to multiplication by six.

**STANDARD II**

Reading

A short paragraph from an elementary reading book.

Writing

A sentence from the same book, slowly read once, and then dictated in single words.

Arithmetic

The multiplication table, and any simple rule as far as short division (inclusive).

**STANDARD III**

Reading

A short paragraph from a more advanced reading book.

Writing

A sentence slowly dictated once by a few words at a time, from the same book.

Arithmetic

Long division and compound rules (money).

**STANDARD IV**

Reading

A few lines of poetry or prose, at the choice of the inspector.

Writing	A sentence slowly dictated once, by a few words at a time, from a reading book, such as is used in the first class of the school.
Arithmetic	Compound rules (common weights and measures).

#### STANDARD V

Reading	A short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative.
Writing	Another short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative, slowly dictated once by a few words at a time.
Arithmetic	Practice and bills of parcels.

#### STANDARD VI

Reading	To read with fluency and expression.
Writing	A short theme or letter, or an easy paraphrase.
Arithmetic	Proportion and fractions (vulgar and decimal).

After the 1870 Act and the establishment of School Boards a wider curriculum was encouraged. This included the memorizing of geographical or historical facts and practical subjects like sewing for the girls and simple woodwork for the boys.

Women teachers employed by the Boards were paid less than the men. At the end of every year the salaries were reviewed and in some cases were reduced. Both the men and women were heavily reliant on pupil teachers and monitors because of the large numbers of children they were expected to teach. Headteachers earned between £75 - £200 per annum; Assistant teachers between £17 - £100 p.a.. When a husband and wife worked together as headteacher & assistant teacher, the wife often received very little. Pupil teachers were paid between £8 - £20 p.a.. - the boys being paid more than the girls; and monitors received 1s 6d - 2s 0d a week.

(Education in Caernarvonshire under the School Boards *ibid.*)



In the **1871 census** John Bowden is once more recorded as a teacher at the National School.

The following teachers and pupil teachers are also listed but it is not known where they were teaching.

John M.Roberts of Chapel street	16yrs	pupil teacher
Catherine Edwards of Bangor Road	28yrs	school mistress
Marie A. Boswell of Upper Gate Street	29yrs	“
Annie E. Gale of “	22yrs	“
Catherine Hislop of “	19yrs	“
John Jones of Railway View	15yrs	pupil teacher

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### **1876 Elementary Education Act (Sandon's Act)**

*This placed a duty on parents to ensure that their children received elementary instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. Parents were compelled to pay a few hard earned pennies each day.*

### **1880 Elementary Education Act**

*This finally made it compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 10 to attend school.*

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The Standards of Education referred to above (pp.24,25) in relation to the cost of education are mentioned in the following article regarding the Infants school at **Plas Mawr**.

'In 1884 a new scale of fees was introduced at Plas Mawr, whereby the first three standards were charged 2½d per week, standard four 3d, standard five 3½d and standards six and seven 4d. Special allowances were made in the case of a large family and in some cases the children were admitted free 'owing to their parents being very poor.' (R. Hugh Pritchard *ibid.*)

The Conwy School Board was not established until 1892 but as soon as it had appointed a School Attendance Office he did his best to ensure that the children of the poor attended school regularly. Previously the few pennies that the children could earn helped to keep the families off the parish. It was also illegal for children under 13 to work between 7pm and 6am but there was no one to check up on what went on behind closed doors.

## **Conwy School Board**

The first meeting of the Conway School Board was fixed by the Education Department for Thursday April 14<sup>th</sup> 1892 but as only 2 gentlemen were able to be present no meeting could be held. The Town Clerk having reported this to the Education Department my Lords fixed upon Thursday May 5<sup>th</sup> for the next meeting. This was also held at the Guildhall by the kind permission of the Corporation, when the following members were present.

Rev. Henry Rees

Mr. William Hugh

Mr. D. I. Evans

(1892-1902 Minutes of the Conway School Board CEB811 Conwy Archives)

30<sup>th</sup> November 1892

The Attendance Officer report was read ..... and it was proposed that a notice be given to the five persons reported by the Attendance Officer that proceedings would be taken against them unless their attendance was improved by the date of the next meeting.

