



Carrot and Stick: reward and punishment

EXHIBITION BOOK

Carrot and Stick: reward and punishment

EXHIBITION BOOK

Series editor

Mark Copley

Photography

Georgia Hutchins

Martin Wootton

Anne Louise Harrisskett

Book design

Susie Jackson

www.susiesoo.com

© 2019 Hitchin British Schools Trust

Foreword

The impetus for the temporary exhibition Carrot and Stick: reward and punishment (February–June 2019) was twofold. Firstly, the British Schools Museum was opening a new exhibition on the educationalist Joseph Lancaster (1788–1836) who did so much to champion the cause of universal education. Lancaster encouraged the establishment of a Lancasterian Schoolroom in Hitchin in 1810. He possessed very interesting thoughts on punishing and rewarding pupils, some aspects society still agrees with today, while others are looked upon in horror.

Around the same time this Lancaster exhibition started to emerge from its pupa, we received a most welcome donation of school medals, certificates, cards and other prizes from Vivian Crellin – a serial donor of significant items on the history of education to the museum over several years. It seemed doubly appropriate to exhibit some of these items, many of which are aesthetically beautiful.

My sincere thanks to all of the volunteers who have worked on the research, preparation and installation of the exhibition and the corresponding book. Thanks also to IMF Audit Ltd for sponsoring this exhibition book.

Mark Copley*Curator*

January 2019

Cover:

*King Edward VII medal awarded
by the School Board for London in
1902 for good school attendance.*

Spink & Sons.

BSM - 2019.334

Introduction *Mark Copley and Lynda White*

Education in Victorian times was mainly for the privileged. Well-off families could afford private tuition in the form of a Governess, or attendance at Boarding schools. However, most children of the poor, male or female, had little education; instead they were set to work at a young age and were an important source of income for the family. Sunday schools became more prevalent from the 1780s, where reading, writing, arithmetic and catechism were taught to a selection of the 'deserving' poor, in areas where funding was available.

In many ways, it is hard for us to fully comprehend how limited education was in the early 1800s. Even where education was deemed important by parents and society, there often simply were not the available schools in the local area, or the priority for many families was to ensure there was enough food on the table.

Later, non-sectarian British Schools, Church of England's National Schools and other Charity schools such as the Ragged Schools, all helped educate the working classes. By the 1860s, the vast majority of children spent some time in education during their childhood, and the Education Act of 1870 required provision of partially-state funded schooling for all children between the ages of 5 and 10. This led to many new schools being established across the country, managed by School Boards.

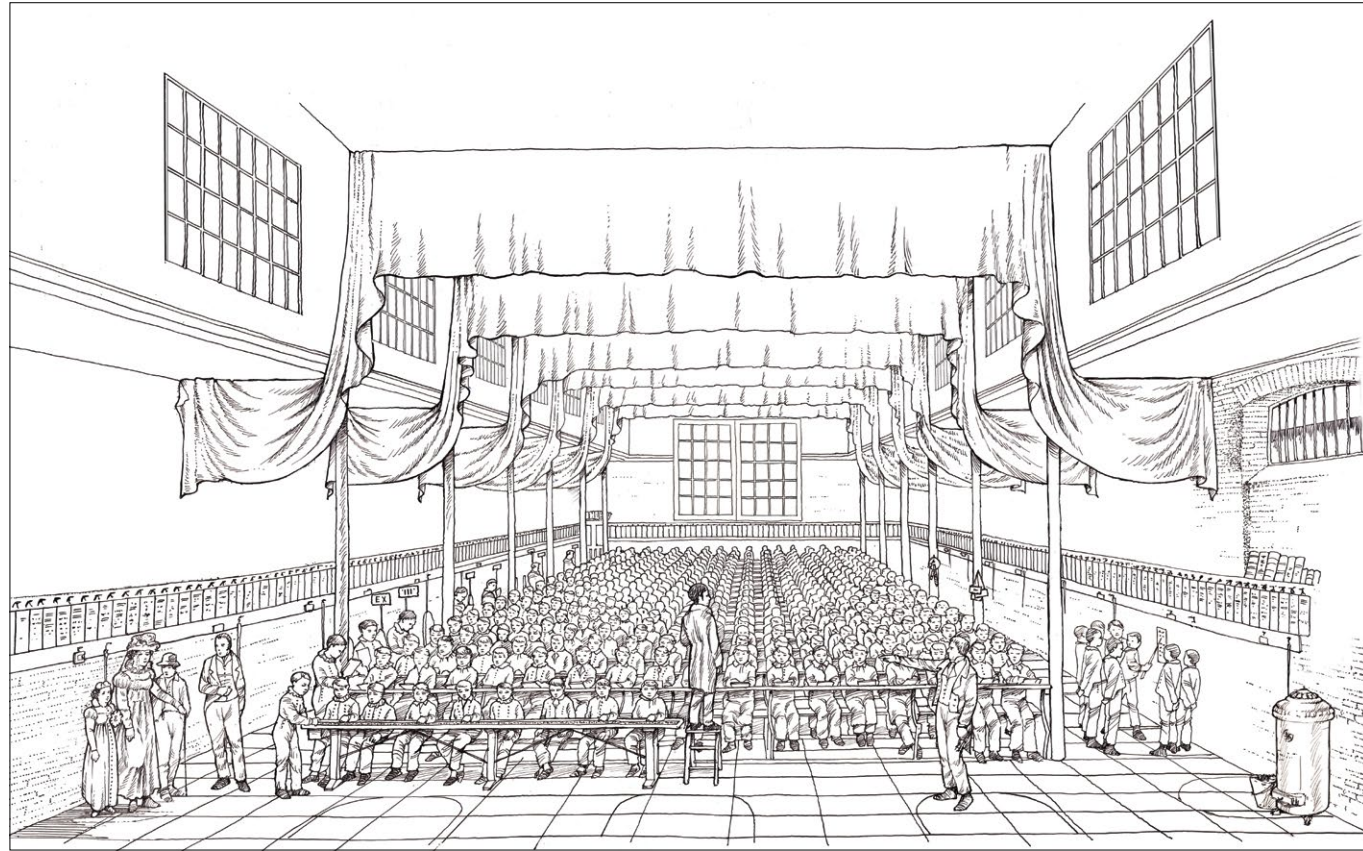
Initially, the School Boards were given the choice as to whether they made education compulsory in their area. It wasn't until 1880 that Parliament stipulated that education had to be undertaken by all children, and it was only in 1891 that an Act was passed ensuring education was free for everyone - not just those in severe poverty.

