

Katesgrove School, Reading

The Simmonds Building (Formerly known as The Henry Building)

Proposed Timber Window and External Fabric Repairs

Heritage Statement



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On behalf of Reading Borough Council

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1.0 Assessment of Heritage Significance

1.1 Introduction

This document has been prepared by the Historic Buildings Group in Hampshire County Council Property Services to accompany a Listed Building Application for works involving repairs and modifications to timber windows, brickwork and rainwater disposal at the Simmonds (Henry) Building, Katesgrove School, Reading.

The Statement focuses on understanding the Heritage significance of the building and considers the impact of and justification for the proposals.

Katesgrove School background

Katesgrove School is located just to the south of Reading City Centre, and comprises a number of separate buildings, amongst them the Victorian Simmonds and Trooper Potts Buildings. Designed by Borough Architect Joseph Morris and constructed in 1873, the Simmonds Building formed the original Katesgrove School and is located at the bottom of the sloping site on the West side of the school campus. It was originally designed to accommodate girls and infants on the ground floor and boys at first floor and was extended in 1891 and 1902. It was one of the first pair of schools to be developed by the Reading School Board. In 1890 a new Central Boys School was constructed at the top of the slope, and in the 1960's the boys and girls schools were merged.

The site is not within a conservation area.

1.2 Heritage Description

The Henry Building is Grade II listed and is described by Historic England as follows:

KATESGROVE LANE The Henry Building at Katesgrove Primary School including boundary wall and former caretaker's cottage II Board school, 1873 by Joseph Morris, extended 1891 and 1902 MATERIALS: Red brick with blue-brick banding and diaper patterns; tiled roof. PLAN: School originally built on a T-plan, with single-storey infant school to north and two-storey girls' and boys' range at right angles to south; this still largely survives, albeit with later additions and some subdivision and amalgamation of spaces. Infant school built around large open hall or schoolroom (original gallery now removed), with smaller schoolroom (now meeting room) to south for advanced infants, and babies' room (now staff toilets) projecting to west. The latter now flanked to right by two-storey wing added in 1891 with entrance lobby below and staffroom above, and to left by later nursery block. Range of three classrooms to east of hall added in 1902. Two-storey cross-range to south has former girls' and boys' schoolrooms (now library) on ground and first floors, each with three classrooms to south, the latter extended in 1891.

EXTERIOR: Proto-Arts and Crafts Gothic style with much use of polychrome and moulded brickwork. Multi-pane mullion-and-transom windows of painted timber - many now replaced with modern double-glazed units - are set in pointed relieving arches with projecting hood-moulds and patterned or tiled tympana. Strongly asymmetrical elevation to Katesgrove Lane, the various elements expressed as a series of gabled projections of differing heights, with steeply-pitched roofs and tall corbelled stacks; 1891 wing similarly detailed but in slightly lighter brick. Polygonal office (now resources room) to right and nursery block to left probably added 1902. Two-storey south elevation to playground has two tall gabled projections, that to right extended outward in 1891. East (rear) elevation partly obscured by sloping site; two two-storey gabled wings to left, single-storey four-gabled classroom range of plain red brick to right added in 1902. Covered timber bridge on tall iron columns linking first floor to raised playground: this is shown on 1879 Ordnance Survey map, but was largely renewed in 2006.

INTERIORS: Former infant schoolroom has open scissor-truss roof of five bays with hammer-beams and cusped arch braces; trusses rest on moulded stone corbels, and at cornice level is a double band of dog-tooth moulding. Stone fireplace (now blocked) with Gothic details in centre of east wall. Doors to classrooms are part-glazed with multi-pane over lights. Most classrooms have open timber roofs concealed by suspended ceilings. Some have dog-tooth cornice details and simple brick fireplaces, all now blocked.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: a) brick boundary wall with Gothic-arched entrance gateway to Katesgrove Lane; b) to north of main building, former caretaker's cottage of 1878, extended 1897-9 to form laundry and housewifery classrooms.