8<sup>th</sup> February 1893

The Attendance Officer reported a great improvement in attendance since the state of the previous meeting in the attendance of the children against whom complaints had been had with one exception .. that of John Williams, joiner of Mount Pleasant. It was proposed that as the Officer had not yet been able to meet with Williams personally he would attend at his home in Mount Pleasant on Saturday next in order to ensure the regular attendance of the children in school thereby avoiding the necessity of issuing a summons.

29<sup>th</sup> March 1893

The Attendance Officer reported that the child of John Williams Mount Pleasant had now fallen back into her old ways and it was proposed that proceedings be taken against Williams.

31<sup>st</sup> May 1893

Mrs Jones wife of Wm. Jones, Watkins Street applied for her son William to be on half time during the next four months – same granted.

Although the School Board does not appear to have been set up before 1892, there is a record of Attendance Officers operating prior to this date. A newspaper report from the Weekly News and Visitors' Chronicle for Thursday January 15<sup>th</sup> 1891 names two Attendance Officers for Conwy and the judgement from the Petty Sessions Court regarding school non attenders.

### **" CONWAY AND LLANDUDNO PETTY SESSIONS MONDAY, JANUARY 5TH NON - ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL**

**Mr Robert Edwards and Mr Elias Davies, School Attendance Officers to the Conway Corporation, had summoned a number of ratepayers for the non-attendance of their children at Conway and Eglwys Rhos Schools respectively, and in each case the maximum penalty, 6d. and costs (or in other words, 5s. including costs) was inflicted by the Bench.**

**The North Wales Weekly News and Visitors Chronicle - THURSDAY JAN 15, 1891**

## **2k. Grammar Schools, Private Day and Boarding Schools**

Grammar Schools like the one in Bangor, known as Friars, provided a classical education. They were exclusively for the benefit of boarders and a few town boys who were the sons of the most respectable tradesmen of Bangor. The poor were not admitted, the trustees being of the opinion that the national school was better suited to their requirements. In 1879 the North Wales Scholarship was formed to help promising elementary children to enter the grammar school. In the following year three Caernarfonshire boys, which included one from the Conway National School, were among those who gained an award.

(Dodd *ibid.* p.387 & 394)

### **Conway Grammar School/Conway College**

A private Grammar School for those who could afford the fees was in existence in 1869 and by 1874 it had premises at Conway College on Upper Gyffin Road (now St.Agnes Road). An advertisement appears in Worrell's Directory of North Wales 1874 describing it as follows:-

**“Classics, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Music, drawing and all English subjects. Boys from this school have passed the Preliminary Examinations of Physicians and Surgeons. Glasgow, Apothecaries Hall, London, and the Incorporated Law Society of Great Britain. Unrivalled position for health, Liberal table, separate beds, Boarders £32 per annum. No extras. Good references.”**

The headmaster is listed as George Fawcett. The school appears with the same headmaster again in the Cassey's Directory of 1876 and 1883. By 1889, when the Sutton's Directory was published, the headmaster had changed to Rev. John E.Evans M.A.,F.S.,S.C.,L.

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### **Gorphwysfa /St.Philip's Preparatory School**

St.Philip's Preparatory School was located in the building previously known as the Gorphwysfa. A tenancy agreement dated 1910 is recorded amongst the Porter Papers.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1910 the following article appeared in the North Wales Weekly News:

**A PREPARATORY SCHOOL – We understand that the Rev. G.H. Cooper, B.A. Late of Demy of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Mr.R.S. Blencowe, M.A. Oriel College Oxford, have taken a lease of Gorphwysfa, on Bangor Road, where they will conduct a preparatory school for boys to be known as 'St.Philip's School.'**



Gorphwysfa/St.Philip's Preparatory School

1911 Conway Trade Directory-advertisement p.216

**St.Philip's Preparatory School'**  
**Gorphwysfa, Conway-Porter**  
**Principals:**  
**Rev.G.H.Cooper, B.A., Magdalen College, Oxford**  
**and**  
**R.S.Blencowe, M.A., Oriel College, Oxford.**

**This is a Preparatory School for the sons of gentlemen. Boys are received between the ages of five and fourteen, and are prepared for the Public Schools and Royal Navy. Special attention is devoted to the gaining of Scholarships at the Public Schools, in which department of Preparatory School work Mr. Cooper has had much successful experience.**

**The house stands on sandy soil, and has a fine commanding position , overlooking the sea and the Carnarvonshire golf links. The climate of Conway is exceptionally bracing and healthy, and the excellence of its water supply is universally acknowledged. A certain number of day boys will be received. Prospectuses may be had on application to the Principal.**

The advertisement also included three photographs of the school.  
The school ran until 1914.