The British Schools

The education reformer Joseph Lancaster (1788-1836) recognised the need to educate children of all backgrounds - for the economic good of Society. He loved teaching, and sought to overcome barriers to children gaining a good education, such as the low number of good quality teachers, poor pay, and lack of discipline. Lancaster and the society he formed (which eventually became the British and Foreign Schools Society) set up schools across Britain and on every continent. Using the Monitorial System of education, a teacher was supported by a number of pupil monitors who were of a similar age to those in their charge. Lancaster saw their monitorial work as an important component in their own development - his motto being *Qui docet, discit*; 'He who teaches, learns'.

Joseph Lancaster visited Hitchin, Hertfordshire in 1808 encouraging local lawyer William Wilshere to establish a school within a disused malt-house in a poor area of town, in 1810. The schoolroom could accommodate 200 boys and 100 girls, with pupils taught using the monitorial method. The school soon outgrew its capacity, and a new monitorial schoolroom was opened in 1838 for 300 boys. Again, in no time at all, demand outstripped supply and in the 1840s and 1850s His Majesty's Inspector of schools reported that the boys' school required an additional classroom for 100 scholars; this was in addition to brand new facilities for girls and infants. These new classrooms were built in the 1850s and were largely sufficient for most of the rest of the century.

The point being, even before education was compulsory for children under 10, parents from even the poorest neighbourhoods wanted their boys and girls to receive an education and to aspire to a better life, at some expense to family income. It then became a question of how do you keep discipline and provide a good learning environment with such large student to teacher ratios?



Depiction of the Lancasterian Schoolroom in Hitchin, making efficient use of monitors.

Adapted from a Brunel University London Archives image by kind permission.



The Hitchin British Schools, comprising boys', girls' and infants' schools.

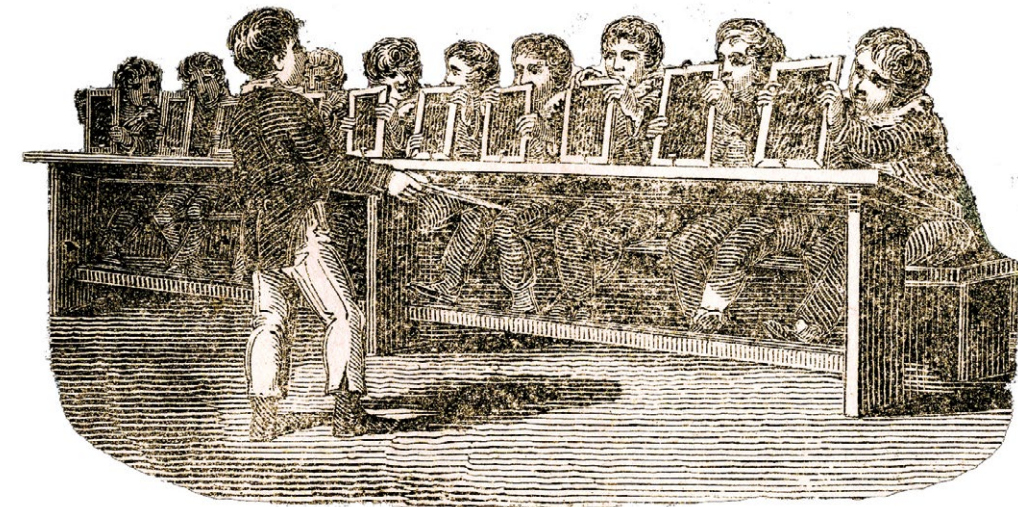


Illustration of a monitor looking after a class of pupils.

The art of discipline Mark Copley and Lynda White

Being a child in Victorian Britain was so different compared to today's childhood experiences. Children were expected to be polite and respect their elders; they were expected to speak only when spoken to; and they were expected to behave at all times both at home and school.

In general, pupils had to stand up to answer questions and wait for permission to speak, always addressing their teachers as "Sir", "Miss" or "Mrs". Students stood up when an adult entered the room, and could not ask questions unless invited. They had to write with their right hand, and could not fidget or talk to each other.

Deviations from these Societal expectations would result in the teacher's or parent's opprobrium. The fear of being punished was often enough to ensure boys and girls stayed in line - especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries, where to be singled out and disciplined in public would have been mortifying for most children, regardless of their background.

School discipline

By modern standards, discipline in Victorian schools appears extremely strict. The classroom sizes were very large, led by only one teacher and perhaps some monitors, so good behaviour was essential. Strong discipline was seen as an important part of bringing up a child.

Influenced by religious beliefs, 'Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him' (Proverbs 13:24) was commonly understood and observed. Indeed, one should 'Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.' (Proverbs 22:6): strict discipline in school would prepare them for a life in the factory, field or home.

However, this does not mean that the provision of punishment

was designed to be a free-for-all in terms of how and why pupils were punished. By way of an example of the Victorian approach, from the 1899 book *Pupil Teachers' and Scholarship School Management*, written by Arthur T. Flux for teachers:

Discipline must be natural
Discipline must be regular
Discipline must be just
Discipline must be unobtrusive
Discipline must be firm

Such an approach was said to bring good order in the classroom, attention to the teacher, a ready and willing obedience, the existence of a good tone and the formation of good habits.

Punishment methods

With the increase in professionally-trained teachers and formal training for pupil teachers, handbooks and teaching manuals flourished in the second half of the 19th century. These listed punishments and where they may be appropriately applied:

