

My letter



Drayton Park Primary School

Arvon Road London N5 1PJ

Telephone 071-607 4142

Headteacher:

Linda Kiernan

30th March 1995

Dear Mr Brereton,

I am a pupil at Drayton Park School, who was in the infants when you retired. Well, anyway, now i'm a year 6 and i'm doing my personal topic on The History of Drayton Park School, and i would be very grateful and interested if you could send me some of your fondest memories of our school and what it was like through the years that you taught here. Do you remember when they built on the new bit in the 60's? I really enjoy history and this topic is really exiting.

Thank you very much,
Yours Sincerely,

Louisa Anderson

his reply
⚡

93 Springfield Road
New Southgate
LONDON N.11 1RL

10th. April 1995

Dear Louisa,

Thank you for your charming letter. It was lovely to hear from you and I like your choice of topic. It could well keep you busy until the Summer holidays.

For me the history of Drayton Park School divides up neatly into the times of the different head teachers. When I first joined there were two Heads because the Infants and the Juniors were separate schools sharing the same building. The Infants' Head was Miss Jewsbury, a motherly sort of lady who laughed a lot but if her infants couldn't read and do sums by the time they were six she WANTED TO KNOW WHY!

Upstairs in the Juniors my first Head was Mr Percy Osgood, a rather fierce, silvery-haired little man who was a great Arsenal fan. He was a steward at Highbury and we used to get sports kit from them sometimes, as you see in the photograph

Boys did football then and cricket in the summer while girls did netball and hockey. They were split up for craft work too. Two classes combined so that the boys came together and did craft work and the girls went to a lady teacher and did needlework. The lady teacher's class was always quieter than the man teacher's!

We were a very crowded school then because another school nearby had closed down and a lot of the children had come to us. The first class I ever had in Drayton Park had forty-two children in it! The teachers had to be strict just to survive!

One older teacher I tried to copy used to say things like, "Johanny Williams! Stand up, boy! Were you whispering?!" "Yes, sir." "That was very naughty! Give yourself a smack!" And little Johanny Williams would hold out one hand and give himself a smack with the other. Everybody took it

A vivid memory from that time is of FOG.

In the fifties you see most of the houses had coal fires which were very smoky of course and this turned ordinary fog into a fearful soupy cloud that choked you. There were a couple of times when it was so thick we couldn't let the children struggle home on their own. They were all taken into the hall at hometime and made up into groups according to the street they lived in and led home by grown-ups, in a line with their hand on the shoulder of the child in front, the way you sometimes practice in Fire Drill.

Most of the children lived in easy walking-distance of the school and there was a School Bell which was rung in the mornings to tell them it was time to come to school.

The bell was taken away many years ago but you can still see traces of it. If you go and look at the corridor to the left side of the upstairs Hall you will see a kind of box-shape coming up out of the

floor and going up through the ceiling. Now, work out your position and then go and look at the same place in the downstairs corridor. You will see the same box-shape coming down out of the ceiling. Inside it you would expect to be pipes and wires but it's empty now because that is where the bell-rope was. The schoolkeeper pulled on the rope and that rang the bell above. And where was the bell?

This is where you come in. You must ask for help to GO ON THE ROOF AND LOOK! Ask your teacher first of course and then I suggest you get Gary in on this one.

The next head teacher, Miss Johnstone, was a very ladylike Headmistress who wanted her children to be ladylike (even the boys, I think). Children still got the cane even then, although it had to be entered in a Punishment Book. I can remember reading one entry about a boy who was caned for 'ungentlemanly conduct' outside school. No, I don't

know what he did! By the way have you asked permission to look at those old school records? The old Log Books would be interesting (if you can read the handwriting).

The Log Book is a school diary that the Head is supposed to write about the daily happenings in school. You will find my writing in there from the times when I was Head while the real Head was away. The first thing I had to write about was a very sad entry about a child called Christine Campbell who was killed in a road accident during the summer holidays.

In Miss Johnstone's time the children still wore School Uniform. It was dark blue, blazer and shorts for the boys and gym slips for the girls, with white shirts and blouses. There was a school badge too which was the initials D.P. inside a shield, something like this.  I wonder if Drayton Park children will ever wear uniform again. Would you have liked it?

And now, before this letter turns into a complete book, I should tell you a little about the changes that happened in the sixties when Miss Johnstone retired. (Around the time the other photograph was taken - which room do you think that was?)

The new Head was Frank Gray who was a very enthusiastic, energetic teacher with modern ideas and a very persuasive manner so that Drayton Park began to be much more like it is today. And of course the big change came when the Infants Head a Mrs Needham, was about to leave and the two schools were turned into one with Frank Gray as the Head. His Deputy Head was Ray Pinder who later became Head himself.

And then we had the alterations to the building that you mentioned in your letter. Somewhere around the school there is a photograph that shows what the Arvon Road entrance used to look like, with arms reaching out to visitors, either welcoming or

menacing according to your state of mind! Those wings were cloakrooms for the children's coats, girls one side, boys the other, of course. It's still very easy to see the newer building, including the top floor with Rooms 14 and 15. By the way have you ever noticed that some room numbers seem to be missing? Why do you suppose that is?

I think I should stop now, at least for the time being. It would be nice to hear from you again if you have time and to hear how the Topic is getting on. Good luck with it.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Brexton