.....

## **Bron-yr-Eryr**

Another private school appears in Conway in Chapel Street in 1873 as shown in a Draft conveyance by Grace Williams and Rev Robert Hughes of Conway, Calvinistic Methodist Minister to Thomas Quellyn Roberts of Chester regarding part of a garden called Old Eagles Garden in Chapel Street. The school went by the name of **Bron-yr-Eryr** (later Marianglas). The building is shown on the 1887 OS map but no name is given.



**Bron-yr-Eryr**

In the 1889/90 Suttons Directory it lists “Miss Maud Swan, Ladies School, **Bron-yr-Eryr**, Conway”

The 1891 census for Bron yr Eryr names Edith Lucy Matthews as a teacher.

In the Weekly News and Visitors Chronicle for Colwyn Bay of 21 April 1892 there is an advertisement for the school with Miss Matthews again named as the school mistress.

**“Day & Boarding School for the Daughters of Gentlemen - also a Preparatory School for boys.”**

On a post 1990 map Bron yr Eryr is now identified as “Marianglas”

A site visit in December 2013 shows that the house is still named “Marianglas” with narrow access lane to the left and uphill of Bronallt.



### **Fern Bank School**

An advertisement appeared in the Liverpool Mercury in 1877 issue no. 9223 for yet another private school for girls at **Fern Bank**, Conway. The headteacher was named as Mrs. R. Elleray Kidall who was:-

**“assisted by visiting masters and mistresses and resident foreign and English governesses”.**

Robert Elleray Kidall and his wife Hannah Louise Kidall (nee Wiles) had both been born in Norfolk.

.....

### **3 Berry Street School**

In the Conway Postal Directory of 1885 and the 1886 Sutton's Directory a boarding and day school at 3 Berry Street is listed with the teacher named as Elizabeth Ellen Bartley. Her husband John Bartley was a commercial traveller. A man named Evan Hughes (b.1879) mentions in a diary written in 1929 that he had attended Miss Bartley's private school. The school obviously did not last for long because by 1889 a Thomas Roberts who was a ship's broker was living at the address. (1889/90 Sutton's Directory)



3 Berry Street

## **The Morfa**

In 1889 another private school for ladies opened at **The Morfa** run by Miss Emma Martin (Sutton's Directory) and in the 1891 census the Principal is named as Maria E. John and two teachers are also listed - Mary Whitby (teacher of English and music) and Marian Harris (teacher of music and drawing).

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## **3. The Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

### **3a. The National Boys and Girls School**

In the 1881 census William Allan, Fanny White and Eliza Edwards are teaching at the National School.

In 1887 the boys in the National School moved to a new school building on Rose Hill Street funded by Albert Wood (next to St John's Church). Also in 1887 the infants which was housed in Plas Mawr, High Street joined the girls in the school at 19 Rose Hill Street. 19 Rose Hill Street is often referred to by the locals as “The Girls School”.



The National Boys School

In the Sutton's Directory for 1889 the teachers at the National School are named again as William Allan and Mrs. A. Allan and also in the 1891 census. In 1901 Mr. & Mrs. Allan seem to have been joined by their daughter Irene B. Allan.  
(cont. on page 37)