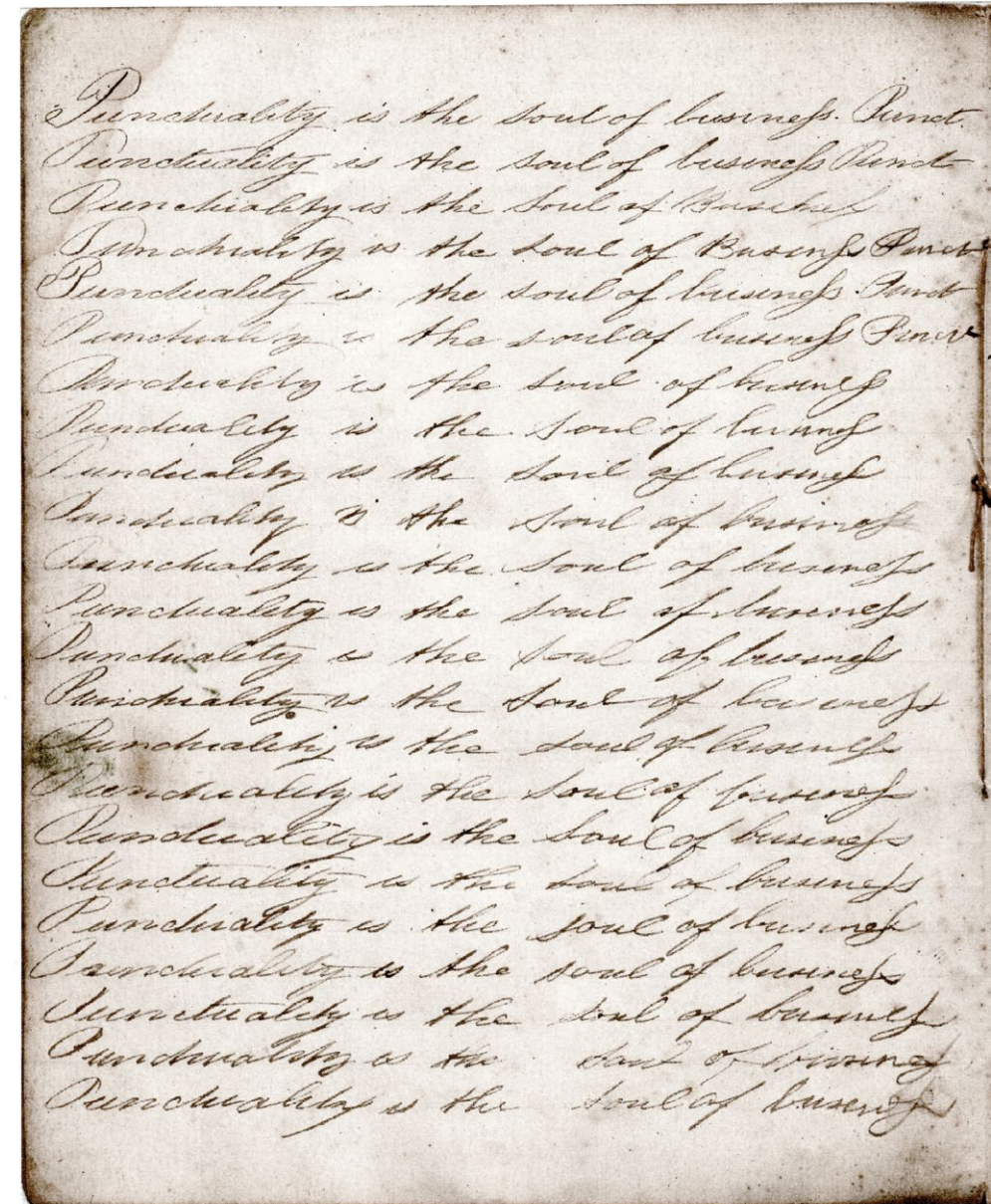
Rebuke in manner or words;
 Loss of marks (and consequent loss of place in class, see the next chapter);
 Detention after school hours;
 Corporal punishment; and
 Expulsion (which was more frequent before compulsory education was introduced).

The Dunce's cap is a familiar method of punishing pupils through humiliation. Typically made of newspaper, rolled up into a cone-shape, sometimes with the words 'Dunce' applied through a badge or armband. The pupil then sat in the corner wearing it - they were expected to be embarrassed into trying harder.



Carte de visite featuring *The Frown* by Thomas Webster RA (1800-1866), with child wearing a Dunce's hat in the back. 97x62mm.

BSM - JGC2495



Older children were given lines to do as punishment. This page is from an exercise book of 1870 with 'Punctuality is the soul of business' repeated, presumably the pupil in question was late for class.

BSM - A16.58

Lines could be given as a punishment. Here, the miscreant must write out the same sentence perhaps 100 times without making a single mistake. The penmanship needed to be consistently good throughout.

Joseph Lancaster's views on punishment

In 1803, Joseph Lancaster published *Improvements in Education as it Respects the Industrious Classes of a Community*, setting out his vision for better quality teachers, better schooling and greater societal involvement in education. His approach was very much focussed on rewarding good behaviour and achievement, and railed against the use of corporal punishment except in the worst cases. Despite this approach, over the decades he became more relaxed about the use of corporal punishment and was never shy of using humiliation.

Lancaster believed that 'few youth do wrong for the sake of it'. Nevertheless, punishments were initially the responsibility of the monitors looking after them. Monitors admonished pupils silently - they were given a card such as 'I have seen this boy idle' or 'I have seen this boy talking'. Wearing this card around the neck was not a badge of honour as it may be viewed today; rather it was seen as shameful among the pupil's peers.

For repeat offenders, Lancaster proposed that a wooden log weighing four to six pounds was placed around the pupil's neck making it hard for them to move around. Other punishments included shackling legs of offenders together with wood, linked together with rope. The shackled pupils had to walk around the classroom until they were tired. If that didn't work, a wooden stick could be fastened behind the pupil, running elbow to elbow, with their legs sometimes tied together. Worse still, boys were yoked together with wood around their necks and then paraded around the school, walking backwards.

According to Lancaster's book, occasionally boys were even

placed in a sack or basket and suspended from the roof in sight of all the other boys. It is said they were terrified of this and that he rarely used it. One wonders how frequently these punishments were meted out at his schools: for instance, they are not recorded in the Hitchin British Schools log books and may have been restricted to his early schools, or perhaps just his 1803 manifesto.

Joseph Lancaster stated that the most effective punishment was after-school detention. Detention was used in all types of schools - the miscreant had to either sit perfectly still, or perform a specific task (such as needlework, or cleaning). Lancaster's monitorial system used a low number of teachers, which he recognised could be an issue when it came to after-hours punishment. His solution: the child could be tied to the desk for the duration.

Corporal punishment

Generally in schools, the cane was the most common utensil for meting out corporal punishment. Boys were caned on their backsides or hands, while girls were usually caned on the backs of their legs or hands. Three or six 'of the best' were given, and if the hand was withdrawn, extra strokes given. An alternative to the cane was the wooden ruler, which usually wasn't delivered to the writing hand.

In Scotland and some northern parts of England, a tawse was used. Commonly known as 'the school strap', it was a leather strap with one end split into several tails and used on the palms of boys' and girls' hands.

Ending corporal punishment

Corporal punishment was supposed to be tightly controlled within Victorian schools, with only the Headmasters or Headmistresses supplying it, then recording the act in the school's Punishment Books.