HISTORY: Prior to the establishment of the Reading School Board, the industrial suburb of Katesgrove was served by a small charity school for 184 pupils run by Charlotte Pell. The area was identified early on as suffering a particular shortage of school places; the Board took over the existing school in 1872 and the following year commissioned the borough architect Joseph Morris to prepare designs for a much larger replacement for 678 pupils, on a sloping site formerly occupied by a villa known as Katesgrove House. Morris' school, built at the bottom of the slope, was designed to accommodate girls and infants on the ground floor and boys above, with the boys' playground placed at the top of an embankment and accessed via a timber bridge. Construction was undertaken by a group of contractors led by the local firm of Wheeler Bros. In 1878, in response to worsening vandalism outside school hours, Morris was employed to design a caretaker's cottage for the site; this was extended in 1897-9 to serve as a laundry and housewifery classroom.

In 1890-2 the new Central Boys' School was built at the top of the embankment to designs by William Ravenscroft by the builders Winter & Fitt of Reading. The Katesgrove boys' department was moved wholesale to the new school, and boys were also transferred from other schools in the borough. Meanwhile, in 1891, Morris was brought in again to extend and adapt the 1873 Katesgrove building to form a girls-only school. Further classrooms, again by Morris, were added in 1902. The site was used as a military hospital during the First World War. The boys' and girls' schools were finally merged in the 1960s; Morris's 1873 school is now known as the Henry Building, and the former Central Boys' School as the Dorothy Building.

The pioneering Elementary Education Act of 1870, steered through Parliament by William Forster and thus known as 'Forster's Act', was the first to establish a national, secular, non-charitable provision for the education of children aged 5-13. A driving force behind the new legislation was the need for a literate and numerate workforce to ensure that Britain remained at the forefront of manufacture and commerce. Moreover, the extension of the franchise to the urban working classes in the 1867 Reform Act also alerted politicians to the need to, in words attributed to the then Chancellor, 'educate our masters'. The Act required partially state-funded elementary schools to be established in areas where existing provision was inadequate, to be managed by elected school boards. At the beginning of 1871, Reading Borough Council petitioned the Government for the immediate establishment of a school board in the town, bypassing the usual preliminary inquiry. Elections were held in March 1871; the resulting nine-member board mainly comprised members of the town's social elite - three clergymen, two prominent industrialists, the headmaster of a local private school - but also included a local boot-maker, Jesse Herbert. The design of new schools was at first undertaken by the Berkshire county surveyor

Joseph Morris, although other architects were brought in after 1890. The Board continued to oversee the building of new schools and the extension of existing premises until 1903, when responsibility for elementary education passed to the Borough Council.

Joseph Morris (1836-1913) was the leading architect in Reading during the later C19. Articled to the county surveyor John Berry Clancy, his first major independent work was the new church of St Paul at Highmoor, Oxfordshire in 1859. In Reading he was responsible for numerous offices, factories and houses, the latter ranging from large suburban villas to workers' terraces; he also restored and extended the town's two medieval churches of St Lawrence and St Mary. He was appointed Berkshire county surveyor in 1872, and it was probably in this capacity that he was selected to produce designs for the Reading School Board; his work included schools at Coley (1872), Katesgrove (1873), New Town (1874) and Oxford Road (1880-3), the latter together with SS Stallwood, his partner in the decade following 1875. From 1884 he became involved with the millenarian sect known as the Agapemonites, for whom he designed a large and ornate church in Clapton, north London (1893-6). Morris established an architectural dynasty in Reading that included two of his nephews and two of his children; his daughter Violet was one of the first women to join the profession.

SOURCES: Bradley, S and Pevsner, N., The Buildings of England: Berkshire (revised edn., forthcoming). Gold, S.M., A Biographical Dictionary of Architects at Reading (1999). Minutes of the Reading School Board (1871-1903), Berkshire Record Office R/EB1

*REASONS FOR DESIGNATION: The Henry Building at Katesgrove School, built in 1873 to designs by Joseph Morris, and extended in 1891 and 1902, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons: **
*Architectural interest: a striking and idiosyncratic design by the leading local architect of the mid-C19; **
Historic interest: one of the first pair of schools to be developed by the Reading School Board, and one of the earliest outside London.

1.3 Existing Site Plan (nts)



1.4 Existing Photographs



Fig 1: Aerial view of the Simmonds (Henry) Building from the South dating from the 1980s.



Fig 2: Aerial view of the Simmonds (Henry) Building from the East dating from the 1980s.



Fig 3: South elevation

All the windows on this elevation are modern aluminium framed double glazed



Fig 4 North wing classrooms surrounding the original hall.