## **Ysgol Bodlondeb**

In 1897 the girls moved to the new school in Bodlondeb ( corner of Town Ditch and Bangor Road) The School was built in 1897 on land provided by Albert Wood in 1896. It is located on the corner of Town Ditch and Bangor Road just outside the town wall. The land is a corner plot originally part of the Bodlondeb Estate owned by Albert Wood. The school was opened on 21 February 1898 but closed after one day due to a measles outbreak. It re-opened three weeks later. It was initially a girls "National" school. In 1927 the girls moved out (to join the boys in the Rose Hill Street premises) and the building became an infants school. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the number of pupils outgrew the original building and additional "temporary" classrooms were erected in the rear grounds. These buildings were removed when the infants moved out. In November 1998 the infants school closed and the pupils re-located to the new school (on the Woodlands, Conwy) Porth y Felin in a merger with Ysgol Cadnant and Ysgol Gyffin. In 1999 the building was re-opened as a Youth Club by Conwy County Borough Council. The building was renovated and improved about 2010. It has also been the occasional meeting place of 1<sup>st</sup> Conwy Scout Troop and its meeting room facilities used by Conwy CBC. The brass plaque commemorating the opening of the school in 1897 is currently mounted on the wall of the foyer of Porth y Felin school. Albert Wood is acknowledged as being responsible for the building.

### **Head Teachers**

#### **Girls School**

1911 - 1926 Miss M.A. Jones - The Girls National School

#### **Infants School - from 1927**

1929 Mrs E.C. Jones –Infants National School (1929 Conway Street Directory)

A booklet " Ysgol Bodlondeb" lists the Head Teachers from 1937 as follows:-

1937-1940 Mrs E.C. Jones  
1941-1966 Miss Myfanwy Jones  
1966-1976 Mrs Blodwen Roberts  
1976-1990 Mrs Laura Jones  
1991-1996 Mrs Sioned Harris  
1996-1998 Mrs Nonna Owen –to closure November 1998

### **Trade Directory Entries**

1911 Conway Directory (Girls Non-Provided School)  
1914 Conway Directory ( Girls Non Provided School)  
1922+1926 Conway Street Directory (Girls National School)  
1929 Conway Street Directory (Infants National school, head - E.C. Jones)  
1939 Kelly's Directory (Conway Infants School, Town Ditch, Non-provided school)



### **Additional Sources of information**

1896 - conveyance of land to The Vicar and Churchwardens of the parish of Conwy for £25  
Shown as National School on map dated 1901.

Diary of Mrs E.J. Jones - “ Bodlondeb was girls only school which she attended from age 7 to 10 starting there in 1911“

1936 - NW Weekly News of 18.7.1991 “ in 1936, Bodlondeb Infants School was mixed”

Booklet - “ Ysgol Bodlondeb 1897 - 1997” published by Gwasg Carreg Gwalch



Bodlondeb School

In the **1881 census** the following teachers and pupil teachers are listed but the schools where they worked are not recorded:-

Thomas M Thomas of High Street, Kings Head	19yrs	schoolmasters
Annie Roberts of Lower Gate Street	28yrs	school mistress
Polly Roberts of Lancaster Square	15yrs	pupil teacher
Margaret Ann Jones of Erskine Terrace	17yrs	“
Thomas Ellis of Bangor Road	18yrs	“
E.L.Brewster of Castle Banks	19yrs	governess

Not long after this census was taken, Margaret Ann Jones went on to become an Assistant Teacher at the National School. She is recorded as such in the attendance records (below 36) and also in the 1891 census.

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In 1888 the Welsh language gained recognition and it was introduced as a specific subject in North Wales.

Pre-dating similar legislation in England by a dozen years, the **Welsh Intermediate Education Act** was passed on 12 August 1889. The purpose of the Act was to make further provision for the intermediate and technical education of the inhabitants of Wales and the county of Monmouth. i.e. for **County Schools** (later grammar schools) to be financed from a combination of the rates, a treasury grant, fees from pupils and the reorganisation of old endowments. This was the first time that public money was spent on specifically Welsh intermediate education and it provided education supported by the rates earlier than in England.

‘It resulted in a network of nearly a hundred state secondary schools across Wales by 1900, schools which had no English parallel until 1902, and the creation of the Central Welsh Board in 1896 for inspection and examination purposes’.

(p.48 *Social Change in the History of British Education* edited by Joyce Goodman, Gary McCulloch, William Richardson)

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The first of these new '**County Schools**' in Caernarfonshire was established in the old training college at Caernarfon rather than in Llandudno, where the school was not opened until 1907. (Dodd *ibid* p.395)

In the 1890s headteachers started to be paid monthly fixed salaries. Previously they had been paid quarterly and their money was partly made up of money from grants and fees.