However, the use of corporal punishment has always divided people and society. Some education reformers such as Joseph Lancaster and other commentators did not recommend its widespread use. In *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), for example, Charles Dickens poked fun at the Charitable schools where Biler was punished 'by the master - a superannuated old Grinder of savage disposition, who had been appointed headmaster because he didn't know anything and wasn't fit for anything, and for whose cruel cane all chubby little boys had a perfect fascination'.

Despite the handbooks promoting guidance regarding fairness, corporal punishment was often seen as unjust or arbitrary, becoming a source of tension between pupils and teachers within early 20th century schools. In the 1940s, it is estimated that some 20,000 boys and girls got the cane, slipper or tawse each week. By the 1980s, most countries in the world had banned corporal punishment in schools. The UK finally banned it in State schools in 1987 and some ten years later in private schools.

Punishment at the Hitchin British Schools

As in other schools, the school log books for the British Schools in Hitchin provide fascinating insights into late Victorian and Edwardian schools.

In 1912, 'six girls were excluded from school on account of unclean state of hair'. Three years later, the mother of one of the girls struck a female teacher, resenting 'the punishment of her child, which consisted of a very slight blow on her upper arm.

With the approval of the school, the girl... was excluded from school until measures could be taken to prevent the recurrence of such an action'.

In the Infants' School, in 1883 and 1886, boys were punished for coming in late. Also in 1886, a number of children were kept in 'for twenty minutes to needlework for coming in late'.

With regard to the Boys' School, in 1899 the log book demonstrates that one boy played truant all day and was admonished but not punished. A second offender, who had been previously warned, was punished in 1900 with four strokes.

According to one teacher, another boy who 'tries to take advantage of leniency and kindness', so 'I am compelled to adopt harsher measures. On receiving two strokes he made grimaces on returning to his place and followed by sulking. Therefore I gave him a few extra strokes'. In 1900, a boy was caught smoking: 'took from him 3 cigarettes which I burnt. He promised not to smoke again but if he does I have told him that I shall write to his father'.

But it was not just the pupils being punished. Also in 1900, one of the teachers was cautioned by the headmaster 'against boxing boys' ears and called his attention to my previous instructions both written and oral that hitting children on the head is absolutely forbidden and is not consistent with intelligent control'. The teacher was sacked three months later.

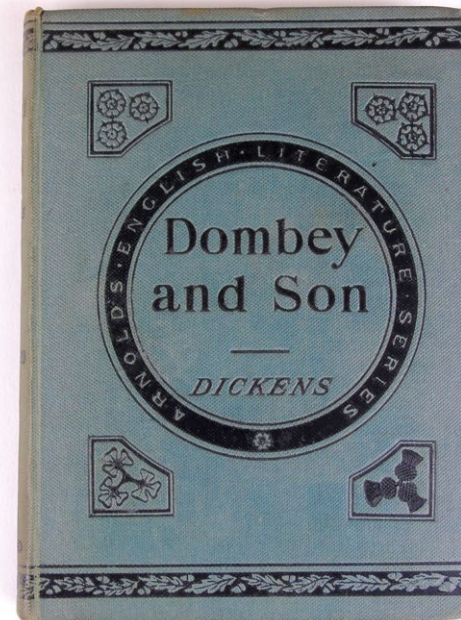


The various implements used for corporal punishment in schools. Canes were typically 1cm diameter and 1m long, with a curved handle, made of bamboo or rattan. Leather paddle and tawse, the latter distinguished by its three tails.

BSM - A34.2, U1462, U1463, U1467, INV263

Cover of Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, abridged and edited by J. H. Voxall 'for use as a reading-book at home and in school' as part of a literature series costing 1s. 6d., with a special school prize edition, gilt, 2s. The text referring to the 'savage master' is not included; this book was added to a school library in 1896.

BSM - JGB351



Depiction of a punishment basket as used in a German workhouse in 1777.

© Peter Higginbotham Collection/
Mary Evans

The lure of the carrot Mark Copley and Lynda White

Emulation and rewards in Lancasterian Schools

Joseph Lancaster understood the need to reward good behaviour and achievement. Under his Monitorial system, he championed continuous excellence and competition. In his 1803 book, *Improvements in Education*, he set out his system of emulation and rewards in his schools.

Paper tickets were issued for good work usually in spelling, reading and writing. If you were top of your class for an activity you would gain a reward ticket, if you achieved enough of these rewards then you could swap it for a prize. The tickets were graded according to difficulty of the task. The greater number of tickets you received of a specific grade, the higher the value of prize (e.g., a ½d or 6d prize). However, if someone surpasses you, you forfeit all of your gained tickets. Prizes included bats, balls, tops, and kites, and were slung in a net above the schoolroom in full view of the children so that they could aspire to being awarded the prizes in this competitive manner.

The pupils were also rewarded by being promoted from class to class; from Standard to Standard. Leather merit tickets were issued to pupils, which were suspended by a piece of ribbon from a button on the wearer's coat, often with an accolade such as 'A Reward for Merit'.

Based on the premise that 'the hope of reward sweetens labour', Lancaster was also keen on the wider practise of ensuring that 'wherever superior merit shows itself in schools, it should always be honoured, rewarded and distinguished'. Books, silver pens, medals with the pupil's name engraved were all given for excellence. Some senior boys were also given silver pocket watches and other expensive items.

Lancasterian monitors were also issued with special silver badges. These were badges of honour heralding the bearer's

diligence – either by teaching others or improving his own learning. Once awarded, the monitors did everything they could to retain them, in the full knowledge they could forfeit the badge. Similarly, the other boys did everything to emulate the monitor, hoping that one day they too would wear the badge.

Monitors, too, could win prizes. For example, if their class improved they would wear a ticket 'Commendable Monitor'; if they achieved this six times in succession, they could claim a prize.

Lancaster was great at publicity (and indeed, self-publication), and in an account of a lecture tour in 1809, where he was espousing the benefits of emulation and reward, he wrote:

I exhibited at Liverpool and Chester a medallion of the king as the highest badge of honour given to boys in schools, the sight of which brought from the people bursts of universal acclamation: the inscription round it was "The patron of education, and friend of the poor".

Monitor badges

Monitors or prefects existed in a number of public, grammar and charity schools, and became increasingly common from the 17th century onwards. Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), for example, wrote a report for Christ's Hospital, a charity school, in 1682 advocating the use of monitors to observe the behaviour of the pupils.