All the timber windows have been replaced with modern aluminium framed double glazed.



Fig 5 West side of south wing
Modern replacement aluminium windows, original timber windows in gable on the left.



Fig 6 West elevation behind south wing
Original timber windows in gable on the left.



Fig 7 Two views of east elevation south and central wings with original timber windows



Fig 8 East elevation central wings with original timber windows, the upper parts are blocked by suspended ceilings

1.5 Summary Statement of Significance of the Simmonds (Henry) Building

• Evidential Value

The original T shaped plan of the building exists broadly as constructed and extended in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, albeit with a number of minor internal subdivisions, and its evidential value is therefore high.

• Historical Value

It is one of the first pair of schools to be developed by the Reading School Board, and one of the earliest outside London. Overall, it is considered that the historic value of the building is moderate.

• Aesthetic Value

The moulded polychromatic brickwork, numerous arts and crafts inspired details and the significant scale of the building ensure it retains a strong public presence and, in the absence of any other significant public buildings in the neighbourhood, it defines the character of Katesgrove Lane. Overall, it is considered that the aesthetic value of the building is high.

• Communal Value

The building has played a key role in the local community since its construction in 1873, and continues to do so today, having provided a continuum of education services in the area for almost 150 years. The Communal Value of the Henry Building is therefore considered to be high.

• Summary of significance

In spite of the erosion of the quality of the surrounding built environment, externally, the building has retained its key aesthetic elements which ensures it remains prominent as the main building of significance on Katesgrove Lane. The building plays a pivotal role in the local community and, coupled with its status as one of the key public buildings constructed in the area at the end of the 19th Century, the building is of considerable local significance.

2.0 The Proposals

For details refer to drawings:- **E04948-HCC-202, Floor Plans,**
 E04948-HCC-4000 to -4006, Elevations
 E04948-HCC Schedule of Works

2.1 Repairs and modifications to timber windows

There are 22 remaining timber windows in the building concentrated in the centre wing between the south cross-wing and the hall to the north. They include a number of differing formats based on casements containing varying numbers of small pane lights in the 'Queen Anne' style. The simplest consist of rows of 4, 6 or eight light casements between timber mullions with some opening, either side or bottom hung, in some cases centrally pivoted. Some of the taller windows have stacked opening casements staggered in section so that the head of the lower aligns with the sill of the upper like a sash window. The sill of the upper is bull nosed and rotates within a corresponding recess in the head of the lower. The first floor windows on the east facing gable have an unusual diamond format within triangular headed openings which follow the angle of the gable, almost but not quite gothic.

Generally, apart from being overdue re-decoration, the windows are in good condition except for some of the more exposed higher level ones, particularly those facing the sun and the prevailing south west wind where there is decay to sills and the bottom of mullions. There is also an issue with opening casements where the build-up of paint thickness over successive re-decorations is frustrating free movement and the original system of cords and pulleys have not been maintained. Suspended ceilings have been installed in the centre wing on ground and first floors. These cross the windows effectively blocking the upper parts. Internal bulkheads are too close to the windows to allow the upper opening casements to open or to let the room benefit from natural light and ventilation from the upper parts.

The proposal is to carry out like-for-like repairs, replacing decayed sills and casements and scarfing in the bottom section of frame jambs and mullions where they are compromised by wet rot. This is only required on a limited number of windows. Generally the intention is to improve the function of the windows in three ways:

1. Where appropriate, permanently stop the suspended ceilings further back from the window to create light and ventilation shafts to their full height. This will not apply to the first floor toilet room where the suspended ceiling will be reinstated to its existing line on completion of the window refurbishment above.
2. Make minor modification to opening casement sashes in order to fit draft seals so that a greater degree of air-tightness is achieved when the window is shut.
3. Replace cord operated window opening with a more robust and reliable Teleflex system operated by a winding handle. Where there are stacks of opening vents these will be grouped together to a single opener. Where the installation of this new operating system allows, the existing sash hoops, quadrant arm stays and pulley wheels will be retained as evidence of how these windows were originally operated.

The windows will be redecorated to the highest possible standard in their existing colour, ie white. Some existing security mesh on the West, Katesgrove Lane, side may have to be replaced following the work subject to an up to date risk assessment. There are two small timber louvre ventilators at the apex of the gables of the south wing which will also be repaired.