In the **1891 census** these teachers and pupil teachers were also recorded.

Joseph W. Mason of 7 Castle Street	16yrs	pupil teacher
Benjamin Jones of 1 High Street	21yrs	assistant teacher
Elizabeth Lloyd of Plas Uchaf	40yrs	school mistress
Mary Roberts of Liberal Club	26yrs	assistant school mistress
Louisa Richmond of 2 Newborough Terrace	50yrs	music teacher/artist
Margaret A. Jones of 3 Jubilee Cottages	27yrs	assistant school teacher
Mary J.J. Salmon of Bodhyfryd, Gyffin	19yrs	music teacher
Mary Jane Owen of 33 Lower Gate	33yrs	assistant school mistress
Ann Fawcett of Conway College	50yrs	school proprietor
Walter Hall of “	28yrs	teacher of Latin, Greek, French
Elsie Jane Montgomery of Hwyn Fryn, Gyffin	36yrs	school teacher of music and painting

The Attendance Officer for Conwy at this time was Mr. J.R. Jones. Attendance records for the National School give the following figures.

Conwy C of E School		pupils on the books	average attendance
1. Mr. Wm Allen	boys	177	159
2. Miss M.A.Jones	girls	141	126
3. Miss M. Harrison	infants	182	158

*In 1891 **The Free Education Act** was passed. This made grants available to all schools to enable them to cease charging for basic education.*

*In 1893 the school leaving age was raised to 11 years.*

#### **4. 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The population of Conwy and Gyffin in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

	Conwy	Gyffin
1901	2486	491
1911	2622	605
1921	3108	661

The **1901 census** shows that pupil teachers were still being used.

Mary Roberts of 8 Church Street	35yrs	assistant pupil teacher
Mary Elizabeth Pritchard of 6 High Street	48yrs	retired teacher
H.L. Williams of 9 Chapel Street	18yrs	pupil teacher
Alice Ann Evans of Bro Llewelyn	24yrs	pupil teacher
Maud M. Leach of Glan yr .... school	36yrs	school mistress
Elizabeth Bringhe of “ (next to Cadnant Park)	22yrs	governess
Edith Rogers of “ “	18yrs	governess

*The School Boards were abolished by the **Balfour Education Act of 1902** which replaced them with around 300 Local Education Authorities by which time there were 5700 board schools in the United Kingdom (2.6m pupils) and 14000 voluntary schools (3m pupils). The LEAs remit included secondary schools for the first time.*

In 1902 an application was made to build an extra classroom at the boys school, **Conwy National Schools, Rose hill**. The work was carried out later that year.  
(Conwy Archives)

In 1903 the percentage of children in attendance in school in Conwy was:-

Conway boys	88.7%
Conway girls	85%
Conway Infants	85%

### **The Boys School, Rose Hill Street**

In 1927 the National Girls and infants school moved to Bodlondeb School. Between 1927 – 1978 the building they had been in, which is now Grade II listed, was left empty. At the same time, the Junior department became mixed although it continued to be referred to as 'The Boys School'.

In 1928 an application was made to build offices (sanitary arrangements) at Conway NP School, Rose hill. It was approved.

The 1929 Conway Street Directory listed the school as 'Boys and Girls Mixed National School'.

The 1932 – 36 Sinclair Bennett's Directory listed it as boys and girls.

The 1939 Kelly's Directory included it as 'Conway Non-Provided (junior mixed) school'.

(cont. on page 42)

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### **Gyffin National School, Henryd Road, Gyffin**

It was built in 1904 because the National Schools in Conwy and Hendre were overcrowded and it also served as a parish room. The school was designed by the outstanding Arts and Crafts architect, Herbert Luck North ( 1871-1941) who lived and worked in Llanfairfechan from c.1901.

**(RCAHMW, Coflein website, 2009)**

Plans relating to a planning consent application are held by Conwy Archive. These are dated 1903 and refer to a National School at Gyffin for Rev. Robert Jones, Rectory, Gyffin.

In his book on the history of Gyffin Church, Charles Fairclough gives the following details:-

The building was erected in 1904.

The architect was H L North.