However, for many who study English primary education, it is Joseph Lancaster's monitors who first spring to mind. These monitors wore a silver badge with plated chain around the neck. A few badges from Lancaster's Borough Road School are held within the British and Foreign Schools Society's archives at the Brunel University London Archives and exhibit engraving of a fine quality.

Made in Birmingham in 1810 probably by silversmith John Lawrence, each badge is surmounted by a crown – a nod to the Royal patronage enjoyed by Lancaster. The largest badge being approximately 9cm by 3cm, they are inscribed ‘ROYAL FREE SCHOOL BOROUGH ROAD’ followed by the class and ‘HONOUR’ within an oval outline possessing an eight-point star, above laurel and palm sprays tied together with ribbon.

The Grimshaw Collection held at the Fitzwilliam Museum contains similar badges from the Borough Road school, some of which have been repaired, suggesting that they were in use for some time.

Indeed, the monitor badges were not given away, but were issued each morning or afternoon and returned at the end of the day. Lancaster notes that ‘no instance has occurred of losing a medal’.



Left:

Second Monitor General ‘Great Honour’ monitor’s badge.

Courtesy of Brunel University London Archives.

Right:

Monitor’s badge for the sixth class used in one of Joseph Lancaster’s earliest schools in London – Borough Road, Borough. Badges for each of the eight classes were made for the school.

Courtesy of Brunel University London Archives.

Page 19:

Reward cards from the early 1820s featuring verse, hand-painted illustrations or musical score: The Lily of the Valley and The Patriot’s Hymn. 75x115mm.

BSM - JGC7803, JGC7806



Reward Cards and Certificates

Schools across the country rewarded pupils for good conduct, attendance and achievement. Some of the earliest reward cards in the British Schools Museum collection date to the late 1810s and early 1820s, and include illustrations with verses and sometimes musical scores.



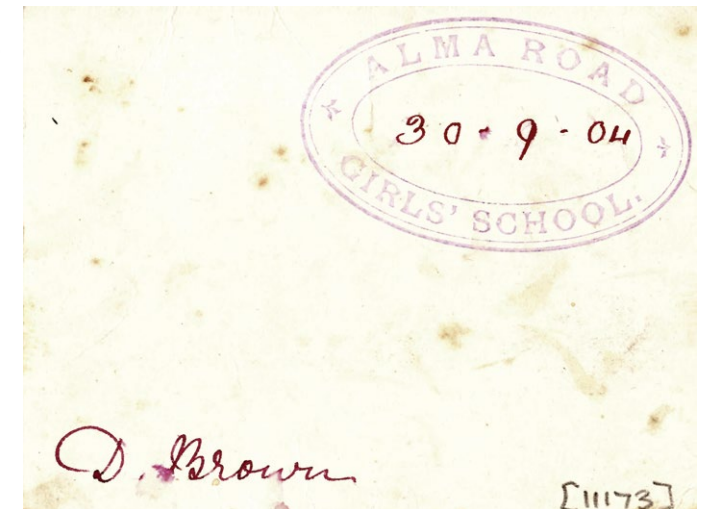
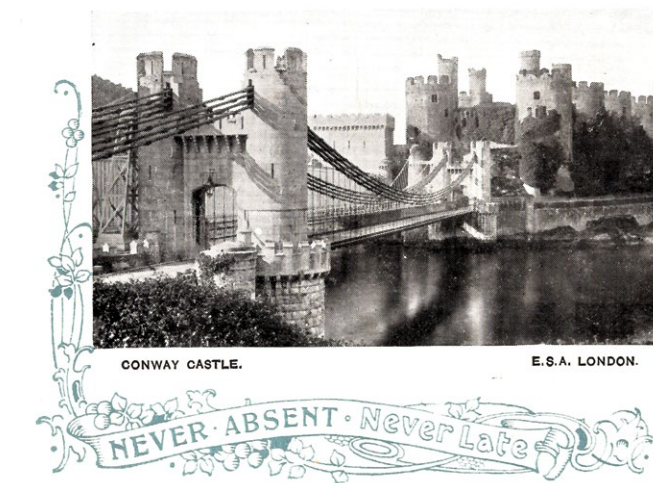
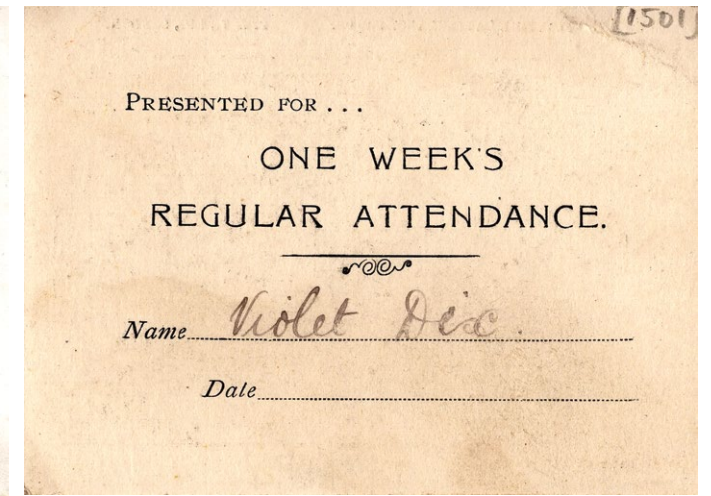
This series of cards were also printed from engraved copper plates and hand coloured, and sold as a book. We do not know why these cards were awarded, but given that they were not mass-produced at this early period, would have been a special prize for the recipient.



Also from the collection, possibly used in Sunday Schools, rewards cards dating to the 1860s feature noble titles such as 'Be Ye Kind One To Another' and 'Those That Seek Me Early Shall Find Me' with coloured illustrations depicting families, schoolrooms and Biblical scenes, with some verse at the bottom of the cards.

Two reward cards from the 1860s. Based on the scene on the left, they were possibly used at a Sunday School or Dame School (a charity school run by elderly women usually in their own homes). 65x105mm.

