

ALBERT ROAD BOARD SCHOOLS

Report taken from Shipley & Saltaire Times, 4 February 1878

ALBERT ROAD BOARD SCHOOLS, - The boys' and girls' departments of these new school buildings - erected by our School Board to provide accommodation for the children, half-timers, hitherto taught in the Schools opposite the institute, Saltaire, and which are in future to be devoted to the purposes of the Salt Schools - were opened on Monday last, with 815 scholars. The formal opening, however, will take place a month or five weeks hence, when the building in course of erection for the infants is expected to be ready for occupation. The principle upon which the schools are worked is, as many of our readers are aware, what is known in America as the mixed system, boys and girls being taught together in one class and by an adult female teacher. But before referring to the method of instruction to be followed here, we will glance at the structure itself. This is in every way satisfactory. It is two storeys high, a central hall 92ft by 36ft, rising the entire height and being lighted from the roof. Around this sixteen classrooms, each of which is 22ft by 21ft, are ranged, eight on the ground floor and eight on the first floor, the latter being reached by two staircases (one for each sex) and a balcony, which gives an appearance of relief to the hall. Between the two staircases just mentioned are placed two teachers' rooms. On each floor are two cloakrooms (one for boys and one for girls), provided with umbrella stands and excellently ventilated; indeed, in this respect every portion of the building is as perfect as it can possibly be made. Separate covered playgrounds are placed in the rear of the school, with lavatories near at hand. Each classroom is surrounded by ample glass lights so that the headmistress may see at a glance what is going on within, either looking from one room to another or from the central hall. It is, however, intended to have frosted the lights communicating with the several classrooms, as it is found that the attention of the children in one room is apt to be attracted by what is going on in the apartment immediately in front. But this arrangement, which enables the head mistress to see, while at her desk in the hall, what is transpiring with four classes or standards, is a feature which at once commends itself to one's mind. Each classroom is furnished with fixed deal desks and American chairs. The framework of the desks has been supplied by Mr Hird of Shipley. The tops are polished beach, with a groove for the pen or pencil, and glass inkwells. The teacher stands on a platform 12 inches high, has in front of her a table, with a large slate panelled in the wall, thus dispensing with the orthodox but oftentimes awkward and troublesome easel and blackboard; and an air of comfort and order pervades every class. The central hall is paved with wooden blocks laid on sawdust, and it is surprising to what a great extent this arrangement prevents noise. The children, many of whom wear clogs, pass along the room in single file with but a fraction of the din usually attending the marshalling of the schoolmaster's troops, if not his forces. There is a fixed gallery at one end of the hall capable of seating about 250. The walls of the building are lined with red bricks, no

plaster is used, and the ceilings are of wood. The heating, as well as the ventilation, leaves nothing to be desired. A word or two, now, as to the method of teaching adopted in these schools. As has been previously stated, boys and girls are taught together. Each classroom contains forty children, who are under the care of one teacher, the boys being seated on the left hand of the teacher, the girls to the right; and this plan is also adopted when they are assembled in the central hall. Corporal punishment is entirely discarded. If any scholar misconducts himself or herself - and the males were the principal offenders on the morning of our visit, as they probably are, as a rule - he or she is sent into the presence of Miss Stephens, the head mistress, who detains the offender in a prominent position until he is penitent, when he is told to 'go and sin no more.' No pupil teachers are employed, the staff of assistants being those who have already gone through their training as pupil teachers, and who have either taken certificates or are preparing for them. Financially considered, a saving will be effected, as compared with the cost of working under the old system; and calculating an increase of 25 per cent on the number of children passed and a consequent augmentation of the Government grant, the saving will be considerable. There are eight classrooms unoccupied but as the Central Board Schools are quite full, it is probable some of the children will be transferred to Albert Road; and then it is expected the number of scholars will increase. In any case, however, the accommodation will be utilised before long without difficulty. Mr Titus Salt, chairman of the School Board, was present at the schools during the whole of Monday, and he continues to take great interest in the working of a system of education which he believes will be crowned with enlarged success. - A short time ago, when the intentions of the School Board were fully made known, we took occasion to question the desirability of relinquishing an old and tried system to adopt a new and, to say the least, a somewhat novel and untried one, believing we spoke the feelings of the ratepayers on the subject. It has since transpired, however, that the general condition of the Saltaire Board School was not satisfactory, and this is confirmed by the results of the recent examination, which have just been received. We therefore wish to put ourselves right with the public, lest it might be hinted that we were inconsistent, inasmuch as at one time we in a measure condemned what now we approve, for after spending a couple of hours in the Albert Road School, we willingly confess that the impression left is exceedingly favourable, and we anticipate a successful working of the mixed system under the Shipley Board.

The following week, 16 February, the following correction appeared:

THE ALBERT ROAD BOARD SCHOOLS. - In reference to the paragraph in our last issue, as to the 'general unsatisfactory condition of the Saltaire Board Schools,' the Chairman of the Shipley School Board has called upon us, asking us to correct the wrong impression which our remarks may have conveyed, and which may be prejudicial to some of the teachers.

The statement was, it seems, of too sweeping a character, and should only have referred to one department. We regret if our remarks have caused any annoyance to the late head master, or to any one they ought not justly to apply. We understand the Board decided upon the new system, which is being carried out in the Albert Road Schools, quite irrespective of the condition of the Saltaire Schools; and the limited experience they have already had, justified them in the opinion that the experiment is likely to prove a great success.