It was built on high ground across the road from the church – St. Benedicts

The official opening was on 3 August 1904.

There were 70 children in 1904.

There were 115 children in 1906.

There were 4 children in 1911.

The school closed on 13 September 1911.

1911 - 1982 Sunday School and church hall

1982 - date Gyffin Community Centre

It has been called – Gyffin National School

The Old School

The Church Room

Church House

In the years 1924 to 1932, 60 children attended Sunday School in “ The Old School “, now called “ The Church Room “.

The 1922 Conway Street Directory lists the premises as “Gyffin Club”

A report dated 1981 says it is shown on the 25” OS map as Church house.

It is listed as St Benedict's Church Hall in the 1939 Kellys Directory.

The caretaker of the hall in 2010 (Mike Fare) said that the church sold the church hall to Aberconwy Borough Council in 1982 for about £14,000.

Since 1982 it has been in use as The Gyffin Community Centre and it is operated by a committee of volunteers.

Regular users have been the Women's Institute and a children's playgroup. It is also available for hire for such activities as children's parties.

Although much needed repairs were carried out by Conwy Borough Council, the building was not used in 2013.



Gyffin Community Centre

### **Gyffin School, Woodlands**

The 1911 Conway Official Directory lists Gyffin School (mixed and infants) average attendance 106, accommodation 87. Headmaster T P Jones, correspondent Rev R Jones, the Rectory, Gyffin. By the 1950s the school was in very poor repair with holes in the floor.

It closed in the 1960s (after 1964) when the new Gyffin Infants School was built in Maes-y-Llan, Gyffin.

### **Additional Sources of Information**

David Dobell was a pupil who attended the school between 1948 and 1950. He said the schoolroom was attached to the chapel with a door through to the chapel. Access to the school was via an



entrance in New Street.

Mrs Mair Evans was a teacher at the school in the 1950s and said it was in very poor repair with holes in the floor.

1914 Conway Official Directory - Non-provided Schools - Gyffin School (mixed and infants)  
Average attendance 104, accommodation 100, Headmaster TP Jones, correspondent Rev R Jones,  
The Rectory, Gyffin

1922 Conway Street Directory - Gyffin Temporary Council School, mixed, T Percival Jones,  
Headmaster

1926 Conway Street Directory - Provided School, Gyffin School, (mixed and infants), TP Jones  
(accommodation 100)

1929 Conway Street Directory - Gyffin Temporary Council School, infants, Miss Jane Williams,  
Headmistress

1932 and 1936 Bennetts Directories - Gyffin County Council School (mixed and infants),  
Headmistress, Miss Williams.

1939 Kellys Directory - Gyffin Junior Council School, Woodlands

### **Gyffin Infants School / Ysgol Babanod Gyffin**

Gyffin Infants School was built in the 1960s and closed in November 1998 when the pupils moved to the new Porth y Felin school. In 1998 the headmistress was Anwen Davies.



The new Gyffin Infants School, Maes-y-Llan

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1908 The **Education Board for Wales** was established.

Owen M. Edwards, who was the Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales from 1907 to 1920, promoted the use of the Welsh language in primary schools, and Welsh language and literature were taught as subjects in secondary schools that had been established as a result of the 1889 Education Act. The atmosphere in these secondary schools was still English in nature, even in areas that were predominantly Welsh speaking.

1918 **Education Act (Fisher)** raised the school leaving age to 14 years.

1926 **The Hadow Report** - Between 1923 and 1933 six reports were produced by the Hadow Committee, of which the 1926 'Education of the Adolescent' was the most important. It called for secondary education for all, recommending that schooling should be split into two stages, primary and secondary with transfer at the age of 11. It also proposed separate schools for infants and juniors though this system was not formally established until the 1944 Education Act.

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## **The Central School**

Location - Gyffin Road (later St Agnes Road)

The school was built in 1925/6 on the site of Conwy College which had been demolished sometime after 1920. It was one of fifteen Central Schools established across the county of Caernarfonshire.

Until 1931 the Central School consisted of a Junior and a Senior department. Following re-organisation under the Hadow Scheme, Junior pupils were transferred to the Conway NP Schools (NP - non provided) whilst Senior pupils from the NP Schools moved to the Central School. In 1946 the Local Education Authority adopted the articles of the 1944 Education Act and the school was re-named **Aberconwy Secondary Modern School**.