BSM - JGC6949, JGC6950

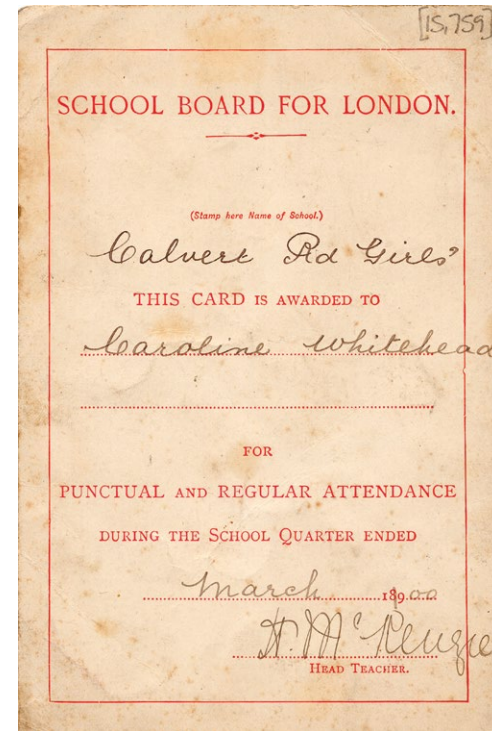


Rewards cards from the early 1900s featuring landmarks and pastimes. Other series were based on peoples of the world, flowers and other subjects. 90x65mm.

BSM - JG1561, JG11173

Attendance card (front and back) from London featuring the Thames Embankment, awarded for punctual and regular attendance for three months in 1900. The series of scenes were published by Edinburgh-based firm T. Nelson & Sons. 150x100mm.

BSM - JGC15759



Schools increasingly used reward cards in the second half of the 19th century, with them becoming ubiquitous by the 1900s. Mass-produced reward cards were issued by School Boards and then Local Authorities' Education Committees or County Councils, mostly for punctual and regular attendance. The type of reward depended upon the period covered. Cards were given for a week's or month's attendance (and sometimes for a quarter's good conduct and attendance), certificates or sometimes medals were issued for a year's good attendance.

On the basis that everyone is a collector, reward cards would have been sought after, with pupils building up personal collections. Examples of these types of mass-produced reward cards include those printed as a series featuring photographs or illustrations of landmarks, or photographs of pastimes with the text 'Never Late, Never Absent' for a period of one week. The pupil's name is usually added on the reverse, normally in their own hand.

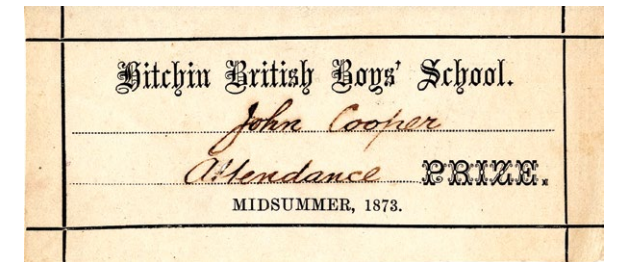
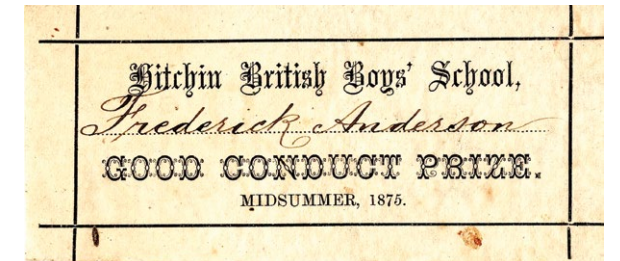
Several Hitchin British Schools reward tickets are held within the museum. One of them shows that John Cooper was awarded an Attendance Prize at Midsummer 1873 (he was aged 10 and could swap the ticket for a prize). His full education served him well - he married Elizabeth in 1890 at Holy Trinity Church in Hitchin and became a bookbinder, sending his son George William Cooper to the same school in 1900. Similarly, Frederick Anderson's good conduct prize was awarded to him again at age 10, while in his first year at the school. Frederick became a local butcher, married Sarah and also sent his son to the school.

Certificates offer a chance to recognise a student's punctuality, attendance and good conduct over the longer period of a year. The 1910 certificate awarded by Norfolk Education Committee featured the newly-crowned King George V. For the following year, Queen Mary was depicted, and for 1917 we have the young John Travers Cornwell who, aged 16, is the third youngest recipient of the Victoria Cross, posthumously awarded for his actions at the Battle of Jutland; Cornwell was well-known to youngsters of that era and no doubt deemed a good role model.

In 1904, Edgar Newell was awarded a certificate for regular attendance at the Hitchin Boys' British School. Signed by the Headmaster, Thomas Pengelly, the unusually-designed certificate mimics a piece of parchment with a red seal attached to a tag, and like so many of the reward cards and certificates, produced by the Education Supply Association Ltd. Edgar was the son of a carpenter and after his time at the British School in Hitchin transferred to the Grammar School, later becoming a railway clerk in Hitchin.

Many certificates were awarded for merit for a wide range of subjects. For example in London, Lily Eykelbosch who was of school-leaving age in 1895 when she was awarded a certificate for reading, writing and arithmetic at Standard VII as well as for domestic economy - the certificate may have been produced

when she interviewed for the diamond polisher job she later acquired, before marrying a solicitor's clerk. The issuing of rewards cards declined during the First World War and never regained popularity with schools - especially with the gradual increase of the school-leaving age, although attendance and good conduct are still annually rewarded today in many schools, as of course merit is.



Good conduct and attendance reward tickets from the Boys' British School in Hitchin. The small paper tickets would have been collected and traded in by the boys to obtain their prize - usually toys, but pocket knives and handkerchiefs were also given. 45x95mm.

BSM - JGC18275, JGC18276



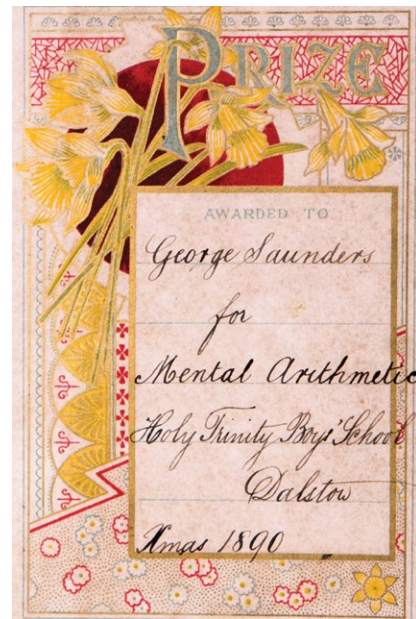
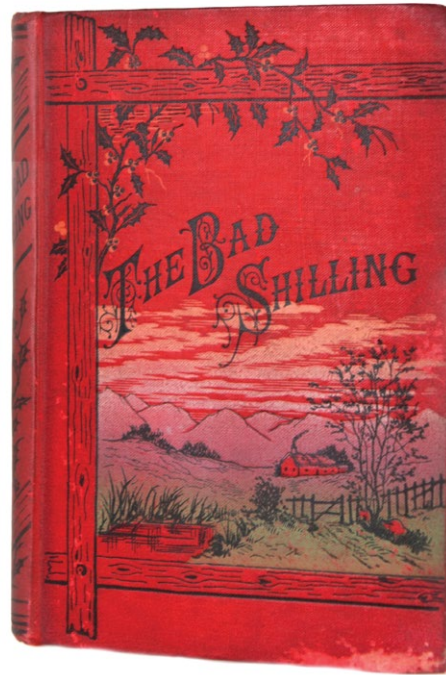
Norfolk Education Committee certificates from the 1910s. 315x240mm.