Fig 9 Examples of localized decay caused by concentration of rain water saturation in cills and at the bottom of mullions .



Fig 10 Stacked bottom hung opening casements with aligned heads and sills



Fig 11 profiled meeting of head and cill normally where both bottom hung, here used in a side-hung format.



Fig 12 Example of previous scarfed in bottom of mullion

There is very little external woodwork on the building since the verges are generally detailed in brickwork. There is a bracketed and tied gable truss which is in poor condition and will be repaired with the replacement of decayed members with matching timber.



Fig 13 West facing gable woodwork suffering from decay.

2.2 Brickwork Repairs and Repointing

The brick used for this building is large format compared to the modern standard brick. 73 x 230 mm face dimensions giving a course module of 83 mm or 830mm over 10 courses. The condition is generally good but with loss of mortar from exposed faces, ie south and west facing elevations at the higher more exposed levels. There is also the typical loss of mortar at ground level from splash up from impervious ground, tarmac playground etc. These areas have been mapped onto the elevations. It is interesting to note that generally north and east facing elevations have not suffered from mortar erosion anything like as much as south and west facing ones.

The proposal is to re-point sympathetically with a soft ie permeable hot mixed lime mortar naturally coloured with selected aggregates to match the original lime mortar as far as is possible.

There are a very few places where facing bricks have lost their face and need replacing. There are also a number of special string course bricks which are broken. These will be replaced with specials made to match the colour / make up, size, and profiles of the existing.

Some existing scars from removed services penetrations will be repaired.



Fig 14 Open joints in high level brickwork exposed to south westerly prevailing weather



Fig 15 Showing the change from eroded west facing brickwork joints (right) to pointing surviving virtually as built on north facing brickwork (left)



Fig 16 Example of a broken external corner string course brick.



Fig 17 brick size and original lime mortar including visible grit.



Fig 18 Standard ornamental air brick in plinth showing typical mortar loss at ground level.

2.3 Rain-water disposal ironwork

It looks like the gutters were replaced, possibly when the building was last re-roofed. They are either cast iron or steel but the fabricated gallows brackets are definitely steel and are showing rust. There is one area of cast iron guttering to the flat roofed infill at the north end of the building and this is in poor condition. Over the years the cast iron rain-water pipes have been altered or partly replaced in plastic, some completely. There are a number of obvious breaks and holes in the remaining cast iron rain water goods. There are many cast iron and some framed mesh face grilles on the building which may be part of an original natural ventilation system.

The proposal is to clean and decorate gutters and support brackets, making repairs as necessary. The down pipes will be methodically dismantled for identification of which sections can be refurbished and reused, not necessarily in the same location. It is likely that much of the older apparently healthy pipes will be near to corroding through on their difficult to access for decoration wall facing side and will have to be discarded. Pipe drops will either be reassembled using all refurbished components or will be completely replaced with new cast iron work, avoiding mixing old and new in one drop.

It is proposed to rationalize the area over the flat roofed ground floor toilet extension on the east side of the building, removing redundant pipework and adding connecting pipework to remove concentrated discharge onto this flat roof.

It is proposed that the external gutters and pipework be redecorated black rather than white. This will make them stand out less and stop them competing visually with the white fenestration.



Fig 19 Corrosion of modern steel or cast gutter and steel brackets, poor connection detail at outlet



Fig 20 Examples of ad hoc repairs to cast iron using plastic, evidence of corrosion.



Fig 21 Broken pipe collar causing leak



Fig 22 short down pipe and leaking services discharges causing brick damage



Fig 23 Cast iron air brick / ventilation grille at low level, high level ones similar design.

3.0 Statement of Impact

<i>Description</i>	<i>Impact on Historic fabric</i>	<i>Impact on setting of heritage asset</i>	<i>Overall impact on significance</i>	<i>Extent of impact</i>	<i>Justification</i>
Draught seals to windows	Invisible modification	negligible	negligible	negligible	Improved comfort, energy saving
Teleflex opening gear for windows	Moderate but noticeable	negligible	low	internal	Improved function and ease of use, energy conservation.
Change colour of RWPs to black	moderate	possitive	beneficial	External surroundings	Clarification of appearance of building by allowing white fenestration to dominate elevations.

Appendix A: Historic Maps



1879



1899



1969



1982

Appendix B: Plan showing building phases