(The above information was taken from notes (ref CE2) on Ysgol Aberconwy seen in Conwy Archive.)

**Aberconwy Secondary Modern School** on St Agnes Road closed in 1961 when the pupils and staff were re-located to the new building on Morfa Drive. The Morfa Drive school retained the name Aberconwy Secondary Modern School.

Headmasters

1929 - 1949 JD Pierce-Jones BA

1949 – 1961 Mr. R.Hugh Pritchard



Aberconwy Secondary Modern School later Ysgol Aberconwy

#### **Additional Sources of Information**

1929 – under the heading of Provided Schools - “Central School, Gyffin Road, mixed, average attendance 260, accommodation 320” – 1929 Conway Street Directory

1939 Council Schools-Central School, mixed -1939 Kellys Directory

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*1944 Education Act - Primary education was re-organised into infants and juniors. For Secondary education the tripartite system with three different types of school was introduced - grammar, secondary modern and technical. The 11-plus examination was introduced. Secondary education became free for all and the school-leaving age was raised to 15*

*1951 The General Certificate of Education (GCE), at both O-level and A-level, was introduced.*

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In 1961 **The National Junior School** in Rose Hill Street, closed and the pupils were moved to Cadnant Junior School on St. Agnes Road.

### **Ysgol Cadnant**1961-1998

The school building was on St Agnes Road just outside the town walls. It was erected in 1926 and used by the Central School and later Aberconwy Secondary Modern School. When the latter school moved to its new premises in Morfa Drive in 1961, the pupils in Rose Hill Street Junior School moved into the St Agnes Road premises to form **Cadnant Junior School**. Cadnant Junior School was later re-named **Ysgol Cadnant**. The school closed in November 1998 when the pupils moved to the new building of Ysgol Porth-y-Felin, Llanrwst Road.

The building was demolished in February 2002 and the grounds were landscaped as park land. The opening in the town wall which gave access from Ysgol Cadnant to what was known as the Teachers Centre or Cadnant Education Centre was sealed in 2002/3.

### **Head teachers**

1965	Mr Martin Humphreys
Pre1986 to 1998	Miss Gwen Jones-known to all as “Miss Gwen”

### **Additional Sources of Information**

GAT report says demolished by March 2002

NW Weekly News of 10.4.2003 says demolished 15 months ago

NW Weekly News of 3.3.2005 says demolished 3 years ago

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### **Ysgol Aberconwy**

This establishment was built on Morfa Drive, Morfa, Conwy and opened in 1961. It was called Aberconwy Secondary Modern School and catered for pupils in secondary education aged 11 to 18. (boys and girls). Prior to the school being built, there was a long running battle to select a suitable site. An exercise book filled with newspaper cuttings and another filled with the minutes of Governors meetings documented the situation and showed the levels of frustration.

(Bangor Archives)

### **'Conwy School Site – North Wales Weekly News 12/11/53'**

**Urgent need of a new school at Conwy. It is the only town in Caernarvonshire that never had a council school. There has been opposition all along to a Council School and we remember the objections to the secondary school a quarter of a century ago.**

**The Council oppose Twthill as a site and Morfa is unsuitable as a site. Now they say it is suitable but refuse to release land.**

**Twthill Field which is part of the Bodlondeb Estate was attractive but its levels made development as a school site extremely difficult. Morfa is too expensive £60,000 to secure a good foundation.**

### **Governors of Aberconwy Secondary School - meeting 2 Dec. 1953**

*“Last Monday’s special Council Meeting is evidence that the Council is aware of this wrath and condemnation! They have seen the writing on the wall - as Balshazzar did of old ..... “weighed in the balance and found wanting” (David v.27)*

*“But what of the secondary or derivative meaning of ‘adamant’ the OED says that poetically or metaphorically it may mean “ impregnable hardness”. Who would think of Conwy Council being poetical.”*

### **March 17<sup>th</sup> 1955 N.W.W.N**

This was decided at a special meeting of Conwy Council on Tuesday, when a recommendation of a special estate committee which had voted 11-5 in favour of releasing the field was confirmed.