Hitchin British Schools certificate for attendance from 1904. 240x285mm.



Certificate used in London in 1895. 230x285mm.



1890 book prize to George Saunders for *Mental Arithmetic* from his London school, with the label from the inside cover.

BSM - JGB447

Books

Books and other objects have long been given as prizes. The Jill Grey Collection at the British Schools Museum has many dozens of books awarded to pupils for attendance or attainment. In contrast to certificates, these were given at the discretion of the schools – therefore specific personal achievement could be rewarded.

Examples of subjects rewarded in the 1870s to 1890s include Science, Art, Needlework, General improvement, Mathematics and General Knowledge. The books won included fiction, history or natural history books.

Good attendance and conduct were also rewarded with books.

For instance, the Doncaster British School awarded John Green a book prize (*Stories from Jewish History*) in 1875 for ‘regular attendance and diligence during 1875’. While Lily Chambers at Hitchin Girls’ British School won *John Halifax, Gentleman* by Dinah Craik, a fiction featuring an orphan who was determined to work hard and do well in life, eventually becoming very wealthy. Lily was at the Infants’ and Girls’ School in Hitchin from the age of four, ultimately leaving in 1904, aged 10, to become a local draper.

The commercial opportunity that school prize-giving presented was not lost on publishers. Many companies produced catalogues of books at set prices, specifically aimed at this market. For example, Blackie & Sons offered a halfcrown series of illustrated books c.1900, half of which were authored by women.



Medal awarded to G. Standcumbe for three years punctual attendance from 1896 in Leyton. Complete with ribbon and bars for each year. 75x40mm.

BSM - 2019.213

R. Hannibal's medal for punctual attendance in 1895 at his London school. Missing ribbon. 50x40mm.

BSM - 2019.304

Medals

The British Schools Museum has a large collection of medals awarded to pupils. While a few have been given for academic achievement, the vast majority are for attendance and conduct.

Medals have been awarded from the mid-18th century onwards in the private and grammar schools of England, most commonly replacing the awarding of money or tokens used as currency.

By the 1770s, Winchester Schools, for example, was issuing a gold medal for Latin and two silver medals for Latin / English speeches each year. Later, medals were also often given for Writing and Arithmetic. Private schools, such as the Academies and Seminaries, also issued medals usually for writing, languages, history, geography, commercial business, scientific and classical subjects.

The problem of absenteeism

Charity schools were more likely to award medals for good conduct and attendance. In contrast to reward cards and certificates, medals were issued for one or more years' good attendance. Why was attendance such an issue for the Charity schools?

Many families lived a hand-to-mouth existence in Victorian times. Despite schools being opened up to the poor by educationalists such as Joseph Lancaster, the necessity of the income a child could provide was sometimes irresistible. In Hitchin, girls would often be preparing straw for plaiting, to be sold at Hitchin market for the hat trade in Luton and elsewhere; an eight-year old could earn several shillings a week. Harvest also required additional seasonal help, which was recognised by many schools, including Hitchin British Schools, where the main summer holiday was timed to coincide with the Harvest, thus varying from year to year.

Gleaning was also an important source of food for families – gleaning is the practice of gathering up the ears of wheat that had been left on the ground following the harvest. It was an important source of free flour for poor families who could make it last into the winter. The log books for the Hitchin British Schools record attendance and absenteeism – gleaning was an annual event where the numbers at school decreased dramatically each year.

Furthermore, girls were also expected to help the family during periods of illness, so may have stayed away from school to care for ill relatives. Indeed, working families lived in terrible conditions, and were subjected to many childhood diseases.

Epidemics such as measles, chicken pox, scarlet fever, diphtheria and whooping cough swept through schools causing many pupils to be absent for long periods of time – often extending to their teachers.

With most children walking to school, the weather also affected attendance, for example in Hitchin we know that children came from many of the outlying villages and had to walk several miles each day – in all weather. They could get very cold and wet, as many did not possess suitable clothing, including coats and waterproof shoes.

On very cold days, there was rarely sufficient heating in the schoolroom – the Hitchin British Schools log book states that in January 1867, for example, children marched several times to keep warm. While in December 1875, days were lost because of deep snow, and in January 1888 the school provided soup for parents who were out of work.

While the school could do little about illness, awarding pupils for good attendance and conduct certainly helped keep pupils in classes, and promote good behaviour. The school log book for the Infants' British School in Hitchin records that 'The System of small rewards for attendance has greatly helped attendance' (October 1891).



