

But the village school was not the only school in the parish. While the Reverend Algernon Humfrey was rector, from 1876 to 1902, he supplemented his church living by running a residential school at the rectory, normally for a maximum of fifteen boys up to the age of fourteen. His promotional pamphlet proclaimed that ‘the system, discipline and routine of work are, as much as possible, those of a public school’. Additionally, from 1854 to 1882, the manor house was tenanted by the Reverend William Browning for use as a preparatory boarding school. Mr Browning took an active role in the parish, being churchwarden for twelve years, keen on foxhunting and also a board member of the village school. Records show that there were 34 boys boarding at the manor in 1871, but as with the rectory school, these were not local children. We can only speculate as to how the ‘sons of the establishment’ settled in to what was then a fairly isolated village and how they were accepted by the villagers. Perhaps there was a rural equivalent to ‘town and gown’ situations found in the larger academic communities.

The school inspector’s visits to Thorpe appear to have been antagonistic. Conditions in the school in 1893 were probably poor – the inspector’s report recommending the building of a new school. This was not accepted, but a new porch and cloakroom were authorised. In 1896 the Inspector had the perhaps rather aptly Dickensian name of Mr. Grindrod. He commented that ‘the small classroom is so crowded with heavy furniture that free movements are impossible’. The rector pointed out that the furniture had been ordered at the instigation of the inspectors in recent years. In 1898, the inspector again said that the schoolroom must be enlarged. A building extension was then agreed, providing the second classroom, at a cost of almost £74. Thorpe’s average school attendance at the turn of the century was 25 pupils.

The national educational system was completely reorganised in 1902 when responsibility for providing elementary, secondary and technical education was given to 330 local education authorities (LEAs) under a central Board of Education. The *board schools* were abolished, becoming *council schools*. The first meeting of the board of managers of Thorpe Mandeville National School was held on 12 November 1903. In 1906 the school received a letter advising on the deletion of ‘National’ from the title of all schools.

In 1911 it was agreed that children over the age of eleven would transfer to Culworth School, one mile away, and the teaching staff would reduce to one person. (In 1918 the national school leaving age was raised to fourteen. Delayed by the outbreak of war in 1939, it increased to fifteen in 1947 and to sixteen in 1965.)