### **Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> 1955 N.W.W.N**

Outdated and outmoded building used as a school in Conwy.

The Old Church house at Conwy built in 1839, one time infants school and later abandoned as unfit for the purpose, now houses 80 children 7-10 in 3 classes. Parents have complained about the condition of the premises and of the yard. A site has not yet been chosen for a new secondary modern school which would release another school building for junior pupils.

The staff and pupils were transferred from the old school building on St Agnes Road, Conwy. In 1969 (or later?) the school became part of the comprehensive system and took pupils of all abilities after the 11+ examination was scrapped (this graded pupils who would then be sent to a secondary modern school or if graded highly, a grammar school (in some areas the middle ability pupils were sent to a Technical School)

In 2003/4/5 the building was sold by the local authority to a private company. The building was then leased back to the local authority and was then extended, improved and modernised under the agreement. The structure was managed by the company owning the building. The scheme was applied nationally by the government and called PFI-Private Finance Initiative.

### **Headmasters**

Mr Lewis ?  
1979 - 1993 Mr Hywel Evans  
1993 - 2004 Mr Roland Ward  
2004 - date Mr David Wylde

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1964 *The Welsh Office was created.*

1972 *The school leaving age was raised to 16*

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In 1978 the old Girls National School building, which had been left empty in 1927 after the Infants moved to Bodlondeb, was opened as “ The Conwy Visitor Centre “ This is a commercial venture-

mainly retail with an upstairs film show about the town. One of the ground floor rooms was used as a brass rubbing centre for some years. The business continues to trade.

In 1939, at the start of the Second World War, the first school to teach solely through the medium of Welsh was established in Aberystwyth. English evacuees, who had been sent to the town in great numbers from English cities to avoid the bombing, were being taught in the local schools making the teaching of Welsh difficult. As a result Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards (son of Owen M Edwards), decided to establish the League of Youth Welsh School. The first Welsh medium secondary school in Wales was Ysgol Glan Clwyd which opened initially at Rhyl and later at St.Asaph.

.....

### **Ysgol Porth y felin**

The school was opened in November 1998 on the Woodlands playing fields. A competition was held to choose a name for the new school and Porth-y-Felin was chosen due of the proximity to the old town gate bearing that name. (ie Mill Gate) It was built to take the pupils from:-

Cadnant Junior School

Bodlondeb Infant School

Gyffin Infant School

Circa 2000 more of the adjacent Woodlands playing fields were fenced off to provide a sports field for the school. Local groups were assured by Conwy County Borough Council that full access would continue to be afforded to the community.

The headmaster in 1998 was Mr Dilwyn Griffiths

In 2012 a new headmaster was appointed, Mr Llyr Gilmour Jones.

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### ***1988 The Education Reform Act***

*The National Curriculum was introduced which made all education the same for state-funded schools, ensuring that pupils had access to a basic level of education. Some subjects were made compulsory, including English, maths, science and some form of religious education. The GCSE was introduced to replace O-levels and the CSE (which had been introduced in 1965 for those 16 year olds who did not take O-levels and until that point had left school with no qualifications). The Act made no changes to A-levels.*

### ***1996 Education Act – Section 19***

*This placed a duty on each LEA to provide suitable education for children of compulsory school age who are not able to attend school. This included children with emotional or behavioural difficulties.*

---

Conwy responded in 1998 by establishing a '**Transition Pupil Referral Service**' and '**Education Centre**'. The current centre is situated on the outskirts of the walled town of Conwy. (see below)

## 5. 21<sup>st</sup> century

### Current schools

Ysgol Porth y Felin primary

Ysgol Aberconwy secondary

Gyffin Education Centre (Pupil Referral Unit)

### Gyffin Education Centre

The Education Centre was set up to provide off-site provision for twelve pupils who have experienced social or emotional difficulties in mainstream primary schools with an additional ten places for students who have experienced difficulties in attending primary schools or in the transition to secondary school. It was originally sited in Rosemary Lane just inside the town walls but when the pupils in the Gyffin School in Maes-y-Llan were transferred to the new Port-y-Felin School the Centre moved into the vacant building.



The Education Centre in Rosemary Lane

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