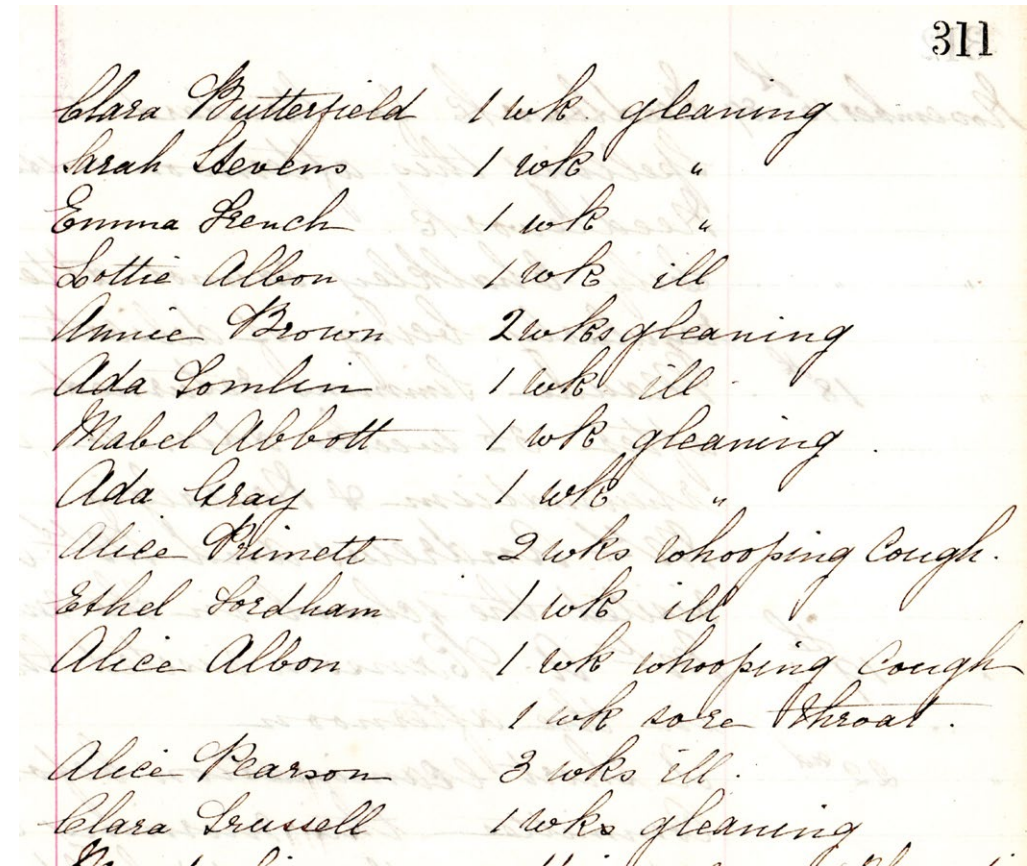
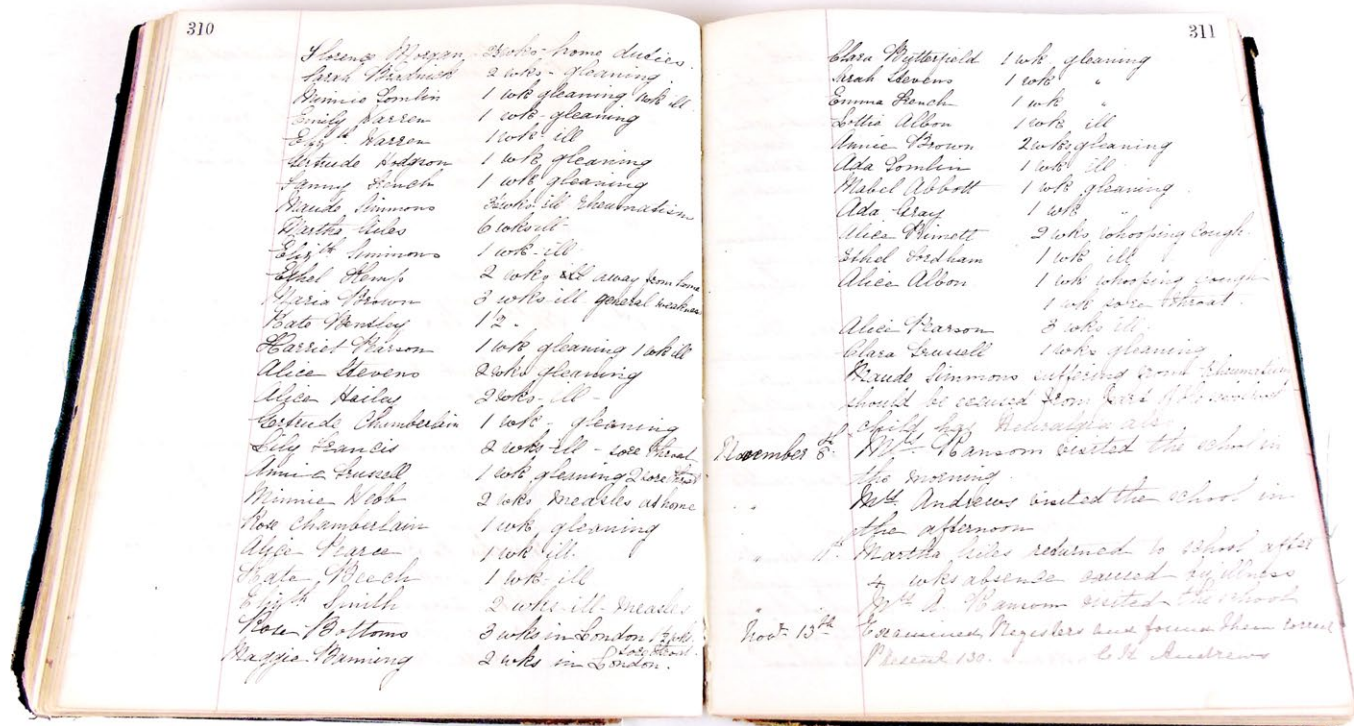
.....
 Sepia print of *The Gleaners* by Jean François Millet (1814-1875), as depicted on the back of a reward card for 1903 from a Marylebone school in London. 140x90mm.

BSM - JGC5940



.....
 Postcard of a class from a Stepney School, c.1900, showing several girls wearing medals.

BSM - JGC10566



Hitchin British School Girls Log Book (1863-1899) showing absenteeism for the quarter ending November 1889. General illness, whooping cough and helping their families gleaning were common.

Other prizes

As well as the medals, toys and valuable prizes were often awarded for good attendance, usually at the end of the academic year. For example, Bertha Cannon received a silver watch case after five years' attendance, having previously been awarded medals after three and four years at St. Saviour's School in Hitchin.

Such prizes were hard to come by. At Hitchin British Schools, the Boys' School log book for July 1878 reads, 'This evening our Public Exam Prize Distribution is held. Mr. Ransom presiding. A large crowd of chiefly parents of the Scholars present. Mr. Sebohm presented extra prizes to the three boys who during the year had never been absent once.'

Similarly, in December 1890, at the Girls' British School in Hitchin, there was a 'Short exam before the Committee and Friends commencing at 3pm. 153 children present. 44 prizes given, 42 for regular attendance, 2 for general progress.'



Pocket watch awarded by Hertfordshire County Council for five years' perfect attendance. The pupil's name is not inscribed. 38x44mm.

BSM - 2019.556



Writing slope awarded to Arthur Lee in 1900 for achieving Standard VII at a Sir John Cass Foundation school.

BSM - 2019.569





Sponsored by



British Schools Museum

41/42 Queen Street
Hitchin SG4 9TS

www.britishschoolsmuseum.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1